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Cultural Extensibility and the Ethics of Cohabitation: Exclusionary Identity, Anti-Blackness, and the Ontology of Culture

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ABSTRACT

This philosophical article examines the ontological assumptions underlying exclusionary claims of cultural preservation and racialised belonging. Contemporary debates on cultural identity frequently oscillate between pluralist recognition and defensive forms of exclusion, yet they rarely interrogate the conception of culture that renders such exclusion intelligible in the first place. To address this problem, the article introduces the concept of cultural extensibility in order to challenge the view that cultures exist as closed, self-identical, or self-sufficient entities. Drawing on hermeneutic phenomenology, relational ontology, postcolonial thought, critical phenomenology, and philosophy of race, the article argues that cultural identity develops through historically mediated and relationally constituted processes rather than through fixed cultural essences or insulated traditions. From this perspective, exclusionary identity claims rely upon a substantialist understanding of culture that denies the relational conditions through which cultural continuity becomes possible. The discussion further examines phenomenologically how racialised exclusion attempts to stabilise identity by restricting relational openness through affective orientation, perceptual fixation, epistemic closure, and defensive forms of cultural self-preservation. This process is described as a form of ontological contraction in which relational co-presence is reinterpreted as threat or intrusion rather than as a constitutive condition of cultural existence. The article concludes that anti-Black exclusion is not only ethically unjustifiable but also ontologically incoherent, and it proposes an ethics of cohabitation grounded in the historically mediated and relational structure of cultural being itself.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Problem Statement

Contemporary plural societies are increasingly shaped by migration, postcolonial entanglements, and global interdependence [1–3]. Yet this increased proximity has not produced a broader recognition. Instead, defensive forms of cultural closure continue to emerge, often justified through claims of preservation or continuity. While existing analyses explain such dynamics through prejudice, inequality, or institutional exclusion, they rarely examine the ontological assumptions that make exclusionary identity claims possible. Such claims presuppose that culture is a bounded and self-identical entity whose integrity depends on resisting alteration. The issue is therefore not only whether exclusion is unjust, but whether the ontology of culture on which it depends is itself coherent.

1.2. Literature Gap

Contemporary debates in social and political philosophy have examined racism through theories of structural injustice, recognition theory, epistemic oppression, and decolonial critique. Drawing in part from Hegelian dialectics, recognition theory has shown how identity is mediated through asymmetrical patterns of acknowledgment and denial [4]. Critical phenomenology has deepened this insight by demonstrating how racialisation operates at the level of embodied perception and spatial orientation [5–7]. Epistemologies of ignorance have shown how racial hierarchy is stabilised through socially organised misinterpretation [8–11].

Comparatively little attention, however, has been given to the ontological assumptions embedded in claims about cultural preservation. Discussions of racism frequently analyse inequality, misrecognition, or epistemic distortion without interrogating the deeper metaphysical picture that makes exclusionary identity claims possible in the first place. Conversely, hermeneutic and relational ontologies of culture—developed by thinkers such as Gadamer [12] and Glissant [13]—have seldom been explicitly mobilised in critiques of anti-Black hostility. Yet their implications for racialised exclusion remain under-theorised.

This lacuna is philosophically important. If exclusionary rhetoric relies upon a substantialist conception of culture—as bounded, self-identical, and preservable through closure—then critique must address not only injustice but ontological incoherence. Without clarifying what culture is, appeals to coexistence or recognition risk remaining externally normative. Their conceptual grounding remains uncertain. The present argument therefore integrates recognition theory, critical phenomenology, and epistemologies of ignorance into a prior ontological clarification. What is at stake is not merely intersubjective misrecognition but a deeper misunderstanding of cultural being itself.

What remains insufficiently addressed is a properly philosophical clarification of the ontology of culture presupposed in exclusionary identity claims. Anti-Black exclusion is approached here primarily as an ontological problem within continental philosophy rather than solely as a sociopolitical or ethical issue.

1.3. Thesis

This article advances the thesis that culture is intrinsically temporally and spatially extensible. Temporally, culture persists only through historically effected transmission, reinterpretation, and transformation within ongoing practices of understanding. Spatially, culture is constituted through relational encounter rather than enclosed origin. Cultural being therefore unfolds through extension across time and relational space rather than through self-identical preservation. Identity does not precede relation but emerges within relational fields that cannot be exited without distortion.

From this ontological clarification, a decisive normative implication follows. If cultural identity emerges through historical mediation and relational co-constitution, then exclusionary postures that seek to secure identity through racialised closure produce a performative contradiction. They attempt to preserve what exists only through transformation and relation by denying those very conditions.

It turns out that the argument unfolds across three interlocking registers. The argument moves from ontological

clarification toward phenomenological analysis before considering the ethical implications that emerge from these distortions. Through this layered analysis, anti-Black exclusion appears as both ontological incoherence and ethical deformation. The argument's central contribution is to show that racialised exclusion depends upon a substantialist conception of culture that collapses once culture is understood through hermeneutic temporality and relational spatiality.

The concept of cultural extensibility names the ontological condition under which cultural identity persists only through temporal mediation and spatial relation. Cultural extensibility describes the impossibility of self-contained cultural being: identity exists only insofar as it extends across historical reinterpretation and relational encounter.

Unlike existing relational ontologies, cultural extensibility explicitly integrates both temporal and spatial dimensions of cultural being. It designates not only the relational constitution of identity through encounter, but also its persistence through historically mediated reinterpretation. Its novelty lies in bringing these dimensions together within a single ontological framework.

If cultural extensibility names the expansion of identity through historical mediation and relational encounter, ontological contraction designates the inverse movement through which identities attempt to restrict, deny, or minimise those constitutive relations. The two concepts therefore function as complementary analytical poles within the argument.

Consistent with contemporary philosophy of race, race is understood not as a biological essence but as a historically produced and socially mediated system of classification. Blackness is approached as a racialised, political, historical, and phenomenological position shaped through colonial and postcolonial processes rather than as a fixed cultural or biological identity. Anti-Blackness refers to forms of exclusion, devaluation, or hostility directed toward subjects positioned within this racialised field. Racialisation designates the processes through which social meanings become attached to bodies, histories, and identities. Cohabitation refers to the shared condition of living within historically and relationally interconnected social worlds.

Anti-Black exclusion functions in this article as a privileged philosophical case through which broader dynamics of exclusionary identity become visible. The argument does not assume that only Black populations may experience discrimination or exclusion. Rather, Blackness occupies a distinctive place within modern histories of colonialism, racialisation, and social classification, making anti-Blackness a particularly illuminating site for examining how identities seek to secure themselves through narratives of separation, purity, and closure.

1.4. Method

The method adopted here is philosophical rather than empirical. It combines ontological clarification, phenomenological analysis, and normative reflection.

The discussion begins with an ontological account of culture developed through hermeneutic and relational approaches. The movement from ontology to normativity proceeds through phenomenological diagnosis. The argument does not infer ethical conclusions directly from relational ontology alone. Rather, it examines how the denial of relational co-constitution generates distortions of recognition, perception, and coexistence, from which normative implications emerge.

Gadamer's hermeneutics[12] is used to argue that culture persists through historically effected mediation—through transmission, reinterpretation, and application rather than inert preservation. Glissant's relational ontology[13], together with Bhabha's reflections on hybridity and negotiated articulation, further suggests that cultural identity is constituted through relation rather than enclosure[14]. Recent work on creolisation, opacity, and minor transnationalism[15–18] reinforces this relational understanding of culture by emphasising entanglement, mobility, and reciprocal transformation. These relational categories have since been extended across literary, translingual, and choreographic practice, indicating their reach beyond the contexts in which they were first formulated[19–21]. Culture is therefore approached here not as a fixed or self-contained substance, but as something that unfolds across time and relational space.

The analysis then turns to lived experience. If relational extensibility is constitutive of cultural existence, its deformation must also be understandable at the level of experience. Drawing on critical phenomenology and recognition theory[5–7,22,23], the discussion examines how relational existence may become distorted through racialised perception, affective orientation, embodied exposure, and asymmetrical recognition. Recognition theory, informed in part by

Hegelian dialectics[4], helps clarify how identity becomes mediated through unequal structures of acknowledgment and denial.

From there, the argument develops the normative implications emerging from this ontological and phenomenological analysis. Derrida's [24] account of hospitality and Levinas's[25] philosophy of responsibility provide the ethical horizon for this development. They are considered alongside analyses of sovereignty, bare life, and the structural production of rightlessness[26–29], which show how political belonging is constituted through the capacity to suspend it. What emerges is not an incidental failure of inclusion but a logic by which exclusion is built into the terms of membership itself.

This structural account is complemented by work attending to how such exclusion is lived, administered, and contested at the border and in law[30,31], where abstract categories of belonging meet the situated circumstances of those subject to them. Taken together, these discussions clarify how exclusionary identity involves not only political exclusion, but also a refusal internal to relational being itself.

This does not imply that we reject political regulation. The issue that we address here concerns the metaphysical absolutisation of cultural closure rather than the existence of political boundaries as such. In the final part of the analysis, we examine how relational distortion becomes epistemically stabilised. Drawing on Mills[8], Fricker[9], Dotson[10], Medina[11], and more recent extensions of epistemologies of ignorance[32–36], the article examines how relational interdependence may become obscured and institutionally reproduced through forms of organised ignorance and historical amnesia.

The critique of anti-Black exclusion thus unfolds across ontological structure, lived experience, ethical implication, and epistemic stabilisation. Cohabitation appears here not as a moral ideal externally imposed upon culture, but as a condition internal to cultural existence itself.

1.5. Outline

The discussion proceeds in five parts.

Section 2 examines the temporal dimension of cultural extensibility through hermeneutic ontology. Drawing on Gadamer's account of historically effected understanding, the article argues that cultural continuity depends on mediation, reinterpretation, and situated application rather than on static preservation or fixed inheritance.

Section 3 develops the spatial dimension of extensibility through relational thought. Engaging Glissant's ontology of Relation together with Bhabha's account of hybridity, the article argues that identity is constituted through encounter, creolisation, and negotiated articulation rather than secured through enclosure or cultural isolation.

Section 4 turns to the phenomenology of racialised encounter[5,22,37]. Bringing Fanon into dialogue with recognition theory, affect theory, and critical phenomenology, the article examines how relational extensibility becomes distorted in lived experience through perceptual fixation, affective orientation, dialectical misrecognition, and internalised constraint. It also considers how such distortions become stabilised through structured forms of ignorance and epistemic closure.

Section 5 addresses the normative implications of these distortions. Engaging Derrida's reflections on hospitality and Levinasian responsibility—while also attending to sovereignty, vulnerability, and political boundary-making—the argumentation suggests that exclusionary identity involves both performative contradiction and ethical refusal internal to relational being itself.

Section 6 brings these strands together and considers their implications for cultural self-understanding, pluralism, and epistemic reorientation. The article argues here that anti-Black exclusion depends upon an ontological myth of separation that cannot withstand philosophical scrutiny. Cohabitation therefore appears not as concession, but as a condition of cultural existence itself.

1.6. Contribution

This article contributes to contemporary debates in philosophy of race and social ontology by arguing that exclusionary identity relies upon a substantialist understanding of culture that becomes difficult to sustain once culture is approached through hermeneutic and phenomenological perspectives. Existing critiques of racial exclusion often focus on injustice, inequality, or misrecognition without fully examining the ontological assumptions that make exclusionary identity claims possible in the first place. By introducing the concept of cultural extensibility, the discussion approaches cultural identity as historically mediated and relationally

constituted, thereby showing that exclusionary identity is not only unjust but also conceptually unstable within the ontology of culture it presupposes.

Methodologically, the article brings together hermeneutics, relational ontology, critical phenomenology, epistemologies of ignorance, and deconstructive ethics within a single philosophical framework. Grounding normative reflection in ontological clarification and phenomenological analysis allows the discussion to remain connected to lived experience without reducing the argument to moral denunciation alone. The aim is not to impose external values upon supposedly autonomous identities, but to examine what occurs when the relational conditions of cultural existence are denied or restricted.

By reframing exclusionary identity as a form of ontological contraction rather than merely moral failure, the article contributes to ongoing discussions in continental philosophy, critical race theory, and political theory concerning plural coexistence, relational identity, and the conditions of shared social life. Its central claim is that racialised exclusion depends upon a substantialist conception of culture that loses coherence once culture is understood through hermeneutic temporality, relational spatiality, and phenomenological analyses of racialised experience.

2. Temporal Extensibility: Culture as Historically Effected Process

Exclusionary conceptions of culture presuppose that identity can be preserved through resistance to alteration. Before any normative evaluation can occur, this presupposition must be tested ontologically. If cultural identity is historical in its mode of existence rather than substantial or self-contained, then appeals to cultural fixity rest upon a misunderstanding of how identity persists through time. The question that must therefore be addressed first concerns the temporality of cultural being.

Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutic ontology provides the starting point for this discussion by suggesting that culture is temporally extensible because it exists only through historically effected understanding, mediated transmission, and situated application. Cultural continuity does not persist as static preservation but through historically mediated reinterpretation, a position that also resonates with phenomenological accounts of temporality as constitutive of meaning [38]. Historical mediation therefore appears not as a secondary addition to culture, but as part of its ontological structure.

2.1. Historically Effected Consciousness (Wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein)

In *Truth and Method,* Gadamer [12] introduces the concept of *wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein*—historically effected consciousness—to describe the way understanding is always shaped by history rather than positioned outside it. His well-known formulation, "In fact history does not belong to us; we belong to it" [12], challenges the Enlightenment image of an autonomous and self-transparent subject. The subject does not approach tradition from a neutral standpoint but is already situated within inherited horizons of meaning and interpretation.

Understanding, Gadamer further argues, is itself "an event of tradition" [12]. Rather than recovering fixed or inert content, understanding unfolds within an ongoing historical movement. If culture exists only insofar as it is enacted, interpreted, and transmitted, then it must also be understood as historically effected: it persists not as a stable substance but through continuing reinterpretation and renewal. Identity therefore remains inseparable from the process through which it is repeatedly rearticulated within changing historical situations [39]. Cultural identity cannot be temporally self-contained because its continuity depends upon mediated transmission and reinterpretation across time.

Temporal extensibility thus refers to a structural condition of cultural existence: culture continues through historically situated acts of understanding. Appeals to timeless cultural essence consequently misunderstand the historical processes through which cultural continuity is actually sustained.

2.2. The Rehabilitation of Prejudice (Vorurteil) and Horizon-Fusion

A second important development in Gadamer's hermeneutics concerns the rehabilitation of *Vorurteil* (*prejudice*). Against the Enlightenment tendency to treat prejudice primarily as an obstacle to reason, Gadamer argues that understanding is always historically effected: "the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgments, constitute the his-

torical reality of his being"[12]. Prejudices are therefore not simply distortions imposed upon otherwise neutral reason. They function as anticipatory orientations through which understanding becomes possible in the first place. Cultural continuity depends in part upon these inherited frameworks, even though they remain open to revision and reinterpretation.

Understanding develops through what Gadamer describes as the "fusion of horizons" (*Horizontverschmelzung*). A horizon refers to the range within which meaning becomes intelligible. Crucially, "the horizon of the present is continually being formed"[12]. This formation takes place dialogically through engagement with the past rather than through detachment from it. Therefore, tradition persists through reinterpretation in changing historical situations, not through the repetition of identical content.

From this perspective, cultural fixity becomes difficult to sustain. If horizons are continuously formed and reformed, identity cannot be preserved through immobilisation alone. Temporal extensibility follows from the historicity of understanding itself and from the ongoing dialogical processes through which meaning takes shape. Culture endures not despite transformation, but through it.

2.3. Application (Anwendung) and the Impossibility of Timeless Preservation

Application further confirms that understanding is always situated: meaning persists only through reinterpretation within changing historical contexts[12].

This should not be confused with relativism. Temporal extensibility does not imply arbitrary fluidity or the disappearance of continuity. Rather, it reconceives persistence as mediated continuity instead of static sameness (*Identität als Gleichheit*). Culture remains intelligible and socially binding, but its mode of existence is processual rather than substantial. Cultural stability is therefore sustained through historically continuous reinterpretation rather than through immobility or preservation in fixed form.

2.4. Counterarguments: Interpretation, Culture, and Relativism

Two objections may nevertheless be raised.

One possible objection is that hermeneutics primarily concerns textual interpretation rather than culture as such. Even if understanding is historically effected, it might still be argued that cultural institutions retain stable cores independent of interpretation. This objection, however, assumes that culture exists separately from meaning-laden practice. Institutions, symbols, and norms persist only insofar as they are understood, enacted, and transmitted by historically situated agents. If interpretation is historically mediated, then institutional reproduction is mediated as well. Hermeneutic historicity therefore extends beyond texts to social practices and institutional life. Epistemologies of ignorance further reinforce this point by showing how institutional knowledge itself remains historically structured[8,11].

A second concern is that continual reinterpretation risks dissolving identity into relativism. Gadamer explicitly rejects such a conclusion. The fusion of horizons preserves continuity precisely through dialogue within tradition rather than through detachment from it. Transformation occurs within inherited frameworks of meaning, not outside them. Temporal extensibility therefore does not abolish identity; it instead understands identity as historically dynamic rather than fixed or self-contained.

Culture exists only through historically effected understanding, revisable prejudgments, and situated application. Continuity is therefore mediated rather than static. Exclusionary appeals to unaltered tradition consequently rely upon a substantialist conception of culture that remains difficult to reconcile with hermeneutic ontology.

Temporality alone, however, does not exhaust the structure of cultural being. Cultural identity must also be understood in its spatial constitution through relation. Exclusionary rhetoric often concedes that traditions evolve internally over time while insisting that they possess a spatial core that must be protected from external intrusion. We must therefore turn from temporal mediation to spatial relation. If reinterpretation destabilises fixity across time, relationality further unsettles it across space.

3. Spatial Extensibility: Relation, Opacity, and the Co-Constitution of Identity

In Section 2, the article argued that culture is temporally extensible because it persists through historically effected

mediation. The discussion now turns to its spatial constitution through relation. Exclusionary rhetoric frequently concedes that traditions evolve over time while insisting that they possess a spatial core that must be protected from intrusion. Against this spatial substantialism, the present section argues that identity is ontologically relational. Encounter is therefore not accidental to culture but constitutive of cultural identity itself. If temporality destabilises identity across time, relationality destabilises it across space. Taken together, these two dimensions point toward an ontological understanding of culture in which identity is neither temporally fixed nor spatially self-enclosed.

3.1. From Rooted Identity to Relational Identity

In *Poetics of Relation*, Édouard Glissant distinguishes between what he calls "root identity" (*identité-racine*) and relational identity[13]. Root identity imagines itself grounded in a singular origin, filiation, and territorial purity, defining itself defensively against mixture and external influence. Within this model, identity is assumed to precede relation and must therefore be protected from contamination or alteration.

Glissant challenges this understanding through his concept of Relation, described as "the set of all relations that weave the world"[13]. Relation is not simply a matter of sociological contact or exchange; it concerns the ontological conditions through which identity takes form. Identity does not first emerge in isolation before later encountering others. It develops through encounter itself. As Glissant writes, "Each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other"[13] (see also Nancy[40]). Nancy similarly describes existence as being-with, emphasising that singular identities arise only within forms of relational plurality rather than through self-enclosed autonomy.

This relational perspective has been developed across several decades of scholarship. Britton[15] and Dash[16] establish relationality as an ontological alternative to cultural isolation within Caribbean literary and theoretical traditions; Gordon[18] extends creolisation into political theory as a method rather than a description; and Shannon and Hackett[19] demonstrate its purchase in contemporary educational practice. Lionnet and Shih's[17] notion of minor transnationalism draws attention to lateral and intersecting forms of relation that unsettle rigid centre–periphery models. Despite their differences, these approaches converge around a common insight: relational extension is constitutive of identity rather than optional or secondary to it.

If identity develops through relation, then spatial containment contradicts the very process through which identity is formed. Cultural being cannot therefore be understood as self-enclosed territory but rather as a dynamic field of interconnection and exchange.

3.2. Creolisation and the Myth of Purity

Creolisation refers to the transformations produced through cultural encounter, thereby challenging the idea of pure or self-contained origin[13]. Relation generates forms of cultural emergence and novelty that cannot be fully predetermined in advance.

Kopf asks whether creolisation can function as a post-migrant perspective, noting that Caribbean theory has typically addressed the state of society after migration rather than migration itself[20]; Jeyasingh extends opacity from an ontological category into a methodological one, treating it as a discipline of reading rather than only a property of cultural being[21]; while Dash[16] shows that relation intensifies specificity rather than dissolving it into homogeneity, and Bongie[41] insists that insular claims to identity persist within creolisation rather than being simply superseded by it. Even Hallward's critique of postcolonial abstraction cautions against separating relationality from material and historical constraints without thereby returning to substantialist conceptions of identity[42].

Attempts at spatial closure consequently seek to stabilise identities that have historically emerged through hybridity, exchange, and relation. Within a relational ontology, such closure becomes distortive because it denies the very conditions through which identity develops and persists.

3.3. Opacity and the Limits of Totalisation

Relational ontology does not imply homogenisation or the disappearance of difference. Glissant introduces the "right to opacity" precisely to resist the demand that the Other become fully transparent, reducible, or assimilable within dominant frameworks of understanding[13]. Opacity suggests that relational coexistence does not require complete epistemic mastery of the other. In this way, Glissant

avoids the false opposition between exclusion and assimilation. Exclusion treats the Other as threat, whereas assimilation reduces difference to sameness. Relation instead accepts incompleteness and reciprocity without requiring enclosure or uniformity.

Panaïté[43] further shows how Glissant's conception of relationality intersects with Derridean deconstruction in resisting totalising forms of universality while still preserving openness to relation. Identity therefore remains articulated through reciprocal incompletion rather than secured through isolation or claims to self-sufficient purity.

3.4. Reinforcement: Hybridity and the "Third Space"

Homi K. Bhabha's[14] account of hybridity reinforces relational ontology at the level of cultural articulation. In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha argues that meaning emerges within the "Third Space"—a site of translation and negotiation rather than repetition. Cultural authority is therefore continually rearticulated through encounter. Hybridity destabilises claims to originary purity by revealing that apparent unity is marked by ambivalence. Identity emerges through negotiation across difference rather than reproduction of intact origin.

Together, Glissant and Bhabha converge on a decisive conclusion: spatial closure rests upon a myth of intact origin. If identity is relationally co-constituted and negotiated through discourse, attempts to secure it through racialised exclusion lose their ontological grounding.

3.5. Counterarguments: Boundaries and Self-Preservation

We may consider here two objections.

A common concern is that relational ontology risks dissolving cultural specificity into indistinction. This objection, however, tends to conflate relation with fusion. Neither Glissant nor Bhabha argues for homogenisation. Opacity preserves difference, while hybridity describes how specificity is articulated through negotiation and encounter rather than through isolation. Boundaries may continue to exist, but they remain historically and politically negotiated rather than metaphysically fixed.

Another objection concerns the role of boundaries in cultural self-preservation. The present argument does not deny the necessity of political regulation. Administrative and juridical boundaries may remain necessary for political and institutional life. Communitarian concerns regarding continuity, shared memory, and collective self-understanding should not be dismissed. The present critique targets only the stronger claim that continuity requires ontological closure or cultural self-sufficiency. Benhabib[44] describes such processes as democratic iterations through which universal norms are continually reinterpreted within particular historical contexts. What is challenged here is therefore not regulation itself, but the attempt to transform political boundaries into metaphysical guarantees of cultural purity or self-sufficiency. Spatial extensibility can now be clarified more fully. Identity is constituted through relation and through ongoing processes of creolisation, negotiation, and reciprocal opacity. Cultural fixity across time and space consequently becomes difficult to sustain.

Ontological clarification alone, however, cannot fully explain why relational co-presence is so often experienced as threat or destabilisation. Ontology clarifies the structural conditions of cultural existence, but phenomenology is needed to understand how these conditions become lived, perceived, and distorted in experience. The discussion therefore turns toward racialised encounter, where relational extensibility may be experienced phenomenologically as intrusion, instability, or threat.

4. The Phenomenology of Racialised Encounter: Distortion, Affective Capture, and Dialectical Misrecognition

The preceding sections argued that cultural being is historically mediated and relationally constituted across space. Yet this ontological clarification alone does not fully explain the persistence of racialised exclusion. If relational extensibility is part of the structure of cultural existence, co-presence nevertheless continues to appear as threat, intrusion, or destabilisation within many racialised contexts. The issue therefore cannot be explained solely at the level of ontology. It must also be approached through lived experience and phenomenological distortion.

Relational extensibility is not absent from racialised

societies; rather, it becomes misperceived and deformed. Culture continues to develop through temporal mediation and relational encounter, while perception, affect, and recognition may reinterpret this openness as danger or instability. The discussion that follows approaches this deformation through questions of recognition, affective orientation, epidermalisation, epistemic stabilisation, and forms of existential entanglement.

4.1. Recognition, Objectification, and the Dialectical Field

Hegel's dialectic of recognition begins from the idea that self-consciousness emerges only through reciprocal acknowledgment[4]. Identity is therefore not self-generated or fully autonomous but mediated through recognition by another. Yet when recognition becomes asymmetrical, objectification appears: the master seeks independence while continuing to depend upon the bondsman's acknowledgment for the confirmation of selfhood.

Fanon radicalises this insight within the context of colonial racial hierarchy. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, he describes how the Black subject encounters a gaze that fixes rather than reciprocates[22]. The exclamation, "Look, a Negro!", marks the collapse of reciprocity into racial overdetermination. The subject is no longer encountered as interlocutor or equal participant in recognition, but as racial object. Recognition gives way to unilateral classification and fixation.

This distortion does not eliminate relationality; rather, it constricts and deforms it. The excluding subject remains structurally dependent upon the excluded in the process of stabilising identity and difference. Objectification can therefore be understood as a deformation internal to relational existence itself. Attempts to secure self-sufficiency through racial fixation continue to rely upon forms of dialectical entanglement that they simultaneously seek to deny.

4.2. Affective Orientation and the Spatialisation of Fear

If misrecognition operates at the level of perception, it is also structured affectively. Sara Ahmed[23] argues that bodies are oriented within affective economies that shape attention, proximity, and fear. Orientation is never entirely neutral. Through repeated affective associations, racialised bodies may come to signify danger, discomfort, or spatial disruption before any explicit judgment is made.

Massumi[45] describes affect as a pre-reflective intensity that precedes conscious evaluation. Fear therefore does not necessarily emerge after deliberate interpretation; it may already structure perception in advance. Within racialised contexts, the Black body can appear as already charged—hypervisible, excessive, or spatially out of place. Critical phenomenology further clarifies that these orientations do not operate primarily through explicit belief but through sedimented perceptual habits and embodied schemas[5,6]. Racialised perception becomes woven into ordinary structures of experience. Space itself begins to appear differentially organised: some bodies are perceived as naturally belonging, while others are implicitly seen as intrusive.

One may consider the example of a Black academic preparing to visit a colleague in Northern Europe and being advised not to wear "too much white clothing" because it might appear inappropriate within an institutional setting. The Black body wearing white became visually excessive within a space tacitly organised around white normativity. The irony, however, is that the fabric itself—cotton—is naturally white prior to its social coding, and historically much of the world's cotton production has depended upon Black labour and regions marked by colonial extraction. What appears here is therefore not a neutral perception of colour, but a historical sedimentation through which whiteness becomes symbolically territorialised and implicitly associated with normative ownership. A colour emerging from material nature is reinterpreted through racial imaginaries as though its unrestricted occupation by Black bodies constituted transgression or symbolic invasion. This example is not presented as empirical evidence in the sociological sense, but as a phenomenological indication of how apparently neutral symbols, spaces, and practices may already be spatially and affectively coded through racialised assumptions. Its significance lies less in the specific advice received than in the structure it reveals, whereby ordinary presence may be transformed into perceived excess or intrusion.

Space often presents itself as neutral, even though neutrality may itself function as a racialised background. Whiteness operates not only as pigmentation, but also as an unmarked spatial norm that remains socially presumed. When

the Black body occupies that position, its presence may be experienced not as ordinary variation but as disturbance. What is at issue here is therefore less explicit hostility than orientation itself. The Black subject does not enter a fully neutral space; space is already affectively organised in advance. Relational co-presence may consequently be experienced as intrusion before any dialogue has even begun. Fanon's account of overdetermination helps illuminate this structure. Attempts to regulate visibility or belonging continue to depend upon relational entanglement even while seeking to deny it.

4.3. Epidermalisation, Internalisation, and the Gaze

Fanon's notion of epidermalisation describes the way racial schema becomes attached to the body, shaping both external perception and lived self-experience [22]. The subject gradually encounters itself through imposed racial narratives and inherited structures of perception. The distortion deepens as the individual becomes not only objectified by others, but also partially alienated from itself through the internalisation of the racial gaze.

Lacan's [46] reflections on the gaze sharpen this analysis further. The gaze does not refer simply to the act of seeing, but to the structure within which the subject experiences itself as visible and exposed to the perception of others. Within racialised hierarchies, visibility becomes asymmetrical: the Black subject may become hypervisible as object while remaining unheard or unrecognised as interlocutor. More recent phenomenological work extends this insight: Antich [47] clarifies how phenomenological description can be reconciled with critical analysis, while Gündoğdu [48] shows how racial schemas constituted through histories of racial violence render Black bodies phobic objects, disproportionately exposed to violence enacted with impunity. The distortion therefore appears not as an isolated episode, but as part of the ordinary organisation of lived experience.

Yet even under these conditions, relational ontology is not suspended. Internalisation does not sever relation; it intensifies it under unequal conditions. Alienation here still reflects a form of relational entanglement rather than genuine separation, since the self continues to be mediated through structures of recognition, visibility, and dependence that it cannot fully escape.

4.4. Structured Ignorance and Institutional Stabilisation

Perceptual distortion alone cannot sustain exclusion; it must be stabilised. Attention must now shift from affective orientation toward epistemic structure.

Charles Mills describes racial domination as sustained through "white ignorance"—a structured pattern of misinterpretation that protects privilege by obscuring historical entanglement [8]. This ignorance is not individual error but socially organised non-knowing. It persists because institutions, interpretive frameworks, and practices of credibility attribution may systematically privilege some knowers while marginalising others. Fricker analyses testimonial and hermeneutical injustice [9], showing how certain groups may be denied epistemic authority or deprived of the interpretive resources necessary to make their experiences intelligible. Dotson extends this diagnosis through contributory injustice [10], while Medina emphasises forms of epistemic resistance [11]. Santos [36] further describes epistemicide within global knowledge production, whereby entire traditions of knowledge may be marginalised or erased. Recent extensions trace how white ignorance is sustained across distinct domains: Martín [32] distinguishes willful, cognitivist, and structuralist accounts and argues that the structuralist reading best explains observed patterns; Teo [33] identifies a white epistemology embedded in the method-centred empiricism of psychological science; Nikolaidis [34] shows that structural reproduction renders agent-centred educational remedies insufficient; and Habgood-Coote [35] extends the analysis to search engines and the social epistemology of technology.

Epistemic closure stabilises ontological myth. If relational entanglement is obscured, spatial coexistence can be narrated as intrusion rather than historical continuity. In this way, ignorance obscures the relational extensibility through which identity becomes possible.

4.5. Existential Unavoidability and the Deformation of Relational Being

The preceding analyses point toward a broader conclusion: relational extensibility cannot be suspended and instead becomes distorted. Racialised exclusion does not eliminate relation but reshapes it under conditions of asymmetry and denial. The excluding subject remains historically,

spatially, and affectively entangled with those it attempts to exclude. Processes such as objectification, affective fear, internalisation, and epistemic closure all continue to presuppose proximity and relational dependence. Even hostility testifies to the existence of a shared relational field rather than genuine separation.

The normative implications that follow do not arise from an external moral doctrine imposed upon culture. They emerge from the diagnosis itself. Once relational co-constitution is shown to be unavoidable, exclusion appears not merely as a moral choice but as a distortion of the conditions under which identity and coexistence become possible.

The analysis developed so far has argued that culture exists through temporal mediation and spatial relation. The phenomenological discussion has further shown how attempts to deny this extensibility deform it through misrecognition, affective distortion, and epistemic stabilisation. The normative question therefore emerges from within the diagnosis itself: if relational co-constitution is structurally unavoidable, what ethical and political consequences follow from attempts to deny it? The discussion can now turn toward questions of sovereignty, hospitality, and responsibility once the idea of fully self-contained cultural identity can no longer be sustained.

5. The Normative Bridge: Hospitality, Responsibility, and the Limits of Ethical Universalism

The ethical implications of relational extensibility can now be clarified more directly. The present analysis does not deny the existence of political boundaries, juridical authority, or institutional regulation. Political communities necessarily establish distinctions, enforce laws, and negotiate questions of membership and belonging. Political boundaries may remain necessary; the problem begins when they are treated as metaphysical guarantees of cultural purity. When sovereignty is mobilised to justify racialised exclusion in the name of protecting an allegedly self-contained cultural integrity, political practice shifts toward metaphysical absolutisation. What calls for critical examination is not regulation itself, but the transformation of historically contingent political arrangements into ontological claims about purity, separation, or civilisational self-sufficiency.

5.1. Hospitality and the Aporia of Conditionality

Jacques Derrida's reflections on hospitality help illuminate the tension between political regulation and ethical openness, a tension that recent scholarship has further explored through the aporias internal to hospitality itself[49]. Hospitality reveals that sovereignty never exists independently of relation, since the authority to admit, receive, or exclude already presupposes a shared relational field through which the home becomes intelligible in the first place[24].

When exclusionary rhetoric invokes sovereignty in order to protect cultural identity from racialised others, political authority is treated as though it could secure a form of metaphysical self-sufficiency. Yet if culture is historically mediated and relationally extensible across time and space, sovereignty cannot coherently be understood as insulation from relation. Political regulation may establish limits, conditions of entry, or institutional boundaries, but it cannot transform identity into something self-originating or insulated from relation. Under such conditions, juridical closure risks misunderstanding not only the nature of culture, but also the relational conditions under which sovereignty itself becomes possible.

5.2. Responsibility, Vulnerability, and Asymmetrical Exposure

Emmanuel Levinas radicalises the ethical implications of relational ontology by grounding responsibility in exposure to the other. In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas describes the face as interruption—an address that precedes reciprocity, contract, or deliberate choice[25]. Responsibility does not arise primarily from voluntary recognition, but from an already existing implication in proximity to the other. Relation is therefore not first chosen by the subject; rather, the subject discovers itself as already addressed and exposed.

Levinas does not, however, dissolve politics into limitless vulnerability. Ethical exposure exceeds political calculation without eliminating the need for institutions, law, or mediation. A constitutive tension therefore remains between infinite ethical responsibility and the finitude of political arