

The Psychosis of Existential Training: Towards an Inclusive and Equitable Therapeutic Practice

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Abstract

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This presentation calls for decolonising existential psychotherapy by integrating Black existentialist thought. Challenging Eurocentric frameworks and epistemological bias, it repositions Black narratives as central to understanding human existence. Drawing on Fanon, hooks, and Gordon, it promotes intersectional, anti-racist training that restores existential practice as a universal, inclusive approach to freedom, meaning, and cultural identity.

Key Words: Existentialism, Decolonisation Black existentialism Eurocentrism, Intersectionality, Cultural trauma, Epistemological bias Inclusivity

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Slide 1: Introduction – The Psychosis of Existential Training

Existential psychotherapy has long claimed to concern itself with the totality of human existence, its ambiguity, freedom, and responsibility. Nevertheless, within its training institutions, a paradox persists: the framework that purports to illuminate the human condition often excludes and marginalises Black existence. When existential psychotherapy training reproduces Eurocentric assumptions as universal truths, it not only narrows its scope but also enacts a philosophical rupture from the realities it claims to serve. Such an attitude can be understood as a form of psychosis, not in a clinical sense, but as a philosophical detachment from lived realities.

Gordon's (2000, pp.20 -26) observation that delusion occurs when one sets up a reality and forgets they did so provide a critical lens through which to examine this disconnection. Existential psychotherapy, constructed and sustained within predominantly white Western epistemologies, often presents itself as neutral or objective. This claim to neutrality conceals the epistemic violence of erasure, the silencing of Black voices and the relegation of Africana thought to the margins of existential discourse. Such conditions create a self-reinforcing circuit of legitimacy, where Eurocentric thought transforms into both question and answer, self-referential and is resistant to critique.

By identifying this phenomenon as a form of psychosis, there is a call of attention to the defensive and repetitive patterns within existential training that mirror the very alienation existentialism seeks to address. When institutions respond to racial critique with avoidance or token inclusion, they reveal an anxiety rooted in fragility: the fear that to expand the canon is to dismantle it. As Gordon (2022) and hooks (1994) suggest, genuine philosophy must remain open to the plurality of human meaning; it must evolve or risk becoming irrelevant.

This paper therefore calls for transformation grounded in authenticity, justice, and radical inclusion. It seeks not to discard existentialism but to restore its integrity by returning it to the multiplicity of existence itself. To engage with Black existential thought is not to politicise therapy, it is to reclaim its universality. This reorientation challenges the psychosis of neutrality and insists that existential psychotherapy must once again become what it professes to be: a radical, truthful encounter with being.

Slide 2: Meet the Presenters – Situated Knowledge and Lived Philosophy

The discourse presented here developed from our intellectual and lived experiences, of doctoral-level existential therapists and researchers whose work is rooted in Africana philosophy, critical thought, and the lived realities of Black womanhood. This collaborative inquiry is not merely academic but existential: it arises from the tension of inhabiting institutions that both train and estrange, educate, and exclude. As hooks (1994) reminds us, theory becomes liberatory when it is lived, embodied, and situated within struggle.

Our positionalities shape this critique of existential training as not only Eurocentric but also epistemically closed. Our lived experience as Black women in predominantly white academic and clinical spaces offers a vital standpoint epistemology (Collins, 2000), from which we interrogate whose existence is validated as philosophical. This standpoint does not seek victimhood; rather, it reclaims existentialism's central premise; the search for authenticity by demanding that authenticity extend beyond the white European self.

This work is informed by both philosophical depth and practical urgency. In navigating psychotherapy training programs that often frame Blackness as deviation, we embody a praxis that bridges theory, care, and resistance. Our voices remind the field that existentialism, at its core, is not a static body of knowledge but a lived engagement with truth. When institutions resist critique under the guise of neutrality, they betray existentialism's essence and display the lack of courage to face ambiguity, anxiety, and difference.

