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The white utopia was a black inferno. Unsettling the coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom. Towards the Human, After Man. Its Overrepresentation – An Argument.

Sylvia Wynter.

So many of us are afraid to speak the word. We are afraid to lay claim to it. It's too awful to believe. No. It sounds too conspiratorial, too pessimistic, too alienating, too (something)... Yet there it is, at the forefront of our minds and on the tip of our tongues. When we are feeling brave and safe among those we love & trust we sometimes whisper the words: genocide... genocide... GENOCIDE.

Mariame Kaba.

Table of Contents

Abstract:	v
Resumo:	v
Acknowledgements	vii
Introduction	1
Objectives	1
Theoretical framework	2
State-of-the-art	6
1 Controversies Involving the General Understanding of Genocide.....	9
1.1 On the Word Genocide and the Notion of Intent	14
1.2 Preliminary Discussion on Race and Genocide	18
2 Adorno and Horkheimer and the Question of Enlightenment	26
2.1 The Ideals of Enlightenment	31
2.2 Adorno and Genocide.....	36
3 Black Genocide	40
3.1 On the Nonbeing.....	41
3.2 Violence and Genocide in the Colonial World	50
3.3 Genocide and the Grammar of Black Suffering.....	65
Conclusion	78
Bibliography	83

Abstract:

On the Question of Black Genocide

This dissertation aims to discuss how anti-Black violence should be understood as genocidal violence. Although apparently apolitical and uncontroversial, the hegemonic conception of genocide is decisively influenced by the Holocaust and the aftermath of World War II, which often becomes an impediment to think about the dynamics of violence inflicted on other ethnic groups. Within the field of Philosophy, Adorno's formulation of genocide circumscribes this expression of violence within the rationalist logic of the Enlightenment, where the extermination of pariahs becomes the only solution for a system seeking total homogenization. However, the specificity of the violence inflicted against Black bodies, where exposure to death is always constant although not fully realized, challenges our understanding of genocide and what we understand as a livable life. Within this paradigm, through authors such as Frantz Fanon and Achille Mbembe, we will investigate the form of violence operating in the colonial world and its genocidal impulse. In order to reveal the persistence of such an impulse in contemporary societies, we will present an investigation on the current dynamics of Black suffering through the prism of Afropessimism. From this line of inquiry, this study aims to describe the inhumane condition of Black lives and the dynamics of violence surrounding them to affirm Black genocide as the great expression of violence against Black subjects, which leads them to death or a life-in-death.

Keywords: Violence, Genocide, Racism, Necropolitics, Political Philosophy

Resumo:

Sobre a Questão do Genocídio Negro

Esta dissertação tem como objetivo discutir como a violência contra Negros deve ser compreendida como uma violência genocida. Apesar de aparentemente apolítica e incontroversa, a concepção hegemônica de genocídio está decisivamente influenciada pelo Holocausto e pela atmosfera política pós-Segunda Guerra Mundial, o que frequentemente se torna um empecilho para pensar as dinâmicas de violência infligidas a outros grupos étnicos. No âmbito da Filosofia, a formulação de genocídio posta por Adorno circunscreve esta expressão de violência dentro da lógica da racionalidade Iluminista, onde o extermínio de párias se torna a única solução para um sistema que busca total homogeneização. Entretanto, a especificidade da violência infligida a corpos negros, onde a exposição à morte é sempre constante embora não seja plenamente realizada, desafia nossa compreensão de genocídio e o que compreendemos como uma vida vivível. Dentro deste paradigma, à partir de autores como Frantz Fanon e Achille Mbembe, iremos investigar a violência

presente no mundo colonial e seu impulso genocida. Com o objetivo de revelar a continuação de tal impulso nas sociedades contemporâneas, uma investigação sobre as atuais dinâmicas do sofrimento Negro será apresentada através do prisma do afropessimismo. À partir desta linha de investigação, nós traremos à tona a condição desumana das vidas negras e as dinâmicas de violência que as cercam para afirmar o genocídio negro como a grande expressão da violência contra Negros, que leva tais indivíduos à morte ou à uma vida-na-morte.

Palavras-chave: Violência, Genocídio, Racismo, Necropolítica, Filosofia Política

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Introduction

Objectives

This dissertation will aim to approach the blurry notion of Black genocide. For years present in the militant vocabulary of different movements across the globe, this term, born out of a collective feeling of disfranchisement, means to reference the continuous assaults against the living conditions of Black communities. In the last decades, there has been a rise in the discussions concerning the genocidal character of the violence being inflicted against Black communities of the African diaspora. Lately, such discussions have become increasingly present both in street protests, in the press and also in academic discussions in different fields¹. The seemingly incessant killings of Black individuals in liberal societies such as Brazil and the United States fertilizes the angst of the socially dead, evoked by the word genocide when naming the violence inflicted upon them. Although undeniably present in street protests, the overall understanding of “Black genocide” seems clouded by confusion. What seems to be under suspicion is the very existence of an on-going genocide against the diasporic Black populations. Therefore, what needs to be addressed is the understanding of the phenomenon itself. More precisely, if the claims echoed in the streets do indeed describe a real event. Thus, the question at stake might be formulated as follows: can we identify the virulent attacks against Black individuals as the enactment of genocide?

This research will aim to tighten the gap between social activism and Academia by facing the socio-political and conceptual dilemmas of our current understanding of genocide and Black suffering. The problems seem to arise from two factors: for one, the lack of sufficient clarification of the meaning of genocide. Our current hegemonic understanding of the word carries numerous conflicts needing to be unraveled. Its usual rapport to the Holocaust seems to suffocate the concept in a biased elucidation, where the specificities of the Holocaust compose the authoritative list of legitimate elements of any genocide. Secondly, a fundamental point to be addressed consists in the distinct suffering of Black individuals. Going back to the Atlantic Slave Trade, the Black person has always been immersed in a world of violence. Violence is not only the command of life over death, but also, as Frantz Fanon would have put it, the force capable of creating territories where life and death are interchangeable (Fanon, 1963). A broader understanding on the exposure of Black lives to violence, and the repercussions of this violence onto their subjectivity, will lead the way to a

¹ The presence of a discourse on “Black genocide” in the public sphere in Brazil and in the United States has been mostly shaped by protests where such concept was a central argumentative claim. (Belchior, 2014; see also, “Ativistas fazem caminhada contra genocídio”, 2019; “Em Florianópolis, Marcha contra o genocídio”, 2020).

conceptualization of the suffering of the so-called *damné*, the sub-other whose humanity has been denied. Through the crystallization on how the *damné* existentially relates her being to violence, we shall be capable of understanding the claims to question the existence of Black genocide.

This research does not confine itself in the usual approach in Genocide Studies. Rather than working through comparisons between different events already considered as genocide to search for elements capable of providing a universal formulation of the term, this investigation will dive further into the foundations of Black suffering and how it relates to the phenomenon of genocide. The hypothesis functioning as the driving motor of the research can be put in these lines: Black genocide is a form of structural violence submitting Black lives to the condition of dying. As death holds an eminent and constitutive role in the phenomenological way the Black person relates to the world, this rapport will be understood as the consequences of a long enactment of genocide. This will be justified through a conceptualization of genocide as a form of violence leading to deaths or a state of “life-in-death”. Such configuration aims to denounce a denial of sufficient conditions necessary for a proper, dignified human life. By understanding the life of the Black subject as one always on the verge of inexistence, bearing the weight of genocidal effects, we will be able to further illuminate the dynamics of physical and ontological violence against Black lives.

Theoretical framework

With the surge of intersectionality, contemporary discussions on anti-Black violence are often thought through a multidimensional approach, where the category of race is placed alongside the categories of gender and class. This theoretical framework poses the understanding of our social reality and the fabrics of oppression operating in our world through a compartmentalized prism of investigation. As it is known, this multifaceted form of analysis presumes that such categories do not overlap one another. They cross each other, and no hierarchy should be established between them. Therefore, the analysis of the current and ancient mechanisms of oppression must be considered in a multidimensional form, because no single category is said to offer the sufficient parameters to understand the dynamics of our social reality.

Against the emergence of this paradigm, some authors see the theory of intersectionality as detrimental to the understanding of Black suffering, especially in what concerns Black men and boys. For Thomas J. Curry, the Black man is inserted into intersectional gender theory as a mythological figure. They are shown as defective, sexist and aggressive predators, ready to make use of their power inside the patriarchal system to unleash their resentment onto females. Fundamentally, Thomas J. Curry opposes intersectionality as it underplays the violence inflicted

against Black men and boys. Their role inside this framework has been internalized as the one of the aggressor, and therefore they only appear as a subject of thought in discussions concerning how their violent character affects others. Although Black men and boys are the most killed, incarcerated, and subjected to various forms of violence, their role as an authentic subject of inquiry is denied. The particularities of their suffering, argues Thomas J. Curry, is left aside. As an object of thought, they either appear as the figure of the oppressor, or as dead bodies. The cyclical media outrage with the death of a particular Black man, as well as the continuous discussion over their death rates, only revolve around the idea of the Black man as a corpse. Inside this duality, the particularity by which their lives are enwrapped by violence is left aside:

In reality, Black men and boys suffer physical and sexual abuse from men and women within their communities. This fact remains unacknowledged in current academic disciplines governed by the calculus of identity, since any centering of the Black male, even when addressing his specific experiences and dynamics of trauma, are deemed to be unjustified. He is simply the wrong body, thought to be undeserving of the position as subject/*subject*. Typical of the ways in which Black men are overdetermined by the corpse—the dead Black male body—conversations concerning abuse of Black males have been erased altogether under current theorizations of Black masculinity. In other words, the only oppression Black males can have is the death caused by racism. (Curry, 2017, p. 114)

Although Thomas J. Curry brings pertinent points in his analysis on how Black men and boys are marginalized in Theory, our investigation on Black genocide will not depart with the ambition of uncovering the dynamics of gender violence. Our understanding is that an approach focusing on a specific gender will underplay our overall discussion of how bodies turned Black are equally subjected to a world of death. Nevertheless, this investigation also won't take a proper intersectional approach, in which the roles of race, gender and class are all thought inside the dynamics of the object of study. This investigation is focused on the general dynamics of anti-Black violence and the process of dehumanization and violence related to it.

With that said, the reader might ask why resort to the concept of genocide when approaching the question of violence against Black populations. Insofar as the concepts of race and racism are interlinked to these phenomena, they would seem easier to work with than the convoluted and surveilled concept of genocide. Indeed, even if our goal were to examine the processes leading to the death of Black populations, we would not have to turn away from the concept of racism. For instance, the definition provided by Leonard Harris of racism as a “form of necro-being: it kills and prevents persons from being born” (Harris, 2018, p. 273), is devoted to understand it an “agent of death”. Racism is described as the mechanism leading to shorter lives and “beneficial deaths”, where the continuous death of a community is shown to be an asset for other groups. Why, then, do we turn to the word genocide? There are two reasons to this: the first relates to the real dynamics of

the world, where such notion seems to already be present in the vocabulary of street protests. To further investigate the notion of Black Genocide is to engage with contemporary politics and its agents. Furthermore, one might argue how the word genocide opens a horizon of thinking that is not readily available in the concept of racism. When speaking of genocide, the thoughts of horror, extinction, trauma and human misery are the ones more prone to appear. While racism can take many forms, with some more violent than others, the concept does not bring to light the immediate ideas of terror as the word genocide does. And yet, it is precisely in this reign of dread that many Black lives are situated. The populations eradicated to never be remembered, the mass killings of Black citizens without accountability, the disregard for the lives of African refugees, the quiet suffering of those marginalized and let to die without the care of institutions, all these phenomena seem to find their way in our imaginary of genocide. In view of this, to engage in a discussion of Black genocide is to be ready to engage with the hellish experience of an anti-Black world.

The realization of genocide as an event encompassing more than a single, immediate attack on a group of people is present since the word's inception by Raphael Lemkin. Indeed, one can point to a certain tradition in Genocide Studies where this form of violence is comprehended in a more nuanced way, going beyond the frames established by the horror of the Holocaust and the subsequent juridical appropriation of the term by the United Nations. One of the first objectives of the research will settle in showing how the hegemonic comprehension of genocide has been used for silencing claims from certain type of victims. By showing how the most widespread understanding of the word overvalues the notion of expressed intent, meant to easily identify perpetrators seeking the erasure of a determinate group, we will establish a new soil for our investigation. After bringing to light the inherent difficulties of dealing with the concept of genocide and its political dilemmas, we will turn to how the term has been discussed in Western Philosophy.

Although Philosophy only shyly deals with the question of genocide, a usual reference in the philosophical literature to the question at hand is that of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer. Authors who understand genocide as the consequence of a particular form of reasoning find in Adorno and Horkheimer's critique of Enlightenment a well-established ground to approach the question, as they relate genocide to the development of Western civilization. The project of Modernity, comprised in an insatiable drive for categorization and schematization of the world according to positivist ideals of usefulness and progress, stands to blame for manufacturing differences between human beings. This has been possible through the foundation of a new order based on a will to domination, the grip of which unequivocally extended itself to assert control not only over Nature, but humans as well. Adorno and Horkheimer understand this moment as part of a long path of the Western civilization and the own impulses of Reason. Enlightenment, as a

totalitarian force, functions by erasing multiplicity in favor of a single unity. What cannot be encompassed in a pre-determinate systemic logic must be abandoned, or in its most terrifying possibility, annihilated. For this reason, Adorno conceives genocide as “the absolute integration” (Adorno, 2004, p. 362). Extermination of pariahs is the ultimate outcome of a system incapable of accepting deviations. A closer look into Adorno and Horkheimer’s thoughts will pave the way for a broader understanding of genocide, to be later analyzed in regards to Black suffering.

Their elucidation of genocide as a project of total annihilation seems sufficiently adequate when speaking of the Holocaust. Nazi policies aimed the physical annihilation of every single Jewish person. Differently from Black slaves, their presence was not acceptable even as a source of economic gain. Given the differences between the forms of colonial violence and the subsequent attack on Black lives from the Holocaust, can we attest the nature of anti-Blackness as carrying the same pattern of integration and extermination present in Adorno’s conceptualization of genocide? Can the eugenic plans, mass incarcerations, religious intolerance, mass exterminations and precarious conditions of living, all submitting the Black individual to the world of death, be enough to consider the attacks against them as genocide? Besides, given how slavery and apartheid were two mechanisms used to deal with social pariahs that could not be integrated into a social order, how do such phenomena get incorporated into Adorno’s formulation of genocide? These questions will lead to a different approach to genocide, one deviating from the path laid out by Adorno and Horkheimer, deemed insufficient to deal with these dilemmas. Instead of understanding the event through the prism of a system seeking homogeneity, we will offer an account of genocide in which the immanence of death is one of its most constitutive attributes.

The line of inquiry in this research urges a turn to authors whose unequivocal object of thought is the existential question of Blackness. Consecrated authors such as Frantz Fanon understand colonialism as built on an “urge to genocide”. In the territories where life intertwines with death, genocide is always a possibility, an internal dispositive of the colonial enterprise ready to be implemented. This means that, to the Martinican philosopher, this horror is not actualized in each instance of the settler’s operations to establish control over the native’s territory, but it certainly looms over as a suitable mechanism to display authority. Although Fanon does not articulate genocide as a continuous form of violence present in the colonial undertaking, he offers the fundamental elements to build this research. This due to the fact that he brings to light the ontological discourse framing the dehumanization of the native in regards to the settler. Inhabiting the realm of the non-being, the native is something other than human, and therefore the violence inflicted against her is a banal affair, structurally naturalized in the colony’s institutions. The fanonian discourse on Black selfhood relates the processes of dehumanization and how they are connected to anti-Black violence. Such operation is crucial to our inquiry on Black suffering.

If Frantz Fanon has made clear the ontological void of those who were colonized or turned into slaves, Achille Mbembe's concept of *necropolitics* describes the type of sovereign violence responsible for condemning these lives to death. Fundamentally, Mbembe's critique of Modernity through the lenses of the economy governing the politics of life and death allows us to conceive the whole colonial enterprise as a genocidal project. By enacting a gratuitous and rampant display of violence, sovereignty in the colonies translates to a type of government primarily focused in producing death – either through killings or by ceasing the possibility of a dignified life. Through the description of this violence and how it seizes the being of the Black subject into a state of precariousness, we shall be able to illuminate the internal structure of anti-Black violence in the colonial world and its genocidal configurations.

However, while the dehumanization of the Black person and the violence used in the plantations was certainly a paradigm of colonialism, can we still find the presence of such form of genocidal violence in today's neocapitalism? In other words, does the notion of Black genocide actually attest to a contemporary event, or should it be considered as a hyperbolic statement? Moreover, we can attest how some theories, such as Marxism, integrate the suffering of Black communities inside the general configuration of the proletariat. Therefore, the affirmation of contemporary Black suffering as being considerably distinct from other minority groups or even related to genocide seems to conflict with the current dynamics of capital, where capitalist violence is said to be the great structural violence behind the great particular manifestations of violence, such as racial hatred (Zizek, 2002). Besides, given the subaltern role of Black communities inside the engine of class dynamics, their genocide, *a priori*, sounds counterintuitive. How could one attest the manifestation of genocidal violence against Black subjects if they ought to be integrated in the current schema of capital? In order to tackle the question of Black genocide inside our contemporary socio-political climate, we must investigate the distinctiveness of Black suffering, and how such defies our understanding of politics and economics. In order to accomplish this, we will make use of the discourse on Black dehumanization put forth by *afropessimism*. Such meta-theory on Black suffering will help us navigate the current dynamics of violence and dehumanization responsible for encircling Black lives in a world of death.

State-of-the-art

Statistics mapping out the groups more prone to premature death, incarceration and poverty have the Black population on the top of its indexes. According to the Anuário do Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública (Brazilian Public Security Forum Yearbook), around 6.357 Black Brazilians were killed by the police in 2019, representing 79% of all cases in that year (Stabile, 2020). In

2018, still according to the same agency, the number of deaths of Blacks in Brazil has increased 11.5% in the last ten years, while of the non-Blacks has decreased 12.9 in the same period. Of all the victims of homicide in that same year, Blacks accounted for 75.7% of the victims (Acayaba and Arcoverde, 2020). Concerning the incarcerated population in Brazil's infamously precarious prison system, the agency Infopen reports that Blacks represent 2/3 of its demographics, going up to 95% in some States, while representing 53.63% of the general population of the country (Bola, 2018). As published by the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics) Black Brazilians also represent the poorest demographic in the country, amounting to 75% of the poorest, while also receiving a general salary two times lower than those of Whites (Madeiro, 2020). These statistics only refer to some of the major adversities condemning Black lives to premature death. Nonetheless, they are certainly crucial to provide an empirical basis for the distinct suffering of these groups. In addition, they do not represent a phenomenon unique to Brazil. The unfavorable position of Black communities is a constant in many parts of the world, and even in rich, liberal and democratic countries, such as the United States. Moreover, such numbers hardly cause any shock. They seem to point to a reality we have been all inclined to accept as part of the state-of-affairs of our contemporary societies. Blacks are not only the ones more prone to die abruptly, but are also pushed to the borders of the "common world" by being incarcerated or marginalized in degraded and poorly sanitized territories. What is clear from the interconnection between these elements is the prevalence of mechanisms shortening or directly ending the continuation of Black lives. Though these numbers depict a grim reality and remain useful in providing an empirical basis for the understanding of the precarious condition circling Black lives, they can hardly provide any meaning or causal justification capable of explaining this reality. They fail to organize and reveal the visible and invisible forms of violence in a coherent narrative of suffering.

Some academics comprehend the phenomena related to such mechanisms of violence as being internal components of genocide. In view of this, it is worthwhile to refer to some researches made in Brazil and in the United States, the two countries with the largest African diaspora populations. The research of Ana Flauzina (Flauzina, 2006) and Abdias de Nascimento (Nascimento, 2016), for instance, perform a descriptive analysis of anti-Black violence by linking the colonial past of Brazil to its current configuration by bringing forth the different forms used by the Brazilian government in exterminating, expelling, incarcerating and overall degrading the condition of life of Afro-Brazilians. In the case of the investigation done by Ana Flauzina, the Brazilian Criminal System is shown to be historically invested in eliminating the Black population of the country through different techniques moved by a racist ideology.

In the United States, the question of Black genocide often converges in a similar approach. The most notorious document referring to a genocide being orchestrated against African-Americans is William Patterson's *We Charge Genocide: The Historic Petition to the United Nations for Relief from a Crime of the United States Government Against the Negro People* (Patterson, 1952). The document represents a great effort towards elucidating the many torments faced by the Black population in the United States in the 1950s, including, but not limited to, the lynching, segregation, economical discrimination, surveillance and police brutality, in a panorama where the interconnection of all of these manifestations of anti-Blackness are thought in regards of the United Nations elucidation of genocide. Recent researches, such as the one done by João Vargas, highlight the unbearable condition of living of the Black population in the United States, where "mass imprisonment, police brutality, high infant mortality, early death (of children, men, women, and the elderly), deficient medical treatment, lack of competitive education and economic opportunities, everyday violence in the inner cities, chronic depression, and self-hatred" (Vargas, 2005, p. 276) are described as the contemporary vectors of genocidal violence against African-Americans.

While these researches are successful in providing a fundamental basis for the claim of genocide against those belonging to the African Diaspora, which throughout the history of Genocide Studies had their suffering marginalized from such theoretical outlook (p. 273), they do not engage in a formulation of genocide focusing on the ontological, existential and phenomenological dimensions of the Black experience of the world. Therefore, while being successful in expanding our knowledge on the claims of genocide by providing a valuable discussion at the level of description, these inquiries do not enter into the relation between the paradigm of dehumanization particular to Blackness and its rapport to genocidal violence. Or, in other words, they do not offer a philosophical perspective on the dynamics between Black selfhood and suffering. With the ambition of expanding on the scholarly comprehension of Black suffering, our investigation will share the spirit of these investigations while posing the question of Black genocide inside the framework of alterity, sovereignty and selfhood.

1 Controversies Involving the General Understanding of Genocide

Genocide hasn't been extensively discussed in Philosophy. Although thoroughly debated in a range of disciplines, ranging from Law to History, the subject at hand has never been a true philosophical problem. Such omission hardly conveys an absence of complexity in the general understanding of the concept. Indeed, its intrinsic political nature has shaped the term as a constantly contested signifier, the dissemination of which into the public sphere intertwines with the overreaching influence of varied power structures present in our modern geopolitics. These mechanisms of power, as well as the inherent difficulty of speaking on extreme violence, are what have turned Genocide Studies into a web of conflicts since the inception of the word. Until today, they remain as a discursive fog blurring what lies at stake in our comprehension of the term, and thus an effort to bring light into the issue is necessary. As it will be thoroughly discussed in this dissertation, genocide is closely related to the unfolding of the West in its imperialist capacity, an unfolding that continues to determinate the dynamics of our contemporary world.

Needless to say, this preliminary predicament only highlights the need for a philosophical approach to genocide. Such necessity does not confine itself solely in rapport to the broader, more general question of genocide. On the contrary, its urgency acquires a clear determination when related to the particular instances of this horror, in the forms of annihilation of specific groups. When the meaningless suffering of the socially dead becomes the object of theorization, it pulls them out of an imposed condition of wretchedness. It symbolically revitalizes them. More importantly, it directly embraces the dynamics of real social struggles and its agents. Furthermore, it is evident how the question of genocide and Black genocide are not mutually exclusive. The connection between an investigation on the broader, more encompassing and general formulation of genocide and the more specific problem of Black genocide, which at this point is nothing more than a persistent uncertainty, will enlighten our knowledge on both fronts.

