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HUMAN BEINGS AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE IN FRANTZ FANON'S PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT Robertus Wijanarko STFT Widya Sasana, Malang rwijanarko68@gmail.com Abstract: Frantz Fanon, an Algerian Postcolonial thinker, articulates that the Western concept of humanism had been utilized to legitimize the systematic colonial form of dehumanization in many colonial countries. This essentialist concept of humanism, which is claimed to be a universal concept, does not include colonial oppression of colonized people cannot be considered as an act of dehumanization. European humanism places colonized people into sub-human entities. In the context of such a discriminative and exclusive concept of humanism, Fanon argues that our understanding of human beings needs always to be connected with the existing social structure. To profoundly comprehend Fanon's philosophical-political thoughts, in this study I will explore Frantz Fanon's existential concept of human existence. My critical research will focus mainly on several of <u>Fanon's works</u>: The Wretched of the Earth, <u>Toward the African Revolution</u>, and <u>Black Skin White Masks</u>. His other works will certainly be considered. I will utilize a litterer critical approach to investigate Fanon's thoughts on the correlation between human existence and social structure and his understanding on the concept. Key Words: Racist Colonialism, Essentialist Humanism, Social structure, Existential Humanism. INTRODUCTION For Europe, for ourselves, and for humanity, comrades we must turn over a new leaf, we must work out new concepts, and try to set a foot a new man, or, more concisely, a new concept of man, which Europe could not create. "Let us decide," Fanon elsewhere states, "not to imitate Europe; let us combine our muscles and our brains in a new direction. Let us try to create the whole man, whom Europe has been incapable of bringing to triumphant birth." (Fanon, The Wretched, 313). Without giving a systematic account, Fanon seems to propose that this new humanism should not be essentialist concept, to be universal and racist, as what the Europeans produced. In many parts of his works, especially in The Wretched of the Earth and Toward the African Revolution, Fanon critiqued that the European essentialist and racist concept of humanity had been utilized to "scientifically" legitimize dehumanization and to disguise any form of domination and oppression. The creation of this new concept of humanism, on my reading of Fanon, cannot be separated from the consideration of its social and cultural structure, since the social and cultural structure, according to Fanon, is a means of human existing. In this critical study, having a specific attention to the correlation between human beings and social structure, I intend to explore the concept of humanism developed by Fanon. In order to pursue this objective, first, I shall investigate the notion of the dehumanizing racist colonialism which, as Robert J. Young claims, is deemed to be the foundation Fanon's philosophical anthropology. Second, I shall illustrate Fanon's accounts of the correlation of human beings and structure that give direction to his new concept of humanism. DISCUSSION Dehumanizing Racist Systematic Colonialism In the preface to Sartre's Colonialism and Neocolonialism. This claim seems to be essential to inquire into the anthropological background of Fanon's humanism and therefore needs to be explored. Young, putting Fanon alongside with Guevara, and Castro, and the anti-humanism of Althusser, were essentially founded on the same colonial problematic: that the racism of colonialism was degrading colonial (or semi-colonized) subjects to the category of the subhuman (my emphasis). What was required, therefore, was either to do 2 away with the concept of humanism altogether, or, more positively, to articulate a new anti-racist humanism, which would be inclusive rather than exclusive, and which would be the product of a variable of the subhuman (my emphasis). those who formed the majority of its new totality (Sartre, 2001). To comprehend the foundation of Fanon's philosophical anthropology, which Robert J.C. Young paraphrases as "the racism of colonialism which was degrading colonial subject to the category of the subhuman," (dehumanizing racist colonialism), means to investigate Fanon's thoughts of the Algerian colonialism in order to comprehend how Fanon interpreted and represented the colonial experience and the Algerian revolution in which he participated as a member of the National Liberation Front (FLN). Fanon, in tune with Hannah Arendt (1976) and Sartre (2001), thinks that the origin of colonialism is in the political emancipation of the bourgeoisie or capitalist.1 His works strongly indicate that the origin of French colonization in Algeria is not merely a need for domination, but rather the need of French colonization and disrupting colonial resistance.2 Since the reason for expansion was obviously determined, the process of colonial domination was systematically implanted: overcome the resistance, smash the framework, subdue, terrorize, and <u>only then will the economic system be put in place</u>. Fanon (1964) says that in the initial phase the French establish their domination and <u>massively affirms</u> their <u>superiority</u>; then <u>the social group</u> is militarily and economically subjugated. "Exploitation, torture, raids, racism, 1 In her work The Origin of Totalitarianism Hannah Arendt states, "What imperialist expansion had been touched off by a curious kind of economic crisis, the overproduction of capital and the emergence of 'superfluous' money, the result of oversaving, which could no longer find productive investment within the national borders" (Hannah Arendt, The Origisn of Totalitarianism, New York: A Harvest Book, 1976, 135). The origin of colonial expansion, therefore, is the political participation of the capitalists (bourgeoisies) in the political life. Sartre seems to share opinion with Arendt when he, in his work Colonialism and Neocolonialism, quoted Jules Ferry, "It is in the interest of France, which has always been awash with capital and has exported it to foreign countries in considerable quantities, to consider the colonial question from this angle. For countries like ours which, by the very nature of their industry, are destined to be great exporters, this question is precisely one of outlets...where there is political predominance, there is also predominance. there is also predominance.". See (Sartre, Colonialism, 33) 2 Fanon states that the colonial bourgeoisie influenced the native intellectuals with new values in order to disrupt their resistance. He states "...during the period of liberation, the colonialist bourgeoisie looks feverishly for contact with the elite and it is with these elite that the colonial country, decides to carry out a rearguard action with regard to culture, values, techniques, and so on" (Fanon, The Wretched, 44). He also states, "The colonialist bourgeoisie had hammered into the native's mind the idea of a society of individuals where each person shuts himself up in his own subjectivity, and whose only wealth is individuals where each person shuts himself up in his own subjectivity, and whose only wealth is individual thought" (Fanon, The Wretched, 47). collective liquidations, rational oppression," Fanon (1964) wrote, "take turns at different levels in order literally to make of the native an object in the hands of the occupying nation". Thus colonial domination is operated by a series of strategies. The domination of the colonized is systematically operated in every aspect of human life. French colonialism introduced individualism as a new social value to undermine the communal life of the Algerian. They strived to destroy the hidden strength of Algerian matrilineal society by provoking Algerian women to unveil in order to disrupt social cohesion. They also created demarcations (compartments) to separate the native from the settlers. And they used torture as the means to manifest an exemplary loyalty to the system they created. The colonialism is, therefore, a dehumanizing systematic domination since it introduces torture and repression as power control and destroys the social structure, values and ways of life as a means of human existing. Colonialism also denies the human rights of the native and subjugates them in a state of sub-humanity, and even prohibits the assimilation of the natives. In addition, French colonialism in Algeria, according to Fanon, is not only a systematic domination, but it is also a dehumanizing systematic domination, but it is also a dehumanizing systematic domination, but it is also a dehumanizing systematic domination of the colonial world, which has reaselessly drummed the rhythm for the destruction of native social forms and broken up without reserve the systems of reference of the economy, the customs of dress and external life" (Fanon, 1963). This proposition implies that systematic oppression entails not only the creation of a social apparatus as a means of control, but also the replacement of the system of values and of representation, as well as the transformation of the ways of life. In other words, the systematic oppression created a new cosmos for the colonized. In this atmosphere, the colonized experienced torture as a way of life. Algerian colonialism, as Young explicates, be a racist system? The fact that colonialism is systematic violence does not say that it is a racist system. What does Fanon mean by dehumanizing systematic racist colonialism as he states in Toward the African Revolution, "In reality the attitude of the French troops in Algeria fits into a pattern of police domination, of systematic racism, of dehumanization rationally pursued" (Fanon, 1964)? To answer this question, I argue that we can depart from his Marxist analysis of the colonial realm. In the Wretched of the Earth he illustrates the fact of colonial world and analyzes: This world cut in two is inhabited two difference of ways of life never come to mask the human realities. When you examine at close quarters the colonial context, it is evident that what parcels out the world is to begin with the fact of belonging to a given species. In the colonies the economic substructure is also a superstructure. The cause is the consequence; you are white, you are white because you are rich (Fanon, 1963). Fanon argues that the ownership of property, which eventually divides human beings into different compartments and species, the colonizer needs to maintain his status and demarcate the boundary to both preserve his privileges and absolve himself from his oppressive and dehumanizing colonization. This analysis is in accordance with his claim in Black Skin White Mask (BSWM) that the economic reason is prior to the racist attitude that results in the pathologic attitude (inferiority complex) of the oppressed (Fanon, 1967). Since dehumanizing fellow human beings for the purpose of the promotion of his or her own dignity is illogical, due to the logical scheme that the dehumanization of fellow human beings implies the dehumanization of his or her own being, it is a strategy of the colonizer to keep the coloni humanism, since what they consider as human only applies to the French, while the native, presented as a subhuman species with its attributions, is in the state of nonhuman. Therefore, the colonizer creates the stigma to label the colonized as the sub-human species. Fanon (1963) describes, "Native society is not simply described as a society lacking in values. It is not enough for the colonialist to affirm that those values have disappeared from, or still better never existed in, the colonial world. The native is declared insensible to ethics; he represents not only the absence of values, but also the negation of values.". Furthermore, he states, "At time this Manicheism goes to its logical conclusion and dehumanized the native, or to speak plainly, it turns him into an animal. In fact, the terms the settler uses when he mentions the native quarter, of the stink of the native quarter, of the stink of the native quarter, of the settler uses when he mentions the native quarter. exact terms, he constantly refers to the bestiary" (Fanon, 1963). 