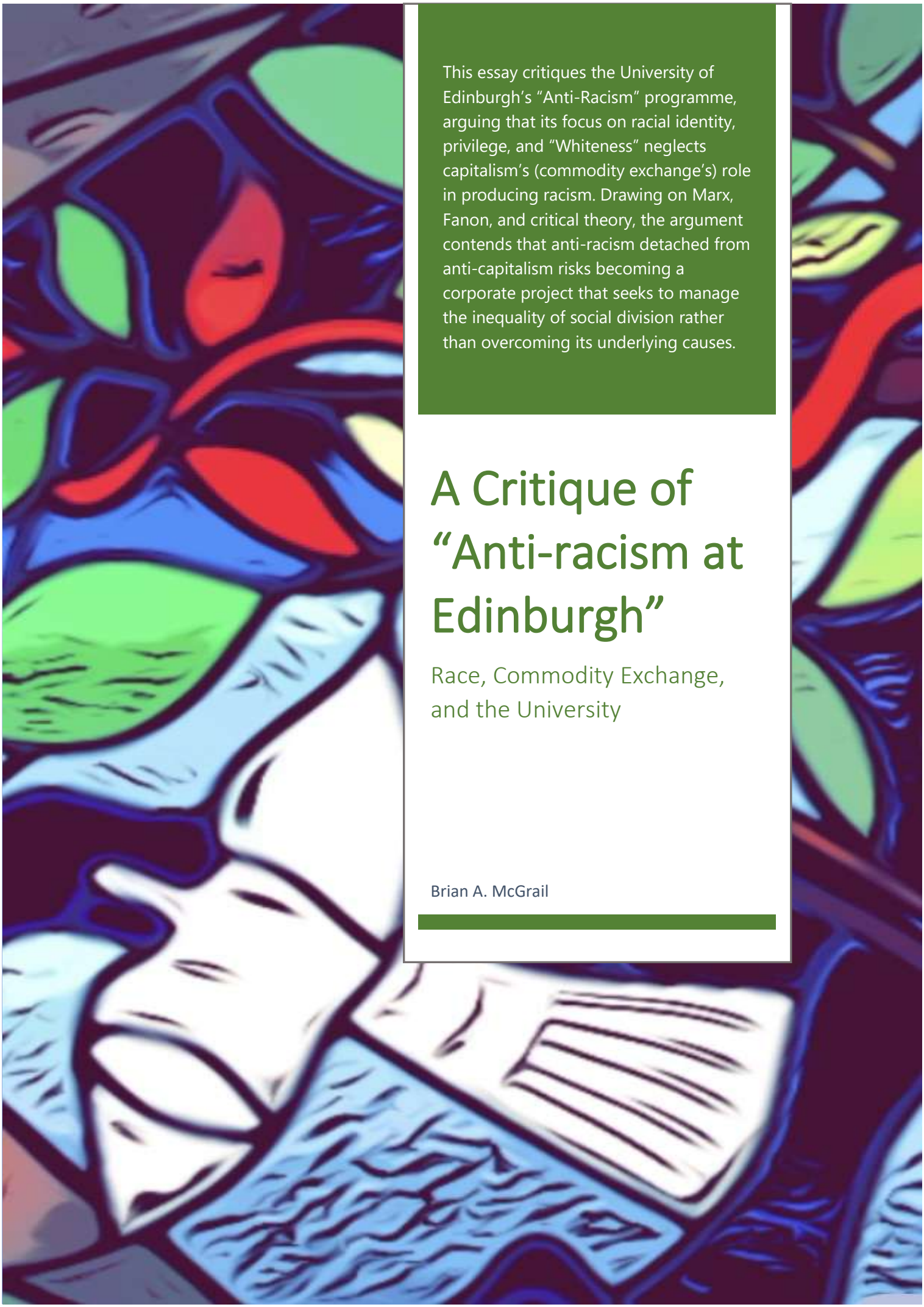


This essay critiques the University of Edinburgh's "Anti-Racism" programme, arguing that its focus on racial identity, privilege, and "Whiteness" neglects capitalism's (commodity exchange's) role in producing racism. Drawing on Marx, Fanon, and critical theory, the argument contends that anti-racism detached from anti-capitalism risks becoming a corporate project that seeks to manage the inequality of social division rather than overcoming its underlying causes.

A Critique of "Anti-racism at Edinburgh"

Race, Commodity Exchange, and the University

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A Critique of “Anti-Racism at Edinburgh”: Race, Commodity Exchange, and the University

Introduction

To what extent is **contemporary racism** rooted in the repetitive, and typically ‘mundane,’ social practice of **capitalist commodity exchange**? Certainly, what could be called ‘classic’ anti-racism of the mid-20th century, from the 1940s to 1970s (including campaigners, writers and academics such as CLR James (1939), Eric Williams (1944), Frantz Fanon (1952 & 1961), Selma James (1975 & 2012), Cedric Robinson (1983), and Angela Davis (1981), gave **capitalism** a central role in their understanding of the **causes of racism**. Likewise, a later Black writer like bell hooks (2001) never failed to include 'capitalism' in her list of contexts and drivers of racism. I do not think any of them could seriously consider an over-coming of racism without featuring or foregrounding their **anti-capitalism**.

Indeed, to attempt **anti-racism** whilst ignoring the predominant **social form** - an historically peculiar set of alienated social relationships centred on the production of money (the Value Form) and the accumulation of capital (an exploitative **relationship**) - would, in their minds, have entailed *sidelining* the very mechanisms of chattel slavery, primitive accumulation, colonialism, imperialism, labour power exploitation (*aka* wage slavery), and prejudiced / discriminatory divisions of labour, leading to isolated and alienated subjects (Fromm, 1942) that make up the ‘my truth’ experience of ‘racialised minorities’ (in metropoles) and ‘majorities’ (in former colonies and the ‘Global South’).

Yet much **contemporary anti-racism** takes just such an approach in *ignoring* capitalism. It is, in effect, **corporate anti-racism** - a desire to expunge the relative oppression (relative to a 'privileged' *portion* of the population) and indignity of *disadvantaged* racialised experience (throughout society but especially in the workplace and/or learning environment) whilst holding on, without apparent contradiction, to the everyday practice of capitalist commodity exchange (i.e., there is no questioning of everyone’s alienation, of the profit incentive, the payment of wages, the demand for tuition fees, nor the requirement for a "leadership" hierarchy).

There is, rather, a hope that, someday, the payment of wages, invoicing of fees, accumulation of capital, and performance of promotion cycles can all proceed without any attendant “racism” (nor "Chauvinism", nor "Cis-ism", nor "Heteronormativity", nor "Ableism", nor "Ageism"), or what Selma James (2012, p.93) calls the existence of “social caste.” This liberating culturally progressive dream will enable capitalism’s **competition for survival** (amongst the *generally* – normalised and unmarked – **dispossessed**) to continue without bad faith nor ill feeling. Indeed, there will be a transparent meritocracy-with-adjustments, where those in lower grades, on lower pay, in ‘dead-end jobs’, or deemed insufficient ‘team players’ will accept, *gracefully*, the nature and will of the truly enlightened and firmly **decolonised corporation**. Every social “group” (or *caste*) will have an administratively ‘adjusted’ and, therefore, fair (equitable) chance of climbing to top positions of "leadership", without anyone questioning the deeply elitist concept of "leadership".

Unsurprisingly, a central focus of such corporate anti-racism has been **institutional racism**. Wherein, the most popular interpretation of 'institution' refers to an incorporated body of some kind: the police force, the judicial system, the church, the school (and education 'system'), the publicly-floated company, the mutual/friendly society, and, of course, the college or university. And such institutions are, accordingly, in desperate need of the right *type* of "leadership" to reorganise themselves and disorganise their inherent **racism**.

A more nuanced interpretation understands the same phrasing to refer to culturally 'instituted' **practices** - whether conscious or unconscious (i.e., implicit). Nevertheless, what is not typically intended by the invoking of 'institutionalised practice' is **commodity exchange** (as per the social institution described by Marx in *Capital,* 1976 [1875]). As ever, **commodity fetish** (a social relation which takes the form of a relation between 'things': see Heinrich, 2021) ensures commodity exchange is *naturalised* as the basic requirement of 'survival' (i.e., "everyone needs to work"). With naturalisation of commodity exchange assumed and accepted, a **substitute** is required to understand and explain racism.[1] And contemporary anti-racism finds such a substitution. It has created its very own **discourse** of a culturally instituted condition and practice, that of **Whiteness**.