By situating ourselves within the narrative, we reject the illusion of objectivity and affirm the necessity of situated knowledge. The project is to humanise psychotherapy training by reintroducing the fullness of lived Black experience into its philosophical foundations. In doing so, aligns with what Gordon (2013, pp. 9 -12) terms the "teleological suspension of disciplinarity", a willingness to let philosophy breathe, change, and include. What is brought to the field, therefore, is not simply critique but a reimagining of existential practice as relational, plural, and ultimately, more human.

Slide 3: Delusions of Neutrality

The claim of neutrality within existential psychotherapy training is among its most persistent and dangerous delusions. As Gordon (2000) reminds us, misbelief occurs when one sets up a realism and disregards, that they did so. Within the Western philosophical tradition, existential psychotherapy has often positioned itself as the study of universal human existence, while covertly centering a narrow Eurocentric framework as the standard of being. This self-perpetuating system produces what Gordon (2013, pp. 9 - 12) identifies as a "closed circuit of legitimacy", wherein European thought continually validates itself as both the question and the answer. In doing so, it creates the illusion of universality while excluding, marginalising, and invalidating other epistemologies.

This phenomenon is not merely theoretical, it manifests concretely in training programs that reproduce the same canonical references, cite the same European thinkers, and reward adherence to intellectual lineages. The apparent neutrality of existential theory therefore conceals an epistemic hierarchy that privileges whiteness as the normative form of humanity. As Fanon (1952/2008, pp. 89 - 92) suggests, such universality is always masked particularity when one speaks of the universal, one is speaking of the European. Existential psychotherapy training, when uncritically aligned with this heritage, becomes detached from the plurality of lived realities it claims to explore. It enters a philosophical psychosis, a defensive detachment from reality that repeats itself in rigid, self-referential ways.

Within this delusion, the training environment becomes resistant to critique. When Black or non-Western perspectives are introduced, they are treated as supplementary

or “special topics” rather than integral contributions to understanding existence. The discomfort this provokes often triggers institutional defensiveness, mirroring what Ahmed (2012, pp.30-36) argues is the institutional mechanics of wilful ignorance a process through which discomfort is displaced, and whiteness is re-centred as the measure of professionalism and rigour. The result is a pedagogy that claims openness yet enacts exclusion, mistaking stability for integrity.

To name this defensiveness as a kind of psychosis is not to pathologise individuals but to diagnose a collective epistemological state. When an institution forgets that its worldview is constructed, it loses the capacity for self-reflection a fundamental existential virtue. Heidegger’s notion of authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*) calls for a continuous encounter with the contingency of being yet, existential training often clings to the illusion of permanence. This attachment to sameness transforms philosophy into dogma, therefore erasing the lived diversity it should illuminate.

Restoring existential psychotherapy to health requires re-engaging with reality recognising that the so-called neutrality of training is itself an existential defence against uncertainty and change. A truly existential pedagogy must be reflexive, relational, and open to critique. It must remember that neutrality, when unexamined, becomes complicity. As Gordon (2022) warns, to deny the world’s plurality is to deny existence itself.

Slide 4: Rooted in Philosophy, Guided by Lived Experience

Existential psychotherapy, at its best, is a practice of truth-telling an encounter with what is, rather than what is comfortable. However, when the lived experiences of Black individuals are rendered invisible within training institutions, existentialism becomes a meaningless exercise in abstraction. For existential therapy to remain authentic, it must be both philosophically rigorous and existentially honest rooted not only in theory but in the realities of lived existence. The failure to engage with the lived meaning of Blackness in existential training represents a profound contradiction: a therapy of existence that excludes certain forms of being.

The intellectual lineage of existential psychotherapy, namely Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre, and de Beauvoir among others, offers valuable insights into meaning, choice, and authenticity. Yet these ideas are often transmitted through a universalising framework that implicitly assumes whiteness as the unmarked norm of existence. Such framing overlooks the ways in which structural racism, coloniality, and cultural trauma shape the lived experience of being-in-the-world. Gordon (2013) and Fanon (1952/2008) both expose this contradiction, arguing that existential philosophy’s claim to universality collapses under the weight of racial exclusion. In Fanon’s words, “I am overdetermined from without. I am the slave not of the ‘idea’ that others have of me but of my own appearance” (1952/2008, p. 95). To exist as Black within a world structured by whiteness is to live an existential paradox: to be both visible and unseen, to be rendered an object while struggling for subjectivity.