5 Racism, therefore, is hybridized in the colonial system. It is inserted in the nature of the exchanges and production to demarcate the ownership of property (the colonizer and the native). Moreover, the French, who claimed to have the universal concept of human beings, were able to construct the metaphysical frame that gives a rational or scientific legitimacy for the colonization. This means that systematic racist colonization went hand in hand with their claim of the universal concept of humanity. That is to say, western humanism, which was claimed to be universal concept, was used to cement the dehumanizing colonial system not only at the socio-economic and cultural level, but also at the metaphysical level which eventually was systematically implanted in the consciousness and values system of both the native and the settler. Restoration of Dehumanizing Social Structure Without pretending to identify him as a structuralist, I argue that Fanon (1964) articulates that the cultural mummification of the colonial world leads to a mummification of individual thinking, he, without being trapped into being a structuralist, performs his structuralistic perspective, in the sense that the external condition of the individual influences how individual thinking inscribes or produces his or her identity. And from this proposition the following can be derived: just as cultural mummification leads to a mummification of individual thinking, so the mummification of a colonial social structure, under rigid control and oppression, leads to the mummification of colonized can free themselves from subjugation and oppression and start creating their identity by way of decolonization and continuous structural restoration, he underlines his belief that the problem of colonial human beings is structural. That is to say, as the colonial power and apparatus are systematically and structural context in which men live, for the purpose of the exploration of the concept of human beings, becomes indispensable. Human beings are historical beings, who exist and produce their identity in the given social structure systematically dehumanize the colonized peoples but also the colonizing people or country, since the colonizer can never succeed in placing the colonized in the status of in/subhuman. The colonized always had the power of resistance and found the spaces, in their own culture and means of existing, to escape from total dehumanization. That is why the dehumanizing and racist colonial structure causes a double systematic dehumanization, which is, the dehumanization of the colonizer and the colonized. Consequently, Fanon claims, the liberation of the colonial system, and such a revolution involves and liberates both sides. This theme is repeatedly articulated in the first chapter of the Wretched of the Earth. Indeed, I argue, that, by reading closely this Fanonian structural liberation model, that the only way to liberate the oppressed is decolonization. It is only by decolonization that the oppressed repossess the most fundamental and concrete values of their existence, specifically the land, which is then the colonizer had undermined and it, as Fanon (1963) says, brings a natural rhythm into existence, introduced by new men, and with it a new language and new humanity. Decolonization of the colonial system, which (2) involves all elements of both the oppressed and the oppressor to restore the dehumanizing colonial social structures. It is true that decolonization, as a revolutionary, complete, and total transformation is always violent since it is about the replacing of a 3 Fanon identifies some "mechanisms of defense" or of resistance of the colonized to escape from the total oppressive domination of the colonizer. He said that when the natives are <u>confronted with the colonial order of things</u>, they find they are in a state of permanent tension, and, among other forms of relaxated and their <u>most acute aggressivity and most impelling violence are canalized</u>, transformed, and conjured away. The circle of the dance is a permissive circle: it protects and permits. Furthermore, Fanon in his A Dying Colonialism convincingly shows that the Algerian turned back to their ancient cultural practices and social structures, such as the way people clothe themselves and the structure of family institution, in order to destroy the domination of the colonizers. Such mechanism proved that Algerian can never be dehumanized completely. Although always presumed guilty "the native, in his innermost spirit, the native admits no accusation. He is not convinced of his inferiority. See Frantz Fanon, A Dying Colonialism, trans. by Haakon Chevalier, New York: Grove Press, 1965, chapter 1,2, and 3. certain species of men by another species of men. It seems to be the path of liberalization of human beings who are locked into two reciprocally exclusive zones, according to Fanon, are opposed, not in the service of a higher unity. In his powerful rhetorical language Fanon invokes: Comrades, let us flee from this motionless movement where gradually dialectic is changing into the logic of equilibrium. Let us consider the question of the cerebral mass of all humanity, whose connections must be increased, whose channels must be diversified and whose messages must be re-humanized (Fanon, 1963). It becomes obvious that, for Fanon, the restoration of colonial structure, which is systematically and racially dehumanizing, needs to be systematic and holistic in a radical sense, and involves all elements of the social structures. It is to be radical in the sense that this restoration comprises the reformation of the existing (material) social structure and the