

I begin by going straight to the heart of my matter. I begin therefore by saying that Whites have for so long been dominant in South Africa - and in other parts of the world - that it is difficult for us who have partly come to recognize and have partly been forced to recognize that indeed we are not White, to see those fellow-men of ours who also are indeed not White, but who have not yet arrived at this recognition, so far as to share it with us. For, the reason, the basic reason why they have not yet come to this recognition that indeed they are not White, is that they still look upon White as a concept which equates with Value. This is what the dominance of Whites have done to the psychology of those fellow-men of ours who I have in mind. It has sapped their will to be autonomously what they are; it has made them sluggish and indeed unwilling to draw themselves away from Whiteness, for that to them would mean to draw themselves away from Valuableness. Their foolishness is their equation of Whiteness with Valuableness, which, we will see, is dangerous for them in that it will destroy them.

I am speaking of course of all those people, fellow men of ours, who should be Black and may I say that in this South African context I include under this term people of all shades of colour who are not considered by the laws and the people of this country to be White: Blacks, brown, yellows, what have you. And at this point may I say that when I was invited to speak here. I was invited as a Black, and immediately made a point of this. I was not invited as a non-Black in the way that I used to be invited, and indeed still get invited by some other people, as a non-White. This form of the invitation in itself carries a profound meaning, and I ask all those present here with us to ponder it. In itself it is a pointer to the fact that Whites in South Africa already have to contend with a consciousness which no longer cares to define itself in terms of their Whiteness and, moreover, negatively in terms of their Whiteness.

We have come, and we are coming, to recognize ourselves as Black. And at least part of our task is and will be to unfetter every man who is not White from Whiteness, that is from a misguided and dangerous belief in the equation I have mentioned. You will notice that I refer here to every man who is not White rather than to every man who is Black; for it would be false to think that every man who is not White is, through that fact, Black. This Blackness of which we speak is certainly, amongst other things, a matter of "the colour of the skin"; however, as such it is something to which not we, but Whites have drawn attention in the first place, and we have no intention of defining ourselves basically in terms of anything that Whites have marked out, or mark out, for us. Therefore it is not colour of the skin in terms of which we see our Blackness in the first place. It is in the first place, a certain awareness, a certain insight.

It is very important that we stress this fact in so far as we find ourselves in South Africa where Whites are present to an extent they are not present in the rest of our Continent, and where we do have, and will always have, and must always have ties with Whites in ways in which our fellows elsewhere in the Continent do not and cannot have. In speaking of our Blackness as a certain awareness and insight, and in recognizing that we are speaking thus in South Africa, we are at once identifying ourselves with Blackness in the world at large and pointing to emphases which are and must be unique for us.

The fact that we do not make colour of the skin the basic criterion for our Blackness must be evidence that this Blackness is not racist. We have seen enough of White racism, we have suffered enough from its meaning - we cannot want to be racist in our Blackness. As I identify this Blackness, our rejection of racism will become clear. Racism is a phenomenon of inferiority whereas our Blackness is a phenomenon of pride. We are not out to hate Whites. We are out to treat them simply as people. Indeed in our Blackness we can accommodate a sympathy for Whites which extends all the way of the sentiments of the Black American writer who writes to his young nephew: "There is no reason for you to try to become like white people and there is no basis whatever for their impertinent assumption that they must accept you. The really terrible thing, old buddy, is that you must accept them.... You must accept and accept them with love. For these innocent people have no other hope."

we differ from this Black writer only in that we do not believe these people to be innocent - perhaps he also meant this only ironically.

Also, it certainly will be hard, this attempt to "accept them with love". For the natural thing for us, the natural thing as a result of White racism, whether crude or chocolate-coated, is not to "accept them with love" but instead to reject them with hatred. The things they have done to us need no repetition - we have named them often enough, we have protested often enough without being understood, wilfully and otherwise not being understood. They "know" us, they are even "experts" on us, but they don't understand. After all, we still sing; after all we still dance. Langston Hughes, the Black poet, has spoken apt words for our situation too:

Because my mouth
is wide with laughter
and my throat
is deep with song,
You do not think
I suffer after
I have held my pain
so long.
Because my mouth
is wide with laughter
you do not hear
my inner cry;
Because my feet
are gay with dancing,
you do not know
I die.

The point however, is that we can no longer care whether or not Whites understand us. What we do care about is understanding ourselves and, in the course of this task, helping Whites to understand themselves - in the words of the Black author I have already quoted, helping them "to see themselves as they are, to cease fleeing from reality".

We notice that this insistence upon ourselves, this new turning away from the White world towards ourselves, is not passing unnoticed by Whites; they have written about it in their newspapers where they say it is to be feared. We wish to say to them however, that they have something worse to fear: themselves. It is true that we are loosening ourselves from their idea or ideas of us, and of course this disturbance is terrible for Whites. As our author says, "the black man has functioned in the white man's world as a fixed star, as an immovable pillar; and as he moves out of his place, heaven and earth are shaken to their foundation"; and, speaking to his nephew: "I said that it was intended that you should perish in the ghetto, perish by never being allowed to go behind the White man's definitions, by never to recognize that we are Black in senses we give to Blackness instead of senses they give to Blackness. And so, since we are upsetting the apple-cart of cosy White thought about Blackness. And these people "who believed that your imprisonment made them safe are losing their grasp of reality". It is this loss of a grasp on reality which Whites ought to fear more than anything else; perhaps it is too accommodating of us to speak here of their loss of a grasp on reality, for in so far as they have always thought wrongly about Blackness, they never have had a grasp on reality. But then we too are only beginning to think properly about Blackness now.

This point that through our turning towards our Blackness, into our Blackness we wish also to help Whites to understand themselves and grasp a reality in which Blackness occurs - and occurs large - , this point once again denies racism on our part. For we are ~~not~~ our

of alienation which we do not seek. Apartheid is a philosophy of enmity. I must define our Blackness briefly. As an introduction I quote the following quite beautiful lines from a young Black American poetress, Desirèè Barnwell:

Will the real black people please stand:

Those fearless of the unconventional,
Moved towards their own blackness,
Prone to influence and set trends,
Schooled in their times and folkways,
Dedicated to worthwhile endeavours,
Attentive to meaningful expression.

The real people in this country are all those people who reject definition of themselves in the clichéd categories of Whites when they speak of "race relations". The "real black people" are those who embrace the positive description 'Black' as opposed to 'non-White' which is a definition in terms of others, not in terms of yourself. The "real black people" are "moved towards their own Blackness". It is a matter of not running away from yourself, but of daring to come face to face with yourself. Have Whites - in South Africa in any case - ever dared this? Has there ever been a situation in the history of the world which necessitated this daring for them as it is necessitated for us now? There has never been such a situation for them - not before now. The very situation which now necessitates this for us, also necessitates this for them for the first time in the history of the world. Of course this "necessitation" is nothing like causation - it is still our free choice, a free choice founded on insight. We want to face up to our Blackness and all its consequences. Do Whites, however, want to face up to their Whiteness and all its consequences, even now? We have said that we wish to help them, that we can, from our position of Blackness; and we must add now that we are in a much better position here to help them than they are to help us.

I have spoken of insight. Our insight is this: We will live without apology, or as if apologising. Why, and to whom, must we in any case apologize, or live as if we apologize, for being ourselves? We cannot apologize for being ourselves; we will live autonomously as ourselves. Anyone who thinks this is a trivial statement, is either hypocritical or ignorant - for it implies that he does not know the extent to which Whites have goaded and do good us to humiliations which all add up to our believing that we live by their grace. Now we are rejecting the idea - their idea which unfortunately has also become deeply embedded in the souls of many of us - , the idea that we live even in the least by their grace. We may live by the grace of God, but we do not live by the grace of Whites. This has been the biggest impertinence on the part of Whites - this idea that they hold life for us in their hands, that they hold it in their hands to give. This has been the idea of even the "best" of Whites -- I mean those who have wanted to give us this life which they believe they hold in their hands for us, quite freely or reasonably freely. The concept of the liberal comes to mind here.

Our movement towards our Blackness means the realization, clear realization, that no-one at all, no men, hold life in their hands for us. We are not beggars for life. We live, we all live in this world, Blacks, Whites, all. The meaning of this, the profound meaning of this, is something we will try to let Whites see, to let Whites understand. This is one of the meanings of trying to help them to grasp on reality.

Protest will therefore play a role in our future actions, but we will realize that protest is a kind of begging; but, again, we cannot beg. Protest will be a secondary form of expression for us altogether. The primary form of expression for us will be manifestation of our Blackness time and time again - and, again, whether Whites understand this or not will not be to the point at all. We are not there for Whites. We are there. We are. That will be the fact for us: that we ARE.

From all this it must be clear for anyone who knows the meaning of

culture, that Blackness for us is a supremely cultural fact. It is, in this South African context, the consciousness that we have tremendous resources of the soul at our disposal from which to grow strong in every sense if we can succeed in eliminating the White man's ideas about us from our own minds, if we can kill in our own minds the ridiculous equation of Whiteness with Value. We do not say that Blackness is also valuable - that would be silly thing to do, in fact it would be to revert to seeing ourselves in terms of Whiteness. We are saying the sensible thing that only values are valuable, and that we have values and that we will work with them as we will work with them. This is important in so far as protagonists of apartheid - and, indeed, also White antagonists of apartheid - love to cast themselves in the role of guardians for us, love to approach us as little children are approached, love to tell us 'You too have beautiful values, can't you see?' or simply 'You too have beautiful values.' We in our Blackness despise these people, we laugh at them.

Our Blackness, in other words, is a consciousness of our own worth which flies in the face of every approach to us that we know by Whites. In America, writes Addison Gayle, there are many White "experts" on Black "subjects", from Harriet Beecher Stowe to Norman Mailer (to think only of writers); and of course in South Africa there are these White experts on us. Whites know us from the outside, they approach us from the outside; even where their intentions are as pure as possible, they are on the outside. We know them well enough from the inside. The non-privileged of a society always know the privileged of that society better than the privileged can possibly know the non-privileged. Our Blackness will therefore appear strange to Whites in any case. But the way we will stand in our Blackness now, the autonomous un-apologizing way, the proud way - I repeat proud - this they will find incomprehensible. We can help them to understand. However, our first task will be simply to live our Blackness on every front. Culture is a comprehensive phenomenon. On all fronts we will be discovering our worth, the worth that White cannot be truly concerned about in so far as, however, well-motivated they may be, they cannot penetrate to it - at least not at this stage of the world's history. At this stage of the world's history nihilism as Nietzsche saw it, that it sheer self-interest, sits fast in the breast of the White man, every White man, even despite himself; his position in respect of the Black man, is defined nihilistically - it is not otherwise just now. This is the stage of our world's history. Therefore, also we have to find the means to do so.

Our Blackness - the consciousness which it is, is not a matter of severing contacts so much as it is a matter of a certain historical necessity. Whites are fond of speaking of survival. They may begin to understand Blackness somewhat if they think that Blacks too have a will to survive the fury of our time.

If therefore, we reject apartheid it is for a much profounder reason - an infinitely profounder reason - than that we want integration; for we do not want integration, we reject it. We want to survive as men, and if we will not insist on our Blackness we are not going to make it in a world peopled quite profusely with White nihilists, and especially not in a part of the world where we have to live with them, close to them, even in the midst of them.