The latter is taken as a social inheritance (handed down from generation to generation) which, unbeknown even to its recipients and carriers, ensures their White 'race' or 'caste' (taken as a starting point, as a 'fact' of existence) *experiences* a "lack of disadvantage"[2] (*aka* "privilege") over other ('factually' existent) 'races': the *Others*. With the incentives (and explanation) of capitalist relations of production neatly removed, **Whiteness** is comprehended as self-perpetuating itself without external reason nor force (an **autotopia**: see McGrail, 2026a, p.6). This Whiteness *thesis* then explains itself (White people as an identity formation look after themselves, or 'their own', including **unconsciously**), and has meaning and purpose through preservation of the "lack of disadvantage" White people face as the *dominant social group (or caste)*. Regarding classical sociological theory, this approach is akin or closest to Weber's analysis of 'social class' as a matter of **market-positioning** whereby groups within society jostle for resources, status, and power in an endless competitive hierarchical struggle.[3] Unsurprisingly, race theory discovers **racial motivation** to be the key **explanatory force** in social science and the life-force which makes modern society *tick* – race identity drives the struggle and should be exposed as doing so.

The central emancipatory question for corporate anti-racism, therefore, becomes not how to tackle capitalism (capitalist commodity exchange) but the all-pervasive "Whiteness" of society – the dominance of **White racial identity** – and its institutions (incorporations and practices). Once Whiteness (a concept also expressed through interchangeable terms like 'Western', 'Colonial', 'Euro-centric', 'Imperial', even 'Modern') is *expunged*, the accumulation of capital, or making of money, will be freed to proceed (in its abstract truth) on a culturally fair and equitable basis; a step up from the empirically manifest, historically mutant, **racialised capitalism** people have *endured* so far (due to "Whiteness"). With capitalism liberated from racism (and ableism, and Chauvinism, and heteronormativity, etc., … or as Marx might put it, all prior *negative social bonds*), "making money" and exploiting the labour power of (non-distinct) others through the free market will become a

[1] Note that one explanatory response to the *naturalisation* of commodity exchange is fundamentally racist in a highly overt form. As a 'natural' system, the operation of commodity exchange has demonstrated, apparently, that 'White' people are, indeed, 'naturally' superior. Racism is therein not only explained but justified through the operation of 'free markets.'

[2] This is a double-negative phrasing I have seen used in DEI training within the University.

[3] For my own criticism of various understandings of social class, see McGrail (2024) *Class Cultures: What is meant by Class?*

mutually-recognitive **equal opportunity**. After all, what is wrong with everyone and anyone in the corporate melting pot being ambitious entrepreneurs in the pursuit of personal financial gain?

As may be seen from my opening, I do not intend *this* critique as 'a critique of anti-racism' *per se*, of all forms of anti-racism (I've named some of my own preferred theorists already), but rather as a critique of a highly-specialised kind of liberal progressive or *bourgeois* "anti-racism" (apparently critical of every institution *except* **money**) which has become incredibly popular in the early 21st century (before and not just after the notable 'surge' in Black Lives Matter – BLM – movement, 2020-21). More than that, I want to focus on a specific (empirically observable and close to 'my truth') *instance* of this contemporary approach, as typified in a higher education institution the free market has happened to allocate my labour power to. Hence, my main title uses the exact wording of webpages from the University of Edinburgh, namely, "Anti-racism at Edinburgh".

"Anti-racism at Edinburgh"

"Anti-racism at Edinburgh" (Ar@E) (2026) is more than a policy position on racism from the University authority (as a corporate body / institution). The University already had a raft of Policies, aimed at defining and promoting its Values and Mission, including a zero-tolerance of [overt] racism. The problem with such 'policy statements', for critics, is they never seem to be 'acted upon' at the broader institutional level. Yes, 'disciplinary' mechanisms and sanctions may be available and entered into regarding individual 'cases' of obvious (recordable, reportable) racism but underlying **microaggressions** (that vague *spectre* of racism which is never quite 'reportable') and lack of progress in "racialised minority" staff promotions (highlighted by statistical analysis) allow **institutionalised racism** to simmer just below the boil. Quite correctly, critics can refer to various colours of 'wash' ('Whitewash', 'Greenwash') as the corporate entity repaints itself to fit in with the Spirit of the Age (*Zeitgeist)* whilst, in its fundamental behaviours, finding ways to roll on with conservative consistency (e.g., technologically and scientifically advancing the capacities of armaments, enhancing the mechanics of population surveillance, enabling genetic manipulation and genetically-targeted destruction, all in the name of human **progress**).

After the death of George Floyd and *surge* in BLM (because it had existed prior to 2020-21), the University of Edinburgh found itself under increased public scrutiny to come to terms (through rigorous investigation) with its own **history of racism**. Prominent within this programme was an attempt to uncover links to the Atlantic slave trade and concomitant enslavement of Africans in British colonies (e.g., Jamaica, Guyana, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago). But, unlike Georgetown University (in the USA) and University of Glasgow, the University of Edinburgh had no 'direct' institutional ownership of slaves. However, the University did play a key supporting role in promoting theoretical (so-called "scientific") justifications for the **maintenance of a racial hierarchy** (*aka* racism). The latter was undertaken via wide dissemination and promotion of theories on national 'characteristics', physiognomy, phrenology, eugenics, and many 'anthropologies' of race. Such theories not only helped to explain (justify) the supremacy of the British and their Empire (thus 'culture'), but they also *equipped* graduates (*alumni* – enlightened ones) who would go on to populate, colonise, and command the Empire.

Perversely, in the decade prior to 2020, the University of Edinburgh found itself increasingly financially dependent on overseas student fee income (due to the higher tuition fees charged). Most overseas students where/are 'non-White' (or people of colour, POC – though that term is insufficiently precise for Ar@E which prefers "racialised": Racialised Minority Journey / Glossary of Terms).

Edinburgh's reckoning with its racist past was long overdue, leading to a major review of racism at Edinburgh (University of Edinburgh, 2025, part of the '*Race Review*'), initially chaired by Black campaigner (and Professor Emeritus of Heriot-Watt University) Sir Geoffrey Palmer, who also worked on a race review with City of Edinburgh Council. As far as I am aware, Ar@E is an outcome / product of Edinburgh's wider *Race Review* (2025). Significantly, Ar@E is not 'history' oriented but focused on current and future responses to ongoing institutional racism.

Journeys to Becoming Anti-racist at Edinburgh

Creatively, Ar@E is a campaign and learning programme which wishes to raise awareness of institutional / implicit racism and then tackle this kind of racism by bringing the unconscious practices, performances, and privileges of Whiteness to consciousness.[4] Being positive, it can be seen as an admirable attempt at what Paolo Freire (1970; 1994) would call "consciousness raising", where subjects begin to understand their situation as a *social* outcome rather than personal failing (nor personal success).

The Ar@E website performs this **consciousness raising** by: (a) enrolling participants on video-based introductory *learning* (or *unlearning*) modules which teach the basics of anti-racist theory (ideas, concepts, terminology); and (b) providing a related Resource Hub, containing *interactive* 'workbook' materials, where participants reflect and express their feelings and responses to 'uncomfortable' questions aimed at raising their self-awareness of 'race' as a societal motivation.

Anti-Racism @ Edinburgh	**Racially Minoritised Anti-Racist Journey**	**Mixed Anti-Racist Journey**	**White Anti-Racist Journey**
Step 1 (or Stage 1)	Pre-Encounter	Pre-Encounter: Identity Development (Childhood Discovery)	Pre-Encounter
Step 2	Encounter	Group Identity Pressure	Avoidance
Step 3	Immersion	Identity Conflict	Defensiveness & Rationalisation
Step 4	Internalisation	Identity Appreciation	Exploration
Step 5	Commitment	Identity Integration	Engagement
Step 6	-	-	Anti-Racist

Figure 1: The Three Pathways for undertaking a personal Anti-racist Journey (Anti-racism Hub, Edinburgh, 2026)

[4] Admittedly, some of this reminds me of Sigmund Freud's (1913) *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, where Freud claims that a patient is *cured* once the cause of their behaviour (the repression of painful memories) is brought to consciousness (from their unconscious). But if White people become aware of their White privilege will this remove the social requirement to compete for employments and positions? It may remove 'race' as an acceptable justification for why X gets the job over Y, though, given the **scarcity** of positions (especially as one goes up the grease pole) another element of justification (involving *subjective reasoning* – to follow Horkheimer's definition: see Bonefeld, 2023) may be slipped in and substituted, such as obtaining a better grade in a culturally-biased qualification. The *theory* 'shifts' whilst the boundaries of *practice* remain 'the same'; scarcity is *imposed* and enforces a *struggle* for resources, status, and power.

One of the latter (the **Anti-racist Journey** [**ARJ**] activity) encourages participants to follow one of three **pathways** (depending on their 'race' or 'caste') by which they can develop their **anti-racism** through self-reflection (see Figure 1). Each journey consists of several steps (*aka* stages) which take the self-committed participant from a 'Pre-Encounter' stage to one of being fully aware (and 'Anti-racist'). The Figure 1 table maps the pathways in relation to each other. Ar@E guidance makes it clear that all pathways can be viewed by all participants, so each ideal 'type' of person (or representative of a category) can see what is being said in the other pathways (to other *ideal* 'types') in the interests of clarity and openness.

