

Frantz Fanon in Ali Shariati's Reading: Is it Possible to Interpret Fanon in a Shariatian Form?

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Is there a Shariatian reading of Frantz Fanon? What kind of interpretation of Fanon does Ali Shariati present? In other words, what are the features of Fanon that Shariati portrays in his own work? It should be noted that in this discussion, I am not interested in Frantz Fanon as a revolutionary or an ideologue, rather I am looking for aspects that are respected in “social theory” and post-colonial theories, within the broader framework of sociological theories. Thus, in this discussion, certain aspects of Fanon in Shariati's interpretation are of significance, while other areas of Fanon are out of my theoretical consideration. Thus, if we want to examine Shariati's interpretation of Fanon, we must do so from within the framework of sociological theory.

In his book, *History and Recognition of Religions*, Shariati refers to Frantz Fanon. It should be noted that Shariati did not write a specific book on Fanon's ideas and opinions; however, throughout the thirty-six volumes of his collected works, he often cites Fanon, and attempts to express his interpretation of the Caribbean thinker in various ways. Shariati claims that he introduced Fanon to the Iranian intellectual community for the first time. In the book, *The History of Civilization* he writes, “nobody can accuse me of not knowing Fanon, because I am the first person in Iran who has known Fanon, translated his works, spoken of him, and written and published all his thoughts.”¹

Of course, this claim is questionable in-and-of-itself, because Fanon's works exceed the number of those Shariati refers to in his books. The current existing works written by Fanon are as follows:

1. *The Wretched of the Earth*
2. *Black Skin, White Masks*
3. *A Dying Colonialism*
4. *Concerning Violence*
5. *The Fact of Blackness*
6. *Alienation and Freedom*

1 Ali Shariati, *Collected works no.12. Tarikh tamaddon* (The History of Civilization) Vol. 2. (Tehran: Ghalam, 2015), 122.

7. *Decolonizing Madness: The Psychiatric writings of Frantz Fanon*
8. *Toward the African Revolution*

Decolonizing Madness is a collection of Fanon's writings in the field of psychiatry, which did not exist as a book in Fanon's time. This invalidates Shariati's claim that "I have translated his works."² *Decolonizing Madness* was translated into English by Lisa Damon, edited under the supervision of Nigel Gibson, and published by McMillon's Publications in the United States, only in 2014. In other words, as far as I know, this collection of Fanon's psychiatric writings had not been published as a book by Fanon during his lifetime. Nigel Gibson categorized these essays into the following eleven sections:

1. The North African syndrome
2. Mental disorders and neurological disorders
3. Aspects of psychiatric care in Algeria today
4. Social therapy in a ward for Muslim men
5. The conduct of "Confession" in North Africa
6. Ethno-psychiatric Considerations
7. The T.A.T. (Thematic Apperception Test) and Muslim women: The sociology of perception and imagination
8. The phenomenon of agitation in psychiatry
9. Letter to the resident minister (during the colonial period)
10. The benefits and limitations of daily hospitalization in psychiatry
11. The encounter of society with psychiatry

Indeed, Nigel Gibson wrote an extensive introduction to this 2017 book, and Roberto Beneduce, an Italian psychiatrist and anthropologist, who has produced important writings in the field of anthropology and psychiatry, wrote "The Last Words." With this explanation, one can argue that Ali Shariati's claim about Fanon, that claim to have "translated his works" is questionable. However, it is notable that Shariati says, "I am the first person in Iran who has known Fanon... [and] ... I have spoken of him."³ This must be analyzed. Unfortunately, this part of Shariati's thoughts has not been seriously considered in Iran, and we do not know what this "reconstruction" of Fanon looks like, i.e. the Fanon that Shariati knew and published about. Consequently, we are presented not with the factual Fanon, or the Fanon that Gibson or Beneduce talk about, but are rather faced with a "Shariati-like reconstruction" that needs to be seriously addressed.

Shariati argues that the world is divided into two areas: "subject" and "object." The *subject* is the European (Western and white) human, while non-Western

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

indigenous people are the *object*. Anchored within such a conceptualization, he regards Fanon as being one of the greatest contemporary thinkers, whom he “sincerely thinks about and believes in.”⁴ The question is: what has Fanon written to make Shariati regard him as “a great man”?⁵ Fanon states,

Friends! (by friends, he does not mean Algerians, Africans, the people of the South American Antillean Islands, but all the people of the Third World, all the people who were humiliated and looted) Let’s not turn Africa into a third Europe, the experience of America is enough for us. What the US did was to build itself like Europe and [consequently] Europe became two. That means people and humanity were suffering from one pain, and that pain became two, and if the struggle of the people of Africa, the intellectuals and the mujahidin leads Africa to become a France, an England, a Western Europe, and so on, we will have three Europes. Do we want to turn Asia, Africa, and Latin America into another America and Europe?⁶

In other words, Shariati deems Fanon as an important person not because he was the ideologue of an anti-Western revolution, rather Shariati finds other reasons in Fanon to elevate him in his own work. What are the reasons? Shariati says that, from Fanon’s point of view, if we

want to turn Asia, Africa, and Latin America into another America and Europe [then it is better to]... give our nation’s fate to colonial Europe, because they deserve more to make such a civilization than we do.⁷

Therefore, why does the non-Western person want to take control of his fate? In Shariati’s interpretation of Fanon, if “we”

want to take control of our fate ourselves, we should not try to bring in the French, English, and Americans through the window, while we ousted them out of Africa and Asia through the door. While we are throwing them out, we are returning [to them] their views, rights, structures, civilization, and opinions. Just be happy about what France and America have done; now we are doing it on our own.⁸

4 Ibid., 123.

5 Ali Shariati, *Collected Works no. 14. Tarikh shenakht e adyan* (History and Recognition of Religions) Vol. 1. (Tehran: SahamiEnteshar, 2009), 206.

6 Ibid., 206–207.

7 Ibid., 207.

8 Ibid.

In other words, "we" in

Asia and Africa do not fight for a catastrophe called civilization, so that we merely change people's places to replace an Asian with a European. We, the third-world intellectuals, have not risen up to just throw out colonization, to just replace people; we will not rise to renew the civilization of the West in the East.⁹

Why have "we" not risen up to "renew western civilization" in the East? Why did Shariati, in his interpretation of Fanon, despise "Western civilization renewal" and consider it a failure? Why is "the renewal of Western civilization," which mesmerized the world, useless and absurd in Shariati's opinion? Did Fanon not look to "renew Western civilization"? Is the "renewal of Western civilization" in the East a simple and petty matter underestimated by the Fanonist Shariati? Shariati says that Fanon considers "the renewal of Western civilization,"

not for Africa and the slaved Asia... and not for humanity, [because] then humanity will vomit once more what it has once eaten up. If we [the Third World intellectuals] turn Africa and Asia into another America and another Europe, Europe and America would see their vomit with a metamorphosed face of their own, and this is neither a service to the colonized nor a service to Europe and civilization, nor a service to humanity. Because we know that the greatest victim of Western civilization is humanity... Third World intellectuals should not follow the path that leads to human metamorphosis.¹⁰

To put it in other words, Shariati's interpretation of Fanon assumes that Fanon's approach will come to the following:

We create a new world, a new system and civilization. And we try to create a new human, a new race, and a new thought, not a human who has become metamorphosed in this fast-paced competitive Western productive system.¹¹

The question that arises here is why do Third World intellectuals want to create a "new human," a "new race," a "new thought," a "new system," and a "new civilization"? Why is the "competitive Western productive system" introduced