This paradox extends into the training room. When Black trainees speak of race, oppression, or cultural trauma, their reflections are often met with discomfort, silence,

or deflection responses that Lorde (1984, pp. 40 - 41) identifies as manifestations of fear masquerading as neutrality. Her reminder that “your silence will not protect you” resonates deeply here; silence within training institutions does not preserve harmony, it perpetuates harm. Existential authenticity demands engagement with that discomfort, recognising it as a site of potential transformation rather than a threat.

A philosophy that claims to be about existence must be accountable to all existence. This means recognising that being is always situated shaped by history, culture, and power. An existential training grounded in African and Africana thought would therefore invite students to engage with ontology not as an abstract category but as a lived condition: a negotiation between personal agency and systemic constraint. This is not an expansion of existentialism for an inclusion exercise but a return to its foundation, the insistence that human beings are always in relation.

In the synthesis of philosophy and lived experience, existential psychotherapy can rediscover its ethical centre. To ignore the realities of Blackness is to abandon existentialism’s central question, what does it mean to exist? By acknowledging that question in its full human complexity, existential training can finally begin to live its own philosophy.

Slide 5: What We Learn (and Unlearn)

Existential psychotherapy has long prided itself on its commitment to truth, freedom, and authenticity. Yet its training courses often reproduce the very forms of inauthenticity it seeks to challenge. Within most existential training programs, the canon remains an overwhelmingly Eurocentric assemblage of white, Western male thinkers whose ideas, while profound, are treated as universally representative of human experience. What is learned is a narrow philosophy of existence; what must be unlearned is the illusion of universality that sustains it.

The dominance of the Western canon in existential training constructs a hierarchy of knowledge in which non-European thought is either peripheralised or entirely absent. Africana, Indigenous, and other non-Western philosophies are usually treated as epistemically inferior and positioned as cultural supplements useful for diversity discussions but not central to the existential project. This marginalisation is not accidental but systemic, reflecting what Mills (1997, pp. 18 – 19; pp. 73 - 78) terms the “epistemology of ignorance” a structured way of knowing that depends on not knowing, on keeping certain realities invisible to maintain intellectual authority. When Black trainees introduce alternative frameworks, they often encounter resistance or dismissal, their critical insight recast as disruption rather than philosophical contribution.

Such reactions betray the existential values that training institutions claim to uphold. To encounter difference should be to encounter possibility. Instead, these institutions often replicate what hooks (1994, p.5) describes as “the classroom of domination,” where power is masked as pedagogy and where those who challenge dominant frameworks are made to feel deviant. Within this dynamic, the Black trainee becomes the mirror of institutional anxiety the embodiment of the Other through whom the limits of existential tolerance are revealed. The message is implicit but clear: to belong, you must assimilate.

Existential psychotherapy, however, demands the opposite. It calls for a radical honesty with the self and the world, a willingness to confront contradiction and ambiguity as sites of meaning. To unlearn Eurocentrism, therefore, is not to discard European thought but to contextualise it, to recognise it as one among many ways of being-in-the-world. This process requires humility and courage: humility to admit that knowledge has borders, and courage to cross them.

As Fanon (1952/2008) reminds us, liberation begins with the act of naming the refusal to be silenced or pathologised. When Black trainees are told that their perspectives are “too political,” “too emotional,” or “not existential enough,” what is revealed is not their deviation but the discipline’s fragility. True existentialism must welcome challenge as growth, not as threat.

To decolonise existential training is, therefore, to restore its philosophical vitality. The task is not merely to learn new content but to unlearn the habits of exclusion that have shaped the field. Only through this unlearning can existential psychotherapy reclaim its ethical integrity and stand once again as a practice of freedom one that honors the plurality of existence rather than fearing it.

Slide 6: Whose Existence Counts?

At the heart of existential psychotherapy lies the claim to universality: that it addresses the fundamental questions of human life - freedom, death, isolation, and meaning. As with much of Western philosophy, these “universal” themes often emerge from particular social and historical locations. These ideas reflect the consciousness of white, European, and predominantly male thinkers whose experiences of freedom and isolation differ radically from those of those whose lives are shaped by systemic oppression. Thus, the question must be asked: whose existence counts in existential training, and whose existence remains unacknowledged?

Sartre’s famous assertion that freedom is what you do with what’s been done to you (1943/2003, pp.509 - 513) encapsulates the existential tension between agency and circumstance. However, within the context of Black existence, this statement acquires a different weight. What does freedom mean for those whose possibilities are constrained not only by personal circumstance but by structural racism, colonial legacies, and intergenerational trauma? Fanon (1952/2008) exposes the limits of existential freedom by showing how racialised being is already pre-interpreted by society. The Black subject is not simply a self-creating consciousness but one forced to exist within the “white gaze” that defines and confines their humanity. In this light, existential psychotherapy that fails to interrogate the social and historical conditions of being reproduces precisely the alienation it claims to heal.

The abstraction of existential concepts like freedom, authenticity, isolation becomes a mechanism of avoidance when it ignores the material and racial dimensions of existence. When training programmes encourage students to explore the “human condition” without reference to social realities, they construct a universal that is, in truth, profoundly exclusionary and non – existential. As Gordon (2013) argues, such universality is a lie that hides a lie: a denial of the multiplicity of human experience disguised as neutrality (pp.89 – 92).

Existential psychotherapy cannot meaningfully address the concept of freedom without recognising the forms of unfreedom that shape Black life. Freedom for some depends upon the unfreedom of others a reality that demands existential, not just sociological, reflection. de Beauvoir (1948/2018) suggested that to will oneself free is to will others free, linking freedom to ethical responsibility. Within this framework, therapists must ask: how can one authentically accompany a client toward freedom while remaining blind to the systemic forces that define it?

Training, therefore, must reorient existential inquiry toward justice. To speak of meaning without addressing oppression is to engage in abstraction without substance. To speak of isolation without speaking of exclusion is to universalise privilege. The challenge is not to politicise therapy but to humanise it, ensuring that the lived realities of race, power, and inequality are recognised as integral to existence itself.

When existential training embraces this complexity, it reclaims its philosophical integrity. The question “whose existence counts?” becomes not an accusation but an invitation to expand the boundaries of existential thought until every existence, in its full historical and cultural particularity, can be seen, heard, and honoured as part of the shared human condition.

Slide 7: From Pathologised to Philosophised

In the history of psychology and psychotherapy, Blackness has too often been treated as a pathology, a deviation from a supposed norm of white mental health. This legacy persists, albeit in more subtle forms, within existential training programs that fail to recognise Black experience as philosophically and psychologically generative. When Blackness enters the training space, it is frequently constructed through deficit narratives: trauma, anger, oppression, or risk. Rarely is it engaged as a legitimate site of philosophical reflection or existential wisdom. This positioning of Blackness as a problem to be managed rather than a reality to be understood reveals the epistemic violence embedded within the discipline’s foundations.

Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952/2008) remains a critical text for rethinking this dynamic. Fanon dismantles the colonial gaze that defines the Black subject as lack, showing how the internalisation of racist ideology leads to what he calls a “nervous condition” a fractured sense of self born from the demand to exist through another’s distorted perception. However, Fanon’s project is not merely diagnostic; it is profoundly existential. His call is for a reclamation of being an insistence on Black humanity as a site of self-definition rather than pathology. Baldwin’s (1961) argues that to be Black and conscious is to be in a constant state of rage reframes this emotional state as a form of awareness rather than dysfunction. Rage, in this context, is not a symptom but a truth, a response to the dissonance of living within systems that deny one’s reality.

Existential psychotherapy must learn to sit with this rage not to soothe, interpret, or categorise it, but to understand it as part of the lived texture of existence. To pathologise this affective reality is to misunderstand both its source and its meaning. Gordon (2013) argues the Black experience of existence offers an essential corrective to Western existentialism: it exposes the concrete conditions of being-in-the-world that Eurocentric theory abstracts into universal proposition. Blackness, far from being a

deviation, becomes a mirror through which the discipline can rediscover its philosophical depth.

Repositioning Blackness from pathologised to philosophised requires an ontological shift within existential training. It asks future therapists to see Black experience not as peripheral to existential inquiry but as central to it. Africana philosophy rooted in the works of Gordon, Baldwin, hooks, and others provides a critical and ethical foundation for such a reorientation. By embracing Black existential thought, psychotherapy can reclaim its capacity to respond authentically to suffering, dignity, and liberation.

In rehumanising Blackness as a site of philosophical inquiry, existential training reclaims its vitality. It ceases to treat difference as disturbance and begins to recognise it as revelation. What emerges is not a departure from existentialism but a deepening of its purpose: a practice grounded in truth, courage, and the full breadth of being human.

Slide 9: Culturally Responsive, Philosophically Grounded

The call for culturally responsive training within existential psychotherapy cannot be reduced to an exercise in inclusivity or awareness. It is, fundamentally, a philosophical demand an insistence that therapy engage honestly with the plural realities of existence. To be culturally responsive is not simply to acknowledge difference; it is to interrogate how power, history, and epistemology shape what counts as knowledge, as meaning, and as being.

In many training institutions, cultural competence is framed as an applied skill something that can be mastered through modules, checklists, or workshops. Nevertheless, this instrumental approach risks reinforcing precisely what it seeks to undo: the reduction of lived experience to technical content. Existential psychotherapy, grounded in the encounter between the self and other, must therefore move beyond competence to awakened consciousness. This requires epistemic justice, a commitment to recognising that knowledge emerges from positionality, and that the lived experiences of marginalised people hold philosophical importance.

Reflective practice, journaling, and supervision core components of existential training can serve as tools for transformation if used critically. When trainees are invited to examine how their identities, privileges, and biases shape their presence in the therapeutic space, these reflective methods become not self-indulgent but self-revelatory. However, when they are used without this critical lens, they risk reproducing colonial habits of self-centered reflection where whiteness remains the unmarked default of existence and humanity.

To become philosophically grounded is to cultivate reflexivity as an ethical stance rather than a technique. Gordon (2022) reminds us that to think existentially is to remain open to the world's complexity and contradiction. This openness must extend to cultural worldviews, linguistic traditions, and spiritual cosmologies beyond the Western frame. Only then can existential psychotherapy fulfil its promise of universality by engaging and not erasing difference.

A culturally responsive, philosophically grounded training thus becomes an act of liberation: an unlearning of superiority disguised as neutrality and a rediscovery of philosophy as lived relation. In this reorientation, the therapist is not merely culturally competent but existentially accountable to herself, others, and to the multiplicity of the human condition.

Slide 10: Lived Realities in Practice – Case Study

To understand the transformative potential of Black existential thought within psychotherapy, one must examine how it reconfigures practice itself. Consider a young Black man navigating systemic racism in both his community and workplace, struggling with alienation, anger, and a loss of purpose. Within conventional existential frameworks, the therapeutic inquiry might center on meaning-making: *What gives your life significance?* or *How do you respond to the inevitability of suffering?* While such questions are valuable, they risk abstraction if detached from the structural realities that shape this client's world.

A Black existential lens reframes the dialogue. It asks: *How has oppression shaped your experience of freedom? What does survival mean in your context?* and *How do systems of power constrain your capacity to choose?* This approach does not reduce existence to politics it restores its concreteness. As Fanon (1952/2008) asserts, the lived experience of the Black subject is always “a combat zone,” where selfhood is negotiated through resistance to dehumanising structures. The therapist's task, therefore, is not merely empathy but epistemic justice: to validate the client's knowledge of their world as real, intelligible, and meaningful.

Sartre's dictum that freedom is that you cannot control what other people do but you have control over yourself (1943/2003), becomes, in this context, a question of possibility under constraint. Freedom is not abstract autonomy but the capacity to act meaningfully within oppressive conditions. The Black existential therapist acknowledges that the client's struggle for authenticity is inseparable from systemic injustice and that therapeutic transformation requires witnessing not neutral observation but ethical presence.

This philosophical shift carries clinical implications. It demands that therapists relinquish the illusion of neutrality, engaging instead in relational accountability. Reflection, supervision, and dialogue become spaces to examine how the therapist's own positionality intersects with the clients. As de Beauvoir (1948/2018, p.73) reminds us, “To will oneself free is also to will others free.” Existential therapy, approached through Black and Africana philosophy, thus becomes an act of solidarity one that honors survival as resistance and restores dignity to the struggle for being.

Slide 11: Build, Do not Bolt On

The transformation of existential psychotherapy cannot occur through superficial inclusion or token gestures of diversity. To “bolt on” African philosophy or anti-racist modules to an existing Eurocentric curriculum is to reinforce the very hierarchy it seeks to challenge. True transformation demands reconstruction at the philosophical, pedagogical, and institutional levels a reimagining of what counts as legitimate knowledge and whose experiences shape the understanding of existence itself.

To emphasise, inclusion is not transformation. Inclusion operates within the logic of accommodation and asks, *how can we fit other voices into an existing framework?* Transformation asks a more radical question: *what if the framework itself is incomplete?* The former maintains Eurocentrism as the norm; the latter dismantles it. This distinction echoes Lorde’s (1984, p.110) insistence that “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.” If existential psychotherapy is to engage the fullness of human existence, it must build new tools and new conceptual, ethical, and methodological foundations drawn from multiple traditions of thought.

Reflective tools such as case studies, role-plays, and journaling, common in existential training, can serve as catalysts for this rebuilding if grounded in epistemic plurality. Rather than rehearsing Western dilemmas of meaning and choice, trainees might explore African conceptions of relational ontology, communal ethics, and interdependence. This shift moves the emphasis from individual authenticity to collective being, aligning with Ubuntu philosophy’s recognition that “a person is a person through other persons.” Such an approach reorients therapy from introspection alone to a shared, relational process of becoming.

Building, rather than bolting on, also requires institutional accountability. Programs must evolve beyond add-ons and electives to embed intercultural existential thought as a core philosophical concern. Assessment, supervision, and research must be restructured to reflect plural epistemologies and ethical standpoints. This is not a dilution of existentialism but its revitalisation: a return to its original concern with the human condition in its diversity and contradiction.

Rebuilding existential training, then, is an act of philosophical integrity. It invites the discipline to live its own values, to face anxiety, confront limitation, and embrace transformation as the essence of authentic existence. Only through such reconstruction can existential psychotherapy become truly universal: a dialogue among worlds rather than a monologue of one.

Slide 12: Decolonise, Rehumanise, Rebuild

The project of decolonising existential psychotherapy is not merely a political correction it is a philosophical and ethical imperative. Existential therapy claims to concern itself with the essence of human being, yet it cannot fulfill this task while remaining confined to Eurocentric understandings of existence. To decolonise is therefore to restore philosophy to its original calling: to inquire into the plurality of human meaning without presupposing which voices define it.

Decolonisation begins with recognition the acknowledgement that Western thought has positioned itself as universal while excluding other epistemologies. This exclusion has produced what Gordon (2013) terms a “disciplinary decadence,” wherein philosophy becomes self-referential and detached from life. Rehumanisation, in this context, is not a sentimental appeal but an ontological demand: to restore relationality, embodiment, and historical consciousness to the practice of therapy. The human being cannot be understood apart from their context cultural, political, and spiritual context.

Drawing on Africana existential philosophy, this process is both a critique and a creative act. Lorde’s (1984) assertion that they may allow us temporarily to beat the master at his own game, but they will never allow us to bring about genuine change, is not merely a warning; it is an invitation to innovation: an academic calling, envisioning training environments where no single knowledge is centred, where learning becomes a pluriversal encounter dynamic, contested, and just. Such a vision redefines existential training as an ethical community rather than a hierarchical institution.

