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The White Supremacist Collective Unconscious:

Towards An African American Ontology of the American Self

White supremacy is a fundamental and unavoidable structural dynamic of the American self. White supremacy is not an unfortunate flaw in the otherwise sound practice of American freedom and individual liberty, to be removed through mitigating policies, not even by the end of discrimination. Rather, white supremacy plays a fundamental ontological function in America by structuring the concept and practice of individual autonomy. While it exists in intensified form in white Americans, white supremacist mentality is not limited to them. In varying degrees, all Americans are endowed with a virtually unalienable white supremacist unconscious (WSCU) that supports and is supported by autonomous individualism. Our endowment is not the work of Jefferson's Supreme Being. It is the historical and ongoing consequence of acquiring and sustaining American style individual autonomy that is embedded

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in our culture and society. Individual autonomy is the nation's highest value, above life itself to which each of us is taught to aspire by example and precept as we grow from birth into adulthood. Autonomous individualism and white supremacy are inseparable, mutually defining and sustaining ontological dynamics of *human being* in America.* Therefore, white supremacy cannot be rooted out without making fundamental changes to our practice and concept of personhood. Efforts and policies that avoid this difficult task, as well meaning as they may be, are futile; and, when they originate within white American institutions they are directed, consciously, or by what I will describe as the *white supremacist collective unconscious*, to preventing any such alternations.

The ontological function of white supremacy is obscured by limiting the concept to far right racists such as the Boogaloo Boys. Such narrowing is a reflex action by the white supremacist collective unconscious, described below, in defense of white supremacy. Fundamentally, white supremacy is the hegemonic position of white people in American society, whether they are of the right, left or center, so that one can be a liberal white supremacist, a moderate white supremacist or an extreme white supremacist. Identifying white supremacy with its extreme manifestations misses its ontological significance. It is the hegemonic position of whites in America that ensures and enables the hegemony of their ideas, ideals and values, including prevailing conceptions of

* In this essay *human being* is considered as something we do, a dynamic performance that engages ourselves, other people, and the natural world, including objects. Like all activities it is surrounded by traditions, methods and cultures of practice-including thinking.

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the self, its nature and its limits or horizons, and standards of beauty, personal responsibility and social obligations, that shape the conscious and unconscious life of all Americans, to one degree or another, regardless of their race or ethnicity. White supremacy is a structural, not an elective problem.

For over fifty years historians, have argued, in varying degrees, that white American racism developed as a justification for the genocide of Native Americans and the enslavement and continued oppression of black people.¹ Most recently Ibram X. Kendi asserted that “Time and again, racist ideas have not been cooked up from the boiling pot of ignorance and hate. Time and again, powerful and brilliant men and women have produced racist ideas in order to justify the racist policies of their era, in order to redirect the blame for their era’s racial disparities away from those policies and onto Black people.”² It is certain that racism and white supremacy rose hand in hand with Indian removal, slavery and the slave trade and supplied powerful rationales for those developments. However, viewing white supremacy as a rationale for slavery begs an important question. Why was there a need to justify taking land from its possessors and enslaving people? Wars of conquest have occurred since antiquity and slavery was a nearly universal and normal practice. As David Brion Davis has shown, neither needed justification other than the prerogative of the stronger, until very recent times.³ Also, white supremacy emerged as well

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in European countries such as Portugal, Spain, France, Britain, and Holland, which, with the exception of Portugal and Spain, had negligible black populations. All of these countries, however, were engaged in empire building in the Americas and Asia and slave trading in Africa. On the other hand, only an extremely small number of their subjects came in direct contact with Africans, Asians or Native Americans either at home or abroad. That does not mean they were not exposed to images of black people. As Winthrop Jordan argued in the 1960s, stereotypical images of blacks and 'savages' can be found in Elizabethan England.⁴ Audiences and readers of Shakespeare's plays would have encountered them in *Othello*, *Titus Andronicus* and *The Tempest*. Travel literature, which became popular in early modern Europe in consequence of European voyages of discovery, introduced Europeans to images and descriptions of colored others. Early on these depictions could be favorable, but they 'darkened' as European technological and military power waxed.⁵ Yet, as Bernard Porter has demonstrated in the case of England, popular awareness of empire was limited to a tiny handful before the era of high imperialism in the late 19th century.⁶ Nevertheless, white supremacist ideas emerged in Western Europe, and were embedded in the evangelical and popular abolitionist movements from the late seventeenth centuries.⁷ White supremacy was transcultural and transnational serving multiple purposes across different regions. It did not have the same origin or intentions in Europe as in America but it filled an overriding need in both, connected with the fact that there was something different about European colonialism, including