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

as a human-metamorphosing system? Is a comradely system preferred against this “competitive system,” or does Shariati call out the “competitive system” for failing to pursue an ideal that has neither the disadvantages of the competitive capitalist system nor the restrictions of the comradely feudal system? With his interpretation of Fanon, it seems that Shariati has come to the conclusion that the Western competitive system, with its tremendous speed and efficiency, places humans in a state of imposition, as these humans are constantly thinking about further pursuits. He writes, “at the same time, nobody asks the person near to them how they feel, nor does any human being see the person next to him. We must abandon this crazy race and [attempt] to build and recognize humanity and [thus] save humanity.”¹²

In other words, the relations that produced America as another Europe, which produced colonization in the East, should be eliminated, so that not only the human of the East can be saved, but also so that the human colonialist of the West can be saved from his metamorphosed self. For such a project, the imposed relations must be transformed so that we can reconstruct anew in order to gain a novel recognition. This new reconstruction will be the way of human liberation in the future. It will not turn Africa or the East into another Europe. But an important question remains: what should be done to create such a new human? Shariati presents the following interpretation of Fanon on that issue:

for this new human to be built, and this new skin [to be made into] a new race – no longer white, black, yellow and red – and whose name will be human race... we need Noah’s Deluge, the deluge within which every corruption, civilization, and inhuman building made on the ground drowns, [resulting in a] clean and pure generation. This will begin humanity’s true evolution.¹³

Here we clearly see that the Shariati-reconstructed Fanon speaks in the form of an apocalyptic prophet who, in his own mind, begins to develop mankind’s true evolution.

The great responsibility of the Third World intellectuals... is not only to bring about independence and freedom through an anti-colonial struggle, but a mission for posterity... For this purpose, today’s human should

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 208.

be saved, not to save them from European colonization, [only] to then take them [back] to Europe; this is not ideal.¹⁴

Many critics of the Islamic Republic of Iran believe that Shariati has nothing to do with the Islamic Republic system, rather he is only “the teacher of the revolution.” Yet, one can see traces of the system in his thoughts that cannot be easily restricted to a “movement.” In other words, the macro-policies that are being proposed today in the Islamic Republic in opposition to “Westernization,” and the attempt to develop an “Islamic human,” are rooted in the desire to create a new race against the “socialist human” and “capitalist human.” The Islamic Republic, in today’s different interpretations (such as Islamic humanities), is in line with this “new race.” However, this term should not be conceptualized in the classical sense of “race.” Shariati has beautifully portrayed this “new race,” he asks: “What kind of race is this new race that should be constructed and become the successor to the White and Red, Yellow and Black race?”¹⁵ Shariati believes that Fanon’s assumption is correct and that “we” should not turn Asia, Africa, and Latin America into another America and Europe, but now we, as Eastern intellectuals, must think about building this “new race.” However, the question remains: how should we build this “new race?” Shariati argues that we have, “the materials for building this human. Those materials are the civilization of the West as the body... the culture of the East, and the pure religion, which is now buried under superstitions, which intellectuals hate, as the soul. These two can make that human.”¹⁶ In other words, in his interpretation of Frantz Fanon, Shariati concludes that the reconstruction of Eurocentric modernism in Iran (and in the rest of the non-Western world), is the re-establishment of the metamorphosing relations of Western civilization, which has constrained both the West and the East; and to get out of the matrix of these affiliations is needed in order to find a future for humanity. “We,” Shariati believes, “as those who are attached to a great religious culture – one of the greatest religions of history,” must also make a substantial contribution to that cause.¹⁷ In other words, the West is the body, and the East is the soul, and upon that the true intellectual must rebuild and create this center.

There are a few key points here: The first is whether the true intellectual can move fluidly between contexts and settings, in order to view the West as a body from an indexicalist position? That is to say, is the subject-object relation only

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid., 15.

based on mental relations or on objective *and* mental relations? The neglected point in Shariati's thought is that he assumes power is not involved in relations between the subject and object, and "we" can, when we reach self-awareness, turn the "West" into the object of the "East."

The second point is that Eastern culture is not limited to religion, but rather contains other dimensions that are contradictory, opposite, or even parallel to religion. Therefore, to divest the East from its plurality and reduce it to religion will not only damage its history, but also depicts a rather totalitarian future for it.

The third point is the following: if the assumption is true, that the East has a "pure religion," i.e. one freed from superstition, what then is the guarantee that the "pure East" would be able to become the holistic absolute subject and recruit the West in the mode of objectivity?

A fourth concern, which Shariati and his interpretation of Fanon seem to be unaware of, is whether "Western materials" (such as technology and science) are "neutral objects," that under the Eastern soul, and in its pure state, could be employed in the Third World intellectual's project to rebuild that "new race."

It seems that these major drawbacks in Shariati's interpretation of Fanon require a pause for more reflection. Without considering these questions, we might assume that there is no organic connection between Shariati's ideals and political philosophy, and that Shariati's *Ummah and Imam* (the Peoples and the Imam) as a roadmap are separable.

Another important question concerns the "new race" that Shariati proposes: what characteristics does this human have? In other words, when the Third World intellectuals integrate Western civilization and Eastern religion, what kind of future for humanity is being imagined? Shariati puts forth such a vision in the following way:

a strong and a scientific human, whose virtue is not trampled under the power of civilization, but the power of civilization is at the service of the human spirit and evolution; the human who is not a slave, who is not submissive, and who is not trampled under consumptive capitalism, and the human whose machine has not become a tool to crush him, but rather the human is the master of the machine... At that time, the evolved and self-aware human being, who has human spirit and human feelings, even if he utilizes machines, instead of ten hours of work a day, two hours of work in a day would be enough for him. The remaining eight hours, for the human who is self-aware and utilizes machines, would be free for reflection, evolution, evolving spirituality, and building a more human history.¹⁸

18 Ibid., 208.

Nevertheless, the question that can be posed here is whether this future is possible by combining the materials proposed by Shariati in his interpretation on Fanon? Is it possible, in essence, to reduce Western civilization (with all its equipment, both material and spiritual) to the "body" and refine the Eastern religion (with all its dimensions) of "the buried superstitions," and exalt it to the level of "spirit," and then establish the future of humanity on this godly creation?¹⁹

It seems that beyond this assumption, there is a creative mentality that derives from religious myth (the soul and the body that God creates) and is conceptualized within the framework of the divine *Kon Fa Yakun* ("Be, and it is"), which Shariati has not paid attention to. Mystics and the scholars of the East make a distinction between "God's will" and "human limitation" in the form of the letter "*Fa*" in the phrase "*Kon + Fa + Yakun*." Additionally, they have said that a universe lies beneath this "*Fa*," and one of its most important components is that humans should avoid repeating the great Deluge of Noah on earth in their attempts to create a "new race." In other words, "divine providence" in religious literature refers to the same human constraints in order to remind humanity that it does not possess the powers of divinity. In my opinion, Shariati's divine ambitions are not derived from religion; rather it belongs to the "modern age" (especially the world of Nietzsche), which attempts to transcend the world in various ways. In other words, if we want to prevent the construction of another Europe in the East, perhaps the most important step is not to see ourselves in the position of divinity and/or holistic absolute subjectivity, contrary to what Shariati says: "If... we want not to turn Asia, Africa, and Latin America, into another America... so... we should not bring back their ideology."²⁰

It seems that within a more complex view, Shariati incorporates Eurocentric thinking into an Eastern Dialogue, and this "return of Eurocentric thinking," despite its anti-colonial appearance, is evident in the deeper layers of Shariati's thought. His idea of human divinity coupled with holistic absolute subjectivity, is fundamentally opposed to the religious spirit. Because the main characteristic of the human is to "worship," and human divinity can only be understood in the "*Fa*" [*Kon FaYakun*] (i.e. the gradual world based on choice, consciousness, self-awareness, understanding, and avoidance of violence, as well as compulsion to reach the position of exaltation), and the exit from it, means that we drove the

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid., 207.

