

# Paulo Freire and Frantz Fanon: Two Faces of Emancipation

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## ABSTRACT

In Paulo Freire's emancipatory model, violence as a mode of struggle is rejected. The revolutionary movement should never appropriate violence in pursuing prospects of emancipation. For Freire, an authentic struggle for emancipation and autonomy does not utilize the *praxis* of the oppressor which is mainly characterized by dehumanization and violence. This emancipatory model also contends that the oppressor should also be subjected to emancipation as they have also been dehumanized in their subjection of the oppressed. Thus, liberation does not only pursue the humanization of the oppressed but also their oppressors. It follows, therefore, that physical violence is out of the picture as the revolutionary movement recognizes the humanity of the oppressed and her oppressor. Therefore, the movement headed by the oppressed does not operate within the *praxis* of their oppressors which, for Freire, is a negation of humanity. An alternative position, however, contends that violence is an indispensable aspect of the emancipatory movement. In fact, violence is not only a consequence of the conflict but, for Frantz Fanon, the overarching dynamic over the colonized order. An oppressive paradigm which, for Fanon, could only be overturned by counter-violence. The dismantlement of the colonial order implies the destruction of the "colonist's sector" which in so doing, necessitates the utilization of violence in the struggle. This work, therefore, challenges the pacifist inclination of Freirean emancipatory model through the lenses of Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*. This paper argues that though ideal emancipatory politics should be discursive and dialogical which Freire advocates, violence remain to be an indispensable aspect of liberation and resistance. In order to ground these arguments, this paper will appropriate the case of the revolutionary movement of the *Katipunan* vis-à-vis the Reformists.

**Keywords**—Peace, Violence, De-colonialism, Emancipation, Philippine History

## INTRODUCTION

The project of liberation and emancipatory movements, arguably, perceives the possibility of decolonization, independence, and freedom as the zenith of struggle against oppression. However, the mode through which this is realized varies from one movement to another. On the one hand, emancipation could be reached through dialogue and discourse. On the other hand, it could only be achieved through violence. In this work, Paulo Freire and Frantz Fanon's conception of emancipation and the means through which this is attained will be articulated. It is known that Freire's prospects of a revolutionary movement should mainly negate the ideological *praxis* of domination through critical pedagogy, that is, through education and the individual's change in consciousness. The point of resistance, in Freire's theory of domination, appears to be distinct to that of Fanon. For Freire, the ultimate end of the struggle for emancipation is to revive the lost humanity of the oppressed by making them critically conscious of the reality around them and ultimately, recreate their socio-political reality. In pursuing this, Freire was very clear that physical violence and armed conflict in overturning the colonial order should not be considered given that violence as a *praxis* is rooted in the thinking of the colonists. Thus, any movement that aims to liberate ought to reject all ideologies

through which the old oppressive order operates and in so doing, create its own *praxis* of authentic cultural revolution through dialogue.<sup>[1]</sup> Frantz Fanon's conception of a revolutionary movement, on the other hand, is founded on the necessity of physical violence in overturning the oppressive order. In his work, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon contends that violence is the governing force of the colonial order and it is only the same that the colonized will be able to emancipate himself from the colonists. The use of violence, then, is not only a last resort that could be used to restructure the social and political order but a cathartic experience that the oppressed needs to fully liberate themselves from the psychological impact of dehumanization.<sup>[2]</sup> This work will therefore argue that though modernity has normalized discourse despite ideological and practical differences, violence remain a potent force in the prospects of emancipation. In order to elucidate the implications behind this thesis, this work will utilize the Philippine Revolutionary movement as a point of analysis and prospectively, a lesson to future emancipatory movements.

Now, the discourse of whether social movements should use violence or peaceful dialogue is no longer a novel debate. A critical perspective concerning violence in pursuing social transformation could also be gleaned from the works Walter Benjamin and Hannah Arendt. On the one hand, Benjamin contends that violence is justified if it is ultimately directed towards peace. In his essay entitled "Critique of Violence", he exposed the role of revolutionary violence in liberating the oppressed from the cycle of domination. This is not to say that Benjamin justifies violence wholesale, but like Fanon, this form of violence becomes a last resort for the oppressed. For him, this is a potent force in immediately overthrowing injustice.<sup>[3]</sup> This is also the case of Hannah Arendt, in her *magnum opus*, *On Revolution*, who contends that so long as violence is geared towards freedom from a totalitarian control, for example, it could be justified. As a means to overturn an oppressive social order, violence should ultimately pave the way to restore the public sphere and not destroy it.<sup>[4]</sup> She emphasizes a problematic in the glorification of violence by the revolutionary movement. For her, violence is to an extent misused in such a way that it is not restorative, but violence in exchange for another form of violence. On the other side of the debate, intellectuals like Jurgen Habermas and John Rawls would look into the role of peaceful rational discourse as primary modes of conflict resolution. Distinctly, in Habermas' *Theory of Communicative Action*, all disputes should be subjected to the lenses of rational discourse. He believes that through communication among social agents in the public sphere, conflicts could be resolved peacefully through deliberation and discourse.<sup>[5]</sup> In participating in the discourse, Habermas contends that the social agent must recognize other members accordingly and abide by the rules of speech which he calls the "validity basis of speech".<sup>[6]</sup> For Rawls, through the basis of reason through which people should operate under, a just society could be achieved. The concepts, "veil of ignorance" and the "original position" takes a central role in his theory of justice as fairness.<sup>[7]</sup> In this manner, all disputes and conflict in the public sphere ought to be resolved without a hue of bias and prejudice. Thus, all members of society are endowed with inviolable right to claim their access and share to resources. The dilemma, however, is the feasibility of such promise of equality given the absence of the necessary conditions for a just society. Again, these paths to peaceful and harmonious social existence are ensured by a just and humane society which, as this paper argues, is a frontier that necessitates violence. Again, through Fanon's justification of violence in overturning oppression, this paper argues that though pacifist-rational discourse is a vital aspect of conflict resolution, violence remains relevant in social change.