These pathways could be termed **self-psychoanalytic** (especially given their roots in the psychology discipline), based on different and contextually 'appropriate' **theoretical models**. Hence, the Racially Minoritised Journey is based on William E. Cross's (1971) *The Negro-to-Black Conversion Experience.* Steps 1-5 of the Racially Minoritised Journey in Figure 1 reproduce Cross's original headings. Meanwhile, the Mixed Journey was "inspired" (Mixed ARJ, 2026, p.6)[5] by W. S. Carlos Poston's (1990) Bi-Racial Identity Development Model. Steps 1-5 in the table are a slight variation, with the most notable difference being Step 3 which was originally entitled 'Enmeshment / Denial' (instead of 'Identity Conflict'). Finally, the White Journey is an acknowledged reworking of Janet Helm's (1992) White Racial Identity Model. Helm's original 6 steps were labelled: (1) Contact; (2) Disintegration; (3) Reintegration; (4) Pseudo-independence; (5) Immersion / Emersion; (6) Autonomy[6] as White people *struggle* in coming to terms with their **racial identity**.

This *background* makes each pathway highly consistent with the others. Notably, Cross's Black Racial Identity Model is the basis of the remainder. Given Cross's model was developed on grounds that "White psychology" (as a discipline evolving from Europeans, e.g., Freud) was *inadequate* at analysing and expressing "Black experience" – that is, Cross's model was developed in *reaction* to "White psychology," it should be kept in mind that Helm's model for White Racial Identity was developed by an African American psychologist studying White people. Hence, questions could be raised about Helm's use of Cross's model (based on Black experience) to analyse White experience.

The move from Step 1 to Step 2 (or Stage 1 to Stage 2) *always* involves the **discovery of one's racial identity**. This is an uncomfortable and disconcerting process for all, but especially for Whites who have little to gain from the entire 6-step process but guilt and shame, except perhaps a recognition of 'allyship' and, ultimately, "an informed and positive connection to your white racial identity" (White ARJ, 2026, p.11), though the latter connection is premised on "continuous effort, reflection, and resilience" (p.11); so, not falling off the wagon.

The Pre-Encounter stage involves blissful ignorance.[7] For the Racially Minoritised this entails being "unaware" or feeling "unaffected by … systemic racism" and it is "common for people to hold the beliefs and values of the dominant culture[8] … leading to a lack of connection with their own cultural heritage" (Racially Minoritised ARJ, 2026, p.5). To be clear, the dominant culture (according to the text) is *not* the culture of people who are racially minoritised.

[5] I have decided to use the PDF versions of the relevant documents, and list the full sources at the end, since this enables me to paginate citations.
[6] See Rosetta Eun Ryong Lee (2026) HelmsWhiteIDModel for further detail.
[7] In *The Matrix* feature movie (Wachowski & Wachowski, 1999), this is blue-pill territory. For a quick explanation, see Red pill and blue pill - Wikipedia.
[8] So, *not* "their **own**" culture. Apparently, the 'two' cultures are separate / mutually exclusive experiences and heritages.

For Whites, Pre-Encounter is about *dismissing* concerns around the existence and impact of race and racism through a belief in "the concept of colour-blindness" (White ARJ, 2026, p.5). Race is viewed as not or no longer important, and a thing of the past. However, for those of Mixed Heritage (which includes children of one race adopted by another – so a mixed heritage family, and not just genetic children of mixed-race parents),[9] the Pre-Encounter stage is *complicated* as a "very young child with Mixed Heritage will tend to have a **sense of self** [my emphasis] that is somewhat independent of their ethnic background" (Mixed ARJ, 2026, p.6). Whilst a child will see colour "they do not yet attach a value to their own mixed ethnicity or that of their parents … [instead] … society will impose those values on the child's heritage, often related to physical attributes" (p.6). In other words, society will determine if the child is or feels Racially Minoritised or Whitened depending on looks (i.e. patterns of epidermis pigmentation). The latter will shape the **racial experience**.[10]

The all-important transition to Stage 2 (or Step 2) is about **becoming racially aware** and **being able to identify (with) one's race**, and/or **one's racism**. The Racially Minoritised subject can be racist, just as much as the White subject, because racism entails acts which simply **maintain or sustain racial hierarchy**, and a Black person can continue to act 'as if' systemic racism has no impact on them (and others like them) when it does – and if not on them directly, personally, then on other Black people and Black culture. The Racially Minoritised ARJ (2026, p.9) asks: "Have you ever denied, camouflaged or belittled your heritage[11] in front of others?" That would be a *passive* (see below) act of racism.

Of course, the 'pathways' are different in the presumptions each 'ideal type' journey makes and entails. At Step 2, Whites enter 'avoidance', obviously, due to guilt and shame at being the ones who **benefit** from racism by reaping its privileges whilst, contrastingly, the Racially Minoritised 'encounter' their own (subaltern?) culture for the first time. The discoveries made at Step 2 are radically different for each 'group' or type. Those of Mixed Heritage face or find 'pressure' over which identity (race) they are going to choose. Awareness of race and racism brings on the question: which 'race' are *you*?

Step 3 (Stage 3) appears to be one of *intensification* on all three pathways: the Racially Minoritised subject becomes 'immersed' in their new found racial identity: "you might actively make your racial identity more visible and seek connections with those with similar lived experiences" (Racially Minoritised ARJ, 2026, p.9). It can be a stage at which 'all' White people become the enemy. Meanwhile, the Mixed subject has to face questions about denying 'part' of their identity (e.g., they may, as a teenager, have denied their parents' [their '*own*'] culture in order to fit in with other teenagers) which, now, leads to deeper "internal conflict when your different cultural identities

[9] The term 'Bi-racial' in W. S. Carlos Poston's model has been dropped in favour of 'Mixed Heritage', shortened in usage to 'Mixed'.

[10] I would assert that 'caste' (a term Fanon uses in *Black Skin, White Masks*, 1952, in addition to Selma James' usage) is a **form** of racism, where racial experience does not depend (necessarily) on differences in skin pigmentation. Other examples are available (e.g., for the Irish as 'Blacks' – see Ratansi's (2007) *Racism: A Very Short Introduction*).

[11] I think this should state "your racially minoritised heritage" and not just "your heritage". The specificity is important. Someone who is racially minoritised (e.g., of South Asian descent who has been born in the UK) may literally inherit property, businesses, or other capital (including social and cultural 'capital', to use Bourdieu's terminology) which are an outcome of being part-and-parcel of Empire and British colonialism. For example, Asians deported by Idi Amin's Ugandan government had settled in East Africa as a 'middle' class (traders; warehousers; administrators) under British colonial rule. The 'dominant' ('modernist') culture would also be part of 'their' heritage. This kind of internal dialectical conflict (the dominant within the racially minoritised; the racially minoritised within the dominant) is generally missing or overlooked within the 'pathways' and their typologies. **A Racially Minoritised subject may well see the dominant culture as 'their' heritage**.

clash" (Mixed ARJ, 2026, p.10). For the White subject, 'avoidance' in dealing with their racial identity can no longer be sustained leading to two forms of escape mechanism: defensiveness and rationalisation. If someone points out to the White subject that they have said or done something racist, then the subject may try to justify or rationalise what they have said (e.g., what was said is 'true' based on some 'metric') which typically includes "a blame-the-victim attitude" (White ARJ, 2026, p.7) (e.g., if only people weren't so sensitive!). The discomfort at this stage can make the White subject "more angry and active in consciously upholding racist views" (p.8). The process of coming-to-terms with race and racism can make the White subject *actively* racist. I suppose the poison has to come out.

The later Steps (4-5-6) introduce the resolutions. For the Racially Minoritised "it is common to feel more secure in their racial identity, developing racially-positive attitudes that are expansive, open and less defensive […] acknowledging that not all white colleagues or individuals are problematic" (Racially Minoritised ARJ, 2026, p.11). Stage 4 begins to see the celebration of "newfound confidence in your identity" (p.11), which can culminate in an ability to call out racism within one's own minoritised racial group regarding derogatory attitudes towards *other* racially minoritised groups. Finally, Stage 5 (Commitment) sees "an understanding and acceptance that race is a social construct that we, as individuals, have a limited ability to change" (p.13) but also a growing capacity to work with White allies and "challenge instances of racism, while clarifying it is not the responsibility of the racialised minority to resolve systemic racism" (p.13).