French, English, and Americans out of Africa and Asia, but... we ourselves again, have let them in through the [metaphysical] window into [our mind's] house... [that is, not only did] we return to their views, rights, constructions, civilization, and thoughts, but we [accepted] Eurocentric metaphysics, which transposed the [position of humanity] from worship to divinity as a measure.²¹

However, the question that should be asked is to what extent have these thoughts influenced Fanon? In other words, how does Fanon view such deification of humanity? Is this only Shariati's interpretation of Fanon, or are there foundations for such an approach within Fanon's thought itself?

1 Civilization and Modernism

In a discussion entitled *Civilization and Modernity*, Shariati argues that intellectuals should be sensitive to such above issues, and in this discussion, he represents his own interpretation of Fanon. He says:

One of the most sensitive issues, but also the most vital issue that must be posed today... is the issue of modernity, which we face today in all non-European societies as well as in Islamic societies.²²

In other words, Shariati, by distinguishing the concepts of "civilization" and "modernity," invokes an important debate, often referred to in sociological discussions as "Diverse Modernities." It is argued that either modernity has a fixed global pattern, or the ways to achieve modernity are fundamentally linked to the history, religion, culture, and the behavioral patterns of any given society, with the understanding that one cannot impose a pattern consistent with the "lived experience of Europe" in all existing contexts. This way of entering into the debate and proposing diverse modernities, initiated the critique, rejection, and abandonment of the "modernization plans" that were made by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other international institutions, which were influenced by the Eurocentric models of development. Within this discussion, a methodological distinction between the concepts of "modernization" and "Westernization" was born. In this context, Shariati states:

²¹ Ibid., 207.

²² Shariati, *Civilization and Modernity*, 361–362.

The most fundamental issue... that we face, as people in this century – a phenomenon that directly deals with our everyday lives, our own destiny and our society, as well as with our beliefs, thoughts, and souls – and also the most sensitive issue for us as Muslims – who are dependent on religion, which has commitment, goal, and direction in the issue of civilization and modernity, human culture, and the worldly life of human – is [to distinguish between] modernity and civilization, [which]... unfortunately... in these [two centuries] modernity, in the name of civilization, has been fed to non-European societies.²³

In other words, the form of modernity that is “fed to non-European societies” in the name of civilization has created “one of the greatest sufferings [and deviations] ... in today’s [non-European] society”: “the psychological deviation of non-European personalities.”²⁴ Shariati believes that “we” (i.e. all non-European societies) are suffering from a kind of psychological deviation in our personality structure. But what does this “deviation” mean in Shariati’s conceptual system, and how does he interpret this deviation? He says “deviation” can be interpreted as the following:

our realities are something else, but... we feel something else... we feel somebody else; whereas twenty years ago, they were the same non-European countries, but when we entered those societies, although they may not have today’s European civilization, they each were themselves: their feelings, their aspirations, their way of working, their spirituality, their delectation, their pleasures, their tastes and their worship, all their work, their arts and their beauties, their religious and philosophical mentality... either good or bad, all in all, were their own.

And when I entered India, for example, or an African country, I knew that it was an African country or India, its taste is its own, it has its own building, the painter paints like a Hindi, a poet writes poetry like himself and has his own Indian pain and his own country’s mentality; they have their own sufferings, diseases, aspirations and religion, all of which are their own; while they were weak in terms of the level of civilization and material possessions, all things were their own; they were not sick, although they were poor, and illness is other than poverty.²⁵

23 Ibid., 362–363.

24 Ibid., 263, 371.

25 Ibid., 371.

Therefore, the deviation in the mind and language of Shariati is that we, instead of taking the Western civilization as the “body,” and taking the Eastern culture and religion – erased from superstitions – as “the heart,” have acted in the opposite way, that is, we had taken “Western civilization” as the only form of civilization; we have named it “modernity” and ignored the spirit of our Eastern self, and also the religion we adhered to is nothing but superstition and is far from the “pure religion” that once had a heart and movement.²⁶ In other words, the West,

to the extent that it has been able to bring manifestations of its own civilization into non-European societies... it has, to the same extent, been able to deliver a philosophical way of thinking, [as well as] beliefs, tastes, and particular behaviors from its society to these societies, societies that are never consistent with those behaviors, mentalities, tastes, and attachments... Thus, outside of European civilization, societies emerged – such as our societies – that are mosaic societies.²⁷

These incoherent societies, with the advent of modernity in the “form of civilization” – which essentially means “Westernization,” not the possibility of modernity based on the conditions of various subjects – have reached a situation effortlessly controllable by the dominant Western subject, and are manipulated towards the Western markets. Shariati describes this “change situation,” or the “rotation of the indigenous people,” as follows:

here European thinkers... have to come up with a certain plan, first of all... to change these non-European peoples' tastes and thoughts; secondly... to change their lifestyle... not that they want to change themselves, because they may change in such ways that they do not become consumers of commodities, but... to change their tastes, favors, sufferings, sorrows and aspirations, ideals and beauties, traditions, recreation, social relationships, and leisure, and so on, in ways that they become consumers... of European goods only. The great producers and great capitalists of Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries gave the plan to the thinkers. The plan is that all people on the planet should be uniform, live in the same way, think in the same way; but it isn't possible that all nations think uniformly.²⁸

²⁶ Shariati, *History and Recognition of Religions*, 308.

²⁷ Shariati, *Civilization and Modernity*, 371–372.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 376.

Shariati seeks to provide a framework in which to explain the alienation of non-European cultures and nations, and in this context, poses the following question: "which materials shape the way of thinking in a nation?"²⁹ In Shariati's view, six fundamental components play a crucial role in shaping social identity: (1) Religion, (2) Culture, (3) History, (4) Past civilization, (5) Education, and (6) Tradition. These are "the factors that shape the personality, mental and intellectual quality, as well as the life of a human, and these are different in every society and region."³⁰ These components, "each of which have made a kind of society, [produced] a distinct nation [with] distinct tastes, flairs, sufferings, desires and sensitivities, [and created] distinct religions and social relationships."³¹ European experts on the other hand, in Shariati's view, define each of these societies within a Euro-centric standpoint, as they attempt, under the name of "modernity," "to [diminish] all non-European societies and the non-European individual in every form and in every way of thinking... our only task as Europeans is to generate the temptation for modernization in those societies."³² In other words, what Shariati says about the distinction between "civilization" and "modernity" is derived from Fanon's interpretation of the same. But what does Fanon say about the modernization of indigenous people? In Shariati's interpretation of Fanon, we come to the idea that, "Europe wanted to captivate all people... by [way of the] machine; but is it possible that a human [individual] or human society be captivated by a machine or by a particular product of Europe before it has first erased their personality?"³³ The Fanon that Shariati reconstructed gives a considerable answer to this question. It is that every society has an independent identity, which forms the personality of that society and has the constituents of religion, society, history, culture, and tradition. For non-European societies to be captive and subjugated, they must first be "depersonalized."³⁴ As such, Fanon argues that, in order to subjugate non-Western societies, there must be processes of de-religionization, de-traditionalization, de-civilization, de-educationalization, deculturization, and de-historicization from the essential components of which personalities are constructed. This is precisely because,

in the 19th century, as an Iranian person, I felt that I am dependent on a great civilization in the 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th centuries of Islam,

29 Ibid., 376.

30 Ibid., 377.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid., 382.

34 Ibid.

which was unique in the world. The whole world was influenced by our civilization. I felt that I was affiliated with a culture of several centuries... that in various forms had created... a new culture, new spirituality, new art and literature; ...and in the name of the human I could feel human personality in myself, against the world, and in front of everyone.³⁵