## METHODOLOGY

This paper will utilize a historical-analytic method in exposing key turning points in the Philippine Revolutionary movement. In appropriating and justifying the theories of Fanon and Freire, this work will employ critical-analytic method. Since the work is simply an article and narrative review, there will be no respondents and participants who can be considered as primary resources. In this manner, this paper merely analyzes the role of violence in social transformation.

## DISCUSSION

### A. Philippine Revolutionary Movement

In this section, the key turning points of the Philippine Revolutionary Movement will be surveyed, in particular, the emergence of the reform movement and ultimately, Andres Bonifacio's *Katipunan* movement. This section, however, will not exhaustively discuss all emerging movements, but only significant historical accounts which necessarily involved violence in the movement's attempt to fight for their cause. As can be known, the emergence of the revolutionary movement in the Philippines, in particular, the militant nationalism of the *Katipunan* was a result of a failed reformation that aimed to simply modify the current socio-political order by making it more humane and inclusive.<sup>[8]</sup> Initially, the anti-colonial movement was not geared towards total emancipation, but the assimilation of the oppressed into the dominant class. In the colonial Philippines, the reformation spearheaded by the Spanish and Chinese *mestizos* – the *insulares*<sup>[9]</sup> attempts to gain representation in the Spanish court in order to be free from the unreasonable taxes imposed by the Spanish government. Key figures in the reformation movement such as Graciano Lopez Jaena and Marcelo H. Del Pilar would emphasize these reforms:

*1) the removal of friars and the secularization of parishes, 2) active participation in the affairs of the government, 3) freedom of speech, of the press, and of assembly; 4) a wider social and political freedom; 5) equality before the law; 6) assimilation; 7) representation in the Spanish Court.*<sup>[10]</sup>

Intuitively, the intention of the reformation is to Hispanize and treat as equal the natives and the Filipino people. This reform, clearly, will radically transform the colonial regime which could, in fact, prolong the dominance of the Spanish crown in the islands. The reformist understood that the only way in which this could be done legitimately and peacefully without bloodshed is through an aggressive press and periodicals – an apparatus that could be deemed too powerful by the friars. This was the debut of the *Diariong Tagalog* and *La Solidaridad*. The press allowed the reformists to stir political awareness through satirical pieces that ridicules the religious institution and its leaders – the friars. Similarly, Jose Rizal's seminal works *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo* contained narratives that show the corruption of the Roman Catholic Church. Dedicating his *El Fili* to the Filipino priests, Burgos, Gomez, and Zamora (GomBurZa), Rizal conceived of the imminent revolution that would soon overturn the Spanish control.<sup>[11]</sup> Gaining sympathy from other Hispanic groups (The Hispano-Filipino Association) both in the archipelago and Spain, the movement made strategic associations to achieve the vision of reformation. The movement also made affiliations with freemasonry to further fortify the brotherhood of reformists and advocate concretizing the vision of the reformation through an organized and structured course of action. In their distinguished work entitled *State and Society in the Philippines*, Abinales and Amoroso emphasized the vital role of freemasonry as a brotherhood with its tradition of secrecy in the unification of the revolutionary movement.<sup>[12]</sup> Rizal then patterning the initial organizations (*La Propaganda and Freemasonry*) founded a society of civic leaders (*La Liga Filipina*) that pursues the following objectives:

*1) to unite the whole archipelago into one compact, vigorous, and homogenous body; 2) mutual protection in every want and necessity; 3) defense against all violence and injustice; 4) encouragement of instruction, agriculture, and commerce; and 5) study and applications of reforms.*<sup>[13]</sup>

Notably, the stark similarity between the intention of Del Pilar and Rizal both implore the prospect of equality rights for the Filipinos. Again, the vision was merely the reformation and not decolonization or complete independence of the country from the Spanish government. Yet, there was already a looming conflict among the members of *La Liga Filipina* which ultimately led to its early dismantlement.

One could argue that the conflict was both ideological and practical, the middle class believed in the

possibilities of reform through the press and its propaganda, but the poor members represented by Andres Bonifacio believed that there was no longer hope for reformation thus, the movement ought to take the form of a revolution. In this manner, the prospect of reform would later transition to a violent insurrection – the *Katipunan* or the KKK).<sup>[14]</sup> The *Kataastaasan Kagalang-galang na Katipunan nang manga Anak nang Bayan* (KKK) or the *Katipunan* having understood the impossibility of reformation envisioned the complete independence of the archipelago from Spain. Its founding leader, Andres Bonifacio rejected the idea that the middle class held dearly, that is, the prospect of reformation and inclusion in the Spanish Court. For Bonifacio, only through an armed conflict will the Spaniards come to realize the magnitude of the oppressed people's yearning for emancipation. Alongside Bonifacio, Emilio Jacinto or more commonly known as the *Brain of the Katipunan* penned the teachings or *Kartilla* of the movement. While there is an angle of pedagogy that prepares the *Katipuneros* in their struggle for emancipation, the movement, nonetheless, entertains the possibility of taking up arms to defend itself and therefore, with enough resources, take over and overthrow the Spanish government. The momentous crossroads that reflect this uncharted conclusion was, therefore, symbolized by the ripping-off of the *cedulas*.<sup>[15]</sup> From this point forward, the movement actively used armed and violent means to retaliate and claim territories from the colonizers. With a tight grip on their sharpened *bolos* and daggers, the *Katipuneros* held the hope of emancipating the country from foreign control with a blind perspective of combative tactics.<sup>[16]</sup> The goal was to instill and inspire a vision of nationhood and a spontaneous rejection of the physical and ideological structure that sustained the colonial order.