On the Mixed ARJ (2026, p.12), the subject is enabled at Stage 4 (Identity Appreciation) "to explore and reconnect with your other identity/identities". The language is, once again, one of celebration: "sense of pride," embracing, sharing, and being "more aligned" (p,12) with the heritage that had been suppressed or denied at Stage 3's 'conflict'. Finally, Stage 5 (Identity Integration) means "you will reach a place of wholeness and self-acceptance … [and] you understand that your identity is not fragmented but layered, and you can move between contexts with self-awareness" (p.14). This confidence, once more, leads to the ability to speak up "when others try to simplify or label your identity to a narrower box" (p.14).[12]

The White ARJ (2026) concludes with a different sense of resolution. Stage 4 (Exploration) provides a "growing awareness of racism as a systemic issue, but also uncertainty about how to act" (p.8) that leads to nervousness about getting things "wrong". There is definitely no *celebration* of any growing confidence in 'white racial identity' nor of any white (subaltern) culture which may be separable from the 'dominant' culture. 'White' and 'dominant' are synonymous, something which can be read forward from Frantz Fanon's (1952) *Black Skin, White Masks* (which I will come back to). There is a seeking of "validation" and "reassurance" (p.9) in what the White subject is doing, but this typically sees them over-relying on, and emotionally burdening, their racially minoritised colleagues for guidance and advice, especially when White racism is *not* the responsibility of the racially minoritised.

By contrast, Stage 5 (Engagement) does witness "a genuine attempt to connect to your own white identity and to learn how to become anti-racist" (p.10) as the White subject evolves a "deep concern around systemic disadvantage and injustice, coupled with overall solidarity towards the racially minoritised experience" (p.10). Hence, reliance on racially minoritised colleagues is no longer required and the White subject learns how to use their White privilege "to challenge racism" without putting themselves at the centre of things. One reflective question asks: "How do you show

[12] Is reducing everything to race, race awareness, and racial motivation, not part and parcel of such "narrowing"?

your solidarity with racialised colleagues or communities in ways that centre their voices rather than your own?" (p.10). Finally, Stage 6 (Anti-Racist) is "characterised by an informed and positive connection to your white racial identity, alongside an ongoing commitment to anti-racist and wider social justice work" (p.11).

To sum up, there are 3 different pathways, one for each 'type' of racialised subject or person[13] undertaking their journey to becoming an Anti-racist at Edinburgh. Some of what these self-reflective, self-psychoanalytical journeys attempt to achieve is admirable, such as getting participants to reflect, review, remember, and revise their personal experiences of racism. We should all do this. However, my initial critique is that the framing of the journeys and what they are doing focuses too much on discreet biological individuals (e.g., there is a Racially Minoritised individual who is distinct from a White one). The question becomes 'which journey should I, you, or anyone else take?' You may think the answer should be 'obvious,' even if you are Mixed Heritage. A white-skinned individual takes the White ARJ. That's not my point.

The point is: to what extent is a Black person also White (or vice versa)? And when should a Black person who is White (internally) *prioritise* the taking of the White ARJ? It should be remembered that within the discourse 'White' is synonymous with being 'dominant.' And here I am in good company regarding this kind of split subjectivity, since on page 45 of *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon prominently declares "I am a White man". A few lines above he states: "I want to be recognised not as *Black* but as *White*." So, to what extent can the Racially Minoritised ARJ of Ar@E allow Fanon this freedom? This is an issue a later section on Fanon comes back to. In the meantime, there are a couple of other small problems to deal with.

Developing "Racist" Identity. A Freudian Slip?

This is a short tangential point on the preparation of the Ar@E materials. Mistakes and typing errors are made in all works, written or recorded, so I do not want to make too much of this. Figure 2 shows a page from the online version of the materials. I took the screenshot as there appears to be an obvious error, where the title (extension) reads "White **Racist** Identity Development." I think it should read "White **Racial** Identity" (after Helm, 1992) or "White **Anti-racist** Identity" (which is the Step 6 'goal' of the White ARJ).

Clearly, the programme is not about building or developing a white 'racist' identity! On the one hand, care and due diligence needs to be taken when writing about such controversial issues and not mixing up words since meanings can change drastically. On the other, the whole approach of the psychological models is focused on discovering (encountering), embedding, and celebrating **racial identity**, and Step 3 of the White ARJ even highlights how things can go wrong (defensiveness leading to a subject becoming more "actively racist"), such that the celebration of a new found racial identity may produce the *opposite* of what was intended, namely, a racialisation or re-casting of interactions and relationships. This also goes for Black people who "immerse" (Step 3) themselves too much in Black Power.

[13] White is a 'race' (though in the Global North the term refers to the racialised majority).

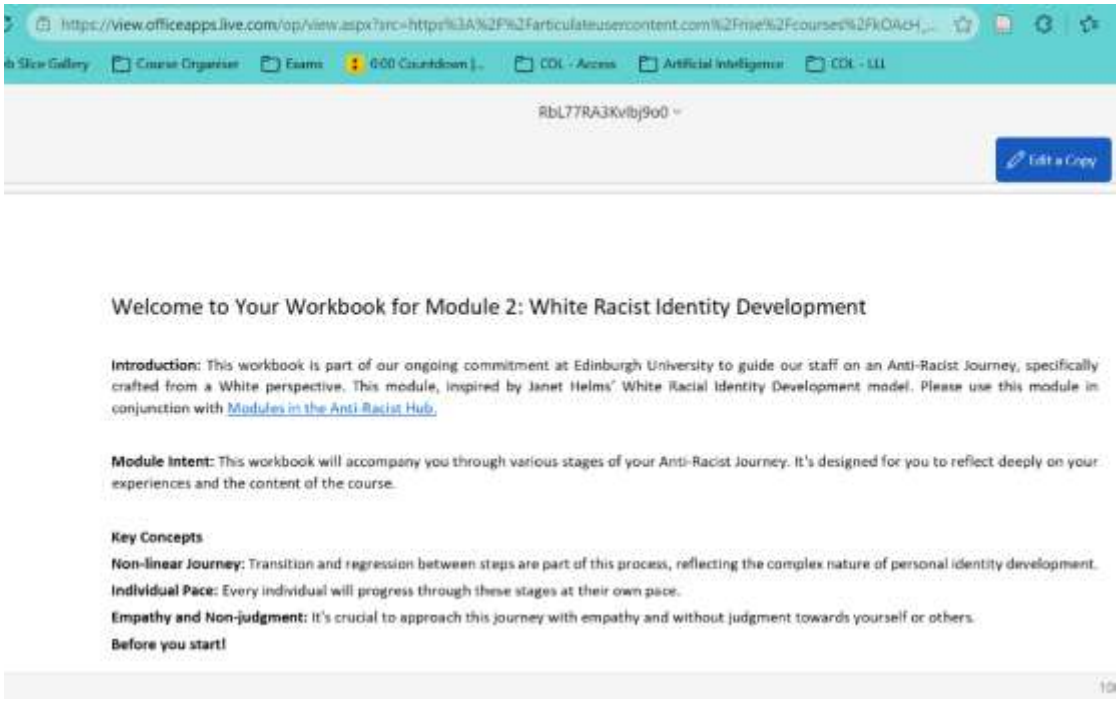


Figure 2: "White Racist Identity Development"! Surely not? (Screenshot from Anti-racism Hub, Edinburgh, 15th July 2026)

Mapping the Theory of Active Anti-Racism

Now I want to take a quick look at aspects of the **theory** behind Ar@E (coming from Critical Race Theory, CRT). The approach adopted draws a key distinction between **passive** and **active anti-racism**. This pulls on the obviously parallel distinction between **passive** and **active racism**. With the latter, active racism entails *overt and conscious* actions to **maintain systemic racial hierarchies** (e.g., consciously using racial slurs, going out of one's way to buy goods from illegally occupied land in the Palestinian Territories), whilst passive racism involves "implicit beliefs, attitudes, and actions that **inherently contribute to the maintenance of racism**" [my emphasis] (Reyes, 2024). Examples of the latter include a person being **colour-blind** in a situation where race is clearly making a discriminatory difference (e.g., asking *only* Black work colleagues if they happen to like British food). In both cases **racism** consists in the maintenance of hierarchies (whether social, cultural, political, or economic).

Passive anti-racism occurs when declarations (even thoughts or internalised reflections) are made in relation to the presence (or not) of racism and the stance / position / beliefs of the announcer. A classic example is to utter: "I'm not racist." Another is: "I've always been an ally to people of colour." This kind of passive anti-racism (typically from a declarer who understands themself to be on the 'right side of history') differs from **passive non-racism**, where nothing is ever said nor thought about racialised experiences, or there is a desire for a utopic social unity[14] which does not exist: "I see no

[14] Incidentally, I am not **anti-utopian**. Indeed, I take the position that every human is **utopic** (being able to relate to utopia) in the sense that they have a capacity for **indirect sympathy** (Smith, 1759) to comprehend the experiences of others, and thus situations they have *not* experienced themselves (e.g., not everyone has experienced working on a fishing boat, on a production line, or being excluded from services because of their skin-colour but we can *imagine* what such experiences are like, especially after communication from those in such situations). This compares with direct sympathy involving comprehension of experiences we *share* with others, because we have experienced the same situations, e.g., losing something that is important). In other

reason as to why we can't all get along together." Or: "We'll all get along so long as none of us take ourselves too seriously." Both passive anti-racism and passive non-racism leave the field open for the implicit practices of racism (the inherent structures of racial society) to replicate themselves, which in turn lead to the maintenance of implied racial hierarchies. In the case of passive anti-racists this can even take the form of seeing people of colour as needing their – i.e., empowered White peoples' - help in the good fight ('Messianism').

Hence, the **active anti-racist** approach of Ar@E understands itself as requiring a recognitive self-awareness of the racial (second) nature of our society (as a **racist society**), namely, that **everyone** in our society can and regularly does act in a racist manner. This is not about acts of overt racism, but all those subtle actions and reactions which **help to support the racial hierarchy**. This includes all the unconscious acts which a passive anti-racist would let slip, pass by, and let go. For instance, micro aggressive questions, scrutinising the published output of Black academics more closely than those of White academics (at the same career point), or a refusal to acknowledge the extra burdens placed on ethnic minority staff outside of the workplace. Or what about just having to go to work every day for an organisation which is *systematically racist* (though few people may see it as such)? These actions (or non-actions) hold racialised minorities back and, therein, reinforce the racial hierarchy.

Responsibility (*aka* **the burden**) for the maintenance of this racial hierarchy needs to be shifted on to those who *benefit* (or benefit *most*) from it - the people with **White privilege**.[15] This 'privilege' has been likened to walking around with an "invisible knapsack" (McIntosh, 2005) which guarantees its carrier resources, positive responses, and prioritisations not available to those without such a backpack.

Money, it can be noted, works in a very similar fashion - it can be carried invisibly and almost guarantees the 'bearer' every type of priority and privilege available. Indeed, most people's **identity** (social status, value, standing, or worth) in the modern[16] world is **mediated** in and through their ownership of money. That profession, body, or hobby that *defines* you must be **paid for**. However, and this is a questionable point, it could be argued that money is an **earned** privilege - the fruit of hard work, risk taking, and making the most of one's God-given talents, and sometimes just 'age' (having worked for longer). In immediate contrast, **White privilege** is simply something White

words, we can and do imagine (like John Lennon) ways of being that have 'not yet' come into being. This does not mean that what is 'imagined' is necessarily good – the same process applies to the concoction of evil. Dystopian literature typically contains both: spaces which are 'good' for some people and 'dysfunctional' for others. See McGrail (2011) and McGrail (2026a). Anti-utopianism involves a lot of backsliding by so-called 'realists' trying to turn their own desires into products of inevitability.

[15] This is a moot point, because it can be argued that racism is in **no-one's benefit**, and is especially not beneficial to those who 'think' they have an instrumental interest in it (e.g., excluding others from competing for the same employment opportunities, *aka* **jobs**). In his 1987 paper 'Notes on Class', Gunn makes a similar point in relation to "workers" and the "working class". Conventional Marxism (what I call **Unoriginal Marxism** because it in no way relates to the original writings of Marx) always **burdened** the workers or Proletariat (following Marx & Engels', 1848/1872, *Communist Manifesto*) with responsibility for overthrowing capitalism – they *suffer the most* so should be primed to *revolt*. But everyone under capitalist relations of production bears **responsibility** for its consequences (e.g., climate warming; pollution; destruction of humans' natural habitat; genocide), and so capitalism's (commodification's) overthrow is the responsibility of 'all'.

[16] Regarding my understanding / definition of **modern** see Heinrich (2019). The pre-Modern world was one where commodity exchange and production existed but in pockets or at the margins of social reproduction. With modernity, commodity production *predominates* and becomes central and compulsory for survival. Heinrich places the transition to modernity between 1780 and 1860. Another interesting work in this regard is Markus (1993), which deals with the transformation of 'building types' (with reference to modern architecture) during this period.

people are *born with* - a kind of biological, genetic *inheritance*. It is an **unearned** and, therefore, **undeserved** advantage and privilege.[17] White privilege *cannot* be "earned"!

Am I Racist? Of course, as I must be!

The initial drive of Ar@E for 'White' people (or those identifying as 'White' from the 3 options available), therefore, is on the **self-recognition** of White privilege and becoming aware / conscious of the implicit racism in everyone's actions (not just their own). Everyone needs to be "called out." Though, in terms of becoming an *active* anti-racist and achieving the desired outcome or goal of the Ar@E programme, what are the 'options' available for anyone either identifying as or identified as 'White'? For experimental purposes, I will place myself (my skin burns after just 5 minutes exposure to the sun) in this **category**.

Can I be a ***Non-racist*** **Anti-Racist**? This is a non-starter because it is an oxymoron. Setting out (having studied the programme) as a non-racist would mean I was incapable of seeing, noting, and recording incidents of racism by others never mind myself. How could I be actively anti-racist if I were incapable of spotting racism when it took place? I would be **colour-blind** to discriminatory practices and processes, thinking that everything is fine when it is not. I would act unfairly whilst thinking I was being fair – I would 'believe' the job went to the most 'qualified' person when the desired role descriptor was compiled out of culturally-biased and *epistemicidal* requirements, traits, and characteristics (de Sousa Santos, 2014). My sense of meritocracy would be shallow if it could not take wider racial disadvantage into account (that is, to parody the 1997-2010 UK Labour government, I would be ignoring the *unsure* start to life). So, let us move on.

Can I be an ***Anti-racist*** **Anti-racist**? This is also a non-starter as it pulls itself up by its own bootstraps. It is a programme defeating, *tautological* position. The whole point of *active* anti-racism is that the White subject undertakes **the work** (taking *responsibility* to deal with **the burden**) to become anti-racist – the White subject must tackle their (and others') racism 'actively.' An analogy here is that a sculptor (artist) requires clay, in order, to sculpt. And what is the 'clay' of the White active anti-racist if not their own (and others') acts of racism? The person who believes themself to be 'anti-racist' from the *outset* and who desires to advertise themself as such (through virtue-signalling badge-wearing, declarations of allyship, etc.) has **nothing** (internally) to work with. Could they, because of their overconfidence, be in a worse position than a Non-racist Anti-racist?

Can I be a ***Racist*** **Anti-racist**? Well, of course, and this is, perhaps, the whole point. To get on to the wagon in the first place I need to be both alcoholic and *aware* of my alcoholism. It is likewise with the wagon of anti-racism. By *reflecting* upon my own 'racist' practices (for example, the simple or mundane habit of going to work everyday under the impression I hold my 'job' on a meritocratic basis, within an organisation / institution with a racialised history), I am enabled to identify and recognise – to become *self-conscious* of – both racism and any opportunities to enact anti-racism. Yet I should never feel 'comfortable' at *identifying* myself as racist nor as 'a' racist! Hence, my 'racism' is not a *condition* (something I am stuck with), but should be viewed as part of a **social process** (a set of interweaving social relations) within which I am being *reproduced* and through which I am *reproducing* myself. I am not a simple 'product' but an **acting constituent** of the social forms I act within and, indeed, *enact*.

[17] Of course, one does not have to travel far (intellectually / academically) to find those who argue capital and money are 'unearned'. See, for example, Adam Smith (1776) who refused the argument that 'profits' were the *earnings* of undertakers (capitalist managers). Thus, 'profit' got its very own chapter in Smith's book, distinct from the one on 'Wages of Labour'.

Thus, the **advantage** in *not* understanding nor seeing myself and others as 'victims' of the 'system' is that action/enactment – my/our responsibility – gives me/us **agency**, which is a central feature of any 'active' approach to bringing about social change. In this manner, 'we' have agency though our agency is both contradicted by others and can be *self-contradictory* (in a Hegelian dialectical sense: the slave 'does the work' through which they are exploited and oppressed, but also reproduce the master – which makes the latter 'dependent' not 'independent').

Ultimately, this consciousness of self-contradictory (or self-consciousness of contradictory) existence applies to *everyone* and not, regarding racism, just to 'Whites.' White people are born into an historical tradition just as Black people are. They are burdened by the past even if they 'calculate' they 'benefit' from 'their' history. As Marx (1969 [1852], p.398) notes in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, "the tradition of all the dead weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living." And this applies to those most willing to keep the 'tradition' going. The sons of the capitalist are *trapped* by the need to stop their accumulated capital from being dissipated or dissolved – they are not 'free.' As Marx puts it (1976 [1875], Chapter 1), they are a **persona** of money.

But in the same manner, those who are 'workers' or Black – those who are most oppressed and exploited by the tradition, can and do play a role in *maintaining* the very traditions which oppress and exploit them. This is why I find the work of Frantz Fanon highly relevant and most interesting as he shows great insight into the (internal or self) contradictory 'being' of the racially oppressed. Under the same social processes as 'Whites' (involving the production and distribution of social values), those born 'Black' act in **racist ways** which cut-across or undercut their own freedom.

The Dialectical Frantz Fanon

When Frantz Fanon wrote *Black Skin, Whites Masks* (1952), he did so from the position of a highly-trained psychiatrist emerging from the French 'White' medical tradition. He was qualified as a (medical) doctor in psychiatry and demonstrates his knowledge of 'White' psychology (e.g., abandonment neuroses, pre- and post-Oedipal complexes, and of Freud, Jung, Adler, and others). Meanwhile, his knowledge of Hegel's (1807 [1977]) *Phenomenology of Spirit* is shown in more than one chapter (with Chapter 8 Part B being given over to coverage of Hegel's theory and the Master-Slave Dialectic). Although Fanon does critique Hegel, this is done from a position of immanent knowledge and application of the theory to the White-Black race relation (a *form* of Master-Slave relation). He mentions "black-white experience" (p.61) as a single phenomenon (the experience of a self-conscious internally-divided subject) even though he also sees Blacks and Whites as separate social classifications (groups / castes of shared experiences), noting "our aim is to enable healthy relations between Blacks and Whites" (p.61).

Black Skin, White Masks is written from feelings of rage (Fanon mentions being intentionally subjective, not objective), with much of Fanon's anger directed at the action and behaviour of fellow Blacks. For instance, there are Black and Mixed Race ("Mulatto") women who simply cannot contemplate marrying one of their "own" since White men have much greater social value. For Mulatto women, marrying a Black man is a "family insult" because it is seen to reduce the 'paleness' of the family. Progress is White, so the future is White! Fanon's anger is more than understandable; it is the voice of a Black man whose gag has been ripped off (as he quotes from Sartre). Despite being a highly educated, well-spoken Martinican who is 'essentially' French – and even whilst being accepted and recognised via official French systems of qualification (becoming part of an intellectual elite), even the socially lowest White citizen will look down upon him. Though *worse* is the fact Black women will refuse to recognise Black men as 'civilised.'

Fanon also considers the role of Black men's inferiority complex, through which they put *themselves* down. No White man need be present for a Black man to deny his own kind and *desire* to be 'White' – to be that which he cannot be. As Fanon pus it: "To elevate himself into the range of colors to which **he** has attributed a kind of hierarchy?" (p.63, my emphasis). And: "Out of the blackest part of my soul, through the zone of hachures,[18] surges up this desire to be suddenly *white*" (p.45).

On Dialectical Contradiction

It is this sense of **internal conflict** – the struggle *within* – that I appreciate most in Fanon (plus his keen understanding of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*). As Mary Beard (2016) makes clear with regard to ancient Rome, the vast majority of slaves who achieved emancipation did so by becoming masters. Thus, if slaves were male, they gained emancipated status by joining the Roman army, risking their life for the Senate and People of Rome (SPQR), plundering 'others,' and subsequently rising to the status of free citizen and, often, becoming an owner of slaves. Meanwhile, female slaves could be emancipated through marriage leading them to bear the children of masters. The slave **admires** what they *observe* and *recognise* everyday – their master. It is no surprise they want to become like those they admire and the slave wants to be **desired** by those they admire. The story of Spartacus' slave rebellion – the overthrow of the existing system, the master-slave relation – was exceptional (not normal) in Ancient Rome, though as Cedric Robinson (1983) notes in relation to Atlantic slavery, such **outright rebellion** was not as 'rare' as establishment historians have made out. Hence, it is not surprising the Black man wants to become 'White' since the latter expresses and represents wealth, status, power, and ownership of capital (thus, control of the impersonal money god) in the modern world. Fanon notes that "the 'White' symbolizes capital as the Negro Labor" (pp.111-112).

But what is meant by 'dialectical contradiction' in a wider sense? Dialectics is a form of philosophical investigation associated with the Ancient Greeks, where knowledge and understanding are advanced through dialogue with one person (e.g., Socrates) questioning the assertions of another. The process typically involves a claim (*thesis*), counterclaim (*antithesis*), and compromise or agreed position (*synthesis*). But whilst the latter is taken as an improved position on the starting point, the synthesis can form a new 'claim' that restarts the investigatory process / cycle. However, the Ancient Greeks were also interested in **paradoxical claims** (e.g., the claim that "There is no such thing as the truth" is itself a truth claim) and **self-contradictory actions** (e.g., the goddess Medea takes revenge on her husband for his infidelity by killing *his* children – the problem is that Medea eternally *condemns herself* since they are also *her* children).

Dialectics re-emerges in philosophical interest during the early 19th century with the work of Georg W. Hegel (1770-1831). Whereas the Ancient Greeks saw dialectics occurring in circular time (or repeated loops and reincarnations) and within ideal forms (in theory / discourse) – after all, the Ancient Greeks were slave owners who wanted to sustain their own social world, and not see it change – Hegel, famously, **historicised** (or Christianised) dialectics into an *evolutionary* **force** with a *forward* moving trajectory). Hegel also materialised dialectics; in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) he introduced the Master-Slave Dialectic within which *violence* (physical, material action) and *work* (the consumption of nature and production of art) form the materialistic basis of action and reaction that gives Hegel's dialectic its historical (one-way?) movement. Hegel's philosophy corresponds well with his time: an era of political and industrial revolutions which were fundamentally transforming the social world. Within Hegel's Master-Slave Dialectic it is the slave who transforms the world

[18] "Hachures" refers to strokes on a map that show steepness of slopes (shorter, darker hachures mean a greater, steeper slope) – Fanon probably means arising from the depths, quickly.

through their work[19]; whilst the master is nominally the *independent* party, they are materially *dependent* on the work of the slave (for their power and existence / maintenance) *and* the reproduction of the slave ***as*** slave (the identity of "A is A"). What happens if the slave no longer recognises themself as such? What if "A is in a movement of becoming *not* A"?

When I was a young undergraduate student, I came across George Novack's (1942 [1978]) *An Introduction to the Logic of Marxism.* Novack's short book discusses the philosophical 'science of logic' and its aim is to contrast the conventional teaching of 'formal logic' with the 'logic of Marxism', the latter being connected or associated with Hegel's dialectics and logic. As his Preface to the 1963 Third Edition outlines: "The kind of logic discussed in this book is so different from the logic presented in school courses that they may seem to be two virtually unconnected subjects" (p.5). However, and critically, I find much (80%?) of Novack's book to be misguided Trotskyist nonsense. For instance, Novack draws on Engels' later works (e.g., *Anti-Dühring* and *The Dialectics of Nature*) where the underlying 'philosophy' of Marx was (supposed to be) outlined as a 'materialist' inversion of Hegel *and* the study of 'dialectics' was extended to the realm of natural science (forming the ground for the later 'Marxist' philosophy of 'dialectical materialism'). Furthermore, Hegel is identified by Novack as a philosopher of German Idealism. But as Heinrich (2019, pp.156-157) emphatically demonstrates, reading Hegel's original works, whether early 'radical' (*The Phenomenology*) or later 'conservative' (*The philosophy of Right*, 1821), provides no *evidence* that Hegel was an 'idealist'. As Heinrich notes, Hegel, who died in1831, only became a German Idealist in 1866 (via Lange's *History of Materialism*) because people and discourses of the mid-1860s wanted to generate a pantheon of German thinkers, identifying them as the 'German Idealists'. This identification process included encompassing the *opposed* positions of Kant and Hegel in a unified 'school'. Ever since, Hegel has been 'identified' as a German Idealist (by Marxist, conservative, and liberal commentators alike), and consecutive generations have accepted this 'positioning' (within textbook philosophy and, later, internet 'wikis').

What is of significance (from an educator's perspective) in Novack's book is the way he contrasts 'formal logic' with that of Hegelian 'dialectical logic.' Novack begins by stating the three propositions of traditional formal logic, which are all about variations in **identity** statements or equations. The first proposition takes the form of A is equal to A, which is focused on 'identity': "Formal logic starts from the proposition that A always equals A" (p.32). The second proposition then covers the "law of contradiction" which "asserts that A is never non-A" (p.42). However, this "so-called law of contradiction in formal logic does not, as it claims, express the true nature of contradiction. It is an edict excommunicating it [i.e., *contradiction*] from logic and ordering it 'to get an atmosphere and a sun of its own'." (p.42). That is, the proposition on 'contradiction' turns out to be a merely inverted restatement of the first proposition on 'identity': A is never non-A, or (more clearly) A is *not* B. But "real contradiction must include both identity and difference within itself" (p.43). Finally, the third proposition is that "of the excluded middle" (p.31). Here, A has to be either A or not-A and can never be anything in between.