reclamation of social structure. "The claim to a national culture in the past," Fanon (1963) wrote, "does not only rehabilitate the nation and serve as a justification for the hope of a future national culture. In the sphere of psycho-affective equilibrium it is responsible for an important change in the native". Social Structure and New Humanism Not only does Fanon view the colonial problem through a structural lens, but he also proposes the solution for the colonial problem in a structural and systematical prescription. When he claims that decolonization and continuous restoration is the struggle which the Algerian needed to take, Fanon is obviously saying that a radical, holistic, systematic, and structural revolution is the only way for the colonized to liberate themselves and start creating their human life. How do we in such a structural scheme of revolution trace or identify his thoughts of a new humanism? How does this prescription give direction to his new concept of humanism? What kind humanism? What kind of humanism? What kind humanism? Wh the restoration of existential ground and a means of the concrete man, (2) which next transcends the dialectic scheme into the logic of equilibrium by means of the colonizer, or what we could call an inclusive social structure. These two matters contained in Fanon's proposal will be the guidelines for my reflection on the Fanonian humanism. It seems to me that, instead of creating a new metaphysical system to serve as a new philosophical frame for the concept of human being, Fanon in his works often sees human being more as a concrete living being, who lives, acts, moves, and struggles based on his or her means of existing, namely, social structure. That is why his concern, among other things, is to restore the social structure of concrete men in the colonial world. For Fanon human being "without means of existing, without a raison d'etre, is broken in the very depth of his substance" (Fanon, 1964). This proposition, I argue, underlines Fanon's view that human being is a historical living being that can never be separated from his or her social structure, since this social structure, as a means of existing, is substantial for his or her existence. It is substantial for his or her social structure, as a means of existence and identity and provides the trajectory to preserve and flourish his/her existence. When Fanon emphasizes that the land is the most concrete value for a human being, he seems to underline this very historical dimension of human being. Social structure, therefore, is not merely a conditio sine qua non for human being. Social structure, therefore, is not merely a condition of human being. existence. Due to its substantial role for historical human being, social structure needs always to be continuously restored for human beings and, reservedly, the mummification of social structure indicates the mummification of human beings. That is why in his positive response to the Algerian revolution Fanon, 1965). The need for the continuous restoration of social structure, therefore, implies that human beings need always to flourish and preserve their being to always be "being human." For Fanon social structure is always meant to serve human being so that he cannot be considered a structure, he indicates as well that his structural concept of human existence includes the notion 9 of human freedom. According to Fanon, although always influenced by a given social structure, human being is still a free being. Freedom in this perspective is not a metaphysical attribute or quality derived from the metaphysical concept of human being. It is not, as well, an unhistorical and universal quality of a human being. It is instead a capability of human being to exist, produce and reproduce his or her identity, while he or she remains and stands in his or her social structure, by means of continuously transformative. The notion of transformative social structure, therefore, refers to both the fact that the concrete and free human being is the subject of transformation and that, by transforming the social structure, the human being is being transformed. Consequently, a human being is the subject of transformation and that, by transforming the social structure. conditions of social structure. In other words, human freedom is always contextual and embodied in the given social structure or circumstances. The next aspect of the Fanonian concept of human being can be taken from his proposal on the social structure. structure is designated to transcend the colonizers, into the logic of equilibrium. Fanon means that the aim of the colonized is not merely to destroy and to radically (and violently) change the ruling power and colonial structure that had been imposed, and by this way to demolish the existence of the colonizer. It also aims to restore a colonial structure that can embrace and include anyone in the colonial realm who wants to have that access for their human promotion. In other words, the end of the struggle is not to dialectically oppress the oppressors or to take a turn subjugating the colonizer, but to build the bridge that can unite two opposing groups into one inclusive social construction. The proposal to articulate the logic of equilibrium implies that neither the Marxian class struggle dialectic nor the Hegelian scheme that history works based on the thesis-antithesis scheme (of the different zones of human being) is able to bring humanity into a more human social condition. Instead, as he observed in the colonial social fragmentation, such kinds of dialectic social structure is by creating an inclusive social structure that embraces any group or parts of the society to build a more inclusive human relation and structure. This could occur when every block of compartment, wall of separation, and form of 10 segregation are demolished so that every web of connection can be rebuilt and interconnected. For Fanon, this structural restoration starts from the historical process of decolonization, and through this process, not only social structure is restored but also the subjectivity of human being. When Fanon emphasizes decolonization as an historical process, he signifies that the possible social restoration cannot start from nothing or from supernatural power; it is instead done by the hands of human beings. Besides underlining the historical character of human being, what does this proposal for creation of an inclusive social structure imply, especially for the concept of new humanism? Does Fanon propose a social structure without the social grouping and social structure imply, especially for the concept of new humanism? Does Fanon any social structure imply and social structure without class? Is it possible to architect a social reality without the social grouping and social structure without class? structure needs to be constructed in such a way so that every member of social structure gains equal access for his/her growth and humanization. Instead of emphasizing the abstract or essentialist anthropology, Fanon rather argues that any social system needs to be constructed and continually restored so that it can serve equally the need of every member of the social system. This means that any unjust and perpetually oppressive social system that gives a benefit for a limited group, therefore means that just such a social grouping always needs to be challenged and restored. The struggle for human rights and social equality is none other than the effort to create a social structure that can provide equal access for everybody to build identity and to be more human. The task of human existence, hence, is not to observe and actualize the prescribed concept of human being, but to create and inscribe their identity. CONLUSSION AND SIGNIFICANCE In conclusion, the existential and structural framework, which Fanon utilizes both in viewing the colonial realm and proposing prescription, offers several features of the new concept of human being he is proposing: first, human being is concrete living being, who exists, moves, and grows in a given social structure. Human being can never be separated from his/her social structure, human being is a free being since he or she has capacity to transform or restore social structure. structure. The freedom of human being can be exercised as long as he or she stands in the social structure and exercises his or her capacity to refresh the 11 given social structure. This task can be exercised also in the social structure. The ethical implication then is that every human being needs to participate in creating a social structure that can accommodate the needs and aspirations of its members and provide access to its members and provid reality where he or she lives. Such a concept of human existence can never exclude or sacrifice the other human being for the sake of his or her own humanization. The significane of Fanon's philosophical thoughts on the correlation of human existence and social structure to the project of social transformation in the postcolonial countries, therefore, can be drawn. Generally speaking, the situations of the society in many colonial countries were structured in the feudalistic social system (Kahin, 2003). Let us take as an example our home country, Indonesia. Prior to the colonial system, the social system of the territory of the East Indies was feudalistic. In order to conquer and control the colonized peoples the representative colonial government built a coalition with the indigenous bourgeoisie (privayi). This mutualistic coalition ends up in the intensification of the feudalistic system. The social stratification between the ordinary people/the peasants and the "privayi" (with the colonial support behind them) became more and more serious. Even at the period after Indonesian independence until now days, the residue of this exclusive social segregation and feudalistic social stratification become can still be found (Cf. Hefner, 2000). And this condition certainly causes a serious challenge to the modern Indonesia that embraces and builds a modern democratic political system, since the democratic political system presupposes an egalitarian and open social system. The feudalistic social system, since the democratic political system presupposes an egalitarian and open social system. structure of the human existence needs to be transformative and inclusive, finds its significance in the postcolonial Indonesia. The new Indonesian government has to continuously design cultural strategy and political orchestration which enable them to build a transformative and inclusive social structure. This is, among others, the most important project that needs to be done by this postcolonial country in order to free themselves from the colonial residues. Otherwise, the Indonesian will only perpetuate the feudalistic and exclusive social structure that 12 had been intensified by the experience of a long colonization. If this happens, the ideal of this postcolonial nation to build a strong democratic political system will never be accomplished. A true independence does not simply means to expel the colonizer from the Indonesia, but it is a continuous process of building freedom and constructing a transformative and inclusive social structure that can include every member of the nation to exercise their liberty and participate in process of national building. Works Cited Arendt, Hannah. (1976). The Origins of Totalitarianism, New York: A Harvest Book. Fanon, Frantz. 1963. The Wretched of The Earth, trans. by Haakon Chevalier, New York: Grove Press. --------. (1964). Toward The African Revolution, trans. by Haakon Chevalier, New York: Grove Press. -------. (1964). Toward The African Revolution, trans. by Haakon Chevalier, New York: Grove Press. -------. (1964). Toward The African Revolution, trans. by Haakon Chevalier, New York: Grove Press. --------. (1964). Toward The African Revolution, trans. by Haakon Chevalier, New York: Grove Press. --------. (1964). 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