As the development of the West cannot be understood outside of the colonial matrix of power dynamics that have fragmented the self-other relations between civilizations, the need for a philosophical inquiry becomes necessary as a means to unveil the fabrics of such relations. Here, the rules of conduct of the modern nation-states and their regulatory mechanisms over life and death, knowledge, and economy are essentially tied to the development of the colonial enterprise, and must be understood through the very ideals of European Modernity. Therefore, Philosophy, as a discipline, does not get involved in the question of genocide because of a supposed privileged position in defining what things are, as if it operates as the tribunal of reason presiding over the true

nature of concepts for its own egotistical desire. Rather, it becomes central to our understanding of genocide because of its capacity, as a tool, in problematizing the frontiers of our relation with the other, foreshadowed as a main factor in the genocidal event.

Yet, as mentioned, Philosophy is rarely concerned about genocide. And even less about whatever Black genocide might represent. Few were the philosophers who have worked directly with the concept. When it emerges, it is either part of a broader discussion, or it is worked in relation to a specific event where there is a public debate over its qualification as genocide². How to explain this absence?

Overall, there are a few reasons capable of explaining the lack of investment in this question. For one, the word genocide, although referring to a very old practice, dates back to the 20th century. Not much time has passed since its inception. Secondly, the intrinsic difficulty in providing a universal conceptualization of genocide capable of explaining every occurrence of the phenomenon is an arduous, if not impossible task. Such ambition to find a reoccurring pattern will undoubtedly face the force of a vast empirical contingency of historical circumstances, agents and rationality enclosing the rise of this catastrophe. For these reasons, one should be cautious of establishing a comparative approach to genocide, as it might succumb to hasty generalizations incapable of expressing the event in an absolute fullness. As Helen Fein warns, “comparisons based on...a single archetype which assume there is one mechanically recurring script are bound to be misleading”. (1990, as cited in Levene, 2005, p. 9)

We can see how a search for a clear blueprint may very well result in an incomplete approach to genocide. Therefore, by diverging from the natural impetus of comparing different events in search for a normative formulation, we avoid falling in the abyss of an elusive contingency. But, more importantly, such realization points to another direction to be taken. If genocide cannot be understood in a clearly detailed schema, where an objective and detailed structure can be recognized in each instance of the event, we ought to recognize the singularity present in each case not as a deviation from a pattern, but as a constitutive factor of the very contingent nature of genocide. For this reason, our goal in this chapter does not rely on an effort leading to a universal elucidation of the concept. Instead, given our main goal of tackling the question of Black genocide, this chapter will delve into a preliminary effort of uncovering the misconceptions and points of conflict surrounding the general concept.

² Genocide has appeared in the discussions of Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, Hannah Arendt, Zygmunt Bauman and Foucault, as being either the culmination of a particular type of rationality, such as racism, or the ultimate consequence of the project of Enlightenment. It has also been dealt in a narrower way, as seen in Sartre’s text “On Genocide”, where the author discusses whether the United States should be considered guilty in orchestrating genocide in the Vietnam War.

The pitfalls present on the way of a universal formulation of genocide haven't stopped different scholars in being invested in such task. In fact, comparisons between events in search of similarities represent an old theoretical approach in Genocide Studies, and they often suppose an essential characteristic of the event, one capable of being obtained through a closer inspection of the dynamics leading to this type of violence. Alternatively, and holding even more influence, another approach has consisted in placing the Holocaust as the paradigmatic reference to any genocide claim, with authors even claiming it as the only true genocide. This transposition of the *genos* (word for tribe or people, in Greek) in genocide, to refer exclusively to the Jewish population has profoundly marked Genocide Scholarship, and has shaped the argument of the uniqueness of the Holocaust.

As the “genocide of genocides”, the Holocaust has occupied the status of being both incomparable and also the ultimate frame of reference of genocides. Since the 1970s-80s (Flauzina, 2012, p. 34), its singularity is characterized not only as the worst case of this catastrophe, but also as “the defining event of the twentieth century” (Levene, 2005, p. 1). Comparisons to it were even considered blasphemous (2000, as cited in Flauzina, 2012, p. 36). However, one can recognize the Holocaust as one of the most horrific crimes in human experience without taking this fact as evidence of its absolute incomparability. Or, perhaps, this undeniable truth should not serve as basis for the argument holding the event as detached from world history, as if it emerged in a socio-historical vacuum.

It is fruitful to our discussion to remember a group who, unlike the Jews, had their suffering reserved to the footnotes of History. The Herero people, old inhabitants of the South West Africa region, were victims of German colonialism between the 19th and the 20th century and subjected to different mechanisms of death and suffering. In fact, the systems of oppression used against them preceded in many ways the forms of domination suffered by the Jewish population in the Second World War. As Mahmood Mandani argues:

The genocide of the Herero was the first genocide of the twentieth century. The links between it and the Holocaust go beyond the building of concentration camps and the execution of an annihilation policy and are worth exploring. It is surely of significance that when General Trotha wrote, as above, of destroying “African tribes with streams of blood,” he saw this as some kind of a Social Darwinist “cleansing” after which “something new” would “emerge.”[...] Yet, there is a link that connects the genocide of the Herero and the Nazi Holocaust to the Rwandan genocide. That link is *race branding*, whereby it became possible not only to set a group apart as an enemy, but also to exterminate it with an easy conscience. (Mandani, 2002, p. 23)

What conclusions can we draw by bringing light into the continuity between the fate of the Herero and the Holocaust? As mentioned by Mandani, the relation between race and genocide

consists of a fundamental aspect in the development of this atrocity, as it will be discussed throughout this dissertation. For now, it suffices to link the primacy of such relation as being a determinant aspect of these exterminatory policies. Secondly, it should be noted how the processes of systemic annihilation in the form of concentration camps were already a characteristic of German imperialism before the Nazi party took control of Germany. The Hereros were also confronted with the hybris of a civilizational *telos*: their extermination was necessary in order for a new historicity to emerge. As it was the case with the Holocaust, their genocide followed the rhythm of destruction and creation. A new order could only ever emerge after the purge of pariahs. The words of General Lothar von Trotha, responsible for ceasing the destiny of the Hereros, echo the hollowness of their fate: “I destroy the African tribes with streams of blood and streams of money. Only following this cleansing can something new emerge, which will remain” (p. 23).

Both the Jewish population and the Hereros fell into a dehumanization process comprised in the form of racial branding. Racialization performs the function of reducing a group’s humanity in order to justify their social nullity. It represents the condition of possibility leading to the proliferation of their death and/or the stage of being near death. It legitimates the arbitrariness of state-sponsored violence, while engendering it in disturbed notions of civilizational progress. The point of bringing up the subject now consists on the necessity in shedding light upon how the machinery of death inflicted against the Jewish population maintains an intrinsic relation with the German colonial enterprise. As mentioned by Aimé Césaire, Nazi exterminatory policies consisted in the application, in Europe, of old colonialist procedures “which until then had been reserved exclusively for the Arabs of Algeria, the coolies of India, and the blacks of Africa” (Césaire, 2001, p. 3). Such realization does not put into question the place of the Holocaust as one of the most horrific crimes in human history. It only shows how its existence cannot be thought out of a determinate rationality already in place years before the Nazi concentration camps. Moreover, one should not assume a criterion of identity between the dynamics of racialization of the Jewish population and the Black natives. Each group has faced vastly different forms of subjugation and atrocities, and the discursive apparatus in their construction as a sub-other throughout the centuries carries their own distinctive characteristics.

Most notably, the arguments endorsing the uniqueness of the Holocaust have been accused of obfuscating the singularities encircling different genocides, as if the dimension of the former held an authoritative status needing to be addressed in every discussion of this form of violence. For instance, Mark Levene argues how a lot of effort was done in order to classify the destructions brought upon the Armenians in 1915-16 as genocide, since its own unique historical background became undervalued faced with comparisons with the Holocaust (Levene, 2005, p. 25). When the Holocaust becomes the sole normative reference in genocides, energy that could have been spent in

elucidating the distinct historical characteristics of an event are sometimes lost in debates seeking points of similarity, and thus the own singular meaning of the catastrophe, and how we ought to interpret it in regards of the impact it caused to a specific group of people, is lost. Even more problematic, this stance has also been used to negate the status of an event as genocide:

Recurrently, approaches that criticize the uniqueness perspective also highlight the use of the uniqueness rhetoric as a political tool serving as moral a justification to dismiss genocide claims. From this standpoint, the uniqueness paradigm poses obstacles to the recognition and confrontation of other genocides. More explicitly, it helps to silence the past exterminations responsible for the very foundation of modern states. (Flauzina , 2012, p. 37)

This silencing cannot be thought outside the clashes between theory and politics. For this reason, here we enter in the domain of what Benjamin Meiches calls the politics of genocide (Meiches, 2019). This articulation refers to the struggles concerning disagreements on the meaning of the concept. It revolves around the limits on what should be considered genocide in order to evaluate if a determinate experience should or not be considered as such. Given the intrinsic political nature of the concept at hand, it is clear how a conflicted political climate on how the word should be understood would arise. In this sense, an articulation of genocide in which the concept is solely comprehended by the elements of the Holocaust could only inevitably reduce the scope of its applicability, which would also impact international response and reparations for the victims. The arguments of uniqueness is related to the politics of genocide as it legitimizes the suppression of genocide claims, giving possibly guilty parties an argumentative foundation in which they can rely on.

Still according to Meiches, the historical developments of the politics of genocide resulted in a hegemonic understanding of the word essentially tied to the Holocaust. This does not imply in a single interpretation of the term, but rather an underlying impetus of encircling the concept in an objective and static light, obscuring the political struggles surrounding its inception and development. It is the continuous uncritical apprehension of the word, that which suggests the interpretation of the concept as stable, politically unbiased, with a clear set of delimitations. In general, it consists of a “common sense” approach, in which the genocidal act is identified as the enactment of mass killing policies targeting a specific group, with perpetrators who are clearly identifiable and motivated by a distinguished intent of harm, needing to be punished by legal tribunals or military intervention. The rise of the hegemonic understanding of genocide must be comprehended within the very history of the concept and two important moments in its development, beginning with the first elucidation of the word by polish jurist Raphael Lemkin, and then its apprehension by the international legal sphere in the aftermath of the Second World War.

1.1 On the Word Genocide and the Notion of Intent

Raphael Lemkin coined the word genocide in 1940. It is the combination of *genos*, Greek word for race or tribe, and *cide*, Latin word for killing. In his book *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, genocide is defined as a multidimensional type of attacks envisioning the destruction of the foundations of life of a particular group. The variety of forms in which this destruction comes into being is not comprised solely by means of physical extermination, but by direct assaults on the overall condition of life of these groups:

The objectives of such a plan would be disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of the personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals belonging to such groups (Lemkin, 1944, p. 79)

It must be stressed how Lemkin's formulation of genocide went well beyond the forms of tangible violence. It incorporated notions describing the targeted group cultural disintegration as being imbedded in the very concept of genocide. Since the undoing of the culture is coextensive with the physical demise, the ultimate aim of this type of violence is the annihilation of the possibility of these groups to exist as such. Their trace in the world needs to vanish by means of a sovereign violence. Whatever remains of their population after this assault must be integrated within the confinements of the hegemonic group cultural traditions. In addition, Lemkin also points out a particular temporal aspect of this form of violence. To the author, genocide does not imply the immediate destruction of a group of people, but also the various mechanisms already in place targeting their doom. Therefore, genocide is not comprised in a single, isolated event in the form of an outburst of violence. Rather, it follows a process of coercive tactics in which institutions actively suffocate the possibility of life of determinate groups.

Although Lemkin's formulation was built through his studies on the colonial conquest of the Americas and the German colonial enterprise in South West Africa (Flauzina, 2012, p.12), it is evident how the Holocaust played a major role in the shaping of the concept. Lemkin worked tirelessly in the aftermath of the Second World War in pushing his conception of genocide in the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide. Despite being successful in getting a great extent of his original ideas passed into the international genocide law, mainly the notion of destruction and persecution of specific groups, his ideas on cultural attacks as being part of the crime of genocide were tossed aside in the convention (Meiches, 2019, p.114). Many countries, such as the United States, were deeply concerned by being accused of perpetrating

genocide in their own domestic territory, and thus an effort was made to delude the term in order to neutralize its scope. As said by the Brazilian government under the presidency of Eurico Gaspar Dutra, the national state sovereignty has to be protected from genocide claims by the part of minority groups who could be “using it as an excuse for opposing perfectly normal assimilation” (Levene, 2005, p. 45). The final draft of the document described the crime in these lines:

In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group³

The removal of elements related to cultural destruction in combination with the valorization of the notion of expressed intent comprises the most noticeable changes from Lemkin’s formulation. After the convention, the need of identifying the element of intent became paramount to any classification of an event as genocide. Strictly speaking, under the umbrella of this entry, genocide is reduced to a form of actualization of a clear and identifiable desire by the part of the perpetrators in fulfilling a teleological plan of extermination of a particular group, partially or completely. Essentially, the elucidation of the concept in this fashion has reduced it to a form of mass extermination. The attention given to the element of *intent* in this juridical formulation clearly reflects the social and political order of the time, in which there was a need for a conceptualization capable of punishing the Nazi party for its crimes, while also edifying legal protection for the allied countries in regards of their own practices.

The primacy over the notion of intent is one of the most controversial aspects of law. Critics have accused it of underscoring instances of genocide in which the intentionality behind the actions is not so easily identifiable. Moreover, it is not sufficiently clear how one should understand this criterion. For instance, we might ask if the element of intent could only be attested if there is a deliberate plan of harm in which the destruction of a group is itself the final aim of the plan, or if it would be enough for it to be an expected collateral consequence of another goal (Card, 2005, p. 69). As it stands, and given its historical circumstances, the final draft of the law seems to imply that no genocide can take place if a deliberate plan, in which the object is the physical death of a group, can be found. While this formulation reduces the range of the concept in order to supposedly better

³ UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS (n.d). Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Available in: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CrimeOfGenocide.aspx>

enforce its applicability, it leaves aside all cases in which a one-sided war is waged against a group without a clear blueprint detailing the steps of their doom.

One might contest this argument by virtue of how an act can be morally reprehensible if its worst outcomes were foreseeable by the perpetrators. If the destruction of a group was rationalized as an acceptable price to pay in order to achieve a goal, the act itself already carried genocide impulses. It has already normalized the horror of its possible outcome and it should therefore bear the weight of it since its inception. Here, we do not need to look any further than the events of Holodomor. Even if one argues that the deaths of peasants were not the intended goal of the starvation policies installed by Stalin against the Ukrainians during 1932-33, but rather the collection of grains to be later used for trading purposes, the act itself can still be thought as genocide. As Israel Charny has argued, the foreseeability by the party of the Soviet government is sufficient to consider the event as genocide (p. 70).

Beyond these points, one can notice how the annihilation of a group can be accomplished without a deliberate order to kill. Sovereign violence can take the form of structural processes in which the condition of life of determinate groups is constantly attacked. Their extermination can result from political goals, economic policies, denial of healthcare and racial hatred already incorporated by a society's institutions. Besides, assimilatory processes in which the condition of life of groups were continuously attacked, as it was the case of the Indigenous population in Brazil, may not have a clear distinguishable intentionality, but still arrive at the same exterminatory conclusions of a genocide.

The controversies over the concept, as shown thus far, gave rise to two prominent traditions in Genocide Studies. On the one hand, a group has privileged a broader and more encompassing approach to the word, building an interpretation more closely in line with Lemkin's thoughts, sometimes going even beyond it. On the other, there are those, mostly from legal sphere or Holocaust scholarship, who have argued in favor of a more limited definition of the concept. They have mostly focused on the Convention's definition of genocide and its focus on intent as the single legitimate way of comprehending the concept. For instance, one important author who has argued in favor of a narrower conceptualization was Steven Katz, who has also defended the argument of the uniqueness of the Holocaust. As he wrote:

For myself, I shall use the following rigorous definition: the concept of genocide applies only when there is an actualized intent, however successfully carried out, to physically destroy an entire group (as such a group is defined by perpetrators)(. .. The intention to physically eradicate only a part of a group on contradistinction to the UN convention and most alternative definitions proposed by others- I shall not call genocide... Any form of mass murder that does not conform to the definition provided here, though not necessarily less immoral or less evil, will not be identified herein as an occasion of genocide. (Katz, 1994, as cited in Flauzina, 2012, p. 35)

Katz goes even beyond the already restrictive formulation of the convention to include only the cases where total eradication is envisioned by the perpetrators. The degree of success of the guilty party in enacting these policies is inconsequential. The important factor here is the intent to physically destroy the group in its totality. In his aim to position the Holocaust as the only true instance of genocide, Katz even ignores the elements of cultural destruction present in Lemkin's original formulation of the concept. After an extensive discussion in which the Holocaust is compared to many other examples of mass murder, ranging from Crusade violence to Slavery, he concludes that what makes it unique is the unparalleled ideology of Nazism. The need to fully annihilate the Jews, as he has argued, trumped even the risk of military defeat against Allied armies (Pawlikowski, 1995, p. 373). This level of hatred and commitment in completely erasing the Jews is argued to be a defining trait of the Holocaust, which also makes it, according to him, the only real case of genocide.

This position has been criticized by many authors, especially by those who diverge from the Convention of 1948 and disagree with the level of attention given to the element of intent. Authors such as Ward Churchill were more inclined to think of the concept more in line with Lemkin's original formulation. They have preferred to highlight the idea of genocide as being an attack against the right to a group to "exist as such", rather than the element of expressed intent from the part of the persecutors. As Ana Flauzina writes,

This has led to many propositions not only with respect to a different approach to the Convention – one that considers the pattern of destruction of a group as the main evidence in the determination of intent – but also to elaborate on alternate versions of the Convention that reflect this broader understanding.⁴ (Flauzina, 2012, p. 39)

Therefore, we can attest the existence of a scholarly tradition that has well diverged from the Convention and the primacy of the element of intent. By seeing how International Law has not been capable of offering sufficient legal parameters to end the contested nature of the concept, as well as the problematic historical circumstances involved in the shaping of the hegemonic understanding of genocide, we can conclude the lack of a sanctified interpretation of the word. Such realization is of fundamental importance to our investigation. In order to better investigate the violence inflicted against Black communities, we ought to follow the "pattern of destruction" responsible for inflicting a great damage to them, which cannot be fully attested if one stays dogmatically attached to the element of *intent*. Violence can often be incorporated into a society without its agents being completely identifiable, morphing into an almost invisible mechanism that, nonetheless, inflicts a

major damage to social minorities and outcasts. Such form of violence can be described as *structural violence* – a type of violence reproduced routinely, in which some groups are denied the possibility of upwards social mobility because they were denied possibilities of education, healthcare, employment and housing. Therefore, structural violence is the condition bringing lives to a premature end. To see it, one must refrain from engaging directly with outbursts of major display of violence to comprehend the dynamics lying in the background. In order to engage with the violence inflicted against Black communities, we need to prioritize our understanding of this form of systematic attack instead of specific outburst of violence, since they can be read inside a greater structural narrative operating against Black subjects. For this reason, this investigation will side with this alternative reading of genocide by these scholars, in which the identification of “a pattern of destruction of a group” is held as the defining aspect in considering a determinate state of suffering as being the consequence of genocide.

Moreover, the supposedly unbiased nature of International Law has been called into question. In her doctoral thesis, Ana Flauzina argues how an anti-Black nature of International Law has been responsible for the leniency towards the accusations of genocide perpetrated by whites on non-whites. Both Academia and the international crime justice are said to reflect the desires of its white supremacist structure. The institutionalization of this power has been responsible for creating a “distorted administration of genocide” (p. 51). Therefore, the problem at hand launches us to a discussion of the relation between racial categories and the applicability of international law. The investigation in this terrain presupposes an understanding of the meaning of race and its socio-historical repercussions.

1.2 Preliminary Discussion on Race and Genocide

Race, as Achille Mbembe argues in *Critique of Black Reason*, is a primitive form of representation. Its unequivocal outcome is the generation of torments, fears, angst and resentment. In a deeper sense, it performs a link to death in different forms: death of possibilities, memories, modes of being and lives. For this reason, race is what sets the condition for the rise of what he calls *altruicide*, referring to the phenomena of seeking the destruction of the other by virtue of a constant sense of threat. The other radically different from oneself becomes the constellation of what lies beyond reason and cannot be reasoned with. Race is what sustains the creation of a mythological figure haunting the preservation of another’s life. The process of racialization is one of constant negation, in which a relational approach between beings sets one as the default hallmark of humanity, and the other as the embodiment of a form of excess or lacking.

At first, the idea of race functioned as a way of naturalizing class differences through a biological explanation (Mandani, 2020, p. 58). French nobility attempted to assert their dominance against the French bourgeoisie in the 18th century by claiming they belonged to a highborn caste, the true descendants of the Germanic Franks, who had ruled over the Western Roman Empire. The idea of a superior biological inheritance served as a discursive tool to assure class privilege and resolve internal societal conflicts. Although the notion of race already played a role in the political debate inside Europe, it was only during the events of European colonialism that it started to gain strength as a mainstream doctrine (p. 59).

The colonial rupture fragmented the world and the being of the human into two asymmetrical poles: on the one hand, the autonomous human in the form of the white master; on the other, the bestial indigenous. The transmutation of the native into animal could only be done through the establishment of a narrative capable of justifying the non-human condition of the indigenous person. According to Achille Mbembe, two traditions were essential to the accomplishment of this goal. First, there's what he calls the Hegelian tradition. Here, the indigenous is seen as a "body-thing". They're taken as being radically different from the settler in virtue of their own nature. Hopelessly immersed in the sphere of the sensorial, they were incapable of being anything other than a collection of drives and stimulus. Like an animal or an object, their only purpose was to exist as a sort of instrument. Therefore, it mattered little if they lived or perished. As their being was fundamentally inferior to the European settler, their purpose was to exist to be commanded:

They could be destroyed, as one may kill an animal, cut it up, cook it, and, if need be, eat it. It is in this respect that, in the colony, the body of the colonized was, in its profanity, assimilated to all other things. For, being simply a "body-thing," the colonized was neither the substratum nor the affirmation of any spirit. As for his/her death, it mattered little if this occurred by suicide, resulted from murder, or was inflicted by power; it had no connection whatever with any work that he/she had performed for the universal. (Mbembe, 2001, p. 27)

Mbembe denominates the second tradition as "Bergsonian". Here, domestication takes the guise of familiarity. The native is invited to be part of the "familiar world" of the settler. Such invitation does not imply any form of recognition. The native is not a part of the world of the settler, not more than an animal would be. Like an animal, they are invited to *be with* the colonizer, but they don't *live with* the colonizer. The difference, once again, is ontological. Living *with* the settler means receiving some of his solidarity and affection. They are allowed to roam among the settler's world and receive his sympathy, only as long as they perform their role as a useful tool. In this sense, sympathy works as a cover for a process of dehumanization. The colonized is not human, but rather a merchandise belonging to the proper human. Living *with* the colonizer, very differently, would

imply sharing the same status of being. It would mean sharing a sense of community, partaking of the same elements encircling the human condition.

Natives do not inhabit the same sphere of being as the colonizer, but they are led to believe they do. As Mbembe points out, this is only possible because the native is submitted to a process of grooming. Through experimentation, the settler sets up a simulacrum of recognition. He purposefully extends gratitude towards the colonized in order for them to feel a sense of camaraderie, with the ultimate goal of domesticating the native. At the same time, as one may barbarically groom an animal, he would also violently attack, punish, and humiliate the native. In the end, these forms of games worked as an obscene power play. By loosening and then straightening his domination of the slave, the master exercised and demonstrated his control.