What is the meaning of the last sentence in the paragraph above, which Shariati says in a Fanonian form? Fanon speaks of “depersonalization strategy,” and Shariati argues that this strategy is only effective when the personality components of a society are erased and consequently, “I” no longer feel in myself the human personality, with the result that I become reduced from “human” to “indigenous,” or from “the subject” to “the object.” Therefore, a person who has a sense of belonging and relies on the core constituents – not the imaginary and superficial – withstands subjugation. From that, we must ask the following question: “How such an ‘I’ can become... something that only consumes new commodities?”³⁶

2 Fanon’s Original Theses

In order to understand Fanon, Shariati refers to three of his works. The first, which Shariati introduces as the first book of Fanon, is *Black Skin, White Masks*; the second work is the *Fifth Year of Algerian Revolution*, which “is about the effects of the revolution on commercial and familial relationships, religious ideas, insights, and thoughts about the people.”³⁷ Fanon’s third book, from Shariati’s point of view, is *The Wretched of the Earth*, in which Fanon says:

as there are scales to assess the actions of people, a number of them will be sent to heaven, and a number of them to hell on doomsday. In the present earth, we have doomsday as well, as there are 500 million saviors and 1.5 billion wretched people [the world’s population was 2 billion at that time], and this wretched majority comes from the third world countries.³⁸

35 Ibid., 383.

36 Ibid., 383.

37 Ibid., 417.

38 Ibid., 420.

Based on these three books, Shariati attempts to interpret Fanon and reconstruct the Fanon who put forward the above classifications. Based on these classifications, Shariati evaluates issues regarding "the cultural aspect[s] of colonization."³⁹ Perhaps one can claim that such a critique is one of the most important dimensions of Shariati's post-colonial theory. At this point, we should review Shariati's interpretation of Fanon in order to identify to what extent it can be included in his overall sociological framework. The reason for this statement is that many sociologists in Iran claim that Shariati is not a sociologist, and in their minds a sociologist is one who considers social issues, such as in the translated literature of Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Anthony Giddens, despite the fact that there are sociological paradigms more complicated that can be analyzed rather than reduced to the views of Durkheim, Weber, or Giddens. For example, after the 1960s, we encountered the new trio of sociological classics that turned to Marx-Durkheim-Weber, instead of dealing with Weber, Durkheim, Pareto and Smalls. But in Iran, scholars still interpret Marx through the ideology of Marxism, even in Leninist, Stalinist, and Maoist forms, which are very different from the Marxist/ Left/ Post-Left paradigms. In other words, the phrase "Ali Shariati is not a sociologist" requires serious examination. To find out whether Shariati was a sociologist, we first need to know what sociological paradigms are, and what the basic features of the "sociological pantheon" are, as well as how a theorist can be regarded as a sociologist.

In his works, Shariati addresses the works of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim, as well as other sociologists and academic paradigms of alternative sociology. One of the most prominent of these sociologists is Frantz Fanon and the post-colonial paradigms in sociology, which deal with social affairs in the form of "cultural colonization."

Due to the similarities that may exist in the official discourse of the Islamic Republic and Fanon from a "rhetorical standpoint," this paradigm has created a kind of "theoretical fear" among the scholars of the human sciences, in order to prevent sociology from falling into "the service of the official power," which could reduce its critical nature. This cross-relation is a kind of simplistic reductionism that requires a critical analysis. It also constitutes a cross-relation that I reject. To articulate it in a more expressive way, Shariati's interpretation of Fanon enables us not only to restore the Shariatian Fanon, but also allows us the chance to discuss Shariati within a postcolonial existentialist sociological paradigm, and thus move beyond the "non-sociologist Shariati myth."

There are three key theses in Shariati's interpretation of Fanon that form the foundation of Fanon's theory. The first thesis is the idea of "revolution" and

39 Ibid., 415.

its effects on the matrix of business and family affiliations, as well as religious beliefs and public opinion. Revolution is one of the most effective components of change. Fanon believes that:

the impact of social transformation in social relations, especially family and social traditions [has a deep connection with revolution], including the impact on religious and familial traditions, which had been solid and frozen over the centuries and had religious sanctity... If the society wanted to eliminate those traditions by educating and reforming the thought of the society, it needs continuous effort for four to five generations because those traditions took root over the centuries, and such an old tradition cannot be eliminated within one or two generations, and generations must come and pass, in order to gradually eliminate that tradition, and replace it with another tradition, whether good or bad.⁴⁰

Of course, Fanon puts forward “*the originality of the revolution for social transformations*” in this thesis, and Shariati conceptualizes it in “revolutionary self-creation,” and even describes the “advent of the prophet” in the Arabian Peninsula, following Fanon’s original thesis. Through a Fanonian interpretation of the advent of Islam, Shariati, in his book *The Covenant with Abraham*, says:

Fanon does not pose the issue of revolution in an epic and heroic manner, rather he represents a detailed analysis of the people of Algeria, who suddenly lose all their old-fashioned and highly-frozen traditions in less than half of a generation, as a result of the spiritual revolution and this change of direction. He believes that due to the length of the historical events, and the history of a nation that continued for two thousand years or more, weaknesses and deviations may be inherent in the nation. Education, training, admonition and advice do not have the potential to eliminate these deviations, but with a sudden change, all people of the nation change their minds and believe in a particular direction... [They] turn to that direction and mobilize, and it is in this mobilization that suddenly, after three to four years, psychological weaknesses, corrupt relationships, and moral degeneration, which has accumulated in their souls for centuries, miraculously disappears.⁴¹

40 Ibid., 420.

41 Ali Shariati, *Collected Works no. 29. Miaad ba Ebrahim* (Covenant with Abraham). (Tehran: Didar publication, 2012), 524–525.

In other words, the Medina community

is organized under the leadership of Muhammad and his followers, a society full of human weakness and corruption; because the forming elements are tribal – people who have no civilization and culture except pillage and war – from the psychological point of view, these menial people cannot form a superior composite, but they were able to... These decadent tribes and people, when they found a certain social orientation and ideology, [having been mobilized], eliminated all the moral weaknesses, all deviations, and corruptions that their society accepted throughout the ages. After ten years they [were] excellent humans [with an] excellent society.⁴²

In other words, Shariati accepts the thesis “*the originality of the revolution for social transformations*” in his analysis, and remarks that “Fanon provides examples of some of these traditions which will not be lost over the course of several centuries.”⁴³ What are the examples that Fanon provides? Is the method by which a sociologist confronts a theory the same as the one that Shariati shows us? In other words, should a sociologist first talk about a theory and list its main components and then list examples that empirically corroborate the theory? Shariati explains the examples that Fanon provides to bolster his “originality of the revolution for social transformation” thesis:

Before 1954, families in North Africa maintained strong traditions, which were established by history, religion, or both. History means the passing of from generation to generation... the spirit of the society, the social conditions, and the set of factors that make the society. Religion is, keeping herself away from the eyes of the father after the ages of seven to eight, which, of course, has various degrees: in some families they do not see each other at all, and in some others, the daughter should wear a hijab in front of her father and her brother, and even in some cases in front of her mother, and this is because of the shame and modesty which is placed like a slave between a father and an adolescent daughter. This is a tradition that cannot be easily changed. It is easy to change the way of thinking, reasoning, and even enlightenment, but it is difficult to change the taste, tradition, spirit and habit, which has taken deep roots... over generations. However, these traditions can change rapidly – even in a few

42 Ibid., 525.

43 Ibid.

years, that is, one generation – when all people try to achieve a common goal and believe in it.⁴⁴