Regarding 'formal logic', which is all about seeing the world as **static** (and especially the social world as static and unchanging), for Novack such an approach does not just expunge *contradiction* from the world but the existence of **movement** (or **motion**). In contrast, Hegel's dialectic foregrounds contradiction:

[19] The Nazis made a mockery of Hegel's statement that 'work makes you free' by turning it into the motto which appeared above the gates of concentration camps, including Auschwitz.

> What then, you may ask in exasperation, is A, if it's not simply and solely A? The dialectical answer is that A is both A and non-A. If you take A as simply A and nothing more, as the formal logician does, you see only one side of A and not its other side, its negative side (p.37).

The proposition that A is both A and non-A is something we find present in Fanon's investigation, which is subjective and internal (not just to the individual, but to the Black-White social relationship), and aims to outline and 'name' the Black man's experience (phenomenologically) in such a way that the 'naming' of the experience, its bringing to consciousness, develops a new form of self-consciousness (self-awareness) using a language that is (more) adequate to the Black man's political experience and task. Theory and action form a new **praxis**.

Fanon outlines and dissects how the Black man is (both) White/Black, and thus Capital/Labour. He criticises Sartre for mistakenly dismissing Blackness (Black nationalism, the new Black poets) as a mere antithetical stage (in dialectical development) towards a synthetic raceless (de-racialised) future. Such an approach robs the Black subject of their role in asserting their own freedom. And this is important for Fanon, because of his analysis of Black men's "inferiority complex." The latter was a result of the 'failure' of Black slaves to free themselves by risking 'death' (in line with Hegel's Master-Slave Dialectic) and, instead, of being 'freed' by Whites (and their – supposed - civilising humanitarianism). Hence, Black assertion of their own freedom is no 'stage' to anything else.

Regarding Ar@E and its three 'pathways,' one of the problems that arises in methodology is that its starting points are built around the classic 'formal' propositions of (preconceived) **identity** (A is A, A is not B, nor can it be A+B). That is, a White person has White experience (A is A), a Racially Minoritised person does not have White experience (A is not B), and a Mixed heritage person must choose between 'identities' (with no space in between), though they can come to terms with 'both' (or multiple) identities. We also have 'White is coloniser' whilst 'Racially Minoritised is *not* coloniser' – rather 'Racially Minoritised is non-coloniser.'

However, Fanon (writing in 1952) raises this precise issue with regards to both Martinique and South Africa, when he highlights that Whites are the racially minoritised in Martinique (30,000 whites to 200,000 blacks), yet still the 'superior' race. In South Africa, the figures are 2 million Whites to 13 million Blacks. In such conditions, Fanon is much more interested in how Black men oppress, repress, and suppress themselves (despite being the racial majority). He gives many examples of Martinicans thinking of themselves as masters – for example, they see Senegalese troops (those from Africa who are 'blacker' than themselves) as "Negroes" but will not experience themselves as such unless and until they travel to France. Hence, the 'struggle' – or 'class' struggle, with race being a form of classification – occurs within the individual, and not simply in terms of 'identities' (as outlined by Ar@E) but regarding the **desire to be dominator**.

On Attitude versus Content in Racism

Another issue that becomes apparent is the extent to which the Ar@E approach aims to **describe** the categories it finds itself confronted with (the Racially Minoritised versus the White experience) rather than **explaining** these categories. This is a criticism Marx makes of the political economists (Smith, Ricardo, Sismondi) in the introduction to his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (1844) and elsewhere – the political economists merely 'described' the economic categories (commodity, money, capital) they dealt with as opposed to *explaining* and, thereby, *questioning* their existence. Thus, what is a social construction takes on the semblance of a natural entity.

Fanon draws our attention to this problem in a footnote citing the work of Joachim Marcus (*L'autorité dans la famille et dans l'état, Revue Française de Psychoanalyse,* 1949). He quotes Marcus to the effect that: "Contrary to current thinking we can safely say it is the attitude that finds the content and not the latter that creates the attitude ([…] p.282)".

What I take Fanon to be driving at here is that it is not 'race' (**content**) which gives rise to 'racism' (**attitude**) but 'racism' that leads to the creation of 'race' (attitude 'finds' its content). Indeed, to hold that content gives rise to attitude can lead to quite abhorrent propositions. For instance, it would be akin to saying that wherever Jewish people go in the world, then anti-Semitism would soon follow, as if being Jewish (content) gives rise to responsive 'attitudes' (anti-Semitism). Rather, it is anti-Semitism (attitudes towards Jewish people, as a required scapegoat) which gives rise to racial **identification** and the 'Jew hunt'.

Problematically, the Ar@E's anti-racism journeys want us to identify our content first (which 'race' am I? I am 'White') and then discover our attitudes via consciousness raising self-awareness (towards the pre-existing content). As a White person I start 'colour blind' before resisting being confronted with my pigmented privilege. Wherever I go I give rise to racism, even if I do not intend to. I need to confront the reality of 'race' (describe its content) before I can understand (and explain) my 'racism' (which is formulated through my 'content' as possessing White privilege and 'Whiteness').

But, clearly, despite denials from Black activists like Diane Abbott and Whoopi Goldberg, White people can be racist towards White people, just as Fanon demonstrated Blacks being racist towards Blacks. Thus, it is the attitude (the desire and requirement to be superior, to be dominator, to be decision maker, or to be 'sadomasochist': Fromm, 1942) which gives rise to the content (social divisions and identifiers, from sex and gender differences, through social status and socio-economic class distinctions, to definitions of caste and race). How does the thesis of 'Whiteness' explain the caste system in Hindu India, or, as Thomas Sewell would not doubt point out, the Arabic enslavement of Black Africans?

On Lack of a Black History

A final point I will take from Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* is that of his critique of 'history'. Early on in the book, Fanon *laments* that the Black man 'lacks' a history. He gives the example of reading, in primary school, books written for White children, such that as a Black child in Martinique Fanon reads about *his* 'ancestors' the Gauls! Point taken – French schooling was colonial, culturally biased, and exclusionary. The idea that Black 'barbarians' might have a 'history' was never considered. Let's keep it in mind he was writing in 1952, prior to the rise of Black Power and the recognition of Black History / Histories. Of course, a similar positioning was experienced by other social groups (women; LGBTQi; the disabled).

Yet, Fanon also feels that Blacks suffer from not fulfilling the role of the slave in Hegel's Master-Slave Dialectic, where the slave 'works' towards the recognition of the master (or, as noted regarding Ancient Rome, the slave 'risks their life' in becoming a master). Fanon argues that in the case of Atlantic slaves in European colonies, the former slaves live with the knowledge that it was the White man, and *his* humanitarianism, which 'freed' Black slaves. So, the Black man 'lacks' **this history of self-emancipation**.

I think Fanon is wrong on this score, as later work by Cedric Robinson (1983) would demonstrate. Robinson's *Black Marxism* is not a history of 'Marxism' but the application of **the concept of class struggle** to Atlantic slavery, whereby Robinson identifies and records the hundreds of revolts which

took place across the Caribbean and Americas, often leading to the establishment of 'marooned' communities of self-sustaining, self-emancipated former slaves. This, for Robinson, was very much forgotten by established (White) historians – the history of Black **struggle**. But as a Black man in 1940s and early 1950s France and Algeria, this may not be a history Fanon was aware of and, thus, could make use of.

However, by the end of *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon has changed his approach and picked up on an important element of **anti-history** (and anti-progressive non-productivism) which is open to the Black man (who *lacks* a history). This is that 'history' (tradition, custom, practice) can be the very thing which weighs people down. As noted regarding Marx above, tradition weighs on the brains of the living like a nightmare! In Simon Cohen's (2014) *Judaism: A Very Short Introduction*, the story of a Rabbi (who organises a daily prayer meeting in a concentration camp as a means of maintaining a semblance of normality in the midst of catastrophe) is presented. After a few days of saying morning prayers, a young man approaches the Rabbi and says he cannot continue to "thank" God for "not making me a slave" when, clearly, he is a slave. Incredulous, the Rabbi responds by pointing out that the word 'slave' is referring to the camp *guards*; and the prayer is thanking God for not making them one of the guards, who are *enslaved* more so than the prisoners because the latter, at least, can discern right from wrong.

In other words, it is the **dominator** who is trapped by the past and the need to reproduce it – tradition, history, and, of course, accumulation. The man who is free *of* history and tradition is open to the future and able to act *freely*, unencumbered not only by what has come before but by the determination of their present. Returning to Hegel's Master-Slave Dialectic, it is the master who occupies the 'dependent' pole in the relationship. In his final chapter, Fanon shows great awareness of the need to shake off the past as opposed to confirming, affirming, or celebrating it.