The link between race and inhumanity has been one of the strongest driving forces in the ideological landscape of Modernity. From the Atlantic Slave Trade, it fulfilled the purpose of projecting white superiority as an undeniable fact. The slave traders established a system based on the flow of expandable human bodies capable of generating value. In view of a capitalist rationality, they were more worthy by being alive than dead. Evidently, this does not mean their lives had any worth in themselves, yet only worth as merchandise. Therefore, the costs of their transportation from Africa to the plantations in America maintained a direct relation with how badly they were subjugated. For instance, slaves in Brazil were more mistreated than those in the United States because it was cheaper to import and substitute them in view of the shorter distance between the Brazilian coast and African continent (Nascimento, 2016, p. 58).

Although racial branding served for many centuries as the justification for violence in the colonies, it was only during World War II that this sort of reasoning started to show its absolute horror in Europe. Nazi ideology built a wall separating the Jews from the fully human. Its civilizational project could only come full circle through the annihilation of what could never be integrated as equal. Mastery over bodies had to be imposed through means of sovereign violence, as it happened in the colonies. But while the racialization of the Black functioned through the rapport of profit and suffering, the racialization of the Jew in the context leading to the Second World War focused on a different motivation.

Unlike the slaves, the Jews were not considered as a rentable source of gains. As the utmost object of fear of Nazi ideology, they could only exist as a corpse. They could not be civilized out of their bestial (sic) ways, and neither their presence was tolerated enough to be exploited. The only possible solution was their total purge. Racial branding, once again in the form of white supremacy, set the ideological landscape leading to concentration camps. For the first time in European soil, the notion of racial hegemony established the lines of those who should live or die.

It was in the aftermath of the Second World War that a fundamental shift in the racial order happened. After the allies became the victorious party of the War, there was a reconfiguration of the attributes of what composes, and those who can be part of, the domain of whiteness. Here, it is possible to attest one of the most important traits of the category of race: contingency. Race is not a stable category. It represents a fluid imaginary composed of a set of characteristics bound to historical circumstances. Until the war, whiteness represented the full possibility of the human in its potency of creating the world. As the figure of the conquistador, the white man brought upon himself the task of shaping the human world in his image. Rationalized as his “burden”, his task was a self-serving prophecy: control and management of populations and resources disguised as civilizational progress. At the end of World War II, a new element was attributed to the category of whiteness: the one of victim. Beyond the well diffused notion of the white individual as the embodiment of power and freedom, the configuration of the Holocaust as a “white tragedy” reshaped the very sense of what means to be human. The aftermath of the Holocaust had as one of its outcomes the insertion of the Jewish person into the sphere of whiteness. As Ana Flauzina writes:

[...]from the standpoint of identity politics, the Holocaust is considered as a decisive historic event in a process that would result in the whitening of European and European-descendent Jews. The assimilation of Jews into the category of whites has as its ultimate consequence the engagement of the privileges of whiteness and the concomitant appeal to a past victimization imposed on their non-white ancestors. This powerful duality helps to explain the solidification of depictions of the Holocaust as a unique event and the impressive reparation policies conceded to Jewish communities (Flauzina, 2012, p. 47)

This assertion does not validate any obscene argument pointing to a supposed end to anti-Semitism in Europe after the events of World War II. Rather, the point here is to show how the Jewish population in Europe underwent a new racialization process, going from the nihilist outskirts of the non-being to the juridical plenitude of whiteness. Once the Holocaust was understood as an event targeting white bodies, its recognition as a human tragedy followed suit. It is precisely because the Jews entered the domain of the human, in the sphere of Law, that they were entitled to reparations. The primacy of whiteness in the regulatory procedures of international legislations has been responsible for the alienation of Black victims of genocides and other injustices from material compensations. As the Blacks continued to be dehumanized, their suffering remained unattended for⁵. Although the aftermath of the war had in its political landscape a proud stance against attacks

⁵ Here we can refer to the example of Germany and the denial of reparations to the descendants of victims of the Herero genocide. Although the event was called as genocide by the part of the German government in 2015, a formal recognition was denied in order to not validate the demands for reparations from the Namibian government. See: Bundesregierung nennt Herero-Massaker erstmals "Völkermord", (2015, July 14), *Der Spiegel*. Deutsche Presse-

on defenseless victims (as can be seen by the creation of international legislations like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Punishment of the Crime of Genocide), these victims had to fit in the well-established color based criteria.

The lack of reparations and recognition of the genocide claims made by Black groups resonate the dehumanization process they have been under. Once Blackness, as a category, is hopelessly attached to images of savagery and bestiality, it naturally pushes those who are encircled within it to the sphere of perpetrators of violence, rather than its possible victims. For this reason, the political and scholarly debates concerning the genocide in Rwanda did not hesitate in calling out the “uncivilized” nature of Africans as the driving force behind the atrocity (p. 56). Racist caricatures reducing the complexity of tragedies involving Black lives are easily available in the western ideological market, and function as a way of legitimating the inherent nihilism of the Black condition. Black suffering is thus seen as an unavoidable result of an inconsequential ultraviolent nature.

The constant placement of the Black individual and most of all, of the Black male, as the undisputable cause of violence while being incapable of being one of its victims can be considered a discursive trope not only in legal domains, but also in Academia. For instance, Thomas J. Curry’s book, *The Man-Not: Race, Class, Genre, and the Dilemmas of Black Manhood*, has been successful in showing how the killing and raping of Black men and boys in the United States has been naturalized through different fields, such as gender theory. As he argues, gender theory is born by the clash of femininity and the imaginary of the violent, overtly sexual Black predator. Through a borderline folkloric characterization of the Black male as a hypersexual beast, desperately immersed in sensorial experiences, their place in theory has been that of a frustrated aggressor that, although victim of structural disadvantages, finds in his masculinity an outlet to express his resentment and anger onto females.

In his discussion, Curry relates the white feminist discourse of the 20th century as being complicit with the construction of the Black man’s identity as one of the rapist. By using old colonial characterizations of Black men as the violent macho entrapped in a never-ending quest to will to power, they have legitimated many instances of lynching, hangings and capital punishments that took place during Jim Crow. As he concludes, the perceived threat of the Black man had a direct interference with the development of gender theory:

In fact, it was the newly won freedom of Black men that launched the theorization of our modern concept of gender. This freedom inspired ethnologists and feminists to give accounts of femininity

that were vulnerable to male violence. It was ultimately the threat of Black male citizenship that gave substance to our current concept of gender in whites. (Curry, 2017, p. 42)

According to Curry, the naturalization of the Black man as inherently violent reflects the biases of academic theorists and their own primitive fear of the mythological Negro. Once they are perceived as an empirical threat, their place in Theory reflects and expands on these notions by establishing them as the embodiment of danger. Insofar as these biases are deeply integrated in the theorist's way of relating to the world, the description of the Black man's being as animalistic becomes an intuitive exercise, almost self-evident. It disregards the need of proof and facts, as if the immediate reality of our everyday could grant sufficient clarity on their nature to justify these claims (p. 236).

Such predicament only highlights the need of a skeptical approach in what concerns the place of the Black subject in grand conceptual formulations. Insofar as this dilemma resonates in the juridical and scholarly developments of genocide theory and policies of reparation, as shown in this discussion, it exacerbates the urge of an inquiry capable of overcoming the default political motivations and racially discriminatory accounts present in the hegemonic understanding of genocide. Since particular instances of violence inflicted against Black folk often pushes them outside of the category of victim, hesitation when approaching the intellectual tradition of genocide studies becomes necessary. Evidently, this realization points to a question: how to continue from here?

It must be attested how genocide, at its core, is a mechanism of altruicide. Even though it is not the sole expression of this phenomena, it's the representation of its most gruesome and destructible possibility. As discussed previously, European Modernity has been identified as the paradigmatic moment responsible for the distortion of the self-other relations. The development of modern forms of exploitation and new systems of sovereignty were only possible through the development of the category of race. This resulted, as Nelson Maldonado-Torres has argued, in a system of complex mechanisms that have left decisive impacts "not only in the areas of authority, sexuality, knowledge, and the economy, but on the general understanding of being as well" (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 242).

Since Modernity represents the moment of disruption in the order of being by creating sub-others, we can venture within its confinements to find the germs preceding the rise of the utmost display of altruicide. In this sense, European Modernity becomes the subject of questioning. Indeed, some scholars defend the idea of a broader approach to genocide, in which the phenomenon is thought in regards of the development of Western thinking. Although it is clear how genocide, in the form of wars of extermination, is as old as humanity itself, some thinkers develop the idea of

how this event became to be a consequence of an internal dysfunction in modern states. In the field of History, for instance, Mark Levene's *Genocide in the Nation State* can be seen as an effort towards this goal. In it, he challenges the idea of genocide as being the consequence of "aberrant and hence isolated social structures and situations" (Levene, 2005, p. 9), but rather a process that has in its roots on "the very process of historical development out of which our entire, global, political-economic system has emerged" (p. 9). Through an inquiry grounded in historical empiricism, he argues how a dysfunctional character of the modern nation-states is responsible for the extermination policies in the 20th century.

In continental Philosophy, one of the most known approaches relating genocide to the very nature of Modernity is the one of Theodor Adorno. After having endured the traumatic experience of World War II, he was motivated by the necessity of coming to terms with the past to make sense of the social conditions capable of leading humanity to the new forms of barbarianism. His inquiry identifies the conditions of possibility of the biggest atrocities and the structure through which it operates. In the context of his co-authored book with Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, is not only the historical period of European Modernity that is at fault for the promulgation of modern totalitarianism and genocide, but a certain disposition present throughout the whole Western tradition. Their discussion on instrumental reason links men's domination over Nature to techniques of social coercion and modern forms of subjugation, in a dynamic leading to the occurrence of genocides.

Other authors, such as Zygmunt Bauman, have also offered an account relating the modern relationship between men and Nature as being a fundamental aspect in the brewing of events of mass extermination. However, the reason why we have chosen Adorno and Horkheimer's famously conflicted conception of Enlightenment instead of opting for the theorization offered by Bauman in *Modernity and the Holocaust* relates to how their perspective offers a broader approach than the latter. As James Schmidt argues,

While we should not underestimate the shortcomings of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, from a distance of a half-century we are also in a better position to appreciate the peculiar strengths that the book nevertheless retains. If it fails to provide the historical specificity that we might desire from an account of Nazi genocide, its discussion of mimesis and projection may nevertheless still offer some insight into the troubling ease with which societies can collapse into genocidal slaughter. [...] While the Holocaust was historically unique, genocide is not. Horkheimer and Adorno may still have lessons to teach us about the stubborn persistence of genocide. (Schmidt, 2000, p. 98)

In the context of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and Adorno's writings on *Negative dialectics*, genocide emerges as the culmination of a broad civilizational pathos. The objective and subjective conditions leading to the horror succumb to an all-encompassing exterminatory procedure mirroring

the modus operandi of reason. What cannot be integrated into a pre-determinate system must be eliminated by virtue of its dissimilarity. The richness and impact of Adorno and Horkheimer's formulations, as well as their aim to uncover the fabrics of power in the contemporary world, justify their place in our discussion. Therefore, the next chapter will aim to venture into their critical Philosophy with the goal of recovering the germs of the rationality leading to genocide.

2 Adorno and Horkheimer and the Question of Enlightenment

To investigate the meaning of genocide according to Adorno, we need to enter the domains of a notoriously provocative, obscure, and anti-systemic philosophical project. This text will not aim to be an exhaustive study of his work, as the variety of themes and the complexity involving them would vastly exceed the objective of this dissertation. What will be central to our investigation is Adorno's critique of Enlightenment. More precisely, our focus will be the rapport between the historical unfolding of instrumental reason and the processes of dehumanization leading to genocide. This will take the form of a discussion of one of his early work, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, co-authored by Max Horkheimer, and also selected segments of *Negative Dialectics*.

As one of the most vocal critics of Enlightenment, Adorno identifies in the so-called *siècle des lumières* the rapid expansion of pervasive tactics of control and exploitation leading Europe to a generalized crisis. Like other intellectuals of the Frankfurt School, he relates the rise of Fascism in European soil to a paradox within Western society: how could the ambitions of a civilization grounded on the principles of rationality succumb to the horrors experienced in the 20th century? Adorno's answer to this question highlights the totalitarian drives within reason itself, and ties his own epoch as being inseparable from the Western rationality of the 18th century.

Adorno's criticism of Enlightenment is known for diverging from the usually optimistic account of this age⁶, and it heavily diverges from the Kantian and positivist excitement concerning the emancipatory possibilities of reason. In order to comprehend his critique thereof, we must first make explicit the foundations of what will be understood here as Enlightenment. This topic is highly polemical. There is still much controversy over key historical aspects of this age, with discussions ranging from where exactly we can locate the birthplace of Enlightenment, to the existence of a coherent unity concerning its expansion in Europe and its relations to colonialist projects (Tricoire, 2007, p. 6).

In this chapter, we will follow Adorno's own understanding of Enlightenment, which does not necessarily correspond to the way historians locate and comprehend this epoch. That is because his formulation is more based on a philosophical articulation, rather than a purely historical assessment

⁶ Although the 20th century brought a fierce reaction against the ideals of the Enlightenment with the postmodern and decolonial theories, a positive outlook of this age has echoed throughout the century. As mentioned by Damien Tricoire, "In twentieth-century scholarship, positive assessments of the Enlightenment have clearly dominated. Most students have seen the Enlightenment as a liberation from religious dogmas, a fight for tolerance, freedom, and human rights." (Tricoire, 2017, p. 2)

concerning dates and locations. For this reason, what we find in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is a broader, more encompassing account of this age, where Enlightenment is seen as the valorization of a specific set of notions, such as autonomy, mastery over the natural world and the use of instrumental reason. Throughout their work, Adorno and Horkheimer show the points of continuity interlinking the entire Western tradition, going as far back to the Ancient Greek mythologies. They make clear that such tradition is part of a larger structure of domination and exploitation leading up to the modern forms of Totalitarianism. Evidently, this does not mean that Adorno ignores the historical ramifications of enlightened Modernity. As noted by Yvonne Sherratt, Adorno and Horkheimer's comprehension of Enlightenment "relates to the historical one in that they regard this latter as the most 'predominant manifestation' of their object of study" (Sherratt, 2000, p. 522). In other words, for them, the historical period usually allocated between the 17th and 19th century is the most representative of a particular type of rationality.

The "historical Enlightenment" can be described as an internal struggle of the European consciousness. If Europe was destined to surpass the age of obscurantism, it had to diverge from its submission to undisputed systems of authority and unquestioned doctrines. This process took the form of a generalized skepticism concerning the inherited traditions of thought and legislation, and further stated the primacy of rationality in guiding the future of Humanity. The previous rule of superstition and religious dogma had to be replaced by means of the guidance of scientific reasoning and its reliance on calculations and instrumentalization. This path assured the Western man of his complete mastery over himself and the world around him. Science, now inseparable from any notion of progress, began to be understood as the utmost tool guiding mankind's emancipation from external forms of authority.

The continuous rise of Europe from a mere province of the World to become its leading power boosted the enthusiasm concerning the capabilities of its newly found confidence in reason. European economic expansion reassured the Western man of his prowess in domination, and further reinvigorated the arguments depicting the inferiority of the cultures the customs of which differed from the European ones. One of the signs of its alleged superiority relied in its rejection of mythology and its appeal to progress through the forms of scientific development, said to be the characteristics of the civilizations following the trajectory of the Universal.

Such understanding laid the grounds of the colonial discourse of Enlightenment. Europe could only be described as the powerhouse of the world and the ultimate reference of the human by contrast of what it considered as inferior. This has brought the need for the theoretical construction of non-European lives as lives the being of which is defined by a form of lacking. Through the negation of the humanity of the non-white, the European man categorized a new order of being by putting himself as the great jury of all that is human. The rationale on how to apprehend, maintain

and control resources was successfully applied to all domains of the real, and its influence in the subjugation of humans marked a fundamental aspect of the relation between Enlightenment and reason.

The rise of Europe validated the arguments over the notion of a progressive historical evolution. As widely known, the classic Hegelian account of the development of the West associates European history with a march towards freedom, in what could be read as a theory of progress. Unlike Hegel, Adorno does not recognize the trajectory of Western society as synonymous of social progress. Indeed, within the Frankfurt School Critical Theory, he can be listed alongside Walter Benjamin as an author who has rejected the Hegelian notion of progressive history. To Adorno, History cannot be thought in terms of a sustained expansion towards freedom. The adaptability of the scientific model and the way it is capable of ensuring a new world through the means of industrialization and mastery over nature is met with high skepticism. Although critical of a linear understanding of historical progress, Adorno does not invalidate the notion of progress itself. He does not make an appeal against reason, nor does he praise alternative forms of episteme founded in non-European cultures. Rather, he problematizes the usual blind faith in a teleological approach to History. What seems to be consistently ignored in these approaches is the inseparable relation between reason and power; how the development of the West has been met with the expansion of mechanisms of subjugation. As he summarizes in *History and Freedom*, “[w]hat can it mean to say that the human race is making progress when millions are reduced to the level of objects?” (Adorno, 2006, p. 8)

Adorno’s concern is the rationale behind an increasingly instrumentalist relation to the world. An outlook that, by virtue of an internal disposition to objectification and devalorization of whatever differs from it, aims to further increase the distinction between the Subject and the Object, leading to what could be described as a nihilistic perspective of the world. Such nihilism devalues human beings from their natural significance, placing them as cogs in the great machinery of historical necessity. Human suffering then becomes justifiable, and even necessary, as no value or meaning can be attributed to singular human lives. The narrative of progress obscures, purposefully or not, the sinister side of a civilization that has normalized the emergence of catastrophes and great outbursts of violence. Following Kierkegaard’s critique of the Hegelian philosophy, Adorno wants to highlight the individual suffering in face of the totality of an all encapsulating History, something he considers neglected in the *Philosophy of History* (p. 4). As he sees it, a debate over the meaning of History loses importance at the point where human lives themselves become meaningless.

Although Adorno’s criticism of Modernity highlights the discrepancy over the narratives of progress and the human suffering brought alongside the development of Europe, he is largely silent on the matter of Western imperialism and its use of violence in the name of progress. The fact that the colonial enterprise promoted the enrichment of European imperialist powers at the mercy of

countless dead indigenous populations, while boasting its accomplishments as a commitment to humanitarian ideals, is not mentioned in his writings. Given how such development gains a major influence in the *becoming* of the West and stands in clear relation to the topics here mentioned, the lack of a discussion interlinking these subjects represents a notorious gap in his critical theory. Nowhere else than in the colonies the discourse of progress made bluntly explicit its material relations to power, as its self-referential nature aimed to replace the culture heritage of the native by brute force, remodeling it after its own image. Here we should note how the colonialist assimilatory procedures, largely justified by a universalist narrative, became a central aspect of the colonial practices of Enlightenment.

During this period, assimilatory policies became central to the administrative procedures in the colonies. As explained by Damien Tricoire in his book *Enlightened Colonialism*, empires that did not make use of this type of ideology, such as Portugal and Spain, had their operations moved from a civilizational to a more assimilatory approach during the 18th century. Others, like the Russian empire, only started to become a colonial empire also during 18th century, by combining civilizing and assimilatory policies, which had not been done before. In the same century, France, that already made use of this practice, reinvented its universalist narratives during the colonization of Madagascar. In general, these practices aimed to establish an identity between the colonies and the metropolis. In the writings of the actors who enforced these mechanisms, such as Louis-Laurent de Fayd'herbe, the count of Madauve, the idea of a “soft” approach to colonization, in which the natives were said to welcome the European culture and its technologies, largely silenced the actual violence needed to be used to enforce the imperial political authority (Tricoire, 2017, p. 50)

This brief mention aims to show the importance of assimilatory procedures for the colonial tactics during the European Enlightenment. A discussion on modern forms of exploitation that withholds the importance of these new applications of sovereignty ends up by undermining the scope of its own investigation. For the sake of clarification, it should be stated that such absence is not only peculiar to Adorno, but it is integral to the particular way the authors from the Frankfurt School relate to these topics. As argued by Edward Said,

Frankfurt School critical theory, despite its seminal insights into the relationships between domination, modern society, and the opportunities for redemption through art as critique, is stunningly silent on racist theory, anti-imperialist resistance, and oppositional practice in the empire. (Said, 1993, as cited in Allen, 2017).

Said understands this silence as being a purposeful restraint from the part of these intellectuals in dealing with the dilemmas of the Third World (sic). He suspects they are partaking of the same universalist theories that were before used to link European culture with its imperialist enterprise. In

this context, even if we consider Adorno's conceptualization of Enlightenment as being more grounded in philosophical abstractions than in empirical events, one could still point out how his theory ends up being limited by virtue of its eurocentrism.

Given this panorama, the reader might ask why we should turn to Adorno in our goal to tackle the question of Black genocide. Since he is undoubtedly devoted to analyzing the state of affairs of bourgeois capitalist societies in his own socio-historical context, how could his work be beneficial to the completion of the task at hand? To answer this question, we must simply refer to how Adorno's intellectual framework is heavily influenced by a genocidal event, and how such event represents a distinct force behind all his works. Indeed, to him, the Holocaust stands as the most profound example of the failure of Modernity. It is because of the dimension of this tragedy that Adorno denounces any theory of historical progress, as millions dead bodies, killed and humiliated for unjustifiable reasons, turn any notion of sustained march towards freedom ludicrous.

Inasmuch the Holocaust holds such a substantial dimension in his thoughts, to the point where it becomes a justification for new formulations of Education, Philosophy, Art, and History, it attains the status of a paradigmatic phenomenon. In that sense, given how his oeuvre is set on coming to terms with these events, Adorno's theory on the development of Western society can be a valuable asset in facing the question of Black genocide. By relating the rise of genocide to impulses within the Western rationality, Adorno stands as one of the few philosophers who offer a broader account of the tragedy. For this reason, we shall uncover his articulations on genocide in order to later investigate how useful they can be for the comprehension of the central problem of this dissertation. Our intention, therefore, is to first present and later critically analyze his formulations on the matter, with the goal of inquiring if his conceptualization of genocide can illuminate the discussions on the violence inflicted against Black communities.

In order to proceed, we must first establish the preliminary work of comprehending the intellectual landscape preceding Adorno's writings. This task is necessary in order to better grasp the arguments laid out in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, where we can find a theorization on Enlightenment and its internal structures of domination. Therefore, we shall briefly discuss the Kantian and Baconian theory of Enlightenment, as they are thoroughly criticized by Adorno and Horkheimer, who consider them as prime examples of the rationality guiding Europe to Totalitarianism. Their arguments are said to capture the spirit of Modernity as they feature an instrumentalist account of the relationship between the Subject and whatever is not the Subject, and therefore are complicit in offering an objectifying conception of our presence in the world.

Before going forward, it should be mentioned that this investigation will opt for what is sometimes called as a horkheimerian reading of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. That is to say, our reading will consist of an interpretation focusing on instrumental rationality, and on how it operates

as a totalitarian force seeking total assimilation. In view of this, this investigation differs from a reading fully aligned with Adorno's late works, which is more concerned with, as Axel Honneth put it, "delivering a sequence of what can be called "figures" or "metaphors" that allows us to see existing social reality differently from how we are used to see it" (Honneth, 2019, 45:05) . Such interpretation highlights the processes of the cultural industry and its contribution in the creation of these figures.

The critical approach hereby sustained is justified by the fact that: 1) either interpretation is valid and none excludes the other since Adorno and Horkheimer worked together in the construction of the book, and both feel equally responsible for its content. Likewise, 2) this interpretation shows itself to be more adequate in light of Adorno's consideration of genocide in *Negative Dialectics*, as it relates genocide to a process of total integration.