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American colonization and imperialism that did require justification. That difference was the invention of the modern self characterized by what C.B. McPherson called possessive individualism, and the kind of radical interiority popularized by Jean Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions* and Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*.⁸ This new kind of self began to emerge just as Europeans were creating empires overseas and transforming their communally and locally oriented kingdoms into market based polities organized for military and commercial competition with comparably powerful rivals. Reflecting its late medieval and early modern roots, the premise of this newly forming self was its creation by god who endowed it with self possession and the liberty to maintain its self in the world. This idea was the basis of Locke's theory of property that asserted the self's liberty, in the state of nature, to use its labor to remove resources it needed to survive from the natural world; while the act of mixing its labor with them, and the God given right of self preservation, gave the self ownership of the fruits of its labor. For this newly emerging self, liberty became the cardinal value, the foundation of self preservation, and self crafting, because it conveyed the means of appropriating and keeping natural resources. In the context of American conquest colonization and development, liberty had concrete, rather than abstract significance. It meant the freedom to take Native lands, enslave Africans and exploit the environment in largely destructive ways alien to the First Peoples. At the same time, the equation of liberty with 'man's' natural state, the proposition that all humans are equal and free in the 'state of nature', whether it was Hobbes brutal or Locke's benign condition,

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problematized the hitherto unproblematic practice of conquest and enslavement. If all humans were originally free and equal in the state of nature there had to be some explanation for why it was permissible to conquer and enslave some of them. Of course, that did not mean both practices could not occur without racist rationales but it made the invention of racist justifications more likely in the context of the New World.⁹ Moreover, racism and white supremacy, emerging roughly concurrently with the invention of the autonomous self served another less easily recognizable purpose. They filled a vacuum created by the socio-cultural-psychological conditions of autonomy. In other words, in addition to justifying racial oppression they performed an essential ontological function in Europe and America that was not and is not *directly* reducible to racial oppression.

The breakdown of communal society in early modern times, including the diminishing importance of the extended family and clan, the restriction of guilds and other collectivist modes of being and the Enlightenment's assault on superstition, religion and the claim of any institution to justification by tradition rather than reason, emancipated the self from constraints on the development of autonomy as we know it. Like Crusoe's island, the "New World" offered an ideal laboratory for creating novel kinds of societies, based on individual autonomy, albeit under the governance of a watchful god. But even *HE* had become an autonomous individual, no longer accessible through a corporate hierarchy of clergy, monks and saints, but, like other individuals, a person one must establish a personal relationship with. In fact, Crusoe's new

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world experiences suggested one could become one's own god, particularly if one had access to people who could be permanently cast as tools, available like things for one's own uses. The New World offered the chance to develop a radical kind of individualism, one empowered by the unchecked exploitation of nature and other human beings who were defined as subhuman, lying outside of the social contract that Charles Mills appropriately calls the Racial Contract.¹⁰ Crusoe did just that on his island. Yet the price he paid for rejecting traditional social authority and modes of being, in exchange for the liberty for self creation and colonial development, was isolation from other people. The new freedom left the self alone in Newton's mechanized universe with no solid ground to stand on. The situation demanded another basis for individual being to replace the old communal ground that was disintegrating underfoot, one that emphasized the self's connection to a racially restricted category of other autonomous selves united in the "pursuit of happiness", which in America became *the conspiracy of happiness*, as whites collaborated against Natives and blacks in pursuit of their own self and collective interests. Amidst the radical transformations in society and culture between the 16th and 19th centuries, the body remained an indisputably verifiable fact. It became the premise of the new foundation: Race. Unlike religions and philosophies the body was a universally occurring, material reality that could be disciplined and punished to use Foucault's metaphor. Even for early Puritans like John Endecott the body was beyond dispute. The incessant need to combat its treacherous inclination to sin made it an inescapable presence and the perfect

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stage for the performance of individualism. One could make one's own body the instrument of one's intent and force other bodies to do one's will. The physical differences between bodies, observed by Europeans in their voyages overseas, became the means of classifying humanity into a system that put white westerners at the pinnacle, blacks at the bottom and the rest of humanity inbetween. While this racist construct certainly helped to justify the oppression of darker people and the theft of their allegedly unproductive land, it also became the basis for an otherwise foundationless self, which could now stand on the solid ground of a particular racial group, each with its own inherent mental, emotional and intellectual attributes firmly rooted in biology, consigned to each race by God, and after Darwin by nature. While the locality of family, clan and village was woefully insufficient as foundation for a self that aspired to limitless development, the invention of the white race whose inherent virtues, particularly its devotion to liberty which it elevated into the supreme value, would prove a superb base from which to launch the project of individual autonomy, limited from the start to white men. Its love of liberty justified its claim to racial superiority while its racial superiority was demonstrated by its love of liberty. Liberty and individual autonomy became interchangeable terms. Enslaved people were obviously inferior because they were unfree, just as unemployed blacks in contemporary America are inferior because they lack the freedom gainful employment conveys. From the beginning, white supremacy became an indispensable support for individual autonomy, *holding-off* awareness of how the commissions and omissions of

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autonomous selves harmed and even extinguished Native and black peoples.*

The sacredness of individual freedom became the freedom to act and think with no regard for those alien people one's actions and thoughts harmed. The ability to ignore the deleterious, even lethal impact of individual autonomy on those others, is the precondition for individual autonomy as it exists in America. While the power and self righteousness generated by the newly invented inwardness of the self provided the motive force for empire building in the Americas, Asia and Africa, the invention of a unique interior world, which whites claimed to have discovered, rather than fabricated, demonstrated their superiority to Native Americans, Africans and Asians who, blinded by their superstitious belief in gods, demons and spirits, were deemed too primitive to find or appreciate it. The creation of that interior world, inhabited by rational thought and romantic emotions, often at war with each other, separated white Europeans and Americans from the colored humanity they set out to conquer and enslave. The revelation of a putative unique inner life in every person, was fortified in the high age of imperialism by the invention of the unconscious, populated by Freud and Jung by dark savages in the guise of the Id, the archetypes, the libido and the primal horde, which had to be suppressed, controlled, or abreacted through therapy, just as whites were exterminating, oppressing and controlling Native Americans, Africans and Asians at home and

* They also harmed millions of white people who were hoodwinked, to use Malcolm X's term, into supporting white supremacy while concealing its self destructive effects on themselves. This subject is addressed in *Endowed by Their Creator: White Supremacy and the Autonomous Self* from which this essay is drawn.

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abroad. The creation of an internal territory relieved whites of the guilt of fabricating separateness between themselves and the colored world. Having invented interior worlds that they could 'discover', like their voyagers allegedly found new worlds overseas, their separateness became proof of their racial superiority to all humankind, and their writ to conquer.

The founding of America was premised on the removal of Native Americans and the enslavement of black people, sanctioned by and written into the Constitution. Thus, the nation began with a readymade category of people whose welfare and humanity could be completely ignored, provided they accepted their subjugation. The fact that they never did, but attacked and rebelled, ran away and resisted, and fought in every way possible to overturn the hegemonic regime of white supremacy, is the source of white paranoia about enemies that continues to grip the nation, illustrated by every white supremacist who goes on a shooting spree. The fear expressed by supporters of white supremacist Donald Trump is that their freedom to control those others is being completely eroded. Of course, they do not see it as freedom to control, but as freedom to act and think as they wish; in short the *conspiracy of happiness*. For them the decline of that freedom, chipped away by the 'special pleading' of minorities, women and the invasion of darker immigrants

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who insist on not being ignored is why America is no longer great. The border wall is the grandest symbol and concrete manifestation of this paranoia at the resistance of colored people to white supremacy. Fear of the colored other is the origin of what I call the *white supremacist collective unconscious*.

In excavating the white supremacist collective unconscious, it will be helpful to begin with the concept of the collective unconscious proposed by Carl Jung in the 1930s. In his essay “The Personal and the collective (Or Transpersonal) Unconscious” Jung theorized that the unconscious “contains, as it were, two layers: the personal and the collective. The personal layer ends at the earliest memories of infancy, but the collective layer comprises the pre-infantile period, that is, the residues of ancestral life.”¹¹

Jung presented a formal definition in the 1936/37 essay “The Concept of the Collective Unconscious”

“My thesis, then, is as follows: In addition to our immediate consciousness, which is of a thoroughly personal nature and which we believe to be the only empirical psyche...there exists a second psychic system of a collective, universal, and impersonal nature which is identical in all individuals. This collective unconscious does not develop individually but is inherited. It consists

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of pre-existent forms, the archetypes, *which can only become conscious secondarily* and which give definite form to certain psychic contents.” 43