Now, one of the perspectives concerning violent armed conflict is well-narrated by the Filipino historian Teodoro Agoncillo. He posits the idea that Jose Rizal inspired and approves of the possibility of armed combat. In the narrative in his work entitled *The Story of Bonifacio and the Katipunan: The Revolt of the Masses*, Rizal was believed to accept the idea of a violent revolution on the condition that the *Katipunan* had enough armaments and ammunition to fight against the Spanish forces. Yet, the narrative mentions that a revolution might occur even without the arms as the revolutionary movement could no longer wait for the contributions that were made compulsory to the members in buying the arms from Japan which Rizal is against.<sup>[17]</sup> However, there are also narratives that suggest that Rizal, in his works, never advocated violent revolution, but gradual reforms.<sup>[18]</sup> Nonetheless, whether Rizal really did allow the revolts, the dominant notion is that Rizal denounced armed conflict in his manifesto while awaiting trial as it is not only futile but transitory and violent.<sup>[19]</sup> To death, he believed in the prospect of social transformation through diplomacy and discourse. Nevertheless, the revolutionary movement increased in number and deployed a surprise attack against the Spanish forces. While Governor-General Blanco, ridiculed by the rumors of a *Katipunan* armed attack, did not seriously entertain the imminent threat. On the 29th and 30th of August 1896, the *Katipunan* commenced the attack in Manila – taking over the city was the goal in mind, the attack failed given the formidable defense of Spanish forces and the lack of arms and weapons of the rebel movement. The logical solution at that point was to retreat and gather enough weapons which Bonifacio and Jacinto did by raiding a gunpowder plant in San Juan del Monte. The move also failed as the Spanish forces were well-equipped and more importantly, overpowered the *Katipunan* by the numbers.<sup>[20]</sup> Though the *Katipunan* at the same time were victorious on other fronts, 157 lives were claimed on the side of the rebel movement in San Juan, Rizal (Pook Pinaglabanan).<sup>[21]</sup> Without going further into the historical narrative of the *Katipunan*, as the purpose of this work is to expose the rationality of violence, the revolutionary movement's impetus to attack was never anchored on the amount of ammunition or soldiers they have on their side, but on the decisive anger against the colonizers that inspired them to attack with a dagger against bullets and cannons.

As can be seen here, the warfare between the natives and the colonizers is a clear and distinct proof that violence is imminent and inevitable. The vision of emancipation could not have been attained without force and bloodshed; thus, one could argue that it is an indispensable aspect of the revolutionary process. The foreign colonizers in their *praxis* of domination will do in their best military capacity to preserve their

control over their conquered territories. While the colonized and the oppressed will sacrifice their blood and sweat to liberate their kind even if death comes into their doorsteps. The following events after this symbolic declaration of independence from Spain could be characterized by internal disputes within the ranks of the revolutionary movement and later, the revolutionary government headed by Emilio Aguinaldo. Though Bonifacio later died in the hands of his own comrades (at least, those who hated him as a result of this internal strife), the direction of the revolution towards the ultimate vision of independence continues under various revolutionary leaders which this work would not cover. Clearly, there is a stark transition from the Reformation to the revolutionary movement. From the middle-class-driven press that pursues mere reforms to utter eradication of the colonial order through the revolutionary government, the anti-colonial revolutionary movement succeeded, though gradually and painstakingly, in liberating the people. Yet, the independence from Spain was short-lived as the United States later took over by occupying the archipelago. The exchange between the revolutionary government under Aguinaldo and the American forces was brutal as the movement refused to surrender. What restricts the rebel government from claiming victory could also be the internal antagonism that persists within the ranks of Aguinaldo's military officers. It is in the famous line of General Antonio Luna's character in the film *General Luna* that best reveals the struggle of the revolutionary movement, "mga kapatid, mayroon tayong mas malaking kaaway kaysa mga Amerikano, ang ating mga sarili (brothers, we have a greater enemy than the Americans, ourselves.)" [22] Though the aim struggle was not fully complete and Spain has already withdrawn not through the overwhelming force of the *Katipunan*, but because of the *Treaty of Paris* – the United States and Spain signed a peace treaty and resulted in the sale of the Philippines for \$20 million, the violent revolution transitions to an organized revolutionary government.[23]

Nonetheless, despite the distinct differences among the figures in the revolutionary movement, the consensus among scholars during the American occupation is that the primary ideological difference was represented by Jose Rizal and Andres Bonifacio. For one, Rizal represented pacifism and his revolutionary ideas without resorting to armed conflict while Bonifacio advocated explicitly the need for an armed struggle. In fact, it is through this rationale that Rizal was considered to be the Philippine national hero later by the Americans. Whether they represent contrasting ideological viewpoints is another debate, but the narrative of the Philippine revolutionary movement is clear as well as other anti-colonial movements around the world which would be discussed briefly later, that is, an armed revolution will become inevitable in the absence of humanistic reforms. In order to expose the rationale behind emancipatory movements and answer the question of how violence is a potent mode of liberation, let me discuss Freire's theory of emancipation which will be followed by Fanon's theory of violence.

## **B. Freire and the Prospects of Emancipation**

Freire's seminal work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* articulates extensively the ontological condition of the oppressed.[24] Though the work is more commonly appropriated as an educational theory, its analysis of domination provides abundant insight into the project of emancipation. In this section, the work will only discuss Freire's conception of liberation and the authentic praxis of the revolutionary movement which, for him, plays a crucial role in social change. While it is clear that Freire sees emancipation and the struggle for liberation as a prospect that could not be attained overnight, he resolves that the project ought to take hold initially at the level of consciousness.[25] Thus, the struggle is half complete once the oppressed have come to denounce the totalizing impact of colonialism. However, the means through which liberation of the mind is pursued is not as expeditious and immediate as the way a symptom of sickness is repressed by a medicinal prescription. For Freire, so long as there is a predominance of oppression characterized by the dehumanization of the person, the oppressive order shall remain both at the level of the mind and society. The revolutionary movement is, therefore, tasked not only with the expulsion of the colonial order but the recovery of man's lost humanity. This makes the prospect of freedom a colossal feat as physical liberty becomes a superficial achievement. For Freire, liberty ought to begin with *conscientization* or the

awakening of the individual's consciousness. The oppressed realizes the historical and political significance of his ontology which, in effect, was the consequence and result of a highly dominating socio-political order.

Grounded in his critical theory of education, Freire's analysis mainly pinpoints the need to humanize the oppressed individual. This is because the act of domination and oppression which exploits and takes advantage of the oppressed class is in itself a clear practice and reality of dehumanization. Distinctly, this analysis coheres with the primary characterization of oppression reflective of Hegel and Marx's bipolar class representation. Dehumanization, here, is characterized by the historical and perennial antagonism respectively between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat and the master and the slave. Thus, Freire would argue that dehumanization is not a socially and politically given reality, but necessarily a result of unjust social order which, by tracing its causes, could be overturned by emancipatory *praxis*. The consciousness, therefore, plays a central role in the struggle – the unseen superstructure should be exposed in order to deal critically and engagingly with the socio-political reality. This is why Freire's approach would initially engage the educational sphere – the apparatus that legitimizes the social order and gives perpetuity to the political paradigm. The rationale behind this strategy is the need to build a formidable stronghold in the consciousness of the individual to internally justify the contradictions in the material base – once this is ensured, as Freire would have us believe, social transformation and any form of attempt to overturn oppression are neutralized. In the succeeding sections, I will briefly discuss the process through which social transformation is achieved from a Freirean perspective.

Freire begins with the idea that in attempting to change the socio-political paradigm, there has to be a careful scrutiny of the colonizer's *praxis*. In so doing, the revolutionary movement can reject the practices and ideas that serve the interest of domination and oppression. One of the *praxes* that perpetuates oppression, for Freire, is the anti-dialogical or *monological* tendencies that govern the colonial order. These strategies were purposive and necessary in maintaining the dominance of the colonists which the revolutionary movement should expose and thus, overturn. In Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, though the work is known more for its pedagogical lessons, it also held valuable analysis on domination and its techniques. Freire mentions conquest, divide and rule, manipulation, cultural invasion, and on the pedagogical aspect, the banking method. These strategies are the *praxis* behind the apparatuses of the colonizer's control. On the one hand, the main goal was to maintain the socio-political order favorable to the dominant class, by conquering the consciousness of the individual, a colonial mentality is sustained thus oblivious to the prospect of transforming reality. By being divided as a people, unity, and organization against the oppressor would not be viable. The people will be fighting amongst themselves devoid of a common purpose. By being manipulated, one simply follows the status quo, maintains it, and searches for a place in it. Here, the individual sees the world as a fixed picture – not subject to any ruptures or revisions. Lastly, cultural invasion – here, the people appropriate the values and ideals of the oppressor. The worst, for Freire, is the adherence of the individual to the oppressor's model of humanity. To be a man is to be like the oppressor. On the other hand, Freire prescribes the *praxis* which ought to be the fundamental driving force behind the revolutionary movement – he calls this the dialogical dynamic in contrast to the anti-dialogical or *monological* dynamics of the oppressor. Here, Freire introduces four dialogical theories of action that ensure the authenticity of a social movement, namely: cooperation, unity for liberation, organization, and cultural synthesis.

In the dialogical dynamic, the individual is no longer a possession or an object that a leader can control and manipulate toward their political end but an equal contributor and sojourner in pursuit of emancipation.<sup>[26]</sup> Having a horizontal relationship and dynamic, even though leaders wield a command in pursuing social transformation, it is vital that “subjects meet in cooperation.”<sup>[27]</sup> Otherwise, the threats of the old order may manifest themselves not particularly in substance, but in the approach of the revolutionary movement. Freire insists that the people are not owned by their leaders and their salvation is not a gift from the leaders, but a result of a cooperative effort.<sup>[28]</sup> This notion of cooperation, for Freire, is a product of communication and

dialogue between the leaders and the people which envisions to engaging concrete social realities and transforming them into what he called – “a critical analysis of a problematic reality.”<sup>[29]</sup> As Freire proposes, the trust and adherence between the people and their leaders come into fruition in the latter’s attempt to consistently unveil the myths of domination for them.<sup>[30]</sup> Eventually, the existence of trust and confidence in a dynamic and relation of cooperation is essential, otherwise, any prospect of social change would be rendered impossible. Thus, a relationship built on trust is a reflection of the people’s confidence in their leaders and inversely, the leader’s confidence in the people. Therefore, this dialogical relation and cooperation implies an inherent “communion” between the leaders and the people, yet its authenticity remains to be anchored on empathy, love, communication, and humility.<sup>[31]</sup> This dynamic necessarily engenders unity between the people and the leaders, the result of which, for Freire, is the fundamental goal in the dialogical theory and in achieving liberation.<sup>[32]</sup> In pursuing unity, however, the common ground with which people identify as a binding force must not be overlooked and forgotten. It is imperative that the movement consciously eradicate its connection to the myths and magic of the old social order that feeds off traces of oppression and that the movement unites not in the name of their old nature, but of “cultural action” and as Freire would have us believe – cultural revolution.<sup>[33]</sup> For Freire, the uniting force among the people and the leaders are actions anchored on dialogical praxis negating the alienating and oppressive narrative of oppression.

As can be seen, the unity of the people guarantees the strength of dialogical *praxis*. In unity, the communion and cooperation among the people and their leaders are presumed which enables the movement to fortify the defenses against the lurking threats of oppressive cultural remnants, and against manipulation. Having discussed the anti-dialogical nature of manipulation in the earlier part of the previous section, its counterpart could be more sensibly situated. For Freire, apart from the people’s unity and cooperation, it is crucial to not only defend the social movement but to also assault and antagonize the manipulative strategies of the oppressor through organization.<sup>[34]</sup> Here, “organization” should be seen as a natural stage in the development of the people’s communion and cooperation, as it is a “constant, humble, and courageous witness emerging from cooperation in a shared effort – the liberation of men – avoids the danger of anti-dialogical control.”<sup>[35]</sup> The attempt to organize not only defends the movement from manipulation, but it also enables the people to bring about an authentic understanding of their historical and political reality as well as the virtues to live by to serve as a witness to their praxis.<sup>[36]</sup> The failure to establish a “witness,” for Freire, is to “absolutize and mythologize the relative; alienation then becomes unavoidable.”<sup>[37]</sup> In other words, a course of action and reflection that is not grounded on concrete historical facts endangers not only the accuracy of the movement’s analysis of reality, but its very authenticity.<sup>[38]</sup> The act of organization, therefore, guarantees the resoluteness and formidability of dialogical action which makes itself immune from the threats of manipulation by means of superseding its inauthenticity.

In contrast to how the oppressors organize themselves to manipulate and divide the people for their own ends, an authentic organization is the unification and communion between the leaders and the people which prevents one to “say their own words.”<sup>[39]</sup> In this paradigm, the leaders do not utter their own words as means to manipulate and control the people; instead, their utterances are results of their communion and cooperation with the people.<sup>[40]</sup> For Freire, this is not to destabilize the leader’s authority and let the people dictate the direction of the revolution, but an affirmation of authority and freedom. Since freedom and authority are inseparable notions in dialogical theory – “there is no freedom without authority, but there is also no authority without freedom.”<sup>[41]</sup> As can be seen, the exercise of authority without having ensured the people’s freedom might fall into authoritarianism; and freedom without having been bounded by the protection of authority might fall into the pit of anarchy.<sup>[42]</sup> All things considered, the dialogical act of organization ensures protection in accordance with the values and standards that the social movement upholds while also safeguarding its leaders from the violation of their praxis.

Now, the last dialogical action – cultural synthesis is a “systematic and deliberate” attempt to antagonize

oppression and domination.<sup>[43]</sup> Being opposed to the cultural invasion, cultural synthesis confronts the cultural values and standards that the oppressor embodies. Yet, the goal of cultural synthesis is not to eradicate the antagonism and contradiction between the oppressor and the oppressed which the dialectic brought to the fore, but to confront the anti-dialogical action enshrined in domination by pursuing the people's liberation.<sup>[44]</sup> Otherwise, the complete elimination of the contradiction implies the removal of a whole class of people which apparently is not the goal of dialogical action, but to liberate both the oppressed and the oppressor. Cultural synthesis is, therefore, achieved by completely abandoning the oppressor's manipulative praxis of imposition or in the case of pedagogy, the utilization of the banking method. Thus, on the contrary, cultural synthesis does not aim to change the people's values and standards, but "to learn with the people, about the people's world."<sup>[45]</sup> As discussed in the earlier sections, critical pedagogy relies on the discovery and understanding of the people's thematic universe and epochal units through thematic investigation. This means that, in this paradigm, the leaders or teachers do not impose values, investigate and analyze the people for the end of potentially training them, but learn the way in which the people view the world in order for them to perceive the world through their own lens.<sup>[46]</sup> In so doing, the problems and contradictions are subjected to thematic investigation through the people's understanding. This mode of investigation aims to "establish a climate of creativity" which is aimed towards further engagement of the people with their concrete reality.<sup>[47]</sup> This is clearly in contradiction with the method of the oppressor that culturally invades the people's capacity to experiment instinctively killing their "creative enthusiasm" by being obliged to follow their leaders' predetermined plans.<sup>[48]</sup> In cultural synthesis, however, the leaders and the people "create the guidelines for their action" which indicates a cooperative effort between parties toward transformation.<sup>[49]</sup> Here, for Freire, they are "reborn in new knowledge and new action" by having exposed the alienating culture of the oppressive reality and the transformative impact of cooperation and organization among the leaders and the people.<sup>[50]</sup> This is not to completely pursue the people's voiced aspirations limited to their worldview or completely disrespect the people's aspirations to trail their own interest, but to identify the people's concern while bringing into light the issues that may pose problems and deepen the understanding of issues that may, in fact, emerge as a symptom to a greater underlying problem. The solution, for Freire, hinges on the possibility of organization and deliberative dialogue with the people to determine concrete solutions inclined towards the humanization of the individual.

It is for this reason that dialogue and communication hold a redemptive role in awakening the individual's critical consciousness which, as can be seen, bears a monumental importance in achieving authentic social change. The impetus behind the goal of critical pedagogy, therefore, as much as it holds interest in building up a formidable citizenry of intellectuals and doers, is to contribute to a substantive democracy where moral and political issues are engaged intellectually and critically. The maintenance of a status quo anchored on the culture of silence and subservience inevitably heralds the misfortune of a socio-political collapse of the *demos*. For Freire, therefore, the prospect of social transformation is not an accidental or a reactionary subversion to the current order of society, but a noble pursuit to affirm the person's humanity and to recover one's consciousness and independence from the shambles of conquest, manipulation, and division. In the next section, let me briefly show emerging perspectives on whether Freire advocates violence or not.

### C. Does Freire Advocate Violence?

A key element to his theory of emancipation is the recognition that the oppressed have been dehumanized by their oppressors and by dehumanizing the oppressed, the oppressors are also dehumanized by their praxis of violence.<sup>[51]</sup> In this manner, the task of liberation in Freire's theory also deals with the emancipation of the oppressor – the realization that their humanity had been marred by their exploits and abuses.<sup>[52]</sup> One could infer that violence as a mode of social transformation should never be an option for Freire. However, there are emerging interpretations that though Freire advocated nonviolent resistance and social transformation, it is explicit in his texts that the next step of his revolution might consider the possibility of taking up arms against the dominant order. In Franz Cortez's work, a Filipino Freirean scholar, "Freire's

take on the role of armed struggle has taken a developmental mode. He has moved from a reformist to a revolutionary to a more critical stance.”<sup>[53]</sup> As Cortez surveys Freire’s stances on social change, in particular through Freire’s *Education for Critical Consciousness* he argues that initially Freire advocates reformation through literacy programs that aims to empower the naive consciousness in critically analyzing the world. Education, therefore, democratizes the public space – allowing the masses to participate in their development.<sup>[54]</sup> Freire appears to be a pacifist thinker instead of radical Marxist as he evades the discourse of class division – for him, again, both are oppressed and thus, needs to be emancipated. Yet, in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* Freire’s consideration of class struggle is made implicit in the unfiltered quotation of radical Marxist thinkers like Fanon, Guevarra, Mao, and etc. Freire sees the possibility of revolutionary action as a possible direction in overturning the dominant order. Cortez notes that “for Freire, it is justifiable if the oppressed act violently against the oppressors because it is a response to the violence of the oppressor, it is in defense of the fundamental rights of the oppressed and it is motivated by love for humanity in general.”<sup>[55]</sup> Premised in the event of self-defense, the oppressed could act violently against the oppressor as the oppressor initiated the act of violence. But contrary to the act of violence of the oppressor which is *necrophilic* – the love of death, the oppressed acts violently out of his love for humanity in general.<sup>[56]</sup>

Now, it is critical to ask whether Freire advocates violence or peace as the *praxis* of the revolutionary movement. Is literacy sufficient in the prospective attainment of social transformation? Cortez contends that one of the central concepts of Freire’s critical thought emphasizes the role of action and reflection to discern whether violence in the struggle is necessary.<sup>[57]</sup> One aspect of violence as a form of *praxis* is the dynamics of power, and how it is utilized in society, for Freire, “the important task (in transforming society) is not to take power but to reinvent power.”<sup>[58]</sup> Cortez notes that the way through which this power is formed is not through means of violence and not gained in order to use violence but to deal with reality creatively.<sup>[59]</sup> He concludes, however, that one could not answer accurately through a “yes” or “no” whether Freire advocates violence towards social transformation. His theory still adapts with time and thus, evolves as the time changes. Cortez contends that the transformation of the consciousness is not sufficient in achieving social change, if a change is to come, one must also act on it deliberately which leads him to conclude that violence is necessarily a possibility.<sup>[60]</sup> Nevertheless, Freire’s theory of emancipation does not hinge on violence as its primary apparatus. Freire considers creatively other forms of struggle and mobilization which could, in effect, expose its contradictions, engage and transform. In what follows, will be a contrasting viewpoint of emancipation. While emancipation is a gradual process of *conscientization* and a *praxis* of dialogue in changing the world and violence is only potentially a last possibility, Fanon sees it as a humanizing and liberating experience for the colonized.

#### **D. Fanon, Decolonization, And Violence**

Fanon’s social theory and analysis of domination could be best understood as metamorphic – the early Fanon held a conscious view of the reality – of racial discrimination and colonial inferiority complex. While the late Fanon advocated the inevitability and even the necessity of violence in emancipating the colonized from the colonial order. In *Black Skin, White Mask*, Fanon underscores the paradox of culturally assimilated identity when he realizes that though he speaks the French language impeccably and in fact, is a highly educated man, he could still not escape the “gaze of inferiority” of the colonizer.<sup>[61]</sup> The “epidermal character of race”, for Fanon, could not be stripped off as the individual carries the baggage of oppression wherever he goes. One could be cultured and sophisticatedly brought up to become a member of high society, but one’s color makes it impossible to maintain such a position. In turn, the psychological impact of such an experience bears a totalizing trauma against one’s identity of blackness. Such alienation to one’s skin color, for Fanon, most often results in the eradication of one’s identity through interracial sexual inclinations. As a psychiatrist, Fanon approaches the colonial phenomenon through the lenses of psychoanalysis which, in so doing, brings discourse to the existential and phenomenological aspects of

domination. His work elegantly portrays the ontology of the black man while maintaining a voice that seems to stir an uprising through every spoken word.

Notably, Fanon posits the idea of interracial sexual desire as a form of self-destruction, for black women, the reason behind the desire to marry a white man is to attain wealth while for black men is to overcome his inferiority and claim his dominance as a man.<sup>[62]</sup> An overview of the *magnum opus* exposes the phenomenon of blackness and the impact of racial essentialism to the post-colonial era – the internalization of inferiority to the colonizers which could be observed in language and other cultural indicators. Yet, Fanon does not propose a violent process of decolonization since the work merely exposes the alienating tendencies of colonial thinking. One could argue, however, that violence is a perceivable necessity in rejecting foreign mentality. Indeed, Fanon recognizes that the phenomenon of colonialism is violent as its apparatuses replace the psychological and cultural identity of the colonized.

The approach of Fanon, however, transitions to a more strikingly combative approach against colonialism. The post-colonial vision of a “raceless” egalitarian world, for him, could not be achieved without the violent decolonization. In his later work *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon contends that in the pursuit of emancipation, violence shall be an indispensable possibility that the colonized ought to exercise in order to liberate themselves from the dominant structure and institutions of colonial power and from the alienation that colonization robbed them of – from the assumption of their negritude. In the psychological aspect, Fanon posits the notion that violence allows the colonized to have a cathartic experience that liberates the repressed energy and trauma from the years of oppression. He notes that since it is violence that governs the colonial world, it is also violence that will liberate the colonized from its grip.<sup>[63]</sup> The tendency for violence lurks behind the gaze of the colonized subject toward the colonizers. The lustful look of envy always crosses the mind of the colonized subject, waiting for his turn to take the place of his oppressor.<sup>[64]</sup> Thus, the ubiquitous status of violence, for Fanon, envelopes the colonial world. The paradoxical operative mechanism of violence in the colonial order works both ways, first, the relational dynamic between the oppressor and the oppressed which is inherently violent, second, the relational dynamic among the oppressed which also becomes violent. The repressed muscular tension, for Fanon, periodically burst yet it could not be directed against their colonists, in turn, the repressed energy could erupt among his kindred.<sup>[65]</sup> Harnessing the language of physical kinetics and psychiatry, Fanon would make statements like “the muscles of the colonized are always tensed” or “their nerves are always on edge,” which captures the distinct emotive aspect behind the rationality of violence.<sup>[66]</sup> It is clear that Fanon approaches the discourse of violence with much anticipation – its outbreak is the clearest evidence of the colonized reaching an authentic struggle.

*The violence which governed the order of the colonial world, which tirelessly punctuated the destruction of the indigenous social fabric, and demolished unchecked the systems of reference of the country’s economy, lifestyles, and modes of dress, this same violence will be vindicated and appropriated when, taking history into their own hands, the colonized swarm into the forbidden cities. To blow the colonial world to smithereens is henceforth a clear image within the grasp and imagination of every colonized subject.*<sup>[67]</sup>

Decolonization, therefore, involves the destruction of the colonial world and the “demolishing” of the colonist’s sector.<sup>[68]</sup> It follows that this process bears the ability to restore the lost humanity and dignity of the colonized.<sup>[69]</sup> In a commentary of Fanon’s discourse of violence, Zenon Ndayisenga, a scholar on Black Studies, argues that the seeming arbitrariness of violence in the colonial order is inevitable and in fact, justifiable in the act of counter-violence by the colonized. He, however, distinguishes the difference between the use of violence of the oppressor and the oppressed. On the one hand, the oppressor made use of violence to conquer while the counter-violence used by the oppressed is an act of self-defense and reclamation of his lost humanity and identity.<sup>[70]</sup> The violence that caused the suffering of the natives should, in turn, be exercised against their oppressors. Intuitively, this stance on violence exposes the colonized to a recurring

terror which, for Fanon, is a point of no return.<sup>[71]</sup> Yet, it is clear that an authentic and total decolonization could not materialize without counter-violence. Once the colonized individual realizes that “this liberation implies using every means possible and force is the first,” he would not think twice in pursuing such ends.<sup>[72]</sup> The colonized, in particular, the lumpen-proletariat, the slave and the outcasts had nothing to lose in the prospect of a violent revolution. The living condition which they come from does not ensure their security and well-being, thus, to eradicate the colonist sector once and for all despite their imminent death is their ultimate gain.

Fanon however qualifies further the process through which decolonization is done. In particular, the question of who will lead the counter-violence. Here, he breaks the colonized into three groups: the worker, the colonized intellectual, and the lumpen-proletariat which, as I mentioned earlier, have everything to gain in the eradication of the colonial sector. First, the workers are characterized by their contribution to the colonized order – they are exploited and overworked, but the colonizer to an extent value the labor of this sector. Second, the colonized intellectuals who play a crucial role in the decolonization and peace process – they serve as the mediators between the masses and the colonizers. As intellectuals, for Fanon, they could serve the interest of the oppressed by breaking down difficult language, concepts, and politics of the colonizer to the oppressed. Yet are also compromised by the virtue of their allegiance and inclination to serve the interest of the colonizers, in particular, the discourse of non-violence and quelling of the colonized people’s political frustrations.

Again, as mediators, they bear the tendency to serve the interest of their colonizers over their compatriots. Lastly, the lumpen-proletariat – the peasantry. This is characterized by the displaced people, slum dwellers, and subsistence farmers. They are the marginals, outsiders, and outcasts. For Fanon, this group holds the purest intention for a revolutionary movement. As can be seen here, the colonized intellectuals have the tendency to be reformists – they value the colonial world and look into the possibility of making it more humane and just, thus, delivering the narrative of non-violence and peace. Yet, Fanon contends that non-violent revolution will fail as the colonial paradigm is governed by violence. It will only be undone with counter-violence. The relationship among people is violent and the language of the colonized masses, all they ever assimilated from their oppressor is the culture of violence. Again, in order to free the body and the mind, the stripping off of colonial thinking, that is, the superstructure and the material base and its institutions is through the same mechanism.<sup>[73]</sup>

Distinctly, the aim of this violence is not to oppress, but to free and liberate the individual. The precondition for Fanon’s vision of the post-colonial world is a people with restored identity and humanity capable of recreating a new world. Again, through revolutionary violence, Fanon envisions the liberation of the oppressed from the physical chains of colonialism, its evils and traumas, and the psychological bondage that alienated him from his heritage and personhood.

## CONCLUSION

### **Peace or Violence, Lessons from Freire, Fanon, and The *Katipunan***

Having similar frontiers, the *Katipunan*, Freire, and Fanon harness common narratives. The *Katipunan* struggles against colonialism and the discontents of the reformation movement, Freire confronts the insidious apparatus of control in the pedagogical arena while Fanon as a psychiatrist turned political activist actively advocates the avenging of the oppressed from the evils of colonialism through counter-violence. The question of this work is what works best. To wit, what would be the ideal approach toward emancipation? I call this dilemma the “two faces of emancipation”. On the one hand, there is the option of peaceful and gradual emancipation, and on the other hand, is revolutionary violence where people take up arms and eradicate the oppressor.

As discussed earlier, Freire was careful in explicitly saying that violence is the ultimate key to emancipation. Though, as Cortez would put it, Freire is open to the possibility of violence as a last resort, the violence inflicted by the oppressed does not come from the same core value of conquest, but the noble love for humanity and its potential restoration. Nevertheless, Freire's critical pedagogy would advocate other alternatives that will arrest oppression and domination to its knees. The options and other alternative modes of liberation will, intuitively, become wider and wider as the *praxis* of Freirean revolution hinges on dialogue between the leaders of the revolution and the masses. Thus, there is no single way of emancipating the oppressed. As Cortez articulates, the discourse of power in the context of Freire is no longer about power grabbing, but the reinvention of power – its utilization in a creative manner. Therefore, arguably, Freire's critical thought would explore various forms of resistance through critical education which may train the individual to become critically aware of the impact of power structures instead of considering violence as the *praxis* of the revolution. However, the context of Fanon's thought might necessarily be this event of "last resort" where the act of self-defense becomes vital to one's continued existence. As discussed earlier, Fanon's work captures the lived experiences of black people, in particular, the psychological impact of colonialism on the individual. The social and political setting of Fanon could be likened to the *Katipunan*. Fanon observes that the governing paradigm in French-Algeria was violence – this is what maintains its power structure.

Similarly, the *Katipunan* having been disheartened by the failure of the reformation movement and the abuses of the friars made use of violence though it would be clearly against their best interest. With sharpened *bolos* and daggers, they instigated a skirmish that claimed hundreds of lives who fought with swords against the bullets of the Spaniards. An observer would ask, what is the rational justification behind this futile counter-violence that led to the sacrifices of the natives? Freirean revolution would condemn such a choice, having in mind the need to also liberate their oppressors – recognizing their humanity. Freire would argue that the revolutionary movement should not appropriate the same *praxis* through which the oppressor operates and sustains their dominance. Fanon, however, would beg to differ, broaching the inevitability of violence and its necessity to overturn the oppressive order.

As can be known, the *Katipunan* and its adherents perceived the world as a collapsed socio-political order. The failure of the colonized intellectuals to act as intermediaries for the cause of a better representation in the Spanish court which, in so doing, makes the colony into a province – still under foreign control. Rizal, Del Pilar, the Lunas, and other members of the propaganda movement were hopeful of a more just and humane society by addressing contradictions and abuses without the possibility of a revolt in mind. For Fanon, however, these forms of movements do not serve the interest of the colonized. The intensity of colonial evil, as Fanon reveals in his work, makes counter-violence an urgent response to the colonial order. The same driving force behind the *Katipunan's* violent revolution, the attacks were not contingent on rigid logistical analysis which may have given them an advantage, rather, on unbearable anger and hatred against the regime. Fanon sees this as the colonized catharsis while Freire would see this as the oppressed individual's adherence to the oppressor's model of humanity – a violent humanity. Fanon believes that in order to achieve emancipation, the oppressed ought to restore their humanity through decolonization which requires the same degree, if not more, of the violent *praxis* with which the oppressor sustains their control.

While Freire's critical reflection would suggest that if violence were to be used as the final resort, one could still distinguish the intent of such an act – the violence of the oppressed is not driven by greed and conquest but by his love for humanity. Thus, the question of which *praxis* works best indicates a myopic worldview. Peace and violence, in the eyes of history, are not mutually exclusive paradigms. Peace could be achieved through counter-violence and the same is lost through its anti-thesis. It is perhaps the case that some conflicts in society could be resolved through dialogue without resorting to violence, as Freire envisions. Yet once the contradictions have become unresolvable, counter-violence is an inevitable option in truncating

the source of power of the colonial order.

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- [9] Filipinos that might have Spanish blood yet are not born in Spain.
- [10] Teodoro A. Agoncillo, “Reform and Revolution,” in *History of the Filipino People* (Quezon City: C & E Pub., 2012), 144.
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[13] Ibid., 153.

[14] Ibid., 154. See also: Teodoro Agoncillo, *The Revolt of the Masses. The Story of Bonifacio and the Katipunan*, Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 43. One could argue that the reform movement is doomed to fail, as Agoncillo would put it, there are two factors that led to the failure of reform: “the violent opposition of the friars and the Government to the idea of changes in the political, social and economic fields, and secondly, the dilly-dallying tactics of the intelligentsia group, too timid to take advantage of the situation.” The movement was also demoralized by the exile of Rizal and the death of other propagandists. This would eventually set the backdrop for the Katipunan.

[15] Ibid., 179.

[16] Teodoro Agoncillo, *The Revolt of the Masses. The Story of Bonifacio and the Katipunan*, Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 158.

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[26] Franz Cortez, “The Prospect of Liberating Pedagogy in the Thoughts of Amable G. Tuibeo.” *Mabini Review* 3, no. 1 (2014): 20. Here, Cortez articulates the dynamics between the teacher and the student as “knowing subjects” that reflect about the world. As is well known, the pedagogical dynamic in Freire’s theory also applies to the prospects of social transformation. In this regard, the leaders and the people are both sojourners towards emancipation.

[27] Ibid., 167.

[28] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 168.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid., 169.

[31] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 171. See also: Ali Nouri & Seyed Mahdi Sajjadi, “Emancipatory Pedagogy in Practice: Aims, Principles and Curriculum Orientation, *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, 79. Here, Nouri and Sajjadi discussed role of love, humility, faith, trust, hope, and critical thinking in the development of a dialogical dynamic between the teachers and the students.

[32] Ibid., 172.

[33] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 175.

[34] Ibid., 176.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid., 177.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid., 179.

[40] Ibid.,

[41] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 179.

[42] Ibid., 180.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid., 181.

[45] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 181.

[46] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy, and Civic Courage* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998), 11. As is known, Freire maintains that the leaders/teachers in order to teach and instruct ought to closely study and understand the individual. For Freire, “whoever teaches learns in the act of teaching, and whoever learns teaches in the act of learning.”

[47] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 182.

[48] Ibid., 183.

[49] Ibid.

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- [64] *Ibid.*, 5.
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- [67] *Ibid.*, 6.
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- [70] *Ibid.*, 466.
- [71] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 47.
- [72] *Ibid.*, 21.
- [73] Sehar Shaheyar, “Is Decolonisation always a Violent Phenomenon?” *E-International Relations* [https://www.e-ir.info/2020/05/09/is-decolonisation-always-a-violent-phenomenon/#:~:text=Non%2Dviolence%20movements%20failed%20to,the%20body%20and%20the%20mind.\(accessed on 24 May 2023\)](https://www.e-ir.info/2020/05/09/is-decolonisation-always-a-violent-phenomenon/#:~:text=Non%2Dviolence%20movements%20failed%20to,the%20body%20and%20the%20mind.(accessed%20on%2024%20May%202023))