2.1 The Ideals of the Enlightenment

While many thinkers from the modern age consider the valorization of rationality as a necessary movement in human History, it is Kant's description of Enlightenment that is often regarded as one of the most defining expressions of this age. Indeed, Kant's optimism regarding the potential of his own historical age echoes throughout his writings. We find in the very act of *critique* the appreciation of the virtuous disposition of human rationality in its capacity of knowing. The trial of reason, as laid out in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, rests on turning the capabilities of the human mind against itself. By setting up the limits of what is knowledgeable, Kant apparently restricts the applicability of rational thought and the usual ambitions of Metaphysics.

However, this moment is closely followed by a second. The removal of what can never be known from the horizon of questioning affirms the capacity of reason of responding to what it can *actually* know. This means that once the correct objects of thought are posed, reason should be able to offer answers with a high degree of certainty. In this fashion, the Kantian critique humbles reason at the same time it exacerbates it. Although our rational faculties are not able to solve the great mysteries surrounding human life, like the existence of God and other metaphysical principles, it is perfectly capable of granting us *truth* when dealing with the problems it can rightfully put in front of itself.

According to Kant, Enlightenment should be understood as the age of human liberation precisely because of its valorization of the human capacity in attaining knowledge. As he argues, "Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-imposed nonage. Nonage is the inability to use one's own understanding without another's guidance" (Kant, 2013, p. 1). Therefore, the enlightened

individual is the one who has blossomed into his full possibility. Those who have accepted a self-imposed duty of suspicion to any externally given norm are ready to rise above the stage of ignorance and finally acquire maturity. In other words, human development can only be thought in relation to our own rapport to reason. Either we fully rely on our rational capacities and assume a skeptic attitude to anything outside the domains of reason, or we are bound to rest as the incomplete and immature version of ourselves.

In this context, one might wonder why Adorno and Horkheimer find in Kant's description of Enlightenment the germs of a totalitarian rationality. If the Kantian formulation only accentuates the individual's obligation to accept her responsibility in seeking knowledge through her own capabilities, rather than blindly following what is given to her by means of tradition or other external forces, how could this translate to a type of mentality capable of guiding Europe to its biggest crisis? If anything, at first glance, such conceptualization seems to drive us further away from Totalitarianism, as it exacerbates the need to resist the unexamined propositions given by the *They*, since critical thinking is often held as an effective mechanism to dismiss authoritarian ideologies and illegitimate political authority. Therefore, what is the reason behind Adorno and Horkheimer's criticism of the Kantian ideals of Enlightenment?

Their answer refers to Kant's praises of the autonomous subject and her confidence in reason and science to the reductionism of reality to the confinements of rationality. Although Adorno and Horkheimer understand the critical approach of this epoch as having positive outcomes, such as the liberation from unquestioned forms of authority, what they judge to be lacking in Enlightenment is a critical stance against itself. The strategy of putting into suspicion all compartments of reality unequivocally overvalued the capability of reason, in the form of scientific methods, and it gave it the status of great juror of all that exists. In this sense, science becomes the ultimate representation of truth, and its method can be described as the foundations of all possible knowledge: "science itself has no awareness of itself; it is merely a tool. Enlightenment, however, is the philosophy which equates truth with the scientific system." (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2002, p. 66). By insuring a new structure of order through the placement of the scientific method as the legislative power of all that exists, Reason became the very authoritarian figure it was supposed to denounce. For this reason, the Kantian ideal of human liberation through an appeal to rationality ends in a tragic irony. Instead of erasing all the possibilities of dogmatic thinking, Reason itself becomes the dogmatic force in the world.

For Adorno and Horkheimer, the modern philosophers pushed a relationship between reason and power by developing the notions of man as an autonomous entity, whose power should be extended to maintain mastery over all natural entities. In this context, the philosophy of Francis Bacon becomes a great representation of this mentality. According to Bacon, we should depart from the

traditional contemplative forms of obtaining knowledge and adopt mechanisms of experimentation. Such approach aimed to give rise to an instrumentalist account of the relation between men and Nature, justified by an ontological hierarchy where men should enact the role of the conqueror of Nature by virtue of the prowess of his rationality. Such idea rested on the affirmation that, to fully be able to gather knowledge, men should bend the world around him according to his needs. Simultaneously, social development starts being thought in regards of how well this task is performed; in other words, progress starts to be related to how well we can pursue this utilitarian outlook of reality. For this reason, Bacon breaks from old philosophical traditions by pushing a theory that, for the Ancient Greeks, would be considered as a form of hybris. The placement of Man as the master of Nature consists in a change of paradigm, where Nature, now existing only as a form of matter to be manipulated, becomes disenchanting, stripped out of its own meanings.

In Adorno and Horkheimer's view, it is precisely this conception of knowledge as power that has fuelled the development of the Western bourgeois societies and their technological superiority. The reproduction of this form of reason validated itself, and therefore its operations of disenchantment of Nature, by its capacity of granting material progress. It was able to fulfill multiple needs of the bourgeois society, as it was capable of transforming nature and offering new goods and technology, effectively expanding military enterprises and international power, while simultaneously offering the material and ideological justifications for a system of underpaid and exploited workers in the industries. Therefore, technological development is inseparable from bourgeois power, as "[...] the basis on which technology is gaining power over society is the power of those whose economic position in society is strongest. Technical rationality today is the rationality of domination"(p. 95). This transformation has only been possible through new epistemological operations, where instrumentality and empiricism are held as the conditions of possibility of progress. For this reason, the authors argue that "technology is the essence of this knowledge. It aims to produce neither concepts nor images, nor the joy of understanding, but method, exploitation of the labor of others" (p.2). In Modernity, technology is the knowledge obtained through a detachment from old notions of meaning and contemplative aspirations. It is the result of an objective approach to the world, where men finds in Nature only a system of repetitive events, lacking meaning of mystery, to be used for the completion of his objectives:

The principle of immanence, the explanation of every event as repetition, which enlightenment upholds against mythical imagination, is that of myth itself. The arid wisdom which acknowledges nothing new under the sun, because all the pieces in the meaningless game have been played o lit, all the great thoughts have been thought, all possible discoveries can be construed in advance, and human beings are defined by self-preservation through adaptation-this barren wisdom merely reproduces the fantastic doctrine it rejects: the sanction of fate which, through retribution, incessantly reinstates what always was. Whatever might be different must be made the same.(p. 8)

Such comprehension, evidently, narrows the meaning of the world itself in order for it to rest as sheer *substrata*. The emancipation sought by the Western man could only be accomplished by extending his capacity of conquering Nature. Adorno and Horkheimer understand this attitude as a form of reaction against traditional mythology. But while trying to distance itself from mythology, said to be a characteristic of old, traditional societies, Enlightenment ends up in a contradiction, as it inevitably ends up becoming a form of myth itself. The authors understand the relation between the two as being dialectical: “myth is already enlightenment, and enlightenment reverts to mythology” (p. 218). This formulation aims to point to a shared condition between myth and enlightenment, where they stand as being radically different, while simultaneously carrying the same elements.

In order to follow their conceptualization, we need first to understand that ‘mythology’ and ‘enlightenment’ are not exclusive to any particular period of Western History. Rather, they represent a set of elements; of notions guiding a certain outlook of the world. As mentioned by Yvonne Sheratt, “[t]he most significant feature of their *myth* is that it is *defined internally* to the enlightenment” (Sherratt, 2000, p. 530), in other words, Enlightenment defines myth as what stands in opposition to its own core values. In this fashion, it defines itself while giving an account of mythology by being what is not identical to it. If Enlightenment is the path towards maturity, where the Subject trails the way towards freedom and peace, mythology could be said to be the representation of immature, barbaric and dogmatic forms of thinking. Essentially, while one affirms the path towards progress, the other asserts its rejection.

And yet, Enlightenment fails to fully negate mythology. The problem lies in the modern attempt of freeing the world from the authority of ancient types of beliefs, while being incapable of authentically deviating from the same impetus. For this reason, “the disenchantment of the world means the extirpation of animism.” (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002, p. 2), and yet, “no difference is said to exist between the totemic animal, the dreams of the spirit-seer, and the absolute Idea.” (p. 3). They all seem to carry the same drive of providing a totalizing account of reality, while promoting their enunciations as absolute truth. Indeed, there could only be a dialectical relation between Enlightenment and mythology, in the sense of the reversibility between mythology and enlightenment, if we can see elements of similarity and opposition between the two of them. What turns them in opposition is the critical stance of Enlightenment; while what brings them together is a totalitarian account of the real, which forbids any dissimilar interpretation of truth.

The scientific method aimed to distance the Western man from the claws of dogmatic thinking and to lead the path to a new “enlightened” form of being in the world. However, the methodology by which it operated, through the disenchantment of nature in an increasingly instrumentalist view of knowledge, reduced everything outside the domains of the “enlightened subject” to forms of

abstraction. Adorno and Horkheimer see the implications of this picture of generalized detachment in the development of Capitalism, where this abstraction took the form of notions of equivalence and exchange. Capitalism disintegrates the uniqueness of things in order for them to be compared with other products in an endless chain of merchandise. Objects receive an assigned symbolic value, and through this operation the dissimilarity between objects is vanished. They are exchangeable and made similar because they are all defined by their worth in the form of currency. In this context, they are reduced to quantities, which fulfill the purpose of providing their assimilation into the capitalistic logic.

The repercussions of this rationality inside the structures of social classes and labor division are one the major focus of Adorno and Horkheimer's diagnosis of the failures of Enlightenment. What is stressed in their argumentation is how the character of modern rationalization was successfully applied to the techniques of social coercion. The assimilatory mechanisms of Enlightenment's rationality is said to become a totalizing power, inflicting a nullifying force against the individual in the name of a higher authority. In a society governed by an instrumentalist account of reason, individuals become homogenous entities; their uniqueness is left aside for them to become part of a rigid system. They are part of the great narrative of history, or the capitalist machinery of profit. The individual, in its innate singularity, is lost inside these processes. She becomes as quantifiable and malleable as an object, reduced to the status of a tool:

Each human being has been endowed with a self of his or her own, different from all others, so that it could all the more surely be made the same. But because that self never quite fitted the mold, enlightenment throughout the liberalistic period has always sympathized with social coercion. The unity of the manipulated collective consists in the negation of each individual and in the scorn poured on the type of society which could make people into individuals. (p. 9)

For this reason, the ideals of emancipation of Enlightenment fail, as no authentic freedom can be achieved when human singularity is deprived of meaning. The inaugural objective of establishing a new order free from traditional metaphysics and dogmas did not lead to human liberation, but to an authoritarian system of knowledge whose primary function is the use of power to maintain its engines of control. As Enlightenment reverts to the blind belief of its own capacities by an unquestioned over valorization of its form of rationality, it ends up performing the same type of dogmatic belief it accused the previous mythological tradition of doing. In this sense, Enlightenment holds reason as its own form of myth. The unquestionable and all powerful capacities of instrumental reason perform the same normative function of the mythological narratives. Incapable of taking a critical approach against itself, Enlightenment ideology assure men

of safety through the assumption of a perfect system, where all is knowledgeable and can be submitted to a pre-existing structure of order.

Adorno and Horkheimer's portrait of Enlightenment show how instrumental rationality leads to domination of nature and humans. It prescribes a utilitarian outlook on social and natural life, where everything has its assigned purpose. It justifies suffering through a teleological narrative of progress, where control of all living beings is normalized through processes of abstraction, where humans and Nature lose any form of inherent meaning and are reduced to the set of functions they are expected to fulfill. In conclusion, this panorama equates knowledge with domination, and progress with suffering. However, in the midst of this critique of Enlightenment, our original question of genocide remains unanswered. How exactly does this diagnosis relate to the occurrence of genocides? In what follows, we will lay out Adorno's conceptualization of genocide as being tightly connected to the repercussions of modern rationality. To Adorno, the ways in which the instrumental rationality exerts control over natural life culminates in a boundless drive over assimilation and homogenization. Such procedure eventually assumes its most gruesome possibility in the form of genocide.

2.2 Adorno and Genocide

Before relating our previous discussion with the question of genocide, a few preliminary remarks are necessary. First of all, it should be stressed how Adorno's philosophical method differs from the traditional form of theorization usually found in philosophical writings. His analyses are often opaque, esoteric, without clear definitions. In his attempt to provide an account of reality, or, as he would have put it, totality, he abandons the pretensions of a systematic philosophy, as it encloses the subject of discussion in a false state of fullness. As mentioned by Gillian Rose, "Adorno starts from the assumption of a split and antagonistic reality which cannot be adequately represented by any system which makes its goals unity and simplicity or clarity" (Rose, 1978, p. 15). As a consequence, he denies any attempt of clearly defining concepts, as he sees linguistic clarity as an obstacle in the way of the dealing with the dilemmas of the real. To him, the pretension of a more accessible language stands on the way of understanding, as it underplays the complexities of the subjects the philosopher poses upon himself, which a more accessible and traditional language isn't capable of fully expressing.

As expected of a philosopher who follows such methodology, we do not find in Adorno a detailed discussion on genocide. There are no clear descriptions of what it is, what leads to it, its elements, and so on. Instead, Adorno grants us with a theoretical background of the development of

European History, and invites us to think about genocide inside the unveiling of said History and the performativity of Reason. This is not to say, however, that Adorno is not engaged in an explicit discussion of the Holocaust. On the very contrary, it is widely known how the subject constantly reappears in his writings, and also how often it appears in the background of many of his further discussions. However, even then we can see how his characteristic approach remains the same. It continues to stand as a deliberate exercise avoiding the encapsulation of phenomena in rigid definitions, having accepted the impossibility and even inappropriateness of providing full explanations of what it sets out to be in dialogue with.

Our aim in this section consists in untangling Adorno's articulation on genocide. His most quoted articulation on the subject appears in *Negative Dialectics*, and it reads as follows:

Genocide is the absolute integration. It is on its way wherever men are leveled off—'polished off,' as the German military called it—until one exterminates them literally, as deviations from the concept of their total nullity. (Adorno, 2004, p. 362)

The first thing to be noticed is how genocide stands in relation to "integration," which refers to a process of assimilation inside a "totality". This means that it functions as a corrective force, aiming to reestablish a social order in the name of a social whole that feels under threat. As we have seen in the previous discussion, the discourse of Enlightenment constructs itself by assuming an all-encompassing intervention on reality. Nothing can lie outside of its jurisdiction, because "for the Enlightenment, only what can be encompassed by unity has the status of an existent or an event; its ideal is the system from which everything and anything follows." (p. 4). Anything that cannot be translated into its pre-established system must be discarded. This is a consequence of the rationality of Enlightenment and its rapport with the unknown. What stands beyond the domains of reason is a source of fear, and therefore the quest to make all reality knowledgeable is a self-preservation mechanism, since fear derives from what is unknown. For this reason, "nothing is allowed to remain outside, since the mere idea of the "outside" is the real source of fear." (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002, p. 11)

Totality is a system incapable of accepting deviations, as those are seen as a threat. They break the established order by view of their dissimilarity. In this context, genocidal violence appears as a systemic mechanism aiming to fulfill its assumed pathos, where order can only be achieved through homogenization. As pointed out by Martin Shuster, we can also notice this same line of reasoning in *Minima Moralia*:

Accordingly the destructive tendencies of the masses that explode in both varieties of totalitarian state are not so much death-wishes as manifestations of what they have already become. They

murder so that whatever to them seems living, shall resemble themselves” (Adorno, as cited in Shuster, 2014, p. 38)

Genocide, thus, comes into being as an expression of the authoritarian force of a totality, aiming the perpetuation of the identical. Such formulation points to the realization of this violence as something that cannot be hastily considered as the expression of a ‘barbaric’ phenomenon, as sometimes we are lead to believe, incapable of taking place in more “enlightened” societies. In fact, for Adorno, genocide is perfectly *rational*. As reason is seen as a perpetual ambition towards unity, pushing aside anything that does not correspond to its internal standards, it can repeat this framework when it becomes a normative logic within a society. Adorno’s goal is to show how the event of genocide and the aspirations of reason follow the same pattern. In view of this, we can summarize Adorno’s conceptualization of genocide as a sufficiently rational process, aiming to destroy what cannot fit inside a pre-determinate system.

This formulation is not radically different from the hegemonic understanding of genocide. For one, it considers genocide as an outburst of physical violence. Adorno does not engage with the cultural elements of genocide, neither does he develop on how genocide might take other forms of violence beyond the form of physical annihilation. Consequently, his formulation deviates from Raphael Lemkin’s original conceptualization of genocide, as it does not seem to share some of its fundamental premises. At the same time, Adorno’s formulation represents an interesting philosophical approach to the subject at hand. It is clear how, although confronted with the burden of speaking about such subject in the aftermath of World War II, his thoughts go beyond the particularities of the Nazi regime and offer a broader understanding of genocide.

Nevertheless, some criticisms can be made to Adorno’s formulation. Some critics, such as Martin Shuster, understand Adorno’s account of genocide as a necessary outcome of the expansion of the dialectic of Enlightenment. For him, the philosopher does not make it sufficiently clear why precisely this form of violence, and no other, must be the conclusion of the authoritarianism of reason:

Even if we grant Horkheimer and Adorno the myriad premises involved in their argument, it is still not apparent that all rationality—whether in the form of myth or enlightenment—must be so totalizing. Why precisely is genocide the teleological conclusion to this process? Even if we grant Adorno the premise ‘that objects do not go into their concepts without leaving a remainder’ (ND 5/15), that is, that there will always be something that cannot and will not be integrated, why precisely must this something be eliminated as opposed to, e.g., marginalized (apartheid) or disempowered (slavery) or spatially rather than ‘existentially’ eliminated (ethnic cleansing or exile)? (p. 17)

Martin Shuster’s arguments are pertinent insofar as they problematize the lack of a necessary link between genocide and the will to totalization. Since there are other ways of disfranchising and

ostracizing social pariahs, such as through slavery or apartheid, why genocide should function as the necessary outcome in dealing with such groups? Both slavery and apartheid carry the germs of the rationale of Enlightenment insofar as they are a consequence of a need of classification for instrumental purposes, be it in the form of a mass of men-merchandise to further economic goals, or in the creation of a homogenized sphere of a society where those who deviate from the norm are not allowed to roam freely and are deprived from access to power. In view of this, genocide does not appear to be the only form of providing wholeness, as those mechanisms are also capable of serving the needs of an “enlightened” society seeking to find purposes for those who are unwanted.

The problem, therefore, seems to arise from the conceptualization of genocide as a teleological outcome in the form of physical annihilation of those who are outside the normative structure of a society. Instead of trying to respond to Martin Shuster’s objection by referring to the works of Adorno to resolve this problem within the framework of his philosophy, we will use this problematization as an opening to offer a different account of genocide. As mentioned previously, Adorno’s formulation of genocide appears to only highlight the physical destructive aspect of genocide, leaving the notions of cultural erasure and “the rights of a group to exist as such”, as first formulated by Lemkin, untouched. Inasmuch his formulation categorizes genocide as this outburst of physical violence, as a necessary solution of a system seeking homogenization, it fails to question how other mechanisms of disfranchisement can be used and are indeed used to attain the same goal, and/or how they can be related to genocide. Therefore, his formulation can be seen as incapable of dealing with the forms of violence inflicted against the Black diaspora. In what follows, we will argue how phenomena such as slavery and apartheid are not substantially different from genocide, but should be considered as constitutive elements of the genocidal structure of anti-Black violence.

3 Black Genocide

Before moving forward into the question of Black genocide, we must first recapitulate some of our findings so far. In the first chapter, the discussion over the concept of genocide pointed to the possibility of comprehending the term beyond the frames of the juridical framework and some of the prominent understandings offered by Genocide Studies. The element of “expressed intent”, a normative guidance to describe an event as genocide, was problematized. Our discussion showed how such element obscures the dynamics of genocide. Such as it was the case of the indigenous population, genocide can happen even if those who are responsible for enacting such violence do not actively plan each step necessary to bring these groups to the verge of complete extermination. Thus, instead of prioritizing the element of intent, our research has decided to side with authors who opt to comprehend genocide by analyzing how groups can be existentially and demographically affected by a type of structural violence. Therefore, our goal now is to understand how such violence affects the very “condition of life” of Black communities. In order to affirm the existence of genocidal violence against them, we need to investigate the existence of a violence exposing Black lives to death.

It can be argued that this frame of inquiry, aiming to understand the exposition of Black bodies to death, is a dominant aspect in the writings of African and diasporic philosophers. What seems to always lie in close proximity with the Black experience of the world, and what is constantly the subject of interrogation, is the very end of its possibility, namely, death. The examined Black life, borrowing Plato’s terminology, is therefore a life in reconciliation with death. They are the ones more prone to end abruptly, as they have been historically crossed by different techniques of domination, forgotten in degraded territories. In this context, when trying to understand how the Black subject relates her being to death, the African/diasporic philosopher is invested in coming to terms with a very frequent and impositive phenomenon. To understand the shadow of death, in its different possibilities, is to expand the knowledge of a consciousness in a constant struggle with its finitude.

As we move to evaluate the existence, and even the substance, of a Black genocide, we need first to first understand the being standing so close to death. In other words, we ought to understand the existential experience of the Black subject, or what Frantz Fanon has denominated as the *damné*. This discussion is necessary in order to reveal the troubled character of Black selfhood. Indeed, the question of the self is central to any discussion of violence against Black subjects. The philosophical task of offering a discourse on violence, in this case, genocidal violence, is

incomplete if one does not face the nihilistic character of Black lives. Thomas J. Curry expands on this idea when commenting on Black males:

Far too often, Black men and boys are recognized only as summaries of raw sociological data: idle collateral, figureless subjects vacated in person and defined by number. These Black males are thought to be little more than the numbers indicating that Black males are social problems: on the street, inevitably dead, or permanently locked away. Black males are not imagined as living human beings. [...] Their lives are not seen, because death is normal for them; he is — they are — disposable. (Curry, 2017, p. 129).

What should be noticed here is the importance in “seeing” the life of the Black subject. Rather than just exposing the violence inflicted against them, the understanding of how this violence becomes an existential burden is paramount to our task. For this reason, we turn to the phenomenological existentialism of Frantz Fanon. This will serve as a gateway to understand the particularities of a mode-of-being defined by the effects of violence. Through this discussion, we will open a thread to consider the life of the *damné* as a “life-in-death”.

Following this discussion, we will approach the question of Black genocide through Achille Mbembe’s concept of *necropolitics*. Through this framework, we will show how Mbembe’s critique of Modernity can be seen as more adequate to approach the question of genocide than the one offered by Adorno. By considering genocide as the expression of a type of sovereignty driven by altruicide – the need to eliminate the other, we will show how necropolitics is a force commanding Black lives to the inhuman state of “life-in-death”. In this context, genocide will be shown to be a force whose ultimate outcome is not only death, but the imposition of a condition where a proper life cannot be sustained. Finally, in the last subchapter, we will confront our findings with the contemporary world. In order to affirm the persistence of a genocide structure in today’s liberal societies, we will have to evaluate the persistence of a necropolitical force being exercise against Black subjects, and the persistence of the dehumanized character of Blackness.

3.1 On the Nonbeing

In the first chapter, we mentioned how the racial category of Blackness is a volatile construction. Indeed, one could think of it as a floating signifier in constant actualization⁷. As something that is produced, Blackness refers to the recreation and actualization of a constellation of images, symbols,

⁷ The understanding of Blackness as a floating signifier, referring to the appropriation of the term by Ernesto Laclau, points to an understanding of such category as deprived of a rigid and intangible content. For one, Blackness is not an ontological property. Rather, it functions by a relational logic, usually determined by socio-political particularities of a determinate country or state, capable of acquiring or losing elements. To illustrate this, we can think of how one might be considered Black in the United States but not in Brazil.

practices and narratives. In its inaugural moment, it installed the representation of an impoverished humanity, one who could not aspire to become anything else than the reproduction of stimulus and drives. One could say Blackness, in its inception, represents an imposed identity, a fantasy to be disseminated throughout the world. That's because the insertion of the African indigenous within the western order could not be made in terms of a shared humanity. The being of the Black subject could never aspire to self-determination, as the rigid imaginary establishing it as a simulacrum of the human was already in place.