In other words, by accepting the thesis of the *originality of the revolution* in a Fanonian form, and interpreting this originality as “having a common goal and pursuing it,” Shariati concludes that:

There are other societies... in which everything (tradition, morality, social relations, etc.) have degenerated and it seems they never change, or a society that is aging and ill [wherein] the causes of its destruction [are many]. But a social miracle changes all these predictions in a way that was not conceivable, by having a common goal and pursuing it. In the meantime, all those effects, which have been ingrained in the spirit of the nation, disappear like a social miracle, once they face a phenomenon that was not only unpredictable, but was not even imaginable.⁴⁵

Shariati tries to assess the samples provided by Fanon with other samples, and then conceptualizes the specific examples in a generalized format. This is what all sociologists employ in the human sciences. Shariati takes the distinction Fanon makes between “reasoning” and “taste” seriously, and believes that it might be possible to influence the first through learning, school, training, and education, and change it in a short period of time, but “taste” cannot be easily changed precisely because they are old habits and traditions that dominate people’s soul, and therefore do not easily change. This Fanonian distinction, which Shariati has reconstructed and accepted in his social transformation theory, is one of the most important components of the theory of the *originality of the revolution*, which has not been dealt with adequately in the context of Iranian sociology. This, in my opinion, is significant, and can be studied in order to understand the historical changes in contemporary Iranian society, in the “constitutional” and “Islamic” revolutions, and the changes in Iranian society after the establishment of the Islamic Republic. For instance, the point Shariati puts forward pertaining to Fanon’s example of the northern African families’ approach to the girls’ adolescence, has striking similarity to the fatwā by Shi’i authorities on women’s social roles in the years leading to the revolution in 1357A.H. (1979 CE), in which some argued that a woman’s presence alongside men in the demonstrations against the Pahlavi Regime was not permissible

44 Shariati, *The History of Civilization*, 417–418.

45 Ibid., 418.

“according to Shari’a.” But the revolution changed many of the consolidated traditions. For example, in Fanon’s instance, it is clearly obvious that,

All these rooted traditions (hiding the girls from their fathers between the ages of sixteen and twenty) change fast and intensively, and the opposite becomes the order of the day. In a way that the same girls who become the Mujahidin lose whatever love they have for their country, and not only do their families not disapprove of their actions, but their actions and the sufferings... appear to be their pride; they [actually] encourage them. We can easily see how their way of thinking changed in a short period of time (during one generation), a matter that takes several generations in normal times.⁴⁶

It seems that Shariati does not follow the distinction Fanon makes between “reasoning” and “taste” in a coherent and logical way. In the above reference, Shariati says “we could easily see how their way of thinking changed in a short time,” but earlier in the same reference, he states, “it is easy to change the way of thinking... but it is difficult to change the taste.”⁴⁷ Because that is within the same line of thought, the following questions might be raised: Do revolutions only temporarily change already established ways of thinking? Are they incapable of transforming tastes? If the people do not resist changing their way of thinking for a short period of time, is it just because of the particular revolutionary situation? Last, once the “revolutionary fever” has subsided, will the rooted traditions come back? In my opinion, this is the question that Fanon and the Shariatian Fanon should answer, and those who believe in “*the originality of the revolution for social transformations*,” should answer with references with historical examples.

The second thesis of Fanon, within Shariati’s interpretation, which is an extract from the book *The Wretched of the Earth*, is the concept of “childhood.” Shariati does not consider this concept under Fanon’s *universal* theory, but interprets it as a *socially bound* theory. In other words, the second thesis, “of Fanon is that childhood and the child boy is eliminated by social transformations.”⁴⁸

What does this concept mean? What does Fanon want to say? What is meant by the phrase “social transformations eliminate childhood,” and from Fanon’s thesis, what conclusion has Shariati obtained for his sociological

46 Ibid., 417–418.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid., 419.

understanding?⁴⁹ Shariati argues that in order to understand Fanon's concept of "childhood," which stands in relation to social changes, attention should be paid to the following matter:

The child is very sweet for parents and relatives up to the age of six or seven, and captures everyone's attention and affection. Gradually, as they approached the ages of eight or nine, they receive less attention and are left on their own until they reach puberty; this means that they go through an interim period in which the child is forgotten. Not that they leave them alone, but they are no longer the center of attention, that is, they are neither sweet nor sufficiently taken seriously. The ages of six or seven are the period of childhood, after which they find themselves talking to adults. This means they become a real audience: a real speaker or listener, but on a lower level.⁵⁰

In other words, Shariati maintains that Fanon

investigates this [conception] of childhood, which can be seen in the West. [He notes that it] increases the more one goes from the south to the north. This period takes ten, twelve, or thirteen years in European and American societies. In the north of Europe, it takes thirteen to fourteen years, and in the south of Europe, nine to ten years. It takes four, five, or six years for the under-developed countries.⁵¹

In my opinion, this is a very interesting point. For those who argue that Shariati was not a sociologist, Shariati's approach to the problem of "childhood," from a comparative perspective, and in the framework of Fanon's theory, should be studied. Shariati, through his interpretation of Fanon, seemingly "de-biologizes" a biological theme, thus posing the issue of childhood within a sociological framework. He says that if we look at the issue of childhood and its relation to the interim period between "childhood" and "puberty," then we will see that,

The cause [of difference between developed and under-developed countries in relation to childhood] ... is that in an under-developed country, the child works from the age of 9, and therefore they cannot be neglected and/or forgotten because there is no time to be forgotten: the child is

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

not only a little boy but is also a worker and a brother who has a unique relationship to society, as he financially contributes to the family. A child who, for example, weaves carpets, is not in an interim period, he feels everything, poverty, distress, impecuniousness; He knows suffering, deprivation, ignorance, and oppression; He suffers from the difference between his class and the employer's class. He knows there are many things he has never seen or eaten, and there are many things he does and others do not do. This is the level of his thought; one has to talk to him because he is serious and he feels all the bitter issues of life deep down in his existence.⁵²

Nonetheless, due to social differences, seemingly biological structures undergo fundamental changes. In Europe, for example, compared to North Africa, "a child at the age of [nine]... has a non-serious spirit and doesn't understand anything of the world. Eighteen to Nineteen-years-old girls and boys play with toys and are childish."⁵³

Shariati derives interesting results from Fanon's thesis: First, the border between "the sociological matter" and "the biological matter" is not biologically solvable; rather it is "bound culturally." Second, social problems are not merely analyzable in the form of "universal matter," rather general matters should be studied dialectically in relation to particular matters. Third, more so (and earlier) than many Western, African, and Indian scholars, Shariati concluded that Fanon was not merely "a psychiatrist," but rather that his ideas contained important sociological perspectives, which he began to develop more than 50 years ago. Thus, it is not mistaken to speak of "Shariati's interpretation" of Fanon's "sociological discourse" today. As such, Shariati believes that "childhood" is not merely a biological matter, but also a social one. He says, that according to the Fanon's theory,

[childhood] is shortened in poor families, and in the same society, when it comes to social and political self-awareness, it is almost eliminated... [once in puberty] the child can feel that there are things which he does not have, while others have them, even though he is no less talented... this makes him... feel impoverished.⁵⁴

52 Ibid., 419–420.

53 Ibid., 420.

54 Ibid.

The feeling of poverty “is beyond poverty itself, like a sense of ignorance that is other than ignorance itself. The feeling of poverty and backwardness has a social value, not poverty itself.”⁵⁵ Therefore, for societies that are in a state of poverty, backwardness, colonialism, ignorance, and exploitation, the mission of the intellectual “is to distinguish between the feeling of poverty and poverty itself, so that people can understand correctly the border between reality and the feeling of reality.”⁵⁶

Fanon’s third thesis, within Shariati’s interpretation, which appears to be based on his interpretation of the book *The Wretched of the Earth*, refers to the ways in which system formations occur in *wretched* societies (the Third World countries which were colonized). In other words, Fanon’s third thesis, “which strongly influenced Africa, is that all societies in the Third World must come under a system of industrial unity, with a unified lifestyle, and their intellectuals must strive to make them a unified race.”⁵⁷ Of course, this aspect of Fanon’s statements requires serious critique. Yet, it is necessary to first refer to Shariati’s political philosophy, which is beautifully depicted in the book *Ummah and Imam* (the Peoples and the Imam), in order to understand this statement. Many followers of Shariati argue that this work is marginal and should not be taken seriously. However, to respond to these approaches, those critics should refer to Shariati’s concept of the “the third way,” which he developed out of his interpretation on Fanon.