Regarding Ar@E, the 'journeys' of the Racially Minoritised and Mixed subjects often make reference to *discovering* and buying into a subject's 'own' culture (therefore, past as much as present) as a means of tackling the dominant culture of Whites and Whiteness. But, as Fanon's dialectical approach has highlighted, might not colonial history also *now* (in the present) be a part and parcel of a Black person's 'identity' and 'culture'? Does a Black person get to reject all histories (their 'own' as well as the dominator culture)? Because this rejection appears to be an option open to White people. After all, what is an anti-racist if not an anti-historian?

Whatever happened to capitalism?

In Part 6 of *Capital*, Marx (1975) deals with the semblance of the wage form. It is notable that people *believe* they are paid for their labour **time** – for the hours they work – and are paid for every hour they work. But waged workers, as Marx demonstrates, are paid for the commodity they exchange, which is **their labour power** – their ability to perform work but not the hours spent working. This is the secret of surplus value (profit, interest, rent) creation since the labour time taken to replace the cost of labour power (energy) used up is shorter than the amount of time the worker spends labouring.[20] The important difference (in these two perspectives) for understanding race and racism

[20] In case you find this a contentious point, it should be remembered that Adam Smith (1776) referred, in the *Wealth of Nations*, to the ability of workers to produce twice the amount of value (in goods) that they required for their own (and their family's) sustenance. Indeed, Smith cites Richard Cantillon on the ability of slaves to produce twice their maintenance cost, whilst the average waged worker requires a payment to cover 6 people (worker, housewife, and 4 children, since two children will die before maturity). That humans are capable of producing more wealth than they need is found in most societies – the controversial element comes down to

is that whereas 'labour time' is not directly related to 'the body', **labour power** *is*; in waged labour the worker is directly commodified – their **body** (its capacity to release energy and its mental and manual ability to control movement) is the commodity for sale, though it is commodified for *only a portion of the day*.

The Atlantic slave trade commodified millions of Black Africans (White indentured slaves also existed early on), turning their bodies into items for 'permanent', '100%-of-time' possession (and direction). With 'everyday' normalised waged work, the worker (the body owner) sells their commodity (the body) for use by an employer for money (to cover the cost of their survival), but the **embodiment** involved in exchange remains. Just as slaves were valued as being worth more or less than one another, based on bodily attributes, including as whole groups (or castes), so too are workers in the waged labour market. The market therein ascribes monetary but also, in and through monetary expression, **social values** to body *types*, including the mental characteristics which go with those 'types' (e.g., compliant, dexterous, experienced, young female etc.). After all, *value* is '**socially** necessary labour time'. Consequently, assessment by type (including race) is something 'modern' capitalism has never left behind. As Bonefeld (2011) has repeatedly stated, **primitive accumulation** is not a *bygone stage* in capitalism's history, but the railway 'bed' upon which the developed engine of capitalism continues to 'run' – capitalism must continually reassert (through *its* struggle) its fundamental requirement for survival by keeping actual and potential waged workers **dispossessed**.

This element of capitalism, that it not only *emerged* into the world but *sustains* itself only by dripping blood from head to toe, is typically forgotten. Regarding pro-capitalist, corporate anti-racism initiatives it is as if the ability to *mention* the **accumulation of capital** has fallen down the back of the sofa. As previously noted, Ar@E makes absolutely no mention of capitalism as a specific social relation, as if this 'background' to racism – the world of money, interest, profit, rent, GDP (of private economic growth), or diminishing public wealth (communal possession) cannot be discussed never mind questioned. *But* once separated from its twin (capitalism), racism can quickly lose its power of explanation, and with it 'meaning'.

An instructive example comes from Eddo-Lodge's *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People about Race* (2017). As Fenton (2022, p.1072, citing Norrie, 2020) highlights, Eddo-Lodge presents evidence that "Black boys" are 3-times more likely to be excluded from primary school as White boys. Surely this is a clear example of systemic racism in which Whiteness gives privileged status? But, what Eddo-Lodge fails to make clear is that these figures relate to Black *Caribbean* boys. Indeed, Black *African*, South Asian, and East Asian boys are "extremely rarely" (p.1072) excluded from school – these boys of 'colour' are much *less likely* to be excluded than White boys. That Black African boys have such low rates of exclusion, despite having the same skin pigmentation, questions whether skin colour or 'tone' is what makes the key difference in treatment. At this point Right-wing racial reasoning would probably bring in 'culture' as an explanation, referring to racist tropes associated with the UK's Black Caribbean population (e.g., on absentee fathers) – a technique which keeps **racialisation** (as an *explanation*) in the *foreground* and 'blames the victims' by retaining a 'personal responsibility' account.

Another way to approach the same statistics is to investigate what all the excluded boys may share in common. One quick way of summing this up in sociological terms, following Max Weber (2001 [1930]) would be to say that exclusion is related to an inability to imbibe and replicate the **Protestant work ethic** and/or **respect for authority**. Alternately, we could turn to Erich Fromm

whether a portion of the population is **forced** to produce more than *they* need for a separate social class (or caste)

(1942) and ask why such excluded boys have *embraced* the will to freedom and, thereby, *failed* to use the "escape mechanisms" (associated with the psychology of capitalist abandonment) of *automaton conformity* and *authoritarianism*, *or* why the boys have turned to the escape mechanism of *destructiveness*? Is it 'schools' that exclude or the boys who self-exclude? Or both? Such theorisations take any **discussion** (thinking) in radically different directions and 'away' from 'racialisation' as an, or the only, explanation. And, of course, it can be argued there is a *downside* to this – the discussion becomes "colour blind" and ignores the specificity of race as a form of discrimination (which it clearly is within the commodified labour power market) through which working class struggle takes place.

However, there are many theorists of racial capitalism, such as Selma James in *Sex, Race and Class* (1975), who have taken and continue to take the opposed position – that race discrimination **can only be properly understood** within the context of capitalism and class struggle against capitalism.

Hence, should race and gender issues be understood as **class struggle** ones? As mentioned before, if you understand 'class' to mean social group or caste within society – so, you think of women as a different class from Black people, and both are different from White males – then you can read either Selma James' work (2012), or my previous paper on the various meanings and ways in which different sociological discourses use the term 'class' (McGrail, 2024). If we understand 'class' to mean **mode of production** (and struggles over how the future should be thought about – a struggle between 'visions' of how human society should develop), then the centrality of **capitalist dispossession** of 'the commons' (of access to public wealth) becomes clear. Dispossession is an experience which *everyone* affected shares in common.[21] This does not mean their experiences are 'the same' (**equal** nor **equitable**), but that when people communicate experiences with each other, their shared experiences make sense to each other and are understandable – that we are all able to empathise with what others are saying (what Rancière, 1991 [1987], and Kohan, 2021, refer to as *equality of intelligence*, and Smith, 1759, refers to as *sympathy* – direct and indirect). Indeed, our differences in experience actually **enables** a consideration of what is held in 'common' to emerge (see McGrail, 2026b).

Here is Selma James questioning the **root of cultural difference** and then highlighting how important such variation in experience is:

> From where does this culture spring which is so different from a man's if you are a woman and different too from a white woman's if you are a Black woman? Is it auxiliary to the class struggle (as the white Left has it) or is it **more fundamental to the class struggle** (as Black nationalists and radical feminists have it) because it is special to your sex, your race, your age, your nationality and the moment in time when you are these things? [my emphasis] (James, 1975, Para. 19, also in James 2012, pp.95-96)

Her conclusion is that all of these unique experiences are not "auxiliary" to the class struggle (i.e., against capitalism) but "fundamental" to it. Of course, such a position requires recognition that **class**, *as* mode of production, **struggle** (i.e., *against* the dominant vision of capitalism that life should be about nothing more than the never-ending valorisation of value and capital accumulation; and *for* a form of living which emancipates people from unnecessary, surplus labour) is *central* to racial and sexist forms of oppression and domination. Aiming to overcome racism and liberate Black people

[21] Here I maintain, along with **degrowth** theorists and activists Jason Hickel (2022) and Kohei Saito (2024), that those affected include the very people who think they are benefitting most from capitalism – the capitalists, the bourgeoisie, the ruling class, or however you want to express it. Capitalism is a general disaster.

within a White hierarchical system, without questioning the very 'nature' of that system (and its hierarchy), merely reproduces a Black "psychopathology" (the term used by Fanon) which seeks *equality with* a White dominator.

But surely, we should be seeking to do away with the White dominator for everyone and not just oppressed Black people. So, where in Ar@E is there a mention of capitalism and/or anti-capitalism? There is none. The commissioning corporation (the University), despite its 'charitable' status (for tax purposes – in 2026 it sits on £3 billion worth of 'reserves' which can only have been accumulated – since it is expressed in monetary value – via surplus value extraction), appears *incapable* of promoting a form of anti-racism which is also anti-capitalist.

The key question becomes: can the University achieve a true anti-racist goal – a **deracialised corporation** - without its abandonment of capital accumulation and, thus, wage slavery? Is such a **utopia** feasible?

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