To rebuild is to imagine new philosophical architectures: core curriculums where Sartre and Fanon, Heidegger and Gordon and Kierkegaard and hooks speak to one another in conversation, not hierarchy. It requires spaces where vulnerability, uncertainty, and dialogue are embraced as conditions of genuine inquiry. Decolonising existential psychotherapy does not mean abandoning its European roots but situating them within a broader human soil, where knowledge grows through connection rather than exclusion.

In rehumanising the field, existential psychotherapy reclaims its integrity as a discipline of liberation. The work of rebuilding is ongoing and collective. It calls therapists, educators, and students alike to inhabit the uncertainty of transformation, to think, to feel, and to act in ways that honour the fullness of human being.

Section 13: Rest and Reflection

The work of decolonising and rehumanising existential psychotherapy is not only intellectual; it is profoundly emotional, embodied, and spiritual. Transformation cannot occur through cognition alone it must engage the totality of the human being. Rest, therefore, is not withdrawal from the struggle but an integral part of it. To pause, to breathe, and to feel is to return to the body as the first site of knowing. Within both African and existential traditions, reflection and rest are inseparable from wisdom. As Fanon (1952/2008) reminds us, consciousness is not a purely mental act but an embodied awakening to being-in-the-world.

In the context of training and practice, rest represents a form of resistance. Within academic and therapeutic spaces, the demand for constant productivity mirrors the capitalist and colonial logics that fragment the self. The invitation to rest is thus a political and existential gesture, a reclaiming of time, of introspection, and of humanity. hooks (1988, p.131) identifies this as a radical act of self-preservation for those whose

existence has been historically devalued: “Caring for myself is not self-indulgence; it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.”

Reflection, in this sense, is not a passive review but an ethical stance. It requires courage to sit with discomfort the grief of recognition, the fatigue of resistance, and the uncertainty of becoming. Within existential pedagogy, this reflective stillness is essential. It allows trainees and practitioners to metabolise the truths encountered through dialogue, to integrate insight with compassion, and to transform awareness into responsibility.

This invitation to pause, then, is deeply philosophical. It echoes Heidegger’s notion of *Gelassenheit* (1927/1962); a letting-be that makes room for revelation. To rest is to resist defensiveness and to open oneself to change. In the stillness of reflection, we re-encounter our shared vulnerability as human beings. It is here, in rest, that philosophy becomes life again: breathing, feeling, and hopeful.

Section 14: Thank You

To conclude this exploration is to return to the heart of existential philosophy: the affirmation of life amid struggles. Clifton’s (1993, p.55) words “Come celebrate with me that every day something has tried to kill me and has failed” capture the existential truth that survival is not mere endurance but resistance. For Black therapists and trainees, survival within institutions that have long silenced their realities is an act of courage and creation. It is, as Clifton reminds us, a reason for celebration not of triumph over others, but of persistence in the face of erasure.

In this spirit, gratitude becomes both political and philosophical. It is gratitude not for what exists, but for what continues to emerge despite adversity. Our acknowledgment of shared struggle honors the collective dimension of transformation: that the movement toward justice and authenticity is never solitary. As de Beauvoir (1948/2018) argued, freedom is reciprocal we become free through one another. The gratitude expressed here is thus an affirmation of relational being, an existential recognition that our humanity is sustained through connection.

The closing invocation to the celebration also marks a shift from critique to creation. Decolonising existential psychotherapy is not solely an act of dismantling; it is an act of rebuilding grounded in love, solidarity, and hope. To celebrate survival is to claim space for joy as a philosophical force a refusal to let pain defines the entirety of being.

In thanking those who listen, learn, and act, we extend an existential invitation: to participate in the ongoing remaking of psychotherapy as a truly human endeavor. This work stands as a call to courage a reminder that speaking truth, especially from the margins, is itself an act of defiance and care. Through voice, reflection, and persistence, the project of rehumanising therapy continues, not as a moment, but as a movement toward freedom.

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