In other words, Fanon in his third thesis presents an exquisite concept: “A unified lifestyle.” This notion must be taken as the basis of the “unified race” as well as the “anti-capitalist society,” while the “industrial” must be created under the leadership of the intellectuals, because “the role of the intellectuals in these societies is greater.”⁵⁸ In Shariati’s view, based on his interpretation of Fanon, the basic duty of the intellectual is “to build the Third World on the basis of ‘the unified race,’ but the concept of ‘race’ in relation to ‘the Third World’ should not be conceptualized in a biological sense. The ‘Third World’ (*tiers monde*) refers to ‘all the countries of the world that have not reached industry-derived wealth via capitalism,” and for the same reasons, “they have common characteristics.”⁵⁹ In other words, the concept of “the unified race” must be understood in relation to these “common characteristics,” not in relation to the color of the skin or race in a biological sense. This point can be found in both

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid., 419–421.

58 Ibid., 420.

59 Ibid., 421.

Fanon's and Shariati's thought. It is from Fanon, reconstructed through Shariati's mind and language, that,

The shared aspect of the nations is neither religion, nor language... But rather a common painful situation. Therefore, since the painful situation is shared, and the Third World countries are subject to a common danger (the incursion of capital and industry), they must be united.⁶⁰

Yet, the question that arises here is: "how can the commonality and unity of these very different countries, with a diverse history, culture, nationality, ethnicity, language, and civilization, take shape? Is such a coalition even possible?"⁶¹ To answer this question, Shariati poses another question: "how does this... unity develop? Essentially, it arises when they face their opposition."⁶²

When we talk about the Third World and its relation to colonization, we must always be aware that the underdeveloped countries have a common painful situation that places them against the capitalist world in a similar fashion. Now, as Shariati explains,

The industrial and capitalist world is rapidly moving towards its path, and the movement is so fast that no matter how much the Third World strives and moves forward, the distance increases day by day... Therefore, the Third World countries are influenced by [industrial capitalism], and the Third World's destiny is in their hands, as they are stronger in terms of both spirituality and wealth.⁶³

The result of Fanon's third thesis as interpreted by Shariati is that we should make a fundamental distinction between "industrialization" and "capitalization," and do not endanger the "unified race" that will be born in the future with the pernicious lie, which states that "in order to industrialize, we must be capitalist," because capitalism is "dangerous." That is why Fanon says: "We should not turn Africa into another America; the ill experience of America is enough for us. That is, these countries [or the future race] should become industrialized in a way other than through capitalism."⁶⁴

60 Ibid.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid.

Shariati, indeed, argues that this thesis of Fanon “strongly influenced Africa.”⁶⁵ But today it has been revealed to us that the distinction between “industrialization” and “capitalism” is not commensurate to the reality of the existing world order. In other words, if we do not adopt capitalism, our industry will not flourish. Africa’s slow course of industrialization may be attributed to the effects of this Fanonian thesis, which proved not to be conducive for attracting capital.

We might criticize Shariati for the same reason in regards to Iran; did his interpretation of Fanon place Iranian society on the same “no industrialization” and “no capitalism” path? This is because, in my opinion, his idea of a “unified race,” with its “common painful situation,” is not solely based on ontology and anthropology, but on “political economy.” The logic for this economy can be examined in Shariati’s own works. In other words, when Shariati, in his interpretation of Fanon, says that we should not turn Africa into another America, he certainly speaks of Iranian society as a part of the Third World, which has the same “common painful situation” and is faced with a common threat by industrial capitalism. He clearly tells Iranians not to turn Iran into the United States, because the exploitation derived from American capitalism “is extremely violent.”⁶⁶ Therefore, in order to establish the Third World and its “unified race,” which can serve as the savior of humanity, there must be an economic design that leads to industrialization, “under a unified industrial system and a unified lifestyle,” without causing this savior race to embrace capitalism.

What strategy should the Third World have? How should the political economy of the Third World, along with its different ontologies and anthropologies, be designed?

Indeed, there are many similarities between the Shariatian/Fanonian discourse and post-Pahlavi discourses in contemporary Islamic Republic of Iran, and these discourses should be examined. In this regard, I disagree with the scholars who, in both positive and negative manners, claim that there is no connection between Shariati’s discourse and a post-Pahlavi discourse. I also contend that there is a deep affinity between Shariati’s discourse and the idea of a new Islamic civilization in the Islamic Republic that requires critical review.

On the original question – Shariati’s proposed economic policies for the Third World – we will consider the prospects he prescribes for Third World industrialization without capitalism. In his interpretation of Fanon, Shariati maintains that, “We should not turn Africa into another America; the ill

65 Ibid., 420.

66 Ibid., 423.

experience of America is enough for us; that is, these countries should become industrialized in a way other than capitalism."⁶⁷ The question posed here is: what should be done? If industrialization without capitalism is possible and desirable, what pattern does Shariati conceive? Is Shariati's model a kind of socialism on the "Soviet model," which existed in the Soviet Union, the Eastern bloc, or in countries like China, Cuba, and Latin America? Or, does Shariati envision other models? Was Shariati envisioning something closer to the "Scandinavian model"? Or did Shariati intend none of these models. I contend that he sought "synthetic models" that could meet the needs of the complex society of Iran as well as the rest of the Third World?

In my opinion, Shariati's approach to economic and matters of political-economy could be a separate inquiry. However, I am going to highlight the following point: The relationship between Shariati's philosophy of politics and his perspectives on political-economy on one hand, and his anthropology and ontology debates on the other, is very deep, therefore, it is impossible to claim that these discussions are not connected. Additionally, if Shariati had said a word on this in *Ummah and Imam* (The Peoples and the Imam), it could be regarded as an immature facet of Shariati's political philosophy, which can essentially be interpreted in the context of "committed democracy." Thus, we should not associate Shariati's anthropological and ontological dimensions with these political arguments and philosophies, or even political economy. I disagree with the above-mentioned opinions; as I mentioned in my 2016 book *Shariati and Heidegger*. Shariati's was concerned with the conceptualization of a "different kind" of social living and ecosystem of civilization, and in order to create this, he tried to portray all possible dimensions of human life within a general schema.⁶⁸

With the Fanonian distinction between "industrialization" and "capitalism," Shariati accepted Fanon's conclusion, considering "industrialization" as the path forward, while considering capitalism as "modern savagery." His strategy for the industrialization of the Third World, including Iran, is that, "A country with small industries... cannot become industrial... because (in such a situation) it will always be in need of other countries."⁶⁹

What then is to be done? What steps should the Third World take to industrialize and prevent capitalism from spreading into non-capitalist societies? Shariati, in his interpretation of Fanon, which is based on the "unified industrial system," states that one of the first steps for the Third World is to move

67 Ibid., 421.

68 Seyed Javad Miri, *Shariati and Heidegger*, Tehran: Naghd Farhang, 2016.

69 Shariati, *The History of Civilization*, 422.

“in the way of the heavy industry.”⁷⁰ Thus, the Third World has to turn to “the basic industries and primary production” in order to avoid relying on other countries.⁷¹ Of course, Shariati is aware of the limitations of this thesis in the context of liberal capitalism and the Cold War, and argues that the Third World must take steps towards instituting basic industries and primary production. Yet, it is almost impossible from a strategic perspective, because,

The social form of these countries (as they are now) is limited in two ways: the quantity of consumer acceptance and the quality of consumer acceptance. The quantity of consumer acceptance, the number of people who buy, is not high enough for heavy industry to work and for marketing opportunities, because heavy industry is constantly producing and the market should absorb it. The quality of consumer acceptance is also limited, that is, of the same potential purchasers and consumers, only a minority are buyers and consumers. A place may have a population of 300 million, but not all have the purchasing power of such industries. The quality of consumption acceptance means the buyer's power.⁷²

Because of this, the Third World would face fundamental challenges in the capitalist world, and it would not be easy to escape the intra-system constraints. In his interpretation of Fanon, Shariati is trying to find a way out of this paradox, but his strategy requires a serious overhaul.

Of course, it is worth mentioning that Fanon had visited the Soviet Union, and that he was closely acquainted with the Soviet Union's common market system. In my opinion, the solution that Shariati puts forward in his interpretation of Fanon is based on the distinction between “industrialization” and “capitalism.” He also speaks about the “one system, one industrial unity, and a unified lifestyle,” which was closely linked to the “Soviet form” that had a special place in the mind of Fanon, which Shariati had internalized.⁷³

Is this impression correct or based on speculation? It seems that Shariati, in the book *The Features of the New Century*, in the chapter on Third World “pioneers of returning,” has made clear indications towards this “Soviet form,” which requires serious consideration. In order to overcome the problems of

70 Ibid., 420.

71 Ibid., 422.

72 Ibid.

73 William W. Hansen, “Another side of Frantz Fanon: Reflections on Socialism and Democracy,” *New Political Science* 19, no. 3 (1997): 89–111.

quantity and quality in consumer acceptance, Shariati refers to a key point: He argues that this challenge is serious and the Third World must find a solution to overcome these problems. He writes, "firstly, the [Third World's] goods are expensive, and then they become classical (that is, like the old times); they are forced to purchase cheaper goods from the outside, as it was with airplane manufacturing."⁷⁴ What should we do if we want to "industrialize," thus freeing us of the "need [for] other countries," while avoiding becoming involved in capitalism, while also creating "a unified race," so that we are no longer among "the wretched of the earth"? How could we achieve these goals? In Shariati's view, a system of manufacturing and exchange between Third World countries must be established, wherein the products of heavy industries within Third World countries find markets outside of Europe. As one nation within this system produces a particular heavy industry, the others do not. Shariati says, "In this way, they can both have heavy industry and have no need for the Western capitalist system."⁷⁵

This seems to be the "Soviet model," which was set up in the fifteen republics of the Soviet Union. The reason for the existence of this system was that Russia had been able to shatter the sovereignty of other countries. In other words, these republics were settled as autonomous oblasts under the central Russ state of the Soviet Union. Otherwise, without damaging the sovereignty of the Third World countries, there was no possibility of managing these countries, as it was impossible for any one country to tell another country not to establish an industry because it was already established in another, or that the markets of the Third World have no need for European markets and goods.

In other words, Fanon defined the Soviet model as a model of socialism and democracy, and Shariati, disregarding the concept of "national sovereignty," naively presented it as a solution to industrialization and capitalism. It would supposedly liberate peoples from colonial rule and establish the "savior race." Nevertheless, it was in fact Soviet-style communism, which has nothing to do with the "Social Democracy of Scandinavia." Some in Iran, of course, claim that Shariati's perception of the "Left Movement" has been a Social-Democratic interpretation in the mold of Scandinavia, but I consider this claim to be dubious, because the solution that Shariati offers in his new century strongly resembles the "Soviet model," not the "Scandinavian model."

74 Shariati, *The History of Civilization*, 422.

75 Ibid.

3 The Colonized and the Colonizer

One of the most important concepts in Ali Shariati's social theory is the concept of "colonialism/colonization." In this context, Shariati's interpretation of Fanon has a special place, since Fanon used the concepts of "colonialism," "alienation," and "race" in a cohesive fashion in his theoretical framework. Unlike Karl Marx, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim, Fanon does not ignore the relationship between "race" and "ethnicity" within colonialism, but rather sees a decisive relationship between colonial culture and the "race" issue. In *The History of Civilization*, Shariati makes a point that is worth noting:

A quarter of the century ago, a new human, culture, era, and religion began... We are at the threshold of a new insight that... begun in our world; it shows that if the Renaissance was the new beginning of culture and civilization in Europe, the new Renaissance is the culture of an era which is to found outside of Europe, and that Europe itself is affected by this movement.⁷⁶

In other words, the era of Eurocentrism is nearing its end. The post-colonial movements have opened up space in a Post-Eurocentric world, and in doing so have given humanity new possibilities. Yet, one must not forget that there are serious obstructions to the emergence of the "new race" or "new human." What are the obstructions facing the Post-Eurocentric human? In Shariati's view,

one of the signs of the alienation illness is degeneration and self-depreciation of a human against another human, or even another civilization, which the second-hand human neither has the courage to recognize nor the ability to recognize, because the ability of recognize depends on the individual's brain power to understand a scientific issue, and the courage to recognize [such a reality] depends on the bravery and the spiritual and moral independence of a person.⁷⁷

In the above quote, Shariati aptly refers to the "degeneration of civilization," and argues that one of the serious obstructions to creating the Post-Eurocentric civilization is the state of the internalized objectivity that the non-European human has been entangled in. According to Shariati, based on this modality, the non-European has lost both the "ability for recognition" and the "courage

⁷⁶ Ibid., 252.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

for recognition." Nevertheless, the question is, in what context, and within what relations, has this lack of personality and lack of courage been created? It is essential to mention that Shariati poses the non-Europeans' objectivity within the framework of "alienation," but his interpretation of alienation is closer to Fanon's. In the book, *The History of Civilization*, in his discussion on "self-discovering," Shariati refers to Fanon's essay *Racism and Culture*, and argues that Fanon puts forward a distinct theoretical interpretation of alienation in the framework of post-colonial theory.

As far as I have been able to find, Fanon never wrote a book entitled *Racism and Culture*. However, Shariati, in the book *History of Civilization*, Volume II, in the chapter on the issue of "self-discovering," refers to such a book. "According to Fanon," he quotes, "in the book *Racism and Culture*, in order to alienate, restrict, tame, and be imitative, one must introduce them to themselves as an inferior race via racism."⁷⁸

Now, before I begin the discussion on the content of Fanon, or Shariati's interpretations of Fanon, on degeneration and self-depreciation, I will briefly reflect on the book *Racism and Culture*. In September of 1956, Frantz Fanon delivered a lecture (in French) in Paris at the First Congress of Negro Writers and Artists, and this speech, entitled "Racism and Culture," was published in the Special Issue of the *Presence Africaine* journal in the June/November 1956 issue. Later, in 1980, the lecture was published by an authorized publisher in London, as a preface to the book *Toward the African Revolution*. This key speech, however, went on another path, which has caused paradoxical confusions in the context of Shariati's references.

Based on my research, in Iran, a researcher named Manouchehr Hezarkhani, a member of the *Mojâhedin-e khalq Organization* (MKO) (Peoples' Mujahedin of Iran), was a translator of works from French to Persian, who seems to have had close literary ties with Jalal al-Ahmad.⁷⁹ Hezarkhani had collected four articles from Aliouin Deep, Frantz Fanon, Aymah Henus, and Jacques Rabemananjara, and published these articles in a book titled *Racism and Culture* 1968 by Ibn Sina publications in Tabriz. Thus, Fanon neither wrote a book called *Racism and Culture* in French, nor a book originally existed with this title in French; nevertheless, there are a collection of articles with different titles that have been published in Persian by Manouchehr Hezarkhani with the title derived from Frantz Fanon's lecture. The translator in the preface of this book explicitly states that,

78 Shariati, *The History of Civilization*, 252.

79 The MKO joined Saddam Hussein's Front against Iran under Masoud Rajavi's leadership, after the Islamic Revolution and the 1960s confrontations.

In his first global congress with the writers, poets and black men of culture, which was held in Paris in 1956, while discussing the specific cultural issues of black people, he addressed and examined this issue, which afflicted the whole colonized world. The translation of these reports and analyses are collected in this booklet.⁸⁰

This booklet was a collection of lectures by four key personalities in the “Negritude” movement, who established the philosophy of the black anti-discourse. But Shariati’s re-interpretation of this discourse in the context of Iran seems to require a critical interpretation. “Race” and “skin color,” in the framework of the Iranian discourse against colonialism, as opposed to the discourse of the Black African struggle in Africa, Latin and North America, as well as in Madagascar and the Caribbean, despite significant similarities in the political and economic areas, had fundamental differences.

Of course, Shariati, in his book *Eslamshenasi* (Islamology) (V.2), mentions the existing differences in the global anti-colonization front. He states:

This was a matter of three private letters between me and Frantz Fanon. Then he criticized this issue, the reliance on religion, and his criticism is like many of the great, committed, and truly human and libertarian intellectuals, who believed that in the anti-colonization world, in which all intellectuals should try to get all the fronts of thought in one orientation, and with one insight, and enter one path of thought (for their common and united struggle, which is the rejection of colonization, take place in the world scale), the reliance on religion will infect this great unity with sectarian and religious divisions.⁸¹

It seems that Shariati has neglected one important point, and that is if we consider the distinctions “unimportant,” the formation of a united front is not possible arising from the failure to focus on the fundamental differences that exist in the confrontation with colonization. For example, Fanon considered “religion” as an obstruction, and Shariati completely ignored the “Negritude Discourse” in Fanon’s philosophy, thus generalizing the “racism experience” (against the black race) to other cultural aspects of colonization. In other words, careless generalizations can seriously damage our theoretical frameworks, and

80 Hezarkhani, Manouchehr. *Nezhadparasti va farhang* (Racism and Culture). Tabriz: Ibn Sina Publications, 1968.

81 Ali Shariati, *Collected Works no. 17. Eslamshenasi* (Islamology Vol. 2.) (Tehran: Ghalam, 2011), 193–194.

therefore we must try to critically examine the variant dimensions of Shariati's interpretation of Fanon so that we can attain the results that can develop and amplify the existentialist post-colonial discourse in Iranian sociology and post-colonial social theory, without being trapped in careless generalizations.

Now, after this brief introduction, we turn to Shariati's interpretation of Fanon's theory about the colonized and the colonizer. Shariati states that, according to Fanon,

In order to make someone alienated, restricted, tame, and imitative, one must introduce them to themselves as an inferior race via racism. Once they feel that they belong to an inferior race, an "escape from themselves" shapes them, and all the efforts will shift to shunning away from their race... In order to reach the level of the superior race, in every possible way, they will imitate everything from the superior race.⁸²

In other words, Europeans humiliate others in terms of race, culture, and humanity; the reaction by the humiliated is to "get away from themselves to immunize themselves from the humiliated 'self,' and reject themselves by pretending to be European in order to escape their own self-contempt."⁸³

There is a kind of dialectic in this matter; because of the predominance of the culture of colonization, the humiliated self of the "Black" (or everyone else against the European) "escapes from themselves," and to the extent that they get away from their real identity, it is in direct proportion to that caused by the colonialism. Shariati considers the relationship between, "the colonized and... the colonizer [as] the dialectical relationship of the child and the mother. The mother attacks the child and the child takes refuge in the mother's arm to protect itself from the mother's attack, and [in doing so] embraces her."⁸⁴

How can "Dominique Sourdel's dialectic" be removed? If we want to consider Shariati's interpretations of Fanon as a base, and from this perspective consider "the civilizational degeneration" of Iran (the Islamic world and the broader non-European world), what is the solution?

Shariati contends that in order to free a person (and a civilization) from alienation, restriction, taming, and imitation, we cannot rely on "science, industry, politics, and... war," or "work.... and economics," because they are not components that create human civilization, but they are the cause of other

82 Shariati, *Covenant with Abraham*, 252–253.

83 Ibid. 253.

84 Ibid.

transformations.⁸⁵ Nonetheless, the question is: what kind of transformation should be done to change the ruling relations between “the colonized” and “the colonizer,” which would allow for the colonized human to become free from alienation, restrictiveness, timidity, and imitativeness? Shariati, with his interpretation of Fanon, argues that,

I believe that since a quarter of a century ago, a new civilization has been in the process of evolving, and a new human being is being born... and... tomorrow’s civilization will arise... not [from] North America, not [from] France and England, or Germany and Italy... but from the depths of the Third World, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. [It will rise] not from the Sorbonne, Harvard, and Cambridge universities... but from the primitive tribes of the Black Africa, the yellow hungry peasants, and the illiterate intellectuals emerging from the heart of the people, they grow like patient and assertive trees from the heart of infernal deserts; as this is how prophethood gives birth to new history, culture, and civilization.⁸⁶

In other words, Shariati claims that what builds civilization and brings about transformations of human history is not “work tools” or “economic tools,” but a more important component must be transformed in order to see more fundamental changes in social relations. But the question is: what is the key component that Shariati has derived from Fanon’s view? Shariati states:

What makes civilization and culture is not science, not industry, not politics, not war, not work, not economics, but new insights. In every era, when the insight has changed, a civilization has arisen. Therefore, the emergence of a civilization and a new movement is due to the emergence of a new insight.⁸⁷

Shariati believes that de-colonization movements are the preludes to these new insights that have gone on to shape the foundations of the “new race” against the “capitalist human” and the “Soviet human.” Moreover, he seems to be involved in the rhetoric of “Post-Marxist Left,” in the form of Fanon’s Negritude philosophy, by what he refers to as “cultural prophethood,” which has no close sense to the religious understanding of prophethood; rather, it represents

85 Ibid., 254.

86 Ibid., 254–255.

87 Ibid., 254.

the semantic system of Post-Marxist discourse in the framework of Negritude philosophy, which requires serious critique and analysis.

Is it possible today, in the depths of the Third World, to find universities similar to the Sorbonne, Harvard, and Cambridge? Would “the new race” thrive among the isolated tribes of Black Africa, or among the hungry Asian peasants and illiterate intellectuals? Shariati brings to the surface a correct point, and that is the importance of “new insights” and their relevance to the “era,” which requires serious conceptualization. The rhetorical internalization of the “Negritude Movement” (the Black Movement) does not help to expand Shariati’s theoretical framework, but leads to “Poesy” poetry, rather than to a kind of “awareness.”

In conclusion, in order to overcome the alienation of colonialism, and the transformation of colonial relations, we need to critique the internalized Post-Marxist discourses that have entered Shariati’s discourse in both poetic and epic forms. It seems that Shariati’s interpretation of Fanon, and Fanon’s thesis that “we should not turn the Third World into another Europe (like America),” has led to Shariati’s indulgence towards “the primitive tribes” as “the creators of new history, culture, and civilization, and the cultivators of a new human race.”⁸⁸

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88 Ibid., 255.

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