We find in the process of racialization a perfect reflection of how the rationality of Enlightenment seizes and transforms reality. It reflects the operations aiming schematization and the partition of reality in utilitarian terms. Simultaneously, it also comprises a narrative of progress and ultimately results in the accumulation of wealth, a defining characteristic of capitalism. All these different facets of Enlightenment can be attested in the creation, and in the subsequent consequences, of the racialization of indigenous natives into Black. As we have discussed, the Black man is born as a body of extraction, a being whose singularity is entirely defined in utilitarian terms. Once this identity had already been assigned, scientific development prospered. To make better use of his property, the master had to ensure the creation of a sufficiently adequate technological system. The logistical obstacles of how to expropriate bodies from a continent to another boomed the development of new techniques of transportation, commerce, warfare and exploitation of peoples (Mbembe, 2017, p. 20). The creation of the Black, therefore, accompanies material and technical progress not only in the obvious sense of profits from forced labor, but also because the exploitation of his labor had to be followed by a technological apparatus to maximize profit. In this fashion, it has validated progress as it generated what it conceives as the sign of progress: technological advancement and wealth.

All of these dynamics functioned to respond to an interiorized ambition of the Western settler. As Lewis Gordon has put it, "Europe sought to become ontological; it sought to become what dialecticians call "Absolute Being" (Gordon, 2015, p. 19). To become Absolute is to achieve the status of a deity. The Supreme Being is the one capable of dictating and describing the being of all natural entities. It sees in the reflection of its epistemic operations in the world the will of a perfect system, capable of assigning the value to all aspects of reality. This does not imply the self-identification of the individual western man as a divine entity, but rather the acknowledgment of his own system of rationality, and the way he acted in the world, as carrying the mark of a divine mission. In this fashion, the assignment of the native indigenous as Black, and all the discourse surrounding it, emerges as the use of a creative power justified by a theological intervention in reality. In the midst of the exercise of this power, Lewis Gordon argues that the West constructs itself as a theodicy, "Theodicy (from *theos*, meaning god, and *dike*, meaning justice) is the branch

of inquiry that attempts to account for the compatibility of an omnipotent, omniscient, and good god with injustice and evil.” (p.19). The denomination of Europe as a theodicy reflects the existence of a rationality constantly justifying its use of violence as being legitimate. If suffering was a consequence of colonialism, this suffering could not be gratuitous or meaningless, but a consequence of a project aiming for the greater good.

The need of a theoretical justification for colonialism becomes necessary as the explicit violent character of this enterprise is not only present during its initial manifestation, but it is sustained throughout its expansion. Even if we acknowledge the different forms it took place, after all, colonial projects differed from one another in different aspects, it should be said that colonialism is an unavoidable violent procedure. In the writings of Frantz Fanon, we find a continuous effort in understanding the repercussions of this violence. His *oeuvre* describes the way through which violence is used to maintain control of a social order and create a hierarchy of being, as well as the psychological and existential ramifications of its use onto the racialized individuals. Moreover, Fanon is also invested in coming to terms with this violence as a mechanism of cure. If his Philosophy does not provide a general account of violence, in a way where the very substance of what is violence is elucidated, it provides an overview that, for those who have suffered the effects of racial subjugation, or are interested in the emancipation of humankind, is even more valuable. For this reason, when he opens *Black Skin, White Masks* by saying “I do not come with timeless truths” (Fanon, 1986, p. 9) his words seem to try to prelude the innate contingency of the themes he is about to discuss. Fanon could not hold timeless truths because the questions he is engaging with are all irreducibly temporal, historically situated; they refer to the dilemmas of a consciousness that has been fabricated. To theoretically engage with the Black man, is to be referring to a form of presence in the world that only came into existence through the violent expression of colonialism. As he has said:

The settler and the native are old acquaintances. In fact, the settler is right when he speaks of knowing "them" well. For it is the settler who has brought the native into existence and who perpetuates his existence. The settler owes the fact of his very existence, that is to say, his property, to the colonial system. (Fanon, 1963, p. 36)

As a created product, the Black man is a product of differentiation, rather than a natural entity. In this fashion, an investigation on the Black man is not an investigation on the nature of man. When Fanon assumes an existentialist standpoint, the focus of inquiry is not the common man, as the Black man refers to a being whose humanity has been degraded to the point it was denied. His discourse on the self assumes a regionalized attitude, as what is being inquired is a self constantly in battle to exist or to assume its identity. In what follows, we will explore some of the aspects of

Fanon's existentialism and how he approaches the question of selfhood. This will be followed by a discussion on the role of violence and death in the *becoming* of the Black native.

Fanon's phenomenological existentialism is an effort towards the examination of the hellish experience of the Black life. It is based on the articulation of how the experiences of submission suppress the being of the racialized subject, making the experience of being Black a type of descent into an abyss. His existentialism acquires a rebellious disposition as it tries to grant meaning to the African subjects in an anti-Black world, in a reality in which their existence is frontally confronted by death and humiliation; in a world where their demands are non-demands as their lives are not proper lives. In this context, Fanon is faced with the question of finding the being of the Black man in a world in which ontological properties have been corrupted. As he says, "ontology—once it is finally admitted as leaving existence by the wayside—does not permit us to understand the being of the black man" (Fanon, 1986, p. 110). Within the seemingly impossibility of finding the being in the non-being, the fanonian existentialism aims to illuminate the existential conditions keeping Black lives in a state of negation, while also searching for ways through which this reality could change. Insofar as he is personally invested in his investigation, as his own existence is the testimony of the experiences he aims to denounce, Fanon's existentialism is a self-examination imbued in angst. He is never distant from the object of investigation, as his philosophy is a cry trying to claim his own humanity.

Fanon, similarly to Kierkegaard, understands the creation of the self as an appropriation of oneself and one's own historical time. As he writes, when explaining his goals in writing *Black Skin, White Masks*:

The architecture of this work is rooted in the temporal. Every human problem must be considered from the standpoint of time. Ideally, the present will always contribute to the building of the future. And this future is not the future of the cosmos but rather the future of my century, my country, my existence. In no fashion should I undertake to prepare the world that will come later. I belong irreducibly to my time. (p.15)

The relation between the self and temporality is the condition of possibility of human existence. Fanon is aware of how his being is intrinsically linked to his own time, and how this relation shapes his experience of the world. In this context, we can relate the fanonian existentialism to the one of Kierkegaard. According to Kierkegaard, philosophers have been too busy in trying to understand the tides of History through the category of necessity. By persisting in this effort they have neglected what he calls the sphere of liberty, in which we are constantly faced by dilemmas in which we need to choose absolutely. Differently from how one can try to understand History, there's no mediation originated from a dialectical process in the becoming of the self. To Kierkegaard, we often have to decide according to an "either/or". Our personality is created by

choosing one side of a dichotomy, and this happens, for instance, when we opt for living a life in search for aesthetic pleasure instead of one grounded on a sense of morality. Through choosing one option instead of another, in a set of oppositional terms, we create our self. To Judge Wilhelm, the pseudonym said to be the author of the second volume of Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*, the effort of becoming a self combines an inner struggle with an exterior struggle. The individual is simultaneously the consequence of her choices and free actions and of her own historical time also. To take a stand on one's own being, in this perspective, means to reconcile both dimensions. The creation of the self, therefore, is not an autonomous project, as it stands in rapport to a condition outside of the individual:

To be sure, the ethical individual dares to employ the expression that he is his own editor, but he is also fully aware that he is responsible, responsible for himself personally, inasmuch as what he chooses will have a decisive influence on himself, responsible to the order of things in which he lives, responsible to God. (Kierkegaard, 1987, p. 233)

Even if we turn to another pseudonym used by Kierkegaard, this time Anti-Climacus in *Sickness Unto Death*, we still find the idea of the construction of the self as a process involving a rapport between the individual with something existing beyond her. The fall into despair and therefore inauthenticity, according to Anti-Climacus, can be a consequence of blindly following the patterns of behavior of one's society. The "They", the collective consciousness, imposes an identity onto the individual, which she is likely to follow if she denies her inherent capability of self-reflecting on her own being. Liberation from this despair arrives by affirming the individual's capability of *becoming what she really is*. In accepting the role one has to one self and to God, while denying becoming only a product of one's social milieu. For both Judge Wilhelm and Anti-Climacus, the self must travel inwards but also towards a transcendental power, either through a comprehension of her place inside History, or by realizing how she stands in relation to "the power that established it" (Kierkegaard, 1980, p. 14). This journey of self-knowledge is, nevertheless, an introspective affair. While the reconciliation of the self presupposes the acknowledgment of something different from it, this process is not mediated through a relation with the *Other*.

While Fanon's existentialism is similar to Kierkegaard's insofar as he also acknowledges the presence of two factors in the shaping of one's self, an aspect differentiating his thoughts from the one of the bourgeois Danish author can be said to lie in the emphasis on the role of power, and the techniques of social coercion, as an obstacle to the flourishing of the self. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon shows how the Black subjectivity results from the internalization of a condition of inferiority, one constantly in the making. The difference between his and Kierkegaard's approach consists in the need of coming to terms with a being whose subjectivity is said to be inhuman. While Kierkegaard's existentialism speaks of a man who emerges in the public sphere in equal

terms with the others, Fanon speaks of a degraded being that needs to ascend beyond the categories in which he has been placed. In this fashion, the existential particularity of the Black subject comes from the mechanisms of subjugation that sustains a colonial narrative. The struggle for emancipation and authenticity to liberate him from this condition does not lie in a movement towards his interiority, but rather in clashing against the material conditions sustaining the racial hierarchy. That is why, as Fanon argues, the native must realize he is not different from the settler. In this context, violence emerges as the means through which this gap is tightened. Through violence, “he [the native] finds out that the settler's skin is not of any more value than a native's skin; and it must be said that this discovery shakes the world in a very necessary manner” (Fanon, 1963, p. 45). Once the native realizes how he and the settler stand on equal foot before death, in the sense that their existence share this unifying condition, he can break free from the complex of inferiority and notice they partake of the same human condition.

At the same time, another dilemma shows itself. As Fanon repeatedly remarks in *Black Skin, White Masks*, the Black man wants to be the White man. Once the White man appears to the gaze of the native as a form of negation of his own condition, the answer to the question “[w]hat does the Black man want?” (Fanon, 1986, p.10) posed in the beginning of the book, finds an answer almost immediately. The desire of the native, his lust, is to find the same plenitude and autonomy of his counterpart. The unavoidable question is, if the desire of the native is to become the settler, does this resume his existential project in an ambition moving to obtain a simulacrum of the power of the settler? If so, the Black man would be willing to integrate himself into a new order, but now occupying the place of the master. In this context, the freedom innate in the *becoming* of the self, and its capacity of authenticity, would be crushed by a will to become an already established, pre-given identity, but this time the content of white identity.

What solution does Fanon provide to this conundrum? Before offering a possible answer, it is worthwhile to refer to this problem, initially, through logic. Let's pose the question at hand in relation to Kierkegaard's and Hegel's thinking. This will involve a hypothesis considering both the Black and White identity as modes of being capable of being chosen. The reader might wonder how could this be possible, given how delimitations based on appearances seem to be always in place when speaking of the encounter between the Black and White man. To consider both identities as capable of being chosen means to highlight their defining content, which could be said to be affirmed or denied by the individual in her own introspection.

If the question before the Black Man is a logical disjunction, an either/or to be chosen absolutely between the Black and the White identity, as the Judge Wilhem's ethics would lead us to believe, the question would assume each identity as opposed to the other, incapable of coexisting. Each one of them, carrying their own singularity by representing a radically dissimilar set of images and

symbols, negates the content of the other. Moreover, posed this way, both of them could be either affirmed or denied, equally capable of being chosen. From a Hegelian perspective, however, there is the possibility of arriving at a third option through mediation. The Black and White identity, through a dialectical process, could offer a third type of presence, an elevated form going beyond the first two elements. The problem with both options, from a Fanonian perspective, lies in the lack of content of Blackness. We can refer here to Homi Bhabha, when he combines the way Fanon describes the geography of the colonies and the problem of subjectivity:

What he says in *The Wretched of the Earth* of the demography of the colonial city reflects his view of the psychic structure of the colonial relation. The native and settler zones, like the juxtaposition of black and white bodies, are opposed, but not in the service of “a higher unity.” No conciliation is possible, he concludes, for of the two terms one is superfluous. (Fanon, 1963, p.39)

In the Manichean world of colonization, neither the Kierkegaardian nor the Hegelian models fit. We need to recall how Black identity, in the context of colonialism, is never a choice. Blackness represents an absence, the abyss of being. Those in the abyss inhabit the zone of nonbeing, “an extraordinarily sterile and arid region, an utterly naked declivity where an authentic upheaval can be born” (p.10). Inhabiting this zone is to live in punishment, damnation, as we have seen this identity as one established through force. In this context, choosing to be Black in a colonial world is not a legitimate possibility because Blackness is ontologically void. It is not the same of choosing, say, an aesthetic or ethical life, in which both terms stand to each other in opposition, but are equally valuable in ontological – even if not in moral – terms. As written by Tendayi Sithole, “what is clear from Fanon is that black subjects exist in the choiceless situation. [...] Their social lives are not the ones which are confronted by choices” (Sithole, 2015, p. 7). At the same time, for the same reason, no mediation through the Black and White identity is possible. There can be no *aufhebung* as one of the elements in place is empty, “superfluous”, as Bhabha has pointed out.

In this context, what we see is two oppositional forces, but one radically configured as ontologically superior to the other. In order for Blackness to become passive of being chosen, a process reclaiming its significance outside of the colonial configuration becomes necessary. In this sense, a follow-up question is inevitable: what should Blackness represent in a postcolonial world? Does it refer to the old traditions of the native, a past she should reintegrate in the present? Or does it refer to a new type of presence in the world?

To Fanon, the past is neither a simple source of nostalgia nor a utopian dream to be relived. We do not find in his writings a philosophical *saudade*, such as the one we can find in the Portuguese missionary Padre Antônio Vieira, in which the experience of the past (which, to Vieira, was the humanity before Adam’s fall), is what is sought for the future. As Chester Fontenot has pointed out,

“[Fanon] constructs his myth in the present, and focuses on the past only insofar as it gives him a basis to move from the negative zone” (1979, as cited in Gordon, 2015, p. 72). The past is a tool to ascend beyond the zone of nonbeing. For this reason, when referring to the pre-colonial past, Fanon is interested in the opening of a shared consciousness, one needed to be created in order to elevate those living in the nihilistic borders of a racialized world. In this context, rather than the singular past of any particular group of people, the past must be an image of unification:

Culture, extracted from the past to be displayed in all its splendor, is not necessarily that of his own country. Colonialism, which has not bothered to put too fine a point on its efforts, has never ceased to maintain that the Negro is a savage; and for the colonist, the Negro was neither an Angolan nor a Nigerian, for he simply spoke of "the Negro". (Fanon, 1963, p. 211)

The affirmation of African culture, of Blackness, aims to make it *positive*. It is a process aiming to enrich the existential qualification of the Black with positive attributes, instead of the discourse surrounding it as the negation of whiteness. The past is a tool to ascend beyond the zone of nonbeing. As a tool, it does not completely seize the content of Blackness. That's to say, whatever this transnational identity must represent, it must not be a mere replication of the past, as the repercussions of the rupture caused by colonialism demand a revolution, a coming to terms with both the past and the present in order to generate a project of human emancipation. Fanon is aware of this when he says “[t]he colonized man who writes for his people ought to use the past with the intention of opening the future, as an invitation to action and a basis for hope” (p. 232). To bring up the past is to recollect an inheritance of traditions and knowledge that should not be forgotten or erased. Rather than an ethnic solipsism, memory is the condition of possibility of liberty, but not an ultimate goal in itself. For this reason, the last sentence continues with the philosopher saying “[b]ut to ensure that hope and to give it form, he must take part in action and throw himself body and soul into the national struggle” (p. 232). There is no freedom without a revolutionary struggle.

Finally, let's go back to our initial question. If the desire of the Black man is a lust towards taking the place of the White man, does this assertion implicate in a need to take up the identity of a master, and hold the power of domination? To take hold of the pre-given identity, turn it his own, and unleash his resentment onto others? Here, we need to turn to the fanonian characterization of violence. Fanon describes it as an expression of those who hold power. It is used both to create and maintain a determined order. In the colonial context, the settler exercises this power to subjugate the native and enforce a system of exploitation. This is not to say, however, that violence cannot be used to a liberationist or co-operative goal. As Fanon has said, “what they demand is not the settler's position of status, but the settler's place” (p. 60). To take the settler's place, but not his

status, is to confront colonialism, “violence in its natural state” (p. 61), with a greater emancipatory violence. Therefore, the identity to be reclaimed is not the one who constructs itself as a master through the use of violence, but one of an emancipated being using violence as a mechanism of defense. The goal, therefore, is the construction of another image of the human. As Sithole writes, “Fanon brings to the attention the fact that the will to liberation is the creation of new forms of life, and by black subjects themselves” (Sithole, 2015, p. 11). This liberation uses violence to forge an image of humanity beyond the shackles of the colonial conquest.

Fanon’s phenomenological existentialism aims to come to terms with the pathologies of an anti-Black world. He is adamant in his conception of racialization as a multi-dimensional force inflicting both physical and spiritual damnation. The body of the colonized feels the impact of violence as being “under the skin” (Fanon, 1963, p.71), inflicting a muscular tension (p. 54). With this image, we can think of the effects of this violence as being a type of parasite inhabiting the deeper layers of our skin. It twitches the body, forces reflexes, and imposes a tension to the point it becomes impossible to be at ease. To have a vermin crawling inside one’s skin is to be perpetually aware of a corrosive force taking a toll on the body. The perception of the body, therefore, becomes entirely devoted to the awareness of the effect of this strange force. The Black subject thus relates to her body primarily through the feeling of uneasiness. In this context, “consciousness of the body is solely a negating activity” (Fanon, 1986, p. 110). The awareness of the body is the awareness of a power over it. It is a negating activity because it comprises the negation of autonomy.

This activity of negation is also extended to a sickness of the self, exemplified by Fanon when referring to his experiences in France:

Look a Negro ... Mama, see the Negro! I’m frightened ... I could no longer laugh, because I already know there were legends, stories, history and above all historicity ... Then assailed at various points, the corporal schema crumbled its place taken by a racial epidermal schema ... It was no longer a question of being aware of my body in the third person but in a triple person ... I was responsible for my body, for my race, for my ancestors. (p. 112)

What Fanon is describing is the effects of a triple-person consciousness. In this dynamic, the self is shattered by the gaze of the white subject. The normal state of being present in the world, in which we are not aware of our body as we take it to be a mechanical expression of our will, is interrupted. Fanon’s body stops from being transparent to him to become the material sign of a racial, political and geographical inheritance. He no longer exists as himself, as his consciousness cannot deviate from the historicity of the world that has racialized him. To Sarah Ahmed, what Fanon describes is the incapacity of the Black subject of having a “body-at-home”:

If the world is made white, then the body-at-home is one that can inhabit whiteness. As Fanon’s work shows, after all, bodies are shaped by histories of colonialism, which makes the world

‘white’, a world that is inherited, or which is already given before the point of an individual’s arrival. (Ahmed, 2007, p.153)

By body-at-home, the British philosopher refers to the state of a body that can roam the world without being interrupted by the gaze of the other. As she argues, the world is made of inheritance: the present is the consequence of what has been ‘passed down’ to us. In this context, not only our genetic configuration is a matter of inheritance, but also the reachability of objects, modes of being and social norms. To be Black in a White world is to inherit the sign of difference, and then suffer movement restriction and obstacles to social ascension because of this difference. The experience narrated by Fanon is an example of a body that can never be at home because he is constantly faced with the historicity of a racialized world.

It is in the expression of the ordinary, day-to-day experience of the world that anti-Blackness manifests itself. Fanon’s phenomenological existentialism finds in the familiar world of the native the starting point of his anguish. It is by showing how this world unfolds in a permanent struggle between life and death that he accesses the existential specificities of the being living in damnation. We will now argue that what Fanon describes as *damné* is a form of life-in-death, created by genocidal mechanisms. By relating his conception of *damné* with Achille Mbembe’s reflections on necropolitics, we will show how colonialism is a form of genocidal violence.

3.2 Violence and Genocide in the Colonial World

Let’s now move to the central question of Black genocide. First of all, what do we mean when we say Black genocide? The specific events already considered as an example of this violence, targeting African colonies, such as the Herero genocide? The old colonial policies responsible for countless deaths since the Atlantic Slave Trade? Contemporary police brutality in countries of the African diaspora? This question is far from clear. Besides, genocide is often said to be a hyperbolic statement. The word has often been trivialized and utilized without sufficient rigor being paid to it. This can be said to be one of the biggest constraints in dealing with the notion of genocide. As Helen Fein has said:

The wave of misuse and rhetorical abuse parallels the alphabet: abortion, bisexuality, cocaine addiction, and dieting have also been labeled as examples of genocide—as well as suburbanization. At times such labeling verges on the paranoid and incendiary, as when Westerners or Jews are accused of genocide by giving African-Americans AIDS. (1994, as cited in Vargas, 2005, p. 272)

When theoretically engaging with the notion of genocide, it is necessary to proceed with serious academic rigor not to fall into a trend of banalization of the word. In what concerns our field of

inquiry, the absence of philosophical works explicitly dealing with the question at hand makes this matter even more important. For this reason, the academic aiming at critically discuss the concept of genocide must focus in uncovering the limitations of the concept while being attentive to the expressions of violence operating in the world. However, the rigorous stance necessary for a serious academic research cannot be mistaken for mechanisms of silencing. Beyond the problem of an uncritical appropriation of concepts, the danger of entrapping the description of social phenomena in dogmatic formulations can also be said to be a vicious trend in Academy. Expanding on this idea, Israel Charney describes this attitude as a:

[..]damaging style of intellectual inquiry based on perverse, fetishistic involvement with definitions to the point at which the reality of the subject under discussion is ‘lost,’ that is, no longer experienced emotionally by the scholars conducting the inquiry, to the point that the real enormity of the subject no longer guides or impacts deliberation (1994, as cited in Vargas, 2005, p. 272)

Israel Charney brings to attention a “perverse” methodology of some genocide scholars whose work underplays real dynamics of violence. This dispassionate approach to genocide results in a dogmatic understanding of the concept, one incapable of engaging with great demonstrations of violence because they do not attend to strictly fixed criteria. Vargas finds in this “definitionalism” a mechanism to silence the claims of Black genocide outside of Africa. As he writes, “In their efforts to circumscribe the scientific field, genocide theorists have glaringly excluded obvious mass killings of defined groups from their field. Such a case can be made for Black genocide in the US and other countries of the African diaspora” (p. 272). It should be stated that the problem of such approach is not its appeal to a rigorous examination of concepts. Instead, the act of suspending judgment or simply refusing to engage with major expressions of violence because of the unwillingness to forego a dogmatic stance can be said to be a problematic approach. Even worse, this form of inquiry, so adept to distance itself from its object of study, can become itself a form of violence. As Slavoj Zizek alerts, “there is a sense in which a cold analysis of violence somehow reproduces and participates in its horror” (Zizek, 2008, p. 4). The danger of seeing oneself from a reality completely different from what is studied implicates in a form of perverse detachment. The human tragedy of what is studied vanishes; it becomes lost in the academic process of description. Therefore, an entirely dispassionate study of genocide can become as problematic as an overtly militant use of the word. In our discussion of Black genocide, we will try to overcome this problem by critically engaging with the definition of genocide, while simultaneously being attentive to the reality of Black suffering.

