

## **THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF THE DICHOTOMY OF THE AFRICAN SPIRIT**

Author: Bonface Isaboke Nyamweya, 10443-00100 Nairobi-Kenya

First Supervisor: Rev Dr John Muhenda

Second Supervisor: Dr Fredrick Wanjala

Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences,

The Catholic University of Eastern Africa

Corresponding Author's Phone Number: +254713648188, Email: [bonnybony7@gmail.com](mailto:bonnybony7@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

This research seeks to highlight the psychological impact of racism upon the African person. The dichotomy of the African spirit is the alienation of the African person due to the racial stereotypes, prejudices and discriminations that amount to the inferiority complex of the African person. The slave trade master-slave mentality was what first caused this feeling of inferiority. Colonialism added to the list, notwithstanding neo-colonialism. The Critical Race Theory observes that racism has been incorporated in the geopolitics such that it is hard to be noted. It also serves a material and psychological end; hence, it is nearly impossible for its benefactors to efface it. Steve Biko's Black Consciousness philosophy attempts to bring a resuscitation of the African identity by encouraging a psychological healing of the Africans from the wounds of oppression. Ngugi wa Thiong'o crowns our discourse through his linguistic dialectics on culture and development in Africa.

**Keywords:** Racism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, racial biases, racial stereotypes, racial discrimination, culture, inferiority complex

## INTRODUCTION

The discrimination of Africans on the basis of their colour can be evaluated as a problem of identity. It is not surprising that no person can have only one identity, yet if one is dismembered from the indigenous culture that bore him, such a person becomes alienated. What follows is an attitude of inferiority complex. This emerges from the stereotyping, biases and prejudices that are aimed at the African person, in our current case, making him imitate the oppressor in an effort to survive while at the same time trying to navigate the route to one's authentic life in one's cultural values. We shall therefore examine this phenomenon of inferiority complex of the African person as has been cultivated through classical conditioning. The tenets of the Critical Race Theory (CRT) shall be invoked in our attempt to establish how racism and the inferiority complex it causes in Africa are learned phenomena, the former being a bias. The renaissance of the African identity through cultural resuscitation in the linguistic dialectics of Ngugi wa Thiong'o shall culminate this chapter.

### 1. Classical Conditioning vis a vis Racism

Although Ivan Pavlov's experiment on the Classical Conditioning theory involved a dog, nonetheless the theory is relevant even in our investigation of human behaviour. In other words, even human beings can be conditioned. Classical conditioning has two basic tenets. The first one is that an unconditioned stimulus (US) for example food, provokes an unconditioned response (UR) for instance, salivating.<sup>1</sup> So this is just like an instinct hence requires no training. The second tenet is that a conditioned stimulus (CS) elicits a conditioned response (CR).<sup>2</sup> A mere ringing of the bell cannot make a dog in the kennel to salivate, but when the ringing of the bell is always accompanied with the giving of the food, then mere ringing of the bell starts to stimulate salivation in the dog.

Relating this to racism in Africa, we learn that the Whites in South Africa had been trained to hate the Africans there and to generally believe that those Africans were inferior than them. Steve Biko opines that:

It is, therefore, not surprising that in South Africa, after generations of exploitation, White people on the whole have come to believe in the inferiority of the Black man, so much so that while originally the race problem was an offshoot of the economic greed exhibited by White people, it has now become a serious problem of its own. White people now despise Black people, not because they need to reinforce their attitude and therefore justify their position of privilege but simply because they actually believe that Black is inferior and bad. This is the basis upon which Whites are working in this country. This is what shows South Africa to be a racist society.<sup>3</sup>

At the onset of slave trade, the Africans were trained mentally to believe that they were and could only be 'servants' of the white slave owners who were their 'masters'. Before this, an African person could encounter a white from say Spain and feel no inferiority. Nor could that White feel any superiority in such a neutral encounter. But as the slave trade commenced, the Africans were commodified in the slave markets, exploited in the farms of the white slave owners. This trained them that they were slaves and that the whites were their masters. Henceforth, a mere presence of a white stimulated fear and trembling in the African slave. During the colonial era, the inferiority

<sup>1</sup> Mark E. Bouton, *Conditioning and Learning*, in, *Introduction to Psychology* (Noba, 2022), 821. <https://www.nobaproject.com> [20/03/2022].

<sup>2</sup> Mark E. Bouton, *ibid*.

<sup>3</sup> Steve Biko, *Black Consciousness and the Quest for True Humanity*, 4. <https://disa.ukzn.ac.za/sites/default/files/pdf-files/remar72.3pdf> [20/3/2022].

conditioning was now done on the African person in Africa and all over the world. The slave-master relationship was reaffirmed as the white oppressors unleashed their insatiable greed to deny the Africans their freedom, land, religion, and everything of practical importance.

In South Africa, as the apartheid system sought to condition the Africans there to believe that they were naturally inferior to the whites, Steve Biko sounded his mournful caution. First, he noted that racism was camouflaged in the South African institutions to make it appear as the South African way of life.<sup>4</sup> This is a case of normalising a problem as a way of avoiding paying attention to it. Secondly, Biko highlighted that the South African system drew its nourishment from the existence of anti-Black attitudes in the society.<sup>5</sup> This means that as long as the whites in South Africa benefited themselves from the privileges they got under the apartheid system, it was hard for them to condemn it. Above all, Biko cried that the Africans there were not given any chance to prove their equality to the whites.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the faulty identity lenses constructed about the Africans there were protected so as to continue making the South Africans and Africans at large feel inferior.

Classical conditioning however can be erased. This is possible if the conditioned stimulus is presented repeatedly without the unconditioned stimulus.<sup>7</sup> After independence, the African nations seem still to be under the control of the global powers, including their former colonial powers. Through neo-colonialism, the slave-master relationship continues to be reinforced. Europe took herself as a parent for the colonies and assumed that the colonies were mere children to be exploited.<sup>8</sup> In the guise of civilizing Africans, they endeavoured as they still do, to condition Africans to continue believing in the white supremacy through a constant meddling in our national projects. Consequently, the inferiority complex as a result of alienation persists in the identity of the African person.

Although slave trade was formally illegalised, the slave-master mentality was revitalised through the regrouping of the global powers to ensure Africa remains under their domination hence the Africans still exploited. Renewal effect is a condition in classical conditioning whereby, after the extinguishing of the conditioned stimulus, a related stimulus can bring back the conditioned stimulus by eliciting what it could have elicited.<sup>9</sup> This is the case with the African inferiority complex after independence being sustained by similar domineering approaches to Africa.

## **2. Black Consciousness as an Exit from the Alienating Classical Conditioning**

Born in the era of apartheid in South Africa, Black consciousness sought to efface the mentality that Africans were inferior to the whites and that they had to assimilate the white man's way of life in order to live an authentic life free from alienation. Talking about the systemic racial intimidation, Biko claims that the system ensured white dominance and the Blacks were left to compete with their fellow Blacks, using each other as stepping stones along the ladder towards white values.<sup>10</sup> Only those Blacks who accepted this inferiority complex project could be accepted and assimilated by the dominant whites in South Africa.

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<sup>4</sup> Steve Biko, 4.

<sup>5</sup> Steve Biko, 4.

<sup>6</sup> Steve Biko, *ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Mark E. Bouton, 828.

<sup>8</sup> Ali Mazrui, *Cultural Amnesia, Cultural Nostalgia and False Memory: Africa's Identity Crisis Revisited* (African and Asian Studies, 12 (2013)), 14.

<sup>9</sup> Mark E. Bouton, *op. cit.*

<sup>10</sup> Steve Biko, *op. cit.*

In itself, Black consciousness was an attitude of mind and way of life that emerged as a call for authentic living from the Black world.<sup>11</sup> It sought to unite the Africans with fellow Africans to fight together against this oppression by the whites. Most important is the fact that it is rooted in a self-examination that has led the Africans into believing that by running away from themselves and plunging themselves in the white man's way of life, was an alienation project.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, reversing the imparted inferiority complex and revitalising the African values free from intimidation and domination of the white oppressors had to be desired and pursued.

Apartheid set Africans from the whites, and apart from themselves since they were trained mentally to hate the African values and cultures and copy-paste the white man's way of life. Black consciousness set forth to express group pride among the Africans and an upsurge towards the realisation of their goals as a people. In short, it was after the freedom of the Africans to define themselves and their destiny. "Hence thinking along the lines of Black consciousness makes the Black man see himself as a being, entire in himself. It makes him less dependent and more free to express his manhood. At the end of it all, he cannot tolerate attempts by anybody to dwarf the significance of his manhood."<sup>13</sup> This is the road towards the redemption of our true identity.

Despite these guidelines of Black Consciousness towards the resuscitation of the Black person's true identity in the history of humanity, racism through the inferiority complex established and protected by the white systems continue to haunt Africa. The new problems emanating in Africa in the current situation of neo-colonialism like the enslavement via heavy loans by powerful nations without clear terms, poor governance and the meddling of the International Community in the affairs of the African nations make the inferiority complex of slave-master attitude of racism nearly immortalised. Exiting the classical conditioning of inferiority complex has been thus blocked by the sustained racial biases and prejudices that constantly fuel and provoke the inferiority feeling in the African person. The extinction of the inferiority stimulus has not been possible hence the Africans continue to be seen and treated as a people of a lower stratum in the hierarchy of humanity. But we all know that these racial stereotypes and prejudices are social constructs.

### **3. Racism as a prejudice, discrimination and stereotype in relation to the Critical Race Theory**

The proponents of the Critical Race Theory (CRT) such as Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman and Richard Delgado among others<sup>14</sup> hold that racism is the ordinary way our world conducts itself in dealing with the Africans.<sup>15</sup> This has led to the normalisation of racism in our day to day life such that we may not detect it at times. On the other hand, racism manifests white dominance that serves to heighten the whites' esteem while demeaning the Africans, notwithstanding enriching the whites materially while ensuring that the blacks remain poor.<sup>16</sup> We shall investigate the six essential claims of the CRT in relation to racism as a stereotype and prejudice. It is important however to understand what prejudices, discrimination and stereotype are before associating them with racism in Africa.

In our process of perceiving reality, we use categories as our mental roadmaps. Categories are our concepts of the understanding of the objects in reality.<sup>17</sup> In our understanding of each other

<sup>11</sup> Steve Biko, 6.

<sup>12</sup> Steve Biko, *ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Steve Biko, *ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 2.

<sup>15</sup> Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 7.

<sup>16</sup> Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 7.

<sup>17</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 445.

however, we can err in classifying people by dint of their age, language, occupation, ethnicity among others.<sup>18</sup> This yields three main problems: stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination. “Stereotypes are biased thoughts about a person due to the incorrect belief that the category accurately describes them.”<sup>19</sup> For example, what we saw in the apartheid system in South Africa about Africans being categorized as inferior to whites is an example of a stereotype. Stereotypes elicit the fallacy of hasty generalization inasmuch as they generalize about the African persons.

A prejudice however is a bias against people on the basis that they are members of a certain group.<sup>20</sup> Stereotypes are associated with our thinking while prejudices have to do with our emotions. For instance, the whites in South Africa who were prejudiced against the Africans felt uncomfortable associating with them freely during the apartheid era. Discrimination on the other hand “is a behavior bias against a person (or group) based on stereotyped beliefs about that group.”<sup>21</sup> Discrimination comes in place when one acts on the basis of the stereotype embraced, for example, the whites acted on the stereotype that Africans were inferior and childish, hence treated them as slaves, colonized them, and continue to meddle in their national affairs. Having elucidated the three terms, we shall now proceed to examine the six core claims of CRT.

The first claim is that racism is ordinary. In other words, racism is experienced among Africans in their day to day life. “Today, blacks experiencing rejection for a job, a home, a promotion, anguish over whether race or individual failing prompted their exclusion. Either conclusion breeds frustration and eventually despair.”<sup>22</sup> This sounds pessimistic but it is the fact. There is partiality based on racial differences and this has been embedded in our system and normalized. Although there have been some affirmative actions like the prohibition of slave trade and the enactment of laws to curb racism, nonetheless, “...affirmative action programs are intended to benefit blacks, but only so far; as soon as blacks’ gains threaten whites’ status, limits set in.”<sup>23</sup> This means that the white oppressors are aware that what they are doing in racism is bad hence they even propose some affirmative action programs to disguise their intentions. If at all their affirmative actions were not biased with a hidden agenda to continue dominating Africans, then racism by now would not be existing.

The second tenet of CRT proposes that racial biases serve to benefit the whites. Indeed, “...most would agree that our system of white-over-color ascendancy serves important purposes, both psychic and material.”<sup>24</sup> This was evident in the previous chapter where we discussed how the Africans were exploited in the slave trade era, the colonial period and the neocolonialism epoch. If the Africans are left free, they will obviously come up with strategies to benefit their fellow Africans. But since each step they plan to execute is being monitored by the International Community, Africans remain behind almost in every aspect of life because our steps of progress are being refereed by a biased global system that has interests in our resources hence ensures we remain in their control. This is neocolonialism and neocolonialism sustains the African alienation.

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<sup>18</sup> Susan T. Fiske, *Prejudice, Discrimination, and Stereotyping*, in, *Introduction to Psychology* (Noba: 2022), 1123.

<sup>19</sup> Susan T. Fiske, 1124.

<sup>20</sup> Susan T. Fiske, *ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Susan T. Fiske, *ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Derrick Bell, *Racial Realism* (Connecticut: Connecticut Law Review, Vol. 24, No. 2, Winter 1992), 374.

<sup>23</sup> Richard Delgado, *Review Essay: Derrick Bell and the Ideology of Racial Reform, will we Ever Be Saved?* (The Yale Law Journal, Vol. 97), 924.

<sup>24</sup> Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 7.

Thirdly, that the problem of racial discrimination is understood as a product of social thought and relations.<sup>25</sup> This affirms our foregoing discussion of the inferiority complex of the African person as a fruit of classical conditioning. It still echoes our aforementioned claims that racism is a stereotype in as much as it involves biased thoughts about Africans, and that racism is a prejudice because it entails a biased feeling of repugnancy against Africans because they are Africans and Africans are generally assumed to be inferior to the whites. Also, it reinforces our claim that racism is a form of discrimination since it involves the interference of the African nations' affairs by the domineering whites on the inherent stereotype that Africans are not full human beings who can manage their resources fully.

Those who do not pay attention to the impact of slave trade, colonialism and neo-colonialism upon the inferiority complex and alienation of the African person may not grasp well racism as a blatant bias and as a subtle bias. Blatant biases are manifest beliefs, feelings, and behaviors that people are willing to admit, and these express hostility towards outgroups while favoring one's in-group.<sup>26</sup> In the case of racism as a blatant bias, this will mean the manifest distorted beliefs by the domineering whites about Africans as inferior and dangerous, hence the uncomfortable feelings towards them leading to lynching them or at times the avoidance of them in some matters of practical importance because of this, at the expense of over-glorifying the white man's values. Subtle biases are basically the unexamined and often unconscious beliefs, feelings, and behaviors that people may not be willing to admit, yet they are automatic, ambiguous, ambivalent, unfair and disrespectful to a belief in equality.<sup>27</sup> So racism as a social construct and biased thought is manifest.

The fourth tenet is differential racialization. This is the tendency whereby the dominant society exploits different minority groups at different times, in response to the shifting needs for example the labour market.<sup>28</sup> For the Africans, this exploitation seem to be perennial and nearly by all dominant nations. In the slave trade era, the Africans were used as slaves to offer labour. During the industrial revolution in Europe, the Africans were still exploited. During colonialism, the Africans and their resources were hugely exploited.

Even today, the African person is being exploited and the African resources looted by the dominant nations. To explain this phenomenon, it is important that we look into the social dominance orientation theory. It holds that group hierarchies are inevitable in all societies to monitor order and stability.<sup>29</sup> However, this will only sound pleasant to the white dominant groups who wish to immortalize their exploitation of Africa and the Africans. It is the guise under which the International Community exploits Africa. For example, if truly the intervention of the United Nations in Congo was after ending the war there, why is it that that war has never ceased? Why is it that the weapons used there are imported from the foreign nations, some of which are members of the United Nations who ought to promote peace and stability? We all wonder about these.

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<sup>25</sup> Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Susan T. Fiske, 1125.

<sup>27</sup> Susan T. Fiske, 1127.

<sup>28</sup> Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 8.

<sup>29</sup> Susan T. Fiske, 1125.



The fifth tenet of the CRT holds that each race has its own origins and ever evolving history.<sup>30</sup> Here, the immediate implication is that no person has a single identity because we have been interacting with other societies that have unique cultures and those cultures have impacted hence influenced ours. This means that those people like Fredrick Hegel and David Hume who consider Africans as lesser human beings and who are not part of the human history are misinformed and biased.<sup>31</sup> Thus the Africans are part of the human history and their efforts are enormously sprinkled throughout history. It should be highlighted that inasmuch as we have unique origins, we all form part and parcel of the human family, with no race being ontologically superior to another.

The sixth tenet claims that the people of colour have a unique voice. The reason for this is ethnocentric bias. This refers to the fact that one is using his/her culture to undermine other cultures that he/she is not familiar with. The African people have undergone oppression for a long time thus may communicate to the whites matters that the whites are unlikely to know.<sup>32</sup> In other words, it is the Africans who ought to tell their story not the oppressor. If the story of the African person is presented by the oppressor, as mostly has been the case, the African person will be misrepresented and his identity will be distorted. “Minority status, in other words, brings with it a presumed competence to speak about race and racism.”<sup>33</sup> This gives the African person the leeway to define themselves as a unique people with a unique experience.

To allow the oppressor to define the African destiny will be the surest way of sustaining racism. And this has been the case for a long time as aforementioned. The white oppressor has hidden intentions of exploiting the African resources as seen in the slave trade era, colonial and neo-colonial period. Since the oppressor is aware that we know his cruelty from the past experience, he always tries to appear gentle, concerned, a champion of human rights, a cornerstone of democracy, yet intrinsically, he is after dominating our affairs by purporting to administer solutions to our problems. It is like in a play<sup>34</sup> where even the murderer can take the role of a saint with such seriousness that we may even worship him.

The African nations are an imagination of the ‘other’ nations. This is why, “UK-African relations are most commonly framed through one of two lenses: exploitation and aid. The African continent as a whole, meanwhile, is imagined according to two extremes: idealized or demonized.”<sup>35</sup> This elaborates why those Africans abroad are traumatized by constantly seeing Africa in the commercial breaks of the television channels soliciting aid.

The emaciated child nearly dying of hunger (since their names are not normally mentioned) is not himself or herself as such, rather, a general ‘representation’ of Africa. Thus:

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<sup>30</sup> Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 8.

<sup>31</sup> Kwame Botwe-Asamoah, *Kwame Nkrumah's Politico-Cultural Thought and Policies: An African-Centered Paradigm for the Second Phase of the African Revolution* (New York: Routledge Press, 2005), 6.

<sup>32</sup> Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 9.

<sup>33</sup> Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, *ibid*.

<sup>34</sup> Hans Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Continuum Publishers, 1975), 103.

<sup>35</sup> Tom Curran, Gerry Power, Aibek Illiasov et al, *The New Narratives Report* (Britain: The British Council, 2020), 5.

Decades of images and stories in the news media and by charities highlighting themes including famine, drought, disease, inequality and instability have contributed to a perception of African countries as impoverished, dangerous, and lagging behind the rest of the world socio-economically and in terms of human rights.<sup>36</sup>

This is what those foreign media houses want the world to believe, that Africa is harsh, impoverished, and dangerous for human habitation. Yet these are fallacious statements and perceptions that are constructed intentionally with the aim of rendering Africa and the Africans as wild, uncivilized and inferior persons who have no solid contribution in the human history.

#### **4.0 The Renaissance of the African Identity through Linguistic Resuscitation**

Ethnocentrism is the tendency of using one's culture as the measure of other cultures resulting to their misunderstanding.<sup>37</sup> The whites erred in perceiving the African languages from the lenses of European cultures. Since most of the aspects of culture are taught by the parents and caregivers, the colonisers assumed the role of a parent<sup>38</sup> or a caregiver in teaching the Africans about how to express themselves i.e. gave Africans new modes of expression in the foreign languages. This aspect no doubt led to the alienation of the African person. Whereas the African person has been rendered inferior, we have always tried to overcome this biased attitude of those foreigners intentioned to bring us to extinction. Through linguistic renaissance, we shall see how the African cultures are being revitalized. Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Frantz Fanon will spice our discourse. More significantly is the fact that we shall introspect the feeling of superiority or inferiority with regards to the language used, whether indigenous or foreign and how this linguistic hierarchy has a taproot in racism.

#### **4.1 Linguistic Hierarchy as a form of Dominance and Racism**

Language and culture are inseparable. To know Kiswahili language for instance, one is not only expected to grasp the grammar but actually even the Kiswahili culture. This is why Frantz Fanon asserts that, "To speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it also means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization."<sup>39</sup> Any attempt to dominate one's language is thus an attempt to dominate that culture and civilization. It is repugnant to equality because it intends to intimidate a people's way of life. An African who speaks fluent English is seen as superior to a fellow African whose English is influenced by one's mother tongue. In fact, the former is taken to be a civilized elite whereas the latter is judged as ignorant or semi-illiterate and uncivilized. Fanon mourns that:

Every colonized people—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality—finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle.<sup>40</sup>

However, Ngugi wa Thiong'o reminds us that, "It is the culture that a people have that embodies their values, those aesthetic and moral qualities that they consider basic and important in their

<sup>36</sup> The New Narratives Report, 2020, *ibid*.

<sup>37</sup> Robert Biswas-Diener and Neil Thin, *Culture*, in, *Introduction to Psychology* (Noba: 2022), 1004.

<sup>38</sup> Robert Biswas-Diener and Neil Thin, 998.

<sup>39</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto Press, 2008), 8.

<sup>40</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 9.



contact and interaction with one another, and with the universe.”<sup>41</sup> This obviously means that the situation in Kenya whereby the local languages are being taught only up to class three, is a mockery of our indigenous civilization and culture. To thrust a sword in a wound that has hardly healed, those Africans in Africa pursuing a Doctorate are expected to do one of the foreign languages like French or Germany; yet, the French and Germans do not study any African language as a prerequisite for them to pursue a Doctorate.

To speak about the African cultures is to reckon the various African cultures and languages embedded in our day-to-day life. A culture therefore has its blood and veins in the very people who produce it. This is why when an African person speaks ‘good’ English, people will say, “He speaks like a white man”. This already explains that using the foreign language even to perfection levels, is still a form of alienation. But those who are Irish, whenever they speak English, they are just expressing themselves and derive that indigenous pride. Strictly, a culture enshrines a people’s structure of values, the foundation of their world, how they see themselves and their surroundings.<sup>42</sup> As a result, the African people deserve true ‘independence’ to express their values using their own symbols (indigenous languages), without the pitchforks of mockery and inferiority from without. Our knowledge of nature is entwined with our efforts to construct tools of production. In fact, “A man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language.”<sup>43</sup> It is a kind of saying that they define themselves.

The colonial powers have always made giant strides to suffocate our African cultures in order to continue dominating and enslaving the Africans. In the guise of a wide market, works written in English are glorified than those in ‘local’ languages. Our music industry, and such areas of entertainment today face a stiff competition from the western cultural preferences. Therefore, in Kenya for example, there is a fierce fight between the national interests and those interests of foreign imperialists who seek to dominate Kenyan cultural values.<sup>44</sup> The competition is aimed at amputating our African cultures and replace them with the western ways of life. This is done in the brackets of cosmopolitanism and globalization that sound a trumpet of universality while paying a semi-blind eye to the particulars. It is a semi-blind eye because it recognizes only the western culture without appreciating the gist of the African cultures at the global level. If at all globalization and cosmopolitanism were unbiased, they would have accommodated even the tenets of the African culture as part of the human progress and not a residuum of civilization. “Indeed, to dominate a nation by force of arms is, above all, to take up arms to destroy or at least, to neutralize and paralyze its culture. For as long as a section of the populace is able to have a cultural life, foreign domination cannot be sure of its perpetuation.”<sup>45</sup> This is why Ngugi wa Thiong’o adds that the colonizing power tries to control our cultural environment by controlling our education, language, literature, songs and each form of expression hence manipulating our sense of outlook and values.<sup>46</sup> This obviously instills the sense of inferiority complex upon the Africans who feel alienated in the foreign modes of expression and culture.

This means that hijacking a culture by imposing another culture onto a people is bruising the evolution of that people. It is not cultural interaction that I refute, rather systemic cultural

<sup>41</sup> Ngugi wa Thiong’o, *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1981), 9.

<sup>42</sup> Ngugi wa Thiong’o, *ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Black Skins, White Masks*, 9.

<sup>44</sup> Ngugi wa Thiong’o, 42.

<sup>45</sup> Ngugi wa Thiong’o, 13.

<sup>46</sup> Ngugi wa Thiong’o, 12.

annihilation that I question. As we know, each culture is not immune of modification, but still each culture seeks to preserve its values and opposes thus any foreign domination.<sup>47</sup> It is therefore a quest of the identity of a people.

Throughout the human history, we learn that to dominate a people includes a control over their cultural values. This is why David Hume, Friedrich Hegel, and Thomas Jefferson in their stinking noble lies present the African person as ontologically inferior to the white person.<sup>48</sup> These noble lies are intentioned to crush our self-confidence and make us hate ourselves, and admire the white person and the white man's culture as the cream of civilization.

We are under no illusion that for a people to prosper, they have to invoke their stored experience and thus make a practical viability in the economic, political and social spheres that are preserved in one's culture<sup>49</sup> that racism is encrusted in the colonizers attitude to the Africans. The cultural genocide expressed in the negative connotations of the African people is despicable and notable. Ngugi claims that:

This racism is expressed in the very structure of the English language, probably the most racist of all human languages. It was not only the character of black sambo, but also phrases like black market, black sheep, blackmail, blacklist, black everything, would testify to the value assumptions in that linguistic negative definition of blackness. Those white racists were reinforced by religion, Christianity especially, which saw God, Christ, angels, in terms of whiteness, while sin and the devil and Satan were black and heaven was depicted as a place where the elect of God would wear white robes of virgin purity, while hell was depicted as a place where the rejects of the white God would burn to charcoal blackness.<sup>50</sup>

This is quite unfortunate. The verbs used to express Africans often convey particularity while adjectives portray a sense of permanency in the stereotypes described.<sup>51</sup> This manifests linguistic intergroup bias whereby members of an in-group (in this case, the Europeans) produce and reproduce a distorted representation of the out-group (in this case, the Africans).<sup>52</sup> The essence of blackness is marred with the racial biases and prejudices, all being delicious lies served in the chalice of linguistic diction and some religious concepts intentioned to undermine the African race at the expense of over-glorifying the white person. This is cultural imperialism in the system of economic exploitation of the colonizers. Linguistic hierarchy and imperialism is a weapon used to dominate a people's imagination and expression.<sup>53</sup> The South African apartheid system expressed the cream of this cultural imperialism of the white colonizers.

Although some efforts have been made to resuscitate the vivacity of the African culture at the national level, nonetheless, the western culture percolates our learning systems and even the entertainment industry as supreme. Our publishing industries are not left behind in butchering our cultural preservation. They value more the works written in English or French than those written in the native languages. The native languages are called 'local' languages while English and French are called 'International' languages. The 'international' languages exact supremacy while the 'local'

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<sup>47</sup> Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 13.

<sup>48</sup> Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 14.

<sup>49</sup> Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 14-15.

<sup>51</sup> Yoshihisa Kashima, *Language and Use*, in, *Introduction to Psychology* (Noba: 2022), 776.

<sup>52</sup> Yoshihisa Kashima, 776.

<sup>53</sup> Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 15.

languages are seen as inferior, since even most of their orthographies are not developed to be objective. The western policy makers smile at this phenomenon because it is for their merit.

As a corollary, we are producing works not for ourselves but for other societies. Our education system, our entertainment sector, are all shaped to suit the needs of a market other than the native one. At the end, we are simply developing other people's cultures at the expense of excoriating our own by our disinterestedness and quietude. A white man coming to Kenya therefore will feel like being in 'England' because of the resemblance of the tastes he encounters in terms of food, songs, and the like. Of course, we are unique, but still we have copied too much from without such that a man from Britain in the future may not realize our autonomy in terms of culture if we are not keen to preserve it.

The view of the African person as ontologically inferior and the white person as ontologically superior, is by no means pleasant since it profanes the ethical canons of human equality and mutual dignity. There is need to crush these faulty lenses of biases and prejudices that foster the foregoing noble lies on the inferiority of the African person and the superiority of the white person. Humanity ought to share those values that unite us all, and respect the civilization evolution of each human society. This means that we should not tolerate any form of cultural imperialism like that expressed in linguistic hierarchies today.

## **Conclusion**

To this extent, it is evident that the inferiority complex of the African person is something that is a reality. It has sprouted from the slave trade era, colonial, and neo-colonial epoch. We are forced to believe that we are born to be slaves and whites are born to be our masters. This is expressed through the ashes of history where we observe the African person being dismembered from the history of humanity in terms of development and civilization. The linguistic hierarchies manifest cultural hierarchies hence a cultural genocide intentioned to condition the Africans as inferior. Thus, the problem of racism is at the same time a psychological problem.

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