I have put the words “which can only become conscious secondarily” in italics to emphasize the point that *secondarily* implies interpretive work which, because it makes use of symbolic thought, is always collectively collaborative. So long as that interpretive work is performed by whites there is little risk of their discovering the white supremacist nature of the collective unconscious with which all Americans, and no doubt Europeans, are endowed. Jung, of course, made no such discovery, but found proof of a racialized, biologically based collective unconscious in so-called primitive peoples. Consequently “The man of the past is alive in us today”.¹² For Jung, the “man of the past” could be observed among the contemporary Hopi he met in New Mexico and the Kenyan and Ugandan “tribesmen” he observed in 1925. He asserted that their myths and conscious mental life revealed archetypes that could be found in the collective unconscious of civilized Europeans, inherited from their primitive ancestors.¹³ Jung’s characterization of Africans and Hopi as “primitive” and “savage” was typical Eurocentric racism, but Frantz Fanon was able to adapt Jung’s concept for antiracist and anticolonial analysis. In his 1952 study of psychology and colonization *Black Skin White Masks* Fanon argued that “European civilization is characterized by the presence, at the heart of what Jung calls the collective unconscious, of an archetype: an expression of the bad instincts, of the darkness inherent in every ego, of the uncivilized savage, the

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Negro who slumbers in every white man. And Jung claims to have found in uncivilized peoples the same psychic structure that his diagram portrays. Personally, I think that Jung has deceived himself. Moreover, all the peoples that he has known-whether the Pueblo Indians of Arizona or the Negroes of Kenya in British East Africa-have had more or less traumatic contacts with the white man...Jung locates the collective unconscious in the inherited cerebral matter. But the collective unconscious, without our having to fall back on the genes, is purely and simply the sum of prejudices, myths, collective attitudes of a given group...Jung has confused instinct and habit. In his view, in fact, the collective unconscious is bound up with the cerebral structure, the myths and archetypes are permanent engrams of the race. I hope I have shown that nothing of this sort is the case and that in fact the collective unconscious is cultural, which means acquired.”¹⁴

Fanon’s formulation focuses on elements Europeans have forced into their unconscious and associate with the Negro in order to deny their existence in themselves. The Negro created by the European becomes the “symbol of sin. The archetype of the lowest values is represented by the Negro.”¹⁵

Drawing on Fanon’s critique of Jung, we theorize a white supremacist collective unconscious that is a cultural construction, created in a manner similar to Freud’s superego. It is also akin to Jung’s concept of the Shadow in the sense that it is a submerging of what the white self does not want to face.¹⁶ Henri Ellenberger describes the shadow as “the sum of those personal characteristics

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that the individual wishes to hide from the others and from himself.” In a formulation reminiscent of Fanon he continues “the shadow can also be projected; then the individual sees his own dark features reflected in another person whom he may choose as a Scapegoat.”¹⁷ Ellenberger usefully points out that the German word *unbewusstheit*, which means unawareness, is a more appropriate descriptor for Jung’s shadow than the Freudian unconscious (das Unbewusste). “To unawareness belong those aspects of the world and of oneself that an individual does not see, although he could if he honestly wanted to.”¹⁸ Jung explained that “the shadow is a moral problem that challenges the whole ego-personality, for no one can become conscious of the shadow without considerable moral effort. To become conscious of it involves recognizing the dark aspects of the personality as present and real. This act is the essential condition for any kind of self-knowledge, and it therefore, as a rule, meets with considerable resistance.”¹⁹ In America, which has a very different historical trajectory than Jung’s Europe, what is suppressed is the collective memory of white America’s genocide of Native Americans, slavery, the racial terror after Reconstruction and the continued oppression of Native and African Americans. In our formulation white Americans do not perceive their white supremacist oppressions because they choose, autonomically, to hold them off, an action that produces the WSCU rather than simply unawareness. This holding-off is accomplished by the mechanisms I call *forestalling* and *foreclosing*. By forestalling, I mean refusing to draw out and explore inklings, intuitions, nagging, unsettling feelings or perceptions that might lead to the

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discovery of the white supremacist collective unconscious and possibly to an altered view of black people and of the American racial situation. By foreclosing, I mean refusing to explore ideas, evidence, or alternative interpretations that one is fully conscious of. An example of the former would be a white person having an unsettled feeling when a jury fails to convict a white police officer filmed shooting an unarmed black man ten times who was feeling from him and claimed he was in fear of his life. Forestalling would suppress the unsettled feeling instead of exploring its implications. In the same case, foreclosing would come into play when one realized the shooting was murder but stops thinking about it in order to preserve one's peace of mind and avoid protesting. All people use forestalling and foreclosing in order to function 'normally' in the world, and their everyday uses help to obscure the particular white supremacist uses. I am arguing that whites deploy those techniques similarly, in similar circumstances, as if they had made a conscious agreement to do so. This helps to explain why, until George Floyd, they normally ignored police killings of unarmed black people. Of course there is no such conscious agreement. Instead there is a culturally set psychic reflex that alerts whites to when they should forestall and foreclose to screen out feelings, ideas and thoughts that would tend to weaken the white cathexis on white superiority and undermine white supremacy. This reflex is a learned behavior that is assimilated over time by intuition, example and precept as whites grow into adulthood and kept, for the most part, out of conscious thought like Freud's superego. In America it is supported by the weight of

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several hundred years of white supremacist conditioning which makes it seem a natural phenomenon. It is further protected by the learned belief that our interior worlds are only connected to others by conscious voluntary disclosures, rather than being always already interlinked by our unavoidable socio-cultural nature. Because the interiority of our autonomous way of being is created by concealing and covering up the socio-cultural dimension of the self, whites acting uniformly about race appear to themselves as having independently arrived at a common view, because they have the intellectual acumen, and emotional maturity, to objectively and fairly assess racially charged situations, which blacks are too emotionally unstable and subjective to do. Coincidence of views strengthens white solidarity, and is taken to prove that the majority view must be right, so that white supremacist concealing action is enhanced by the uniform behavior it is instrumental in effecting. It is important to understand that when whites act this way, they are not normally, consciously, or even unconsciously, acting to protect white supremacy per se. They act in defense of what they consider 'normal' ways of understanding, of living and of valuing the world. They act in defense of values they hold to be independent of race, ethnicity and, usually, of gender. For example, when I sent an open letter to my colleagues at Boston University labeling the institution white supremacist, one of them replied that using the same term to describe BU that was applied to the Boogaloo Boys was hyperbole. His response imposed his own definition of white supremacy, holding-off the possibility the institution was exactly as I had described it. He acted

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autonomically to define white supremacy in a way that made it impossible to include the university he worked in.

And this is what makes white supremacy so difficult to expose and combat. Unless their behavior fits the criteria *they* define and accept as overtly racist, criteria censored and redacted by the WSCU to protect white supremacy, whites refuse to perceive or comprehend the connection between their acts and white supremacy. This is why most white Americans do not understand how American autonomous individualism underpins white supremacy by permitting inequality between blacks and whites to exist as long as it is not intentionally created, and forecloses action to remove inequality that could interfere with American individual autonomy. While blacks who are also committed to American individual autonomy are handicapped in proposing effective actions unless they are willing to violate the canons of autonomous individualism by advocating the preferential treatment of blacks on the basis of race. When they do so their actions are routinely taken as proof of their hostility to individual responsibility, and, therefore, as subversive of individual autonomy.

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Amidst attacks on white supremacy, which began immediately upon white colonization of the Americas and have never ceased, the White supremacist collective unconscious, which is itself a defensive reaction to those attacks, maintains itself by a collective *cathexis* on whiteness. Webster's Dictionary explains that

"Cathexis" comes to us by way of New Latin (Latin as used after the medieval period in scientific description or classification) from the Greek word *kathexis*, meaning "holding." It can ultimately be traced back (through *katechein*, meaning "to hold fast, occupy")²⁰

I am using *Cathexis* in the dual sense of holding something fast in mind and that something's occupation of the mind. The white supremacist collective unconscious is an emotional, mental and intellectual fixation on white superiority, a guarded and willfully unspoken holding on to the belief in white superiority and entitlement, the last of which is so indefensible that they project it onto black people. However, those beliefs have become so unfashionable, as a result of decades of social and cultural activism against racial oppression, that vast numbers of whites have suppressed them into an unconscious realm to avoid provoking the anger, criticism and action of black people and progressive whites against them, and to confirm their own positive self image as freedom loving people. The continued, albeit suppressed, commitment to white supremacy is fixed in the *white supremacist collective unconscious* by focused concentration, and constant reinforcement by the

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groups whites live within, the way monks collectively recite a mantra thousands of times in order to produce the desired common mental state. For being white is a mental state and religious faith that informs and justifies white supremacist action. Thus, the WSCU is an actively deployed and constantly repaired, modified and adjusted bulwark against expanding the notion of what the American self is in defense of continued white dominance, a trance-state that gives white people the appearance of uniformity and the opacity and brutal insensitivity that ignores the regular killing of blacks by blacks and the high rates of alcoholism and suicide among Native Americans as black and Native problems, rather than American problems, while promoting opioid abuse among whites as a national crisis. This is a demonic condition.

In his study of sin and anxiety, the nineteenth century Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard, speaks of the demonic as “inclosing reserve” sealed into itself. Lacking the gradual step by step continuity of normal communication it appears as if from nowhere, as “the sudden”.^{21*} The purpose of Kierkegaard’s demonic inclosing is to escape the self-revelation inseparable from interacting

* In like manner, the appearance of masses of whites protesting the oppression of black people in the streets of America seems a sudden and nearly inexplicable occurrence, because it did not occur as the continuation of an ongoing process of engagement.

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with others. This function is similar to that of the WSCU in forestalling and foreclosing authentic communication with blacks by refusing to confront the tremendous power inequalities inherent in any exchange between blacks and whites, while pretending that authentic communication can occur without that admission. This holding-off is designed to conceal white supremacy and protect it from criticism. However, in both cases the self cannot avoid betraying itself:

“What the inclosed person conceals in his inclosing reserve can be so terrible that he does not dare utter it, not even to himself, because it is as though by the very utterance he commits a new sin or as though it would tempt him again...What determines whether the phenomenon is demonic is the individual’s attitude towards disclosure...He has, that is to say, two wills, one subordinate and impotent that wills revelation and one stronger that wills inclosing reserve, but the fact that this will is the stronger indicates that he is essentially demonic.”²²

Inclosedness allows whites to be and do what they could not openly be and do without contradicting their professed ideals and democratic self image. White demonic inclosing is the result of whites refusing to face the choices they make to allow blacks to suffer and not to assume responsibility for their plight, and the fear that authentic communication with blacks, the kind my BU colleague foreclosed, would expose their sins of omission and commission. But, as Kierkegaard argues, the demonic cannot keep its secret concealed. “Inclosing reserve is involuntary disclosure. The weaker the individuality is originally, or the more the elasticity of freedom is consumed in the service of inclosing reserve, the more likely the secret will break out at last. The slightest touch, a

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passing glance, etc. is sufficient". The demonic may reveal itself "as when an insane man betrays his insanity by pointing to another, saying...he is no doubt insane."²³ Here, again, Fanon's argument that the "Negro" created by the European becomes the "symbol of sin. The archetype of the lowest values is represented by the Negro" is revealing. Fanon recognizes this as the "mechanism of projection" or "transference".

"In the degree to which I find in myself something unheard-of, something reprehensible, only one solution remains for me: to get rid of it, to ascribe its origin to someone else. In this way I eliminate a short circuit that threatens to destroy my equilibrium."²⁴

By casting collective their *shadow* onto blacks whites protect their innocence.

The white supremacist collective unconsciousness is constructed by precept, proscription and lived experience. Once constructed it guides the actions of white people unless they challenge and overrule it. And we must recognize that not overruling it, letting it direct one's actions, is a decision made in bad faith, to support a white supremacist political economy that works for the benefit of white people, without being conscious of doing so. Here it is essential to recognize that white supremacist oppression operates not just, or even mainly, by overtly racist acts, but, overwhelmingly, by acts that foreclose social action that would remove systemic racism and modify American individual autonomy,

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that is, by acts of omission that ensure the failure to challenge white supremacy. Many whites go against the white supremacist promptings they assimilated as they developed into adulthood. But many do not even know they are there because they are holding them in their unconscious. Here, what we call the unconscious is not another place. It is the result of holding off awareness of something or some process so we might concentrate on other things, but being in abeyance does not remove them from one place to another. However, there are degrees of holding-off so strong that unawareness becomes deeply unconscious. Nevertheless, it is still possible to bring what is held in the unconscious into conscious focus for critical examination, and that possibility is why whites resist so strenuously discussing white supremacy, and cling so stubbornly to freedom of thought and emotion in defense of their secluded beliefs and feelings. As long as that collective unconscious, and those racist feelings and thoughts, remain indwelling they are beyond my power of publically exposing and critiquing them. For whites, who are normally protected by social distancing from the kinds of close interaction and intellectual/emotional exchange with blacks that could provoke soul searching, there are no compelling reasons to admit or challenge the white supremacist collective unconscious. On the contrary there are powerful reasons for keeping it hidden. Perhaps the only way to reveal it is through provocation. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference brilliantly utilized this perception in the Birmingham campaign of 1963 by offering the opportunity for Commissioner of Public Safety Bull Connor and his minions to attack peaceful

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demonstrators, including children, thus manifesting on the outside what black people knew from experience was always lurking on the inside, but which whites had concealed so effectively from themselves they could claim they did not know it existed. The demonic explosion of race hatred, televised on the evening news, shocked the country and benefited the Civil Rights Movement.

In the final analysis, white supremacy exists because our autonomous way of being causes it to exist, and because it does we need it to exist, even when we're unaware of any such need, even when we wish fervently for it to disappear. To eradicate racism we must modify our way of being by reconstructing our notion of what it means to be a self in an expansive direction, so we are able to anticipate how our actions will affect people and things whose welfare we do not currently feel obligated to consider when we act. To accomplish this goal we need greater access to our selves so we can eliminate those ways of thinking, feeling and acting that encourage and support our American style of destructive individualism, and cultivate ways of being that undercut and root it out. We need to gain greater access to each other's thoughts and emotions by bringing more of what we regard as private emotions and thoughts into the public realm, where they can be accessed by everyone and subjected to an ongoing critical evaluation. On the one hand we

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must shrink our self-concept by reducing or qualifying our autonomy in so far as it directly or indirectly affects others negatively, while on the other hand we must expand our self-concept to include the welfare of others we currently consider separate autonomous selves. In other words, we have to become less privately autonomous selves and more *socially autonomous selves*. Autonomy would come to have a consciously collective meaning and significance expressing the freedom of the group, and the individuals in that group, to think and feel freely and to pursue self-realization and self-development provided it is consistent with the welfare of others, defined more broadly than currently. This would amount to a dramatic shift in what we understand as the self, the emergence of the *socially autonomous self*, which would expand the realm of acts that harm others to include acts of omission as well as commission, and mental and emotional acts committed in the privacy of one's mind, such as racist feelings, beliefs and attitudes that enable white supremacy and patriarchy, as well as physical, economic and political acts done in public. It would reconceive our notion of intent to include the consequences of acts, committed unintentionally, that could have been anticipated, where the failure to anticipate the probable consequences of an act implies intent not to imagine possible consequences that might prevent or discourage our actions, a kind of connectedness that forces an expansion of self concept. The recent murder of George Floyd by a white police officer kneeling on his neck for nearly nine minutes, as he pleaded that he could not breathe, is an example of an easily anticipated consequence that must be considered intentionally brought about

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by the officer failing to anticipate the death. The alternative, that he anticipated the death, would be premeditated murder.

But what is a *socially autonomous self* and how is it created? First, I use the term social in the sense of “tending to form cooperative and interdependent relationships with others” living in “more or less organized communities especially for the purposes of cooperation and mutual benefit”.²⁵ The *socially autonomous self* I have in mind is spiritually grounded, which means the self is the creation of forces beyond its control, but not ‘socially constructed’ in the sense of being the product only of social and cultural processes we can identify and trace by rational investigation and analysis. The social self emerges from dynamics it did not initiate that transcend the social and cultural. It does not come into such relationships, precisely because, there is no moment from conception on, in which it is not always already in such relationships. In this sense, it is always already a *socially autonomous self*, and becomes one in a conscious and constructive way by recognizing and affirming that state. This is a rebirth into an already existing condition, that the self has been taught to conceal and *hold-off* in order to achieve American style self centered autonomy. This is a spiritual awakening, where spiritual is understood as the interconnectedness of all creation and the self’s complete and utter dependence

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on forces, creatures and things other than itself, together with its unavoidable influence on other beings. This web of interconnections is mysterious because our limitations as human beings, including our temporality, do not allow us to comprehend them, and because, in order to produce a certain kind of autonomy, we hold-off much that we could recognize, particularly regarding the relationship of humans to humans and humans to other beings and the environment. However, I am not making a materialist argument that only the world we are aware of, or can become aware of, with our senses, or can demonstrate scientifically, such as the quantum universe, is all that exists, all that influences us and all we can know. Such a position is entirely undemonstrable, and is simply taken as an article of faith by its proponents, despite its aura of scientific objectivity. We do not know and cannot know that this world is all there is, or that consciousness ends with death, or that our existence in this world is governed only by the forces we can identify as originating in it.

To achieve the *socially autonomous self* we must develop a notion of self characterized by *connectivity*, a relentless and continuous quest toward unity by exposing multiple connections between individuals and all creation, undermining the notion that separateness is our most important and essential

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defining characteristic. We need to create a new “art of being-in-the-world”, to use Kakuzo Okakura’s characterization of Taoism in his 1906 study *The Book of Tea*²⁶. *Connectivity* is a built up predisposition towards finding connection points and developing them. Such points might be intuitions of affinity or the potential for affinity that are always there to be perceived, but which, in our inclosing autonomy, we forestall to prevent them from destabilizing American style individualism. In an active state of *connectivity* we stop *forestalling* and instead summon such intuitions and develop them. Likewise, we must continuously expose negative connections, such as the way white privilege harms those of us who are not white, empowers whites and makes them insensitive to the harm their actions do to us. The more diligently we develop our ability to unconceal negative and positive connections, including the omissions we do not now recognize as acts that affect other beings, the more connections we will find, with the consequent result of becoming less self-centered, less focused on the self as something whose affinities are entirely elective, to a conception of self as always already connected to every other self and every other being by relations that can be ignored, obstructed or developed, but never removed, even after the physical demise of the other, for even then there is memory and the ongoing consequences of that person’s existence. In fact, the fight is not really over the existence of connections, but over whether or not they will be and should be exposed, discussed and accounted.

Whether we chose to modify the selves we've inherited or cling to them in fear of alteration, the old self will not survive the coming technologically driven shifts in global political economy. Inevitably a new kind of self will be facilitated by brain to brain interconnections via AI or bioengineering. The primordial idea that there is a god who knows our every thought and sentiment is perhaps an intuitive foreshadowing of our coming connectedness under the dominance of a *Super Intelligence*.²⁷ This will occur because it will be convenient to do so. Begun in harmless ways it will not seem threatening, and might not be dangerous at all if we lived in an equitable world. But we do not. In fact, we live in a nation where wealth and income inequality have grown dramatically over the last forty years, bringing inordinate power to a tiny elite, and a president who supports white supremacy, right wing extremists and reactionary civil disobedience. As things now stand, the advent of linked brains may enormously strengthen the power elites that dominate our world, creating the standardized minds marching to the orders of Big Brother we all dread. Therefore, it is crucial to create broad based, grassroots movements for equitable, just and democratic societies before the coming singularity vastly multiplies technological revolutions, so they may be used to liberate rather than enslave humanity, and heal the earth.²⁸ White supremacy prevents us from doing this, and white supremacy depends on preservation of the kind of autonomous self we live with. That self is an obstacle to removing white supremacy because white supremacy protects it and is protected by it. That

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self is deeply engrained in all Americans regardless of race, gender or sexual orientation. But it will inevitably fall prey to the possibly unstoppable march of scientifically engineered sameness even if we do nothing. Ironically, in our reactive resistance to surrendering some autonomy in order to create more equitable societies in fear that doing so will destroy the individual freedom we prize, we may ensure that very result.

¹ There is a large literature on Native American history and anti-Native racism. One can begin with Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire-Building* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), and Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010). For the origins of anti-black racism see Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1968); Thomas S. Gossett, *The History of an Idea in America* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1997); George Fredrickson, *White Supremacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), *The Black Image in the White Mind* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), *A Short History of Racism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); Edmund Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003), and Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning, The definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (New York: Bold Type Books, 2017).

² Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning, The definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (New York: Bold Type Books, 2017), P.9.

³ See David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1966) and *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975)

⁴ Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1968)

⁵ There is a large literature on European overseas expansion, but on the shifting nature of popular impressions of Africans and Asians see especially Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990).

⁶ Bernard Porter, *The Absent Minded Imperialists, Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p.164ff and passim.

⁷ Ronald Kent Richardson, *Moral Imperium: Afro-Caribbeans and the Transformation of British Rule* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1987).

⁸ C. B. MacPherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Lock* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962); Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Confessions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Adam Smith, *the Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2006).

⁹ Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1968)

¹⁰ Mills observes:

“Henceforth, then, whether openly admitted or not, it is taken for granted that the grand ethical theories propounded in the development of Western moral and political thought are of restricted scope, explicitly or implicitly intended by their proponents to be restricted to persons, whites. The terms of the Racial Contract set the parameters for white morality as a whole, so that competing Lockean and Kantian contractarian theories of natural rights and duties, or later anticontractarian theories such as nineteenth-century utilitarianism, are all limited by its stipulations.” Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), p.17.

¹¹ Carl G. Jung, “The Personal and the Collective (Or Transpersonal) unconscious”, in *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*, Translated by R. F. C. Hull (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966), P.77.

¹² Carl G. Jung, “The Concept of the Collective Unconscious”, in *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, Translated by R.F.C. Hull (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), Pp.43,47,

¹³ Carl G. Jung, *Psychology and Religion* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958), pp.76-77.

¹⁴ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), pp.187-188

¹⁵ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p.190.

¹⁶ Carl G. Jung, *Psychology and Religion* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958), p.76ff, and passim; *Aion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1958), Chapter Two.

¹⁷ Henri Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious* (New York: Basic Books, Incorporated, 1970), p.707.

¹⁸ Henri Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious* (New York: Basic Books, Incorporated, 1970), p.743, n.143, p.707.

¹⁹ Jung, *Aion*, p.8.

²⁰ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cathexis>

²¹ Soren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, Edited and Translated by Reidar Thomte (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp.129-130.

²² Soren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, Edited and Translated by Reidar Thomte (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp.128-129.

²³ Soren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, Edited and Translated by Reidar Thomte (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 129.

²⁴ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p.190.

²⁵ Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/social>, accessed on 8-11-19

²⁶ Kakuzo Okakura, *The Book of Tea* (Tokyo, Kodansha International, 1989), P.64.

²⁷ See Nick Bostrom, *Superintelligence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), especially chapter 2.

²⁸ What has been called the technological singularity refers to a future time in which technological growth accelerates beyond human control accompanied by the creation of a superintelligence. The concept is highly controversial. See among others Ray Kurzweil, *The Singularity is Near* (New York: Penguin, 2006).