The premature death of Black men and women is an ordinary affair in many parts of the world. Generally, the dynamics leading to their deaths are mostly studied under the category of racism.

Today, we see a growing trend, both in the Academy and in the public sphere, of discussions on institutional and structural forms of racism. The importance of these debates is clear: they amplify our understanding of racism beyond individual behavior to show the many layers it is present in our reality. The replication of racism inside social institutions is said to create norms and patterns to protect and maintain a hegemony (Almeida, 2019). This happens because the bodies who occupy the positions in these institutions often belong to a privileged racial group, and they use this power to advance their own goals. The notion of structural racism, on the other hand, is said to be the underlying root behind institutionalized and individual manifestations of racism. The last two can only occur because of the existence of a general anti-Blackness already incorporated into the social order. In other words, structural racism points to a normalization of racism into our ordinary lives, and how they manifest through different outlets.

Although Black suffering is certainly a central focus of inquiry in determinate circles of Academia through the analysis of racism, the precise question of Black genocide is not often a point of interrogation. When referring to this notion, we are engaging with a concept more evoked in street protests and social movements than in academic discussions. The claims of Black genocide come as the cry of those who inhabit a world where their presence seems to be unwanted; where a persistent disregard for their lives is taken as a consequence of systemic and institutionalized forms of violence. Often, those who bring out the question at hand are referring to the continuous killing of Black individuals as the enactment of a genocidal violence. This is the case of some journalists and academics who engage with this notion. They find in the disproportional numbers of Black individuals being victims of police brutality the consequences of policies of extermination. Those, if not *overtly genocidal*, are said to carry the consequences of a genocide (Wynter, 1994, p. 2). Such interpretation seems to be grounded on the hegemonic understanding of genocide, and relates the numbers of dead Black bodies as being sufficient to declare the existence of a genocide against Black populations.

In academic circles, the notion of Black genocide is also thought in regards to a historical trend of violence against groups from the African diaspora. The writings of Abdias Nascimento (Nascimento, 2016) and Ana Flauzina (Flauzina, 2006), for instance, are focused in showing how the Brazilian social imaginary has been constructed through the racial democracy myth, while simultaneously perpetuating an anti-Black system. The Brazilian government and its criminal system are accused of deliberately targeting their domestic Black population in multiple forms. They are said to expose them to poor sanitary conditions while limiting access to medical assistance, deny work opportunities, install eugenic policies to “whiten” the population and develop an anti-Black project aiming the elimination or mass incarceration of these groups. These approaches reveal the thread of oppression and inequality interlinking the lives of the Black

individuals marginalized in the favelas and suburbs. These are described to be the result of a racist ideology in rise since the early periods of colonization, in operation until today.

While successful in showing the historical and juridical persistence of an anti-Black reality in Brazil, these discussions don't offer an account of the experience of living in these territories; neither do they engage with a broader conceptualization of what drives this violence. In our investigation, we will aim to expand on the conception of Black genocide by deviating from the method of Social Sciences and Law to circumscribe the question in philosophical terms. With this assertion, we aim to pose the question of genocide by expanding on the ontological properties of the Black subject, as seen in the last chapter, with the concept of *necropolitics*, as defined by Achille Mbembe.

By Black genocide, we want to refer to an anti-Black violence responsible for the symbolic, physical and ontological death of Black populations. We will define this as a *genocidal structure* being governed by a death-drive seeking either the physical death of Black individuals, or the placement of their lives as "life-in-death". To begin, we would like posit Mbembe's critique of Modernity as more apt to analyze the question of genocide than the one offered by Adorno and Horkheimer, as presented in the second chapter. Our previous discussion of Adorno's account of genocide served as a gateway towards a philosophical comprehension of genocide inside the categories of Western Philosophy. To Adorno, genocide mimics the *modus operandi* of Enlightenment's rationality. He understands this form of violence as a corrective measure necessary to reinforce a pre-established order. Just as reason functions by eliminating divergent epistemic systems and anything deemed as incapable of being understood through mathematical entities, genocide aims to eliminate social groups who cannot belong to an ideal of social hegemony. Therefore, in both cases we attest the necessity of establishing an order through the elimination of what deviated from the pattern.

Adorno describes genocide as the expression of a force based on a need to total annihilation. What enriches his formulation is its inscription within his critique of the Enlightenment. In this context, utilitarian reasoning is responsible for the politics leading up to genocide as they deprive human beings of significance. Once human lives are disenchanting from any inherent meaning, they are transfigured into a form of object that must have its place assigned, or even be completely eliminated if no use can be found for them. In this regard, Adorno conceives genocide as the ultimate technique of a system not willing to integrate those who are considered as deviations from the norm. Death, in the literal sense, is thus the consequence of a semi-divine intervention in reality, aiming to preserve or install a new social order.

If we were to investigate the notion of Black genocide through an adornian perspective, we would have to examine the existence of a social system seeking the literal annihilation of the Black

subject. An historical perspective would show that, traditionally, this has not been the case. Beginning with the inaugural colonial enterprise, the Black person had always their place assigned in the cog of western capitalism. We have mentioned (in the beginning of the last sub-chapter) how the production of human-merchandise was crucial for the development of Europe, once it resulted in generation of wealth and the development of various techniques in different areas of expertise. In this context, once the Black person had a role inside a global-oriented system, their total annihilation was far from ideal. Unlike the Jewish people in the Second World War, their lives were valued to the point where they could be incorporated as a profit or as a means to gain profit. Under this perspective, we could not relate the racist character of an anti-Black world with genocide if we formulate such concept as aiming the complete annihilation of Black subjects. The internal dynamics of capitalism had, since their beginning, a place for the Black subject inside their notion of social order. The subaltern could be mistreated, killed and exposed to a hellish experience of the world as long as they could be replaced, or continue to be able to fulfill their roles.

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon denies the existence of a genocidal project as being coextensive with colonialism because of these dynamics. He writes:

Poor settler; here is his contradiction naked, shorn of its trappings. He ought to kill those he plunders, as they say djinns do. Now, this is not possible, because he must exploit them as well. Because he can't carry massacre on to genocide, and slavery to animal-like degradation, he loses control, the machine goes into reverse, and a relentless logic leads him on to decolonization. (Fanon, 1963, p. 16)

With this, Fanon highlights the notion of exploitation as being essential to the imperialist project, and the ultimate obstacle impeding the fruition of genocide. Insofar as the Black man can be a source of profit, his life is still valuable. After decolonization, exploitation can still continue if their roles are incorporated into the proletariat class.

However, this understanding can be brought into question. We have seen in the first chapter how such the notion of complete annihilation is not a normative necessity to consider an event as genocide. Even for Lemkin, “genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation” (Lemkin, 1944, p. 79) . Besides, we have pointed to the criterion of “destruction of essential foundations of the life” (p. 79) as being an alternative justification to guide our understanding of genocide. By prioritizing this criterion we perceive the central substance in the development of this horror, namely, the drive to stop the fruition of lives. With this reading, which we will come back to later in this chapter, we can orient an analysis of colonial imperialism and its mechanisms to cease the possibility of life. Here, we can refer to Fanon and his discussion on violence. To him, the colonial enterprise is made up of three expressions of violence:

1. The first can be seen in the behavior of the colonizer towards the colonized. It shows itself routinely, through the use of punishments, mistreatment and sadism. This is a constitutive dimension of the rapport between the colonized and the colonizer, and it corresponds to the most observable type of violence.
2. The second is called “violence in regards of the past”. In order to instaure a new order, the colonial enterprise had to cause a rupture in the history of those who had to be their servants. The destruction of monuments, infrastructure , and any other representation of the native’s culture were decisive for the imperialist project. Through the erasure of the historical memory of the native, the colonial project shows its mastery over space and time. The words of Alexis de Tocqueville, when referring to the French colonization in Algeria, describes this phenomenon in a crystalized way:

[The conquest] was a new era, and out of fear of mixing the past and the present in an irrational fashion, we even destroyed a great many of the streets of Algiers, in order to rebuild them according to our own method, and we gave French names to all those that we consented to have remain.” (Mbembe, 2017, p. 109)

3. The third is “violence towards the future”. As a daughter of Modernity, colonialism aims to be universal. It conceives a temporality where its sovereignty is permanently actualized. It shatters any other possibility of governance and it assumes its reign to be eternal.

Colonial violence is, in its purest form, an attack on time and memory. The erasure of the figures of the past of the native is not a simple gratuitous hubris, a narcissistic commandment purging out of reality all that does not resemble the settler’s traditions. Its function is to establish a rupture in time by depriving the native of cultural inheritance. What shall compose the reality of the native is what was already familiar to the settler. The aim of cultural unification is an effort towards the reinforcement of the colonizer’s power; it increases the durability of the colonial project by drowning the future generation of colonized subjects in a fabricated timeline. What they shall know, what they must identify with, is a reality mediated by the settler. In this sense, the assimilatory policies attack the past and simultaneously the future. It seizes time in order to limit the possibility of the native in imagining a different world. No sign of a past before foreign domination, and no hope for a different future.

Describing the immediate reality of the native, he says:

The town belonging to the colonized people, or at least the native town, the Negro village, the medina, the reservation, is a place of ill fame, peopled by men of evil repute. They are born there, it matters little where or how; they die there, it matters not where, nor how. (Fanon, 1963, p. 39)

What shapes the world of the native is the acknowledgement of the nullity of his life. In the colonial world, this nullity has been normalized. The place assigned to the colonized is where life and death occurs with little regard of dignity. As body-things, the life of the colonized is not one to be protected or cherished, as the Hegelian assumption of African lives being “mere things” is taken to govern the racist ideology. Within the frontiers of the world raptured by colonization, the ones inhabiting the zone of the racialized subject are utterly disposable. Their lives are the prime example of Judith Butler’s description of unlivable lives, the lives sharing a unifying condition of precariousness. To the American philosopher, a life is unlivable when they lack a social network providing the conditions for its flourishing. While all lives are precarious, since they can always go out of existence and need support to remain living, some groups experience this precariousness as an imposed condition. As she argues:

Precarity designates that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death. (Butler, 2009, p. 25)

With this concept, Judith Butler wants to expose the condition of vulnerability of marginalized groups. To say that lives are conditioned into a state of precariousness, means to note the influence of a structure driving these populations to the outskirts of the social world. There is not only one single element bringing these lives to this state, but rather a constellation of mechanisms that are at work. For this reason, we can say that both austerity policies and police brutality, for instance, work together in making lives precarious. Moreover, Judith Butler uses the element of *grievability* to measure and attest the nullity of these lives. When a life is grievable, this life can be said to have a meaning. To grieve is to express sorrow for the passing of someone. When a life is ungrievable, it means that the life is prone to be forgotten, as if it never mattered to anyone. Dying, in this sense, cannot be taken to be the end of a life because what existed wasn’t a proper life in the first place. Biological death, in this context, is a “second death”. With this notion, Butler manages to work the ideas of social neglect with the notion of lives that are not worthy of being lived. She mentions how “without grievability there’s no life, or rather, there’s something living that’s other than life” (p. 15). Her conclusion, therefore, is that no proper life can exist in the state of precarity. In this context, what exists is not a human life, but something different. This distinction is fundamental to the understanding of structural forms of violence, and how they operate as an ontological and empirical force negating the fruition of a livable life.

In the context of colonialism, Fanon shows how the settler has spread precariousness by demarcating the territory of those whose lives are grievable, and those who are not. In the structure of an anti-Black world, territorial demarcation serves to delimitate where violence and social

neglect are not only acceptable, but a project in itself. In the areas demarcated for the colonized, governance is often expressed through empirical and subjective violence. In its empirical form, it is manifested through the unrestrained use of militias and police men exercising force without accountability. But these are far from the only mechanisms inflicting death and limiting the possibilities of these lives. Beyond them, social abandonment in multiple forms is also in place. Here, we can point to the lack of institutions and sustainable environments as being part of a general disregard to the life of the native. The permanent sense of indifference towards them works as an admission of whose lives matter, and those who do not. To live in this state, is to live a non-life.

The negation of the condition of living comes as the consequence of a particular interpretation of what it means to live a human life. In itself, this is not a matter of a metaphysical inquiry on what it means to be human. Neither Fanon nor Butler engage in the question of human nature. Nevertheless, this discussion is once again inside the domains of ontology. In the last chapter, we showed how the *damné* is an ontological abomination: human yet striving for humanhood.

It was shown how Blackness is an imposed identity, responsible for traumas and other forms of pathologies. Most importantly, we showed how the category of race intervenes in the experience of the world. It causes the phenomenon of “third-person consciousness”, described by Fanon as an experience felt on the body, the feeling of being paralyzed by the gaze of the other. The experiences Fanon describes of having an identity imposed onto him refer to the repercussions of what Butler names “bodily ontology”. As she conceives it, “the “being” of the body to which this ontology refers is one that is always given over to others, to norms, to social and political organizations that have developed historically in order to maximize precariousness” (p. 25). With this, we can point to a clear link between the imposition of a “being”, or, in clearer words, an assigned identity, and precariousness. The idea of precarious lives reinforces the arguments of the “non-life” of the *damné*, already grasped by Fanon.

Judith Butler is certainly not the first to engage with the distinction of livable and unlivable lives. Beyond Fanon, such notion is also thoroughly discussed in the writings of Giorgio Agamben, with this notion of *homo sacer*, and by Achille Mbembe, as “death-in-life”. What matters for our discussion is how all these formulations point to a condition of existence beyond life and death: they are interconnected in showing a form of life in a permanent state of being excluded from life, be it physically or socially. Racism has been a common denominator in the categorization of whose lives should and should not be excluded from the proper realm of living. In our discussion, we want to emphasize how this calculation does not necessarily converge in physical death. We can find such understanding, for instance, in the way Michael Foucault relates racism and death.

Foucault conceives racism as a biological legitimization for the use of biopower. If the idea of a menace is essential for the construction of a political hegemony, of the sovereign power needing to justify its existence, the criteria of race presented a scientific justification for deciding those who should live or die:

Racism first develops with colonization, or in other words, with colonizing genocide. If you are functioning in the biopower mode, how can you justify the need to kill people, to kill populations, and to kill civilizations? By using the themes of evolutionism, by appealing to a racism. (Foucault, 2003, p. 257)

Foucault thus relates racism to the technologies of death. The relation of sovereignty and race is mostly thought inside the context of a war. While resting on the notion of racial superiority, sovereign states can construct the idealization of a biological threat representing a danger for the social order and the lives of their citizens. Racial warfare then becomes necessary as a form of self-defense mechanism against a natural threat. Each death of a racialized person strengthens the current hegemonic power not only by removing that which is perceived as an enemy, but a 'figure' of humanity altogether. For this reason, Foucault argues that "racism is bound up with the workings of a State that is obliged to use race, the elimination of races and the purification of the race, to exercise its sovereign power" (p. 258). Therefore, Foucault is invested in showing racism as being a decisive factor in the calculations of State power. The desired outcome of the racist ideology is thus the total annihilation of the biological threat.

In response to Foucault, we can pose the same question that Martin Shuster has posed to Adorno in regards of his formulation of genocide, showed in the ending of the last chapter. Why does the sovereign power have to completely exterminate the racial threat while there are other means to deal with them such as segregation and slavery? Why death, and nothing else, is the ultimate outcome of the calculations of racism and biopower? Foucault was aware of how racism could lead to other means of exclusion beyond physical death, as he wrote:

When I say "killing," I obviously do not mean simply murder as such, but also every form of indirect murder: the fact of exposing someone to death, increasing the risk of death for some people, or, quite simply, political death, expulsion, rejection, and so on. (p. 256)

The notions of exposition to death and political death are also part of the foucauldian analysis of racism. In our reading, we want to expand on the foucauldian description of how biopower is exercised against racialized subjects. While death is certainly a present outcome in the dynamics of how the sovereign power maintains control of racialized peoples, this death can be said to take many forms. In this fashion, physical elimination becomes one out of different forms of dying. With the aforementioned conceptualization of a life-in-death, we want to show how death can become a

constant present in the life of the colonized, without being properly actualized in its most notorious form. Genocidal violence, in this sense, will be said to be a force working within these frontiers.

In this context, Achille Mbembe's conceptualization of *necropolitics* becomes a vital tool to understand the expression this violence. Mbembe expands on the foucauldian notion of biopower to describe the sovereign power invested in asserting itself through the right to kill. In the beginning, we have mentioned how Mbembe's critique of Modernity could be said to be more valuable to understand what is at stake in the dynamics of genocide than the one offered by Adorno and Horkheimer. That is because, in analyzing the forms of governance emerging since Modernity, Mbembe gives priority to the State's exercise of violence as a way to reinforce its sovereignty. By using categories such as life and death, instead of reason, the Cameroonian philosopher is better equipped to engage with the traumatic experiences of Modernity, such as colonialism, in a clearer way. By this, it shouldn't be said that their critique is mutually exclusive. Indeed, Mbembe, similarly to Adorno and Horkheimer, is invested in coming to terms with the increasingly utilitarian mechanisms being used to dominate human beings. This is made clear when he expresses his central thesis on modern sovereignty, which he characterizes as being defined by "*the generalized instrumentalization of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations*" (Mbembe, 2003, p. 14). What is peculiar to Mbembe's account is the way he relates the normalization of extrajudicial killings with the shaping of modern forms of sovereignty. Insofar as the modern world can be described as the development of techniques to produce the foucauldian "docile bodies", the act of killing no longer is a social taboo or ethical violation, but the operational engine of those who exercise political power. In this fashion, modern politics can be said to bring about an immanent version of what Kierkegaard has nominated as the "teleological suspension of the ethical". The negation of ethics understood as *Sittlichkeit* comes as an acknowledgement of a duty towards a higher – here immanent form of – command. The disregard of social norms is not taken as an act of transgression, which would deem these acts unlawful, but rather a necessary, and therefore acceptable, burden of the sovereign State. If the condition of *necessity*, in the biblical case of Abraham, was the weight of the religious command, for the State this necessity takes the form of a defense mechanism, where the sovereign protects and asserts itself from what it sees as a threat. Instead of a violation of the proper codes of conduct, this breach consists in a political method in itself, oriented towards a "greater good". As this violation continues to penetrate ordinary life, its violence becomes increasingly acceptable. Mbembe draws our attention to how this negation of the ethical, characteristic of societies under the state of siege and exception, is the defining element of the colonial conquest and government. Within the umbrella of *necropolitics*, the sanctioned power of killing, he uncovers the increasingly authoritarian nature of governance, and how proper and

improper lives are born out of the calculus of those who can live, and those who must be subjected to death or the condition of “living dead”.

As Mbembe makes it clear, true sovereignty is “the capacity to dictate who may live and who must die” (p. 11). When bodies are appropriated by the political, they are subjected to external deliberations. They can be allocated, disciplined, transformed and trained through techniques developed in social institutions, all leading to the development of a political anatomy capable of answering to the will of another. As argued by Foucault, these are the consequences of the application of power into the domain of human lives. What we see in the figure of the sovereign discussed by Mbembe is an unrestricted, boundless form of how this power takes life hostage. Essentially, necropower, the force dictating those who shall live or die, is the element responsible for a qualitative transformation of human lives. The decisive aspect of this force is its capacity to restrict, transform and deny the very possibility of human existence. Insofar as death is a transformation, a form of negation of the condition of living, we can think of it as a process that can gradually take hold of life. While killing can take the form of the sudden, perpetual denial of an existence, it can also be said that slow processes of deaths are equally part of the equation of killing, and therefore they are inscribed into the calculus of necropower. In this sense, the power of killing coincides with the power of inflicting a condition bringing premature death, or a daily exposition to death. With this, sovereignty is exercised by creating “death-worlds”, a reality where the presence of death has been normalized.

What this line of inquiry inevitable brings to questioning is our very understanding of death. Necropolitics implicitly works with the distinction of whose deaths can count as a proper loss, and those who do not. Here, it is worthwhile to make use of the concept of *homo sacer*, as described by Agamben. For the Italian philosopher, the *homo sacer* corresponds to the human life “who may be killed and yet not sacrificed” (Agamben, 1998, p. 12). With this, he diagnoses a superfluous form of existence, whose death is an uneventful occurrence. The figure of the *homo sacer* highlights a form of presence disempowered from political recognition and value. Inside the Greek linguistic distinction between *zôe*, the designation of the vegetative, animal-like form of life, and *bios*, the “qualified”, inserted into the political realm type of life, his existence is inscribed in the former, instead of the latter. What turns the *homo sacer* into a man who can be killed with impunity is its status outside of the political order. State power can be exercised against him because his integration inside the *bios*, the qualified, properly human life, has been denied. In this sense, he may be killed because his life is deprived of recognition, but not sacrificed, once his life holds no meaning.

The figure of the *homo sacer* is the embodiment of a dual representation: it represents a life unworthy of being celebrated, and a death unworthy of being lamented. A meaningless death can

only occur if one is taken to be outside of the common human world. Those ‘outside’ are the ones not seen, not known, not loved. When a death does not count as a loss, it means it does not merit the usual traditions to grieve their passing. Once again, proper human life needs to pass through the metrics of grievability. Under this paradigm, the *homo sacer*’s life is shown to be an improper, inhuman life. Agamben makes this idea clear when he characterizes the life of the *homo sacer* as “defined solely by virtue of having entered into an intimate symbiosis with death without, nevertheless, belonging to the world of the deceased” (p. 61). To be in symbiosis with death, and yet not be properly dead, means to be living-in-death. For the Italian philosopher, the most extreme example of this has been shown in the Nazi concentration camps, where “the most absolute *conditio inhumana* ever to appear on Earth was realized.” (p. 95). The extreme example of the Nazi atrocity accounts for the most notorious illustration of the suspension of ethical and juridical limits, fundamentally reducing human lives to the condition of complete nullity.

Nonetheless, we do not need to resort to the concentration camps to see the creation of bodies already morphed with death. This is especially due to the fact that, to Agamben, the figure of the *homo sacer* is transhistorical (Ajari, 2016, p. 75). It represents a being taken out of the social order, reduced to the status of an animal that can be killed with impunity. Inside colonialism, the Black subject has certainly occupied such a place. The ontological reduction of the Black person turns their experience of life into a gateway to death. This was clear to Mbembe, and for this reason he asserts that the colonies are primarily governed by the use of necropower, “the power and the capacity to dictate who may live and who must die” (Mbembe, 2003, p.11). There, the political intervention in the life of the colonized through violations of ethical limits, to the point where their lives are overdetermined by it (Maldonado-Torres, 2008).

For this reason, “the colonial death-world becomes the ethical limit of human reality” (p. 95). The idea of limit, and even law fare, loses significance as the right of killing becomes naturalized. Death, therefore, becomes part of the economy of power. Through necropolitics, the State distributes violence and reinforces a racial hierarchy and its sovereignty. The incapacity of fleeing from this terror is what turns the life of the slave in a “death-in-life”. To live in the state of dying means to carry the marks of “absolute domination, natal alienation, and social death (expulsion from humanity altogether)” (Mbembe, 2003, p.21); therefore, it means to live without possibilities, in an inhuman condition of nothingness.

Mbembe’s conceptualization of necropolitics brings to light a type of sovereignty based on the politics of exclusion and extermination. Early and later forms of colonial occupation rely on this policy to assign the targets of surveillance, movement restriction, seclusion and violence. But the creation of an asymmetrical exercise of power combined with an urban configuration to allocate the disposable/inhuman subjects is not only peculiar to the colonial world, but rather a constituent part

of any government based on a radicalized need of altruicide. In other words, these policies are in place when the *Other* represents the embodiment of a menace. For Mbembe, the rise of altruicide is a fundamental component of the modern world:

The perception of the existence of the Other as an attempt on my life, as a mortal threat or absolute danger whose biophysical elimination would strengthen my potential to life and security—this, I suggest, is one of the many imaginaries of sovereignty characteristic of both early and late modernity itself (p. 18)

In this regard, the distribution of a hellish experience of life is not a collateral damage of a system incapable of assimilating racial or political minorities, but the consequence of a way of operating politics when the other represents an immediate danger. It matters little if an intentional plan of bringing these lives to the state of despair is in place. Effectively, what matters is the method and execution of these policies, followed by the terror of their consequences. For this reason, apologetic discourses on colonialism, imperialism and domestic State violence can only be manifested as a sign of bad faith. It is only possible to overlook the damage of the policies creating “life-in-death” if one simultaneously overlooks the humanity of their victims.

Necropolitics functions by establishing a war-like environment, in a process called by Nelson Maldonado-Torres as the naturalization of the *non-ethics of war*. To him, this phenomenon represents a “sort of exception to the ethics that regulate normal conduct in Christian countries, to a more stable and long-standing reality of damnation” (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, 247). Mbembe amplifies on this subject by describing the colonial world as a reality where peace is replaced by a state of a “war without end” (Mbembe, 2003, p. 23). The terminology of warfare becomes important as it is through the enactment of war-like rationale that the sovereign power legitimates ethical transgressions. In this context, the colonial enterprise functioned by the disregard of national sovereignty and the treatment of racialized citizens as if they were enemy combatants. Therefore, the colonies represented the territories where international laws of occupation, in which the invader had the obligation of protecting the lives of the native inhabitants, were never valid. In fact, although developed in Europe since the 19th century (the first Hague Peace conference took place in 1899), the contemporary notion of belligerent occupation was not valid in territories outside Europe. It only became implemented as international law in the 20th century, “by which time the U.S. and the European colonial powers had already consolidated their gains” (Benvenisti, 2008, p. 623). Expanding on this, Arai Takahashi affirms that “until the process of decolonization unfolded, the law of occupation was largely the ‘European project’ and was never contemplated as applicable to ‘colonial occupation’” (Arai-Takahashi, 2012, p. 72).

In a territory ruled by the non-ethics of war, there are no distinctions between combatants, noncombatants, enemies, or criminals (Mbembe, 2003, p. 24). The power over the body of the

colonized is thus made absolute. In this death-world, genocide becomes an expression of sovereignty:

This non-ethics included the practices of eliminating and slaving certain subjects _ e.g., indigenous and black _ as part of the enterprise of colonization. The hyperbolic expression of coloniality includes genocide, which is the paroxysm of the ego cogito _ a world in which the ego cogito exists alone. (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p.247)

If we refer once again to the conceptualization of genocide provided by Raphael Lemkin, we find in his arguments a relation between genocide and laws of occupation. To him, “genocide is the antithesis of the Rousseau-Portalis Doctrine, which may be regarded as implicit in the Hague Regulations” (Lemkin, 1944, p. 80). These doctrines refer to the aforementioned regulations establishing war as a combat between two nations’ armies, sparing civilian lives. With this remark, Lemkin is referring to genocide as a type of warfare where no distinction between civilians and combatants are made. He mentions how the Nazi regime violated the Hague agreements by enacting a *total war*. He summarizes their reasoning as follows:

The enemy nation within the control of Germany must be destroyed, disintegrated, or weakened in different degrees for decades to come. Thus the German people in the post-war period will be in a position to deal with other European peoples from the vantage point of biological superiority. Because the imposition of this policy of genocide is more destructive for a people than injuries suffered in the actual fighting, the German people will be stronger than the subjugated peoples after the war even if the German army is defeated. In this respect genocide is a new technique of occupation aimed at winning the peace even though the war itself is lost. (p. 81)

By doing the most damage as possible to other nations, which includes the death of civilians, Germany would stay in a better position than said nations because of their racial superiority. The harm done to enemy countries would be sufficient enough to cripple their recovery, and since they are deemed “inferior”, even if Germany ended by losing the war they would still be in a better position in comparison to their enemies. What should be noted here is that, in this context, Lemkin is considering genocide as an application of sovereign power not restricted to the Jewish population, but rather an instance to be taken against all that is considered as an enemy:

The plan of genocide had to be adapted to political considerations in different countries. It could not be implemented in full force in all the conquered states, and hence the plan varies as to subject, modalities, and degree of intensity in each occupied country. Some groups - such as the Jews - are to be destroyed completely.¹⁰A distinction is made between peoples considered to [p. 82]be related by blood to the German people (such as Dutchmen, Norwegians, Flemings, Luxemburgers), and peoples not thus related by blood (such as the Poles, Slovenes, Serbs). The populations of the first group are deemed worthy of being Germanized. With respect to the Poles particularly, Hitler expressed the view that it is their soil alone which *can and should be profitably Germanized*. (p. 82)

Lemkin points to a certain adaptability, or modalities, of the Nazi genocidal project. While some populations should be completely annihilated, some could continue to exist because of biological similarities. In other words, genocide becomes the power aiming the erasure of the different, exercised in different forms depending on the characteristics of the territory occupied. Therefore, genocide is a form of sovereign power exercised through different techniques. Lemkin divides these techniques by different aspects:

- a. Political: “local institutions of self-government were destroyed and a German pattern of administration imposed. Every reminder of former national character was obliterated.” (p. 81)
- b. Social: “The destruction of the national pattern in the social field has been accomplished in part by the abolition of local law and local courts and the imposition of German law and courts.” (p. 83)
- c. Cultural: “In the incorporated areas the local population is forbidden to use its own language in schools and in printing.” (p. 84)
- d. Economic: “The destruction of the foundations of the economic existence of a national group necessarily brings about a crippling of its development, even a retrogression.” (p. 85)
- e. Biological: “Foremost among the methods employed for this purpose is the adoption of measures calculated to decrease the birthrate the national groups of non-related blood, while at the same time steps are taken to encourage the birthrate of the *Volksdeutsche* living in these countries.” (p. 86)
- f. Physical: 1) Through racial discrimination in feeding, ““The German people come before all other peoples for food”; (p. 87) 2) through the “endangering of health”: The undesired national groups, particularly in Poland, are deprived of elemental necessities for preserving health and life. (p. 88); and finally, via mass killings. (p. 88).
- g. Religious: “Likewise in Poland, through the systematic pillage and destruction of church property and persecution of the clergy, the German occupying authorities have sought to destroy the religious leadership of the Polish nation. (p. 89)
- h. Moral: “In order to weaken the spiritual resistance of the national group, the occupant attempts to create an atmosphere of moral debasement within this group” (p. 90)

Lemkin’s description of these elements forms an umbrella of forces that were all too common in the colonial enterprise. Most of these elements, as we have seen along this discussion, are related to the creation of the colonial “death-worlds”. These techniques combine the use of violence, removal of self-determination, elimination of local culture and the creation of precarious lives. We can see that genocide is an expression of sovereignty, capable of being expressed through multiple variables. Commenting on Fanon, Mbembe relates genocide to a necropolitical force:

In Algeria, France attempted a “total war” that incited an equally total response on the part of the Algerian resistance. Through his experience of the war and the racism that was one of its driving

forces, Fanon became convinced that colonialism was fundamentally a necropolitical force animated by genocidal impulses.²⁴ The colonial situation was, above all, a situation of potentially exterminating violence that had to be converted into an ontology and a genetics in order to reproduce and perpetuate itself. (Mbembe, 2017, p. 163)

The colonial world functions by the constant actualization of these “genocidal impulses”. The life of the *damné*, described in this research as *life-in-death*, is therefore a product of a genocidal structure. The material, temporal and symbolical violence, politics of killing, precariousness and the denial of a proper human life all lead to the conclusion that the *damné* finds himself in an order where he can either die, or live an unlivable life. In this context, the fact that the settler does not seek the complete annihilation of the colonized is, therefore, irrelevant. To be thrown in the world of death, in an inhuman condition, is sufficient to describe this violence as genocide, once the right to life a proper human life was already denied.

3.3 Genocide and the Grammar of Black Suffering

In the first sub-chapter, we offered an account of Fanon’s phenomenological existentialism. The pertinence of this discussion to our overall debate of genocide lied in the need to problematize the existential dimension of the experience of the world. By linking the ramifications of colonial violence as being an attack against the ontological properties of Black subjects, we have opened a path linking violence and the fruition of Black selfhood. The self of the colonized was said to be denied: inside the world of colonialism, no authentic Black identity could be born. The problem standing against the fruition of the self was said to be the effects of colonial violence. This violence was responsible for “creating” the Black identity, and also the pathologies that accompanied it. In the second sub-chapter, we discussed how this violence could be said to be a genocidal violence. Colonialism, through the means of *necropower*, is an enterprise responsible for causing death or inflicting a condition we named as “life-in-death”. We mentioned how both these processes were sufficient to categorize the colonial enterprise in its entirety as a genocidal endeavor. By ceasing the possibility of a proper human life, the colonial death-world represents a world operating within the frontiers of genocide. In this final sub-chapter, we will expand on the link between Black inhumanity and genocide by relating the two as the primary vector of anti-Black violence. Through this relation, we will explore the notion of Black genocide under the paradigm of contemporary politics.

In our discussion thus far, we have put under suspicion some of the normative requirements usually connected to the concept of genocide. By problematizing the notion of expressed intent,

while emphasizing the connection between genocide and the production of death and/or lives-in-death, we have shown a perspective on genocide more linked to actual ramifications of violence, rather than a questionable and highly politicized juridical prerogative. Through grasping the real consequences of the colonial conquest, we have found in it the operations of a sovereign power focused in eliminating the Black subjects from the realm of a qualified life. In order to access the genocidal structure of contemporary anti-Black violence, we must understand how the paradigm of Black inhumanity was not an intrinsic manifestation of the colonial world, but rather a historical constant defining the contours of Black social identity and its presence in the world. In other words, we must venture forth into the category of Blackness by showing how its static characteristics continue to create bodies commanded to death or the condition of life-in-death.

At first glance, the idea of a contemporary genocide against Black individuals might seem as a hyperbolic statement. While many could agree that Black populations are particularly affected by State sponsored violence and social neglect, the claim of genocide might appear as an unnecessary, overly militant predicament. The formal end of slavery, apartheid and the substantial political gains of Black communities in the 20th century might seem to point to the contrary: instead of being further trapped into their state of precariousness, Black subjects seem to enjoy a continuous state of progress. In fact, when asked to comment on William L. Patterson's claim of genocide being committed against African Americans, Raphael Lemkin considered the idea absurd. Replying to the CRC report "We Charge Genocide", published in 1951, he responded that its claims were "a maneuver to divert attention from the crimes of genocide committed against Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Poles and other Soviet-subjugated peoples" (Dagbovie, 2010, p. 166). In an article for the New York Times, he wrote:

[C]an one be guilty of genocide when one frightens a Negro? Obviously not, because fear alone cannot be considered as serious mental harm, as meant by the authors of the convention; the act is not directed against the Negro population of the country, and by no stretch of imagination can one discover in the United States an intent or plan to exterminate the Negro population, which is increasing in conditions of evident prosperity and progress. (p. 166)

Lemkin was eager to dismiss the cruelty of Jim Crow laws as being part of a genocide project. To him, the "negroes" are merely frightened; real suffering exists elsewhere. His frontal rejection of the arguments brought forth by the CRC report seems to exclude from reality all the content of the document. Therefore, the lynching, police brutality, lack of access to healthcare and political disenfranchisement detailed in the document are to be ignored because of a lack of "an intent or plan to exterminate the Negro population", which, to him, were enjoying "conditions of evident prosperity and progress".

Lemkin's incapacity to see the schematization of a structural violence against Black bodies seems to arise from a denial in comprehending genocidal violence beyond the frames of juridical accountability, together with a seemingly Eurocentric view of those who undergo real suffering. Other genocide scholars, such as Irving L. Horowitz, partook of similar conclusions. To him, "The bulk of the black population were suppressed and discriminated against, but were not summarily liquidated" (p.166). Within this line of thought, Black suffering appears more as the result of policies of discrimination, instead of mechanisms that put these lives in direct contact with death. Although there is no requirement for a specific death toll to consider an event as genocide, Horowitz understands that, categorically, the number of African Americans killed is simply insufficient. Black suffering, within this line of reasoning, appears in line with the suffering of other social minorities who are also disadvantaged and discriminated against. The issue of Black genocide, therefore, should be put aside for being an overstatement.

In Philosophy, authors usually follow the trend of disregarding the specific conditions of suffering of Black communities in order to assimilate them inside more general categories. We can think of Marxism and its tendency to dehydrate social conflicts in order to be thought within a general theory of class struggle as an example of such effort. Within some Marxist perspectives, Black suffering should be understood as inscribed into the general form of suffering of the proletariat. In this fashion, since the violence of the capitalist system is essentially connected to modes of production, the Black subject suffers from occupying the subordinate position of the worker. Her suffering is then devoid of any singularity, and the solution to her dilemma can only arise from the dissolution of the capitalist structures that determine those who must be submitted to the forms of violence of capital.

Moreover, it could be thought that the distinct condition of Blacks in the plantations and in the old regime of slavery has expanded and now, in the neocapitalist system, it is shared by all. Mbembe's conception of "becoming Black of the world", described in his book *Critique of Black Reason*, refers to the universalization of the instrumental character of subjugation that before was only reserved to the Black subject:

I believe that at its core, capitalism is fundamentally anti-human or at the very least, *anthropophobic*. Its final aim is to replace the human species with another, which would combine the attributes of various natural, mineral, organic, machinic, and nowadays digital entities. In fact, it might be entirely possible that the transformation of blacks into commodities *or into "object-humans" or humans-with-prostheses* – which happened in that early stage of American, Atlantic capitalism – is a process that could be universalized. It could be extended to more than just blacks. That's what, in the book, I call the *becoming-black-of-the-world*, a distinct possibility particularly in this contemporary phase of our lives. (Mbembe, 2018)

The current dynamics of contemporary capitalism, formed by the scarcity of employment and a continuous feeling of fragility, ended up normalizing the exploitation of the proletariat. If before there were protests because of poor working conditions and exploitation, today the subaltern class struggles to be incorporated into the dynamics of capital. The ancient formation of Black bodies as malleable objects is then normalized outside the racial paradigm. Thus, as a contingent category, Blackness breaks with its ethno-racial morphology to become a stronghold of contemporary misery.

As a human-object, the contemporary subject, independent of her race, is left to the will of a system that ignores human plurality and reduces all human beings to the level of an instrument. Within this perspective, Black suffering can be apprehended as similar to the White man or any other person of color. Fundamentally, in this context, what constitutes a central mechanism of exploitation and creation of inequalities is the development of an economic system that is increasingly effective in creating docile bodies. As players in a vicious game, the proletariat, in a generalized way, is amenable to the ways in which the violence of capitalism can take shape.

This explanation is not intended to reproduce Achille Mbembe's point of view on the current suffering of Black communities, but rather to produce a possible argument against the notion of Black genocide. Such a perspective would certainly nullify the arguments of genocide by equating the suffering of Black people with other members of the proletariat. Still within this perspective, the concept of "race" becomes a useless category. It obscures social conflicts and ends up becoming an obstacle to the formation of solidarity among workers. In other words, the persistence over theoretical formulations on race and racism would be a diversion from the most prominent discussion over the control of means of production.

It should be said that, from a historical perspective, the arguments over the existence of a Black genocide do not need to come into conflict with Marxist thesis. Historically, such arguments are based on empirical analysis of the dynamics of oppression against Black bodies, which can be well exemplified by precise evidence. For example, it is notorious how the Afro-descendant population of Brazil was perceived as a problem for the Brazilian government before and after the end of slavery. The effectiveness of the myth of racial democracy, propagated by Brazilian academics and politicians, ended up producing a fictitious image of Brazil as a country without racial conflict. At the same time, as Ana Flauzina argues (Flauzina, 2006), the Brazilian penal code was consolidated through a notoriously anti-Black ideal. In this way, ethnic supremacy went unnoticed within a discourse of pro-miscegenation and race equality. The Brazilian elite, who identified much more with their European heritage than the indigenous or African, implemented different mechanisms to reduce the number of Blacks citizens present in the country. Among such techniques we can point the granting of land for European immigrants to populate south and

southeastern areas of Brazil, explicitly eugenic policies aimed at extinguishing the African diaspora from Brazilian soil, mass incarceration, murders, and attempts to generate internal conflicts among the Black population. Throughout Brazilian history, the Black subject has always been a source of fear that had to be dealt with.

However, one could insist that such analyses could be adequate to the Brazil of the past, but not to its contemporary configuration. The old anti-Black sentiment by the part of the Brazilian government and its appeal to eugenic policies would be part of a world still tied to notions of scientific racism, which lost legitimacy after the events of World War II, when eugenics became a taboo. Thus, the continuous development of neoliberalism in the second half of the twentieth century would be showing us a reality where the notion of race would be increasingly losing significance. The exploitation of workers and the widespread instrumentalization of bodies would then be the absolute paradigm governing the social world, which would undermine the argument of genocide by attesting to a shared condition of suffering. Within this perspective, it is possible to imagine how the genocide of an entire population would be counter-productive for the neoliberal system. Black individuals, who statistically are in greater poverty than other races, would be needed precisely because they would be able to provide a mass of expendable workers who could easily be replaced. Their precariousness would then be a favorable aspect of the current economic system, since lower salaries could be offered on account of the great mass of unemployed workers⁸.

The inherent violence of the capitalist system, where capital speculation is capable of determining which countries should have a greater or lesser exposure to poverty, would then be the great propeller of social ills and the power responsible for the exposure of individuals to precariousness. The particularity of this violence, according to Slavoj Žižek, lies in its systemic and anonymous form. Instead of being propagated by agents that can be identified, such violence originates from the "solipsistic speculative dance of capital" (Žižek, 2008, p. 12). Because of this, there is no particular intentionality governing it: "this violence is no longer attributable to concrete individuals and their "evil" intentions, but is purely "objective," systemic, anonymous. (p.13). The inherent movements of capitalist dynamics create the conditions of possibility of more observable manifestations of violence. Because of this, Žižek emphasizes how we must refrain from being fascinated by the material forms of how violence spreads, such as in the case of humanitarian crises and episodes of racism, to find in the essences of the capitalist engine the source of social antagonisms.

⁸ As pointed by Silvio Almeida, even in contemporary liberal societies where racism is fought with anti-discrimination laws, racialized groups are more likely to work in insalubrious conditions while receiving smaller wages. In Brazil, this can be seen as a historical trend in what concerns the racial division of work. (Almeida, 2019, p. 68)

Zizek's detachment from particular episodes of violence to seek their conditions of possibility is certainly a virtuous method of investigation. For example, when routine episodes of police violence arise, we must deviate from the typical claim that states that only "a few rotten apples" are responsible for such abuses, in order to see the institutional character of racism within the police corporation. Moreover, Zizek's discussion of systematic violence brings to light the need to break with the search for identifiable perpetrators, such as the case of the hegemonic conception of genocide, in order to search within the internal logic of violent processes the forces propelling it. However, despite realizing the need for this kind of observation, Zizek's Marxist critique of violence ends up placing the structure of anti-Black violence as being subordinate to the dynamics of capital. Thus, the particularity of racist violence, as well as the dynamics between race and class, is put into the background of class warfare. In our analysis of Black genocide, we must understand how the dynamics of anti-Black violence are not only endowed with its own internal logic, that differs it from, for example, violence against other social groups, but also that in the relationship between class and race, the former does not superimpose the latter. In fact, the sub-ontological difference between Blacks and Whites discussed in the first subchapter continues to be a decisive aspect in the dynamics of violence inflicted on Black populations. In this way, the supposed equality between poor Whites and poor Blacks ends up neglecting the fundamental role of the imaginary of Blackness, built as the antithesis of the human, and its role within global capitalism. As Mbembe points out:

For a large part of modern history, race and class have coconstituted one another. The plantation and colonial systems were the factories par excellence of race and racism. The "poor Whites" in particular depended on cultivating differences that separated them from Blacks to give themselves the sense of being human. The racist subject sees the humanity in himself not by accounting for what makes him similar to others but by accounting for what makes him different. The logic of race in the modern world cuts across social and economic structures, impacts the movements within them, and constantly metamorphoses. (Mbembe, 2017, p. 36)

Thus, the 'humanity' of the White subject is built through the negation of the humanity of the Black subject. The White, endowed with rights and whose body cannot be arbitrarily violated by the State, builds his consciousness as a human being by differentiating herself from those whose lives are simply undignified, malleable, and capable of being terminated at any moment. Therefore, one attests her own 'humanity' through a relational logic. While the *other* can be seen as a negation of my condition, such negation only reinforces my own identity.

In this context, the exposition of Black bodies to violence serves as a mechanism drawing the line between the bodies that can be violated and those who must be preserved. Evidently, such configuration puts to question the theories undermining the particular suffering of Black

communities and their insertion within the proletariat. It shows how race operates as a tool separating the humans from the inhumans, and how such relational logic serves as a justification for anti-Black violence. However, Mbembe's description seems to specify the presence of these dynamics during an earlier period of Modernity, instead of our contemporary society. The question, thus, is if we can attest the continuation of these dynamics inside today's neoliberalism. If so, we will be able to reinforce the notion of the distinct suffering of Black communities, as well of how such suffering arises as a result of a genocidal violence.

Inside the theoretical framework of *afropessimism*, such dynamics is considered to be as present today as it used to be during the Western colonial past. For this reason, we will now present the afropessimist critique of Black suffering in order to better grasp the internal logic behind the genocidal violence against Black communities.

According to Frank B. Wilderson III, the theoretical framework of Marxism, as well as of feminism, post-colonialism and psychoanalysis, are not able to reveal the complexities of Black suffering. For him, there is something unparalleled about the condition of the Black subject, which does not allow for any analogy with the violence inflicted on other groups. For Wilderson, Blackness is what defies any conception of humanism because it represents a living contradiction. The Black subject is alive in a bodily way, with biological impulses that keep her organism functioning, but such organism is not human. Thus, what separates Black suffering from any other, making it impossible for it to be fully embraced by the consecrated theories of social sciences, is the singular character of its inhumanity. The sub-ontological discrepancy between the Black and any other social group ends up destabilizing any analysis that aims to draw analogies between these two elements. Because of this, when describing afropessimism, he states that:

Afropessimism offers an analytic lens that labors as a corrective to Humanist assumptive logics. It provides a theoretical apparatus that allows Black people to not have to be burdened by the ruse of analogy— because analogy mystifies, rather than clarifies, Black suffering. (Wilderson, 2020, p. 41)

Now, what makes the Black subject essentially inhuman, to the point that her space in Theory has to be absolutely distinct? Moreover, why do analogies with other forms of suffering mystify Black suffering?

Clearly inspired by Fanon and the sociologist Orland Patterson, Wilderson conceives the condition of inhumanity of the Black subject as a consequence of the historical unfolding of Blackness. This unfolding is not seen as a continuous ascent, as Lemkin said when confronted with the situation of the African-American, but rather as a static condition, fundamentally marked by the phenomenon of social death. Thus, the basis of his argument focuses on the idea that there has not

been a distinct qualitative leap from slavery to the condition of freeman. In reality, for Wilderson, all Blacks can still be considered slaves (p. 9). Slavery would not be a paradigmatic moment already overcome institutionally, but rather an experimental technique on how to dominate Black bodies. As a form of technique, slavery can be improved and merged with new control mechanisms. Because of this, based on Patterson's discussions, Wilderson conceives that the fundamental aspect of slavery was not forced labor, but social death, which is conceived as the conjunction of three elements: gratuitous violence, dishonor, and natal alienation.

With the element of dishonor, these authors want to refer to the fact that Blacks are dishonored without having done any action warranting such classification. Dishonor is thus constitutive of Blackness, which points to the existence of beings whose very presence in the world is tied to notions of shame and humiliation. The gaze of the colonizer, the gaze that paralyzes Fanon, is the gaze that actualizes this dishonor in the consciousness of the Black subject. This is often the gaze of the policeman, the prosecutor and the judge. The characteristic of this gaze is that it violates the present moment and crystallizes the racial dynamics that make the Black subject a social abject. Its duration exceeds the temporal dynamics: it brings back the consciousness of a racial past of which the Black individual in question simultaneously is and is not a part of. This is because such dishonor is inherited, and as an inheritance it gathers the past into the present. While being dishonored, the Black person is that which is always in suspicion. It is because she has her humanity in suspicion, in a continuous Cartesian delirium, that her actions are mediated by the gaze of the other, who casts a judgmental and condemnatory gaze. If this gaze reveals the distinct ontological disqualification of the Black subject, it also reorganizes the very being of the objects and artifacts that are in proximity or in use by Black subjects. By this, we mean that the attitude of suspicion does not turn only to the being of the Black person, but questions all the relationships she maintains with the world around her. It is because of this that Rafael Braga, a Black Brazilian man, was arrested in 2013 when he was carrying a bottle of disinfectant that was mistaken for a bomb (Garcia, 2017). If Heideggerian Philosophy states that the being of objects and artifacts exists through a relationship between the *Dasein* and the use she makes of an object, the example of Rafael Braga, and so many others who continues to suffer from similar experiences, shows that this "being" does not appear socially only through the use that is made of it, but is also mediated by the one who holds the object. The Black man, while being essentially dishonored, corrupts the objects that surround him. It is within this context that a disinfectant becomes a bomb.

The element of "native alienation", in turn, demonstrates the disconnection between Black individuals and their cultural heritage. This term, coined by Orlando Patterson, refers to a paradigmatic phenomenon brought by the institution of slavery. The colonial project as a whole was responsible for alienating the slaves from their cultural inheritances and their traditions. The

descendants of the slaves who were torn from their country are put into a new cultural and temporal stream. They are devoid of a connection with the culture of their ancestors, to the point that this culture is forgotten. For this reason, such rupture refers to a broken historicity, which in turn negates the presence of a genealogy. The world of the slave is therefore a world without cultural or familial bonds.

Finally, the third element, gratuitous violence, is always present in the elements previously mentioned. With this notion, Wilderson refers to a type of punitive but not disciplinary violence. Violence against the Black subject does not come into being as a response to some kind of transgression by the Black person. It exists in its own space and time, and responds only to its own impulses. This violence is the same necropolitical violence of the sovereign we discussed earlier: a violence that is self-serving and disconnected from ethical or juridical limits. In this way, Black bodies are humiliated, killed, and left in the condition of precariousness without any need of justification.

For a Black body to be violated, it is not necessary for it to perform the transgression of some conduct. As Wilderson states, "for the Blacks, the Slaves, no notion of transgression is necessary. The pleasure of maiming Black bodies is its own reward. It is this pleasure that divided the conference not into five colors, but into two species: Blacks and Humans" (Wilderson, 2020, p. 209). While exposed to a state of vulnerability and precariousness, the being of the Black person, which is the performance of the non-being, is that which is open to be conquered, imprisoned and taken. While necropolitical violence needs some form of justification for non-Blacks, such as land possession in the case of indigenous genocide, or a fantasy of economic domination, as in the case of Jewish genocide, this same violence does not need this type of causal justification in the case of Blacks. This does not mean, however, that such violence is completely gratuitous. The meaning of this violence, for Frank Wilderson, is to promote the regeneration, and attestation, of the humanity of non-Blacks.

According to the American philosopher, the spectacle of violence against Blacks, whether in the unregulated actions of police interventions, in migrants who are thrown out into the sea, in television programs that humiliate and condemn suspects inside police stations, wage disparity, mass incarceration and other related phenomena, end up promoting the mental health of the world. As something to be completely devastated by structural violence, Blackness is the abyss of human suffering. It is then the reference of an existence that lives in death, whose being is marked by the effects of coloniality⁹. Within the perspective of afropessimism, humanity is a form of property,

⁹ According to Nelson Maldonado-Torres, coloniality refers to "to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations". (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 243)

something that one can have through the means of a relational process. One becomes human through the differentiation between those whose bodies are open to violence, whose death is a constant presence, and those who identify themselves as human by being outside this paradigm. As Frank Wilderson concludes, "[h]uman life is dependent on Black death for its existence and for its coherence" (p. 42).

To comprehend the particularity of the violence inflicted against bodies, an analysis relating political economy with the libidinal economy is made necessary. According to Fanon, the fantasies composing the racist imaginary of Blackness are formed by the relation of contradictory elements. The Black subject is a source of fear and hatred, thus having to be eliminated or segregated, while also being that which causes fascination, desire and lust (Hook, 2014, p. 168). The theory of racism elaborated by Fanon acknowledges these contradictory relations as being a fundamental aspect of the psychic structures behind the fascination and obsession of the colonizer with the native. The Black body, as an object of sexual desire and paradigm of virility and promiscuity, becomes the source of sexual inadequacy and impotency on the white subject (p. 169). In this context, the sexual anxiety of the settler becomes a vector channeled through sexual violence against Blacks. For Jared Sexton, the libidinous economy "underwrites and sutures" (Sexton, 2018, p. 84) the social dynamics of the political economy. That is why he understands that a study of violence needs to relate the structural processes of violence together with the dynamics of fascination and repulsion, desire and murder-drive, present in anti-Black violence. Characterizing such dynamics in racist violence, Wilderson writes:

(a) in the *libidinal* economy there are no forms of violence so excessive that they would be considered too cruel to inflict upon Blacks; and (b) in *political* economy there are no rational explanations for this limitless theater of cruelty, no explanations that would make *political or economic* sense of the violence that positions and punishes Blackness. (Wilderson, 2020, p. 216)

It is because of this relationship between libidinal economy and political economy that Sexton states that Blacks are not subjected to death within an "economy of disposability" (Sexton, 2018, p.84) like the vast majority of poor workers, who are hostages to the movements of capital. Rather, because of the fantasies of the libidinal economy and the way it acts in economic policy, Blacks are subject to "the interminable time of meaningless, impersonal dying" (p. 84). In this way, Blacks are subjected to violence in a unique way. As explained by Orlando Patterson, when he compares the condition of the slaves to the workers, the Black man is the one subjected to a type of violence where his own being is always at stake (Wilderson, 2020, p. 217). While the worker might get fired, or exposed to violence when a strike occurs, the violence inflicted against him always references his contingent condition of being a worker. When he loses his job he continues to be a worker, only

needing to be employed by a new company. However, in the case of the Black man who has become a freeman, the original violence responsible for implementing his condition as slave morphs into another. This new violence is not actually novel in itself, but rather a modified form of the previous one. Thus, the freed slave continues to suffer the same tensions between the libidinal and the political economy.

The Black man is then a figure who suffers a singular structural violence. Because of this, Frank Wilderson understands that analogies that compare Black suffering with other groups end up obscuring the dynamics of the suffering of those who are not human, and who consequently live in death. Thus, while the institution of slavery was not completely disintegrated, but rather acquired new techniques and morphed itself into new modes of violence, the same necropolitical violence that we saw in the last chapter is as valid in the contemporary world as in the colonial past. As non-humans, Blacks are victims of a violence that defies rationality and is sanctioned to transgress any ethical and legal standards. The "non-ethics of war" is as present in the slums and suburbs of the Brazil of Bolsonaro as it was during its colonial past. The territories where citizens live and die with little regard of dignity, as described by Fanon, is the fertile soil where anti-Black violence runs rampant. In this context, the 2020 public health crisis brought up by the SARS-Cov-2, which many believed it would have brought a larger sense of solidarity across the globe by showing how all of us are subjected to this illness, only reinforced the precariousness of Black lives. In the United States, Blacks account for 18% of the population but represent 58% of the deaths caused by Covid-19 (Sciulo, 2020). In Brazil, Blacks died 40% more than whites by complications directly related to the virus (Viñas et al., 2020). Instead of crystallizing the intrinsic fragility of the human condition, the pandemic reaffirmed the inequalities between those who are closest to death and those who are not.

However, we should not think of racist violence as following a single pattern. Indeed, such violence is manifested in multiple forms, largely determined by the socio-political particularities of a determinate region or country. As Leonard Harris exemplifies:

The suffering of young African Americans males in Gary, Indiana may not be well captured by a single theory or logic of racism that also purports to capture the suffering of Yoruba-speaking young immigrant men from Nigeria, in the slums of Johannesburg. Both have suffered from anti-black racism, but to explain their worlds under one rubric arguably requires an unlimited number of caveats, such as noting their different statuses such as immigrant or citizen, taking account of national heritage, class status, religious histories, language specific meanings, and educational resources (Harris, 2018, p. 287)

The different manifestations of anti-Black violence show how a set of contingent factors mediate the experience of racism more likely to be inflicted against a racialized person. In view of this, anti-

Black violence morphs into different shapes and assumes a particular configuration. Although its contingency does not allow us to disregard the distinct character they uphold based on socio-political determinations, racist violence, as argued by Harries, remains constant in being “a function of the undue loss of life and health” (p. 291). This means that, although we cannot establish a discourse on racist violence in a neat formulation because of the great array of elements involved and their own contingent character, the empirical factor of how Black communities are disproportionately affected by death and ill-health when compared to other groups remains a constant. The genocidal character of anti-Black violence is therefore attested in a broader fashion, interlinking communities to a shared form of suffering even if one cannot refer to an ontological character of Blackness. In other words, to speak of Black genocide is to speak of the necropower taking Black lives hostage, regardless of geographical barriers. The economics of death entangling the exposition to illness, lack of access to healthcare, premature death, incarceration and poverty leading to a form of life-in-death is therefore constitutive of the dynamics of an anti-Black world and its display of racist violence.

Inside this panorama, Frank Wilderson conceives Black genocide as a spectacle that can never be fully realized. As he writes:

Blacks are not going to be genocided like Native Americans. We are being genocided, but genocided and regenerated, because the spectacle of Black death is essential to the mental health of the world— we can't be wiped out completely, because our deaths must be repeated, visually. The bodily mutilation of Blackness is necessary, so it must be repeated. What we are witnessing on YouTube, Instagram, and the nightly news as murders are rituals of healing for civil society. Rituals that stabilize and ease the anxiety that other people feel in their daily lives. It's the anxiety that people have walking around. It can be stabilized by a lot of different things— marijuana, cocaine, alcohol, affairs— but the ultimate stabilization is the spectacle of violence against Blacks. I know I am a Human because I am not Black. (Wilderson, 2020, p. 40)

In this way, Black genocide is the constellation of the different objective and subjective forms of violence that are inflicted on Black communities, which materializes as a spectacle of social "healing". When Black suffering is considered inside the dynamics of the economy of death, we are capable of making clear the actors who stand to profit from their condition of wretchedness. The fact that not all Blacks are being, nor can they be, exterminated does not interfere with the genocidal character of the violence against the non-beings. This historical constant of bodies open to violation is what shows how slavery, apartheid and the current techniques of anti-Black violence, whose most observable contemporary aspects refer to state-sanctioned police brutality and mass incarceration, attest the static character of a violence responsible for eliminating Black bodies from the realm of the living. In this fashion, we can conclude that, as a spectacle, Black genocide is the force that actualizes the relational limit between the human and the non-human.

The panorama elucidated by Frank Wilderson aims to problematize how such configuration must be thought in relational terms, where Black genocide is considered as a psychic medicine for the general human conscious. Independently of race, gender, or class, those who are not Black benefit from Black suffering by realizing they are not conditioned to endure a similar exposition to violence. Although certainly polemical, Frank Wilderson's thesis does not underscore the pain of other communities, nor does it aim to provide a "hierarchy of suffering" or even deny the capacity for human solidarity. Rather, his discourse emerges as a critique of violence determined to conceive the particularity of Black suffering, and remains unapologetic in deviating from other forms of analysis presented by other social theories. In view of this, beyond posing the frame of contemporary anti-Black violence as being genocidal, his arguments allow us to consider how such violence can be beneficial to other segments of society. Such realization might be controversial when considering the unfavorable position of other marginalized communities, but it does not appear as polemical when thought in regards of white supremacy. It is the beneficial aspect of racism, attested in the operations transforming human misery in wealth, that Leonard Harris conceives as the reason why it remains present in the world:

The explanation for the persistence of racism is obvious: it benefits every member of a dominant group fortuitously, independent of malevolent and malicious intentions or structures; poor health and premature death limit the ability of those oppressed by race to accumulate and transfer assets to their progeny; and progeny face greater dangers to their healthy than populations that do not inherit the results of parental miseries and egregious stereotypes visited upon all members of its social kind. (Harris, 2018, p. 294)

Therefore, the 'healing' aspect of Black genocide can be thought as its own condition of possibility. While it continues to establish a relational dynamic providing either the accumulation of wealth or assets, or even the very own humanity of other social groups, it remains as a form of necronomical power looming over Black lives. At last, our discussion revealed the need to consider Black suffering beyond the Marxist critique of capitalism and class warfare. Given the unique character of the violence inflicted against Blacks and how it performs as a regenerative property responsible for attesting the humanity of non-Blacks, these dynamics point to a type of suffering that defies our current understanding of violence and capitalism. This line of inquiry has showed how the dehumanization of Black subjects continues to be the condition of possibility leading to their vulnerability and exposition to violence. In view of this, Black genocide is not only a mechanism bring these lives to death or life-in-death, but also a regulatory mechanism fracturing the world into those bound to suffer and those who profit from their suffering.

Conclusion

This research aimed to uncover the dilemmas of Black suffering through the lenses of the notion of Black genocide. Motivated by the current allegations in the public sphere concerning the existence of genocide being committed against Black populations, this investigation intended to put such notions into question by problematizing the concept of genocide and the particular dilemmas surrounding the suffering of Black populations. Therefore, our goal was to evaluate the existence of a genocide being perpetrated against Black subjects, as well as its substance and the forces which would be propelling this violence. Through a discussion on the particularities of Black suffering, we presented an interpretation on some of the fundamental aspects of anti-Black violence and how the label of “genocide” can be conceived as a suitable term to describe the phenomenon responsible for subduing the possibility of life of Black communities.

Since genocide is a surveilled and highly political concept, our investigation started with a discussion on the complexities involved with the concept in order to lay the grounds for our understanding of the term. This led to the realization that the hegemonic comprehension of genocide is highly influenced by the events of the Holocaust, and overtly determined by the normative necessity of some elements established by the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide. It was shown how the need of finding an “expressed intent” by the part of the perpetrators of any supposed occurrence of genocide reduced our capability of thinking the material dynamics of this violence, and how such element was incapable of attending to the systemic destruction of populations in which no easily identifiable parties could be found. Moreover, the hegemonic understanding of genocide was found to be highly connected to the political environment of the aftermath of World War II, and thus its elements reflect the juridical necessity of providing legal punishment for Nazi crimes, while also protecting influential nations from being accused of perpetrating genocide inside their own domestic territory.

Adding to these problems, a closer look into the dynamics of genocide revealed how the notion of race is central not only to the brewing of this form of violence, where the racialized other is seen as a menace needed to be dealt with, but also to the juridical and academic understanding of those who can count as victims of genocide and those who cannot. Drawing upon the research of Ana Flauzina, we discussed how Black people have often been denied the same type of reparations given to white communities who suffered the consequences of genocide. Beyond this, the racist imaginary of Blackness and the animalistic representations of Black subjects were argued to be an operative fantasy present both in Genocide Studies and in the juridical rulings over reparations for

genocide. Given this configuration, the current place of Black subjects inside the dynamics of genocide called for a conceptual appropriation of genocide beyond these anti-Black tendencies.

In our investigation, we revealed other formulations of genocide diverging from the hegemonic understanding of the concept. Such conceptualizations gives less emphasis to the notion of “expressed intent” and consider the aspect of “attack on life foundation of a group” as a more suitable to understand this form of violence. However, although valuable, such a model does not offer a proper philosophical understanding of word. That is to say, such formulation does not provide a deeper analysis of the substance and also what is at stake in genocidal violence. In order to evaluate the substance of genocide and how it could be thought in regards of Black suffering, while simultaneously avoiding the array of prejudices and anti-Black tendencies found in the academic literature, this research opted to search within a broader philosophical approach of genocide a possible formulation of the concept. Following the hypothesis that genocide is mainly a problem regarding our relation to the *other*, and given how racialization often plays a role in igniting genocidal violence, we have opted to turn our research towards European Modernity as it represents the paradigmatic moment responsible for creating sub-others – the human beings considered to be ontologically inferior for deviating from European standards. In this fashion, we turned to the philosophy of Theodor Adorno in order to find a more refined and philosophical formulation of genocide.

To better grasp Adorno’s formulation of the concept at hand, we had to offer an analysis of his co-authored book with Max Horkheimer *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, as the concept of instrumental reason, thoroughly discussed in this book, offers much of the base for the adornian formulation of genocide. Our discussion revealed how Adorno conceives this violence as a totalizing force. Just as the Enlightenment’s rationality is moved by a will to discard anything that cannot be understood through its own operational logic, genocide is a mode of violence used to eliminate any group that cannot be integrated in a given society. However, such formulation of genocide was considered to be insufficient when related to the mechanisms of violence inflicted against social outcasts. Slavery and apartheid, for instance, were both used in order to dominate social dejects that could not be integrated into a social order. Since Adorno’s formulation does not address how these phenomena are related to the discussion of instrumental rationality, neither to how both of them could be thought inside of his own theory of genocide, his conceptualization was deemed incapable of sufficiently dealing with the dilemmas of Black suffering.

After exposing the insufficiencies of Adorno’s theory of genocide to the matter at hand, our investigation turned to the authors more focused in understanding the specificities of Black suffering. Thus, since the matter of a Black genocide is necessarily connected to the dynamics of the racialization of the Black subject, our discussion offered an account of what composes such an

identity. By evoking the fanonian phenomenological existentialism, the particularities of Black selfhood were discussed in regards to the material manifestations of violence against Black bodies. Fanon's contributions to the understanding of how violence subdues and transforms Black lives were essential to open a pathway towards our comprehension of the dehumanized character of the Black subject. The dynamics between violence and dehumanization lead us to access the precarious character of those whose lives are always on the fringe of inexistence. However, this configuration only permitted an initial comprehension of some of the dynamics related to Black suffering, and therefore the question of genocide was still needed to be addressed.

To answer this dilemma, our research has posed the question of Black genocide in a more controversial format. Instead of simply referring to specific episodes of genocidal violence perpetrated against Black groups throughout history, such as the Herero genocide, we decided to investigate the existence of genocide operating within the dynamics of anti-Black violence. If we could argue how genocide, an exterminatory violence responsible for frontally attacking the conditions of life of a group, is a constantly present phenomenon targeting Black communities, we would be able to conceive Black genocide as the form of structural expression of anti-Black violence. For this reason, we portioned our research into two fronts. The first was dedicated to question the operation of a genocidal force inside the colonial enterprise, and the second revolved around finding the continuation of such mechanisms in our contemporary neocapitalist societies.

Within the first discussion, we used Achille Mbembe's formulation of necropolitics to posit an analysis of sovereign violence inside the colonial context. Mbembe's critique of Modernity through the analysis of the economy of necropower – the sovereign's policies dictating those who should be killed, highlights the dynamics of life and death inside colonial occupation. Since Mbembe engages directly with the colonial world and offers a more in-depth observation of the dynamics leading to altruicide, his critique is more valuable to understand the anti-Black forms of violence than the one of Adorno, previously discussed. Through the concept of necropolitics we were capable of describing the colonial world as a death-world, a territory fundamentally determined by the violation of ethical and juridical limits. In such territories, Black communities were submitted to state sanctioned forms of violence, while also denied the possibility of a dignified life. Thus, since they were submitted to death or a life-in-death, they were targets of a form of genocidal violence – an expression of violence determined by a will to exterminate the conditions of life of a group.

After exposing how the colonial enterprise is structured under a genocidal form of violence, our investigation aimed to look for the continuation of these dynamics in the contemporary socio-political dynamics. In order to do so, we had to first make explicit the singular character of Black suffering. To emphasize the paradigmatic aspect of the internal structure of anti-Black violence, we confronted the Marxist thesis concerning the primacy of class struggle and the role of violence

within the capitalist system. Such thesis proposes that a discussion over racist violence only obscures the real dynamics of violence operating in the world. Moreover, the very notion of Black genocide would seem ludicrous, since no particular type of violence being inflicted against Black communities could be said to exist within this context.

The answer to this dilemma came through a discussion on Blackness through the lens of afropessimism. Inside this meta-theory, the Black subject is paradigmatically a slave, and therefore continues to suffer from the same forms of social death that used to define Black lives during the plantations. As the ultimate reference of ‘inhumanity’, Blackness defies our understanding of violence and humanity. The uniqueness in Black suffering, which turns it incapable of being fully understood through the conceptual framework of Marxism and other tools of social and political analysis, is said to lie in the “nourishing” and “healing” character of anti-Black violence. Whereas the worker might experience violence because of a transgression, such as going on strike, Black subjects suffer primarily a gratuitous violence. A self-serving type of force, responsible for drawing the line of those who can be said to be inhuman, and thus subjected to an incomparable regime of violence, and those who attest their humanity by being outside the paradigm of Blackness.

The reproduction of a continuous arbitrary violation of Black bodies is what attests the dehumanized character of Black lives, which points to form of presence in the world characterized by a distinct exposition to death. The theorization of this violence as a genocide is hardly a rhetoric exaggeration, but a suitable denomination of the magnitude of the violence inflicted against these communities. While being constantly denied the possibility of a dignified life by being exposed to a death-world, the Black subject continues to carry the sign of dehumanization, and thus the violence inflicted against her has been normalized. The dynamics of this normalization points to a distinct form of suffering of these communities, which warrants a theorization capable of highlighting, instead of downplaying, the effects of this violence to their existential projects. Therefore, our investigation has showed how Black genocide is a suitable name for the anti-Black violence. By perceiving how such violence is structured on an impulse to purge the possibility of life of Black communities, while denying the very human condition of the Black subject, we have attested a form of genocidal violence being inflicted against bodies turned Black.

Our investigation pointed to the necessity of problematizing the singular character of anti-Black violence. Most importantly, our research opened a path to think some of the most urging questions in street protests through the prism of Philosophy. By asserting the possibility of engaging with contemporary social dilemmas of Black communities by means of a philosophical inquiry, we revealed how such discipline can be seen as a powerful tool to address the cries of the social outcasts. We understand such form of investigation as being unapologetic tied to the questions of life and death, which often is a central point of analyzes when investigating the distinct

questions of marginalized groups, often forgotten in the field of Philosophy. Nonetheless, given the scope of this dissertation, some problems remain to be investigated in future researches. The relation between capitalism and racial violence is a vast subject. A more detailed investigation on the current and past mechanisms of dehumanization of Black subjects inside capitalism, as well as an in-depth look on the ‘healing property’ of Blackness could lead to a better understanding of some of the notions discussed in this dissertation.. Additionally, the question of Black genocide and reparations is also a fundamental point needing to be further addressed, although perhaps such investigation should be done by a multidisciplinary approach, involving the fields of Law, Philosophy and History. At last, this research offers no final solution to the question it proposed to investigate. Although we presented a description of anti-Black violence as being genocidal, we are not capable of offering solutions capable of leading to a new social reality. Such ambition exceeds the capabilities of this research. Nevertheless, the lack of solutions to this question does not mean that none exist. Rather, it only proves the necessity of such an inquiry. Therefore, as all too often in Philosophy, our discussion ends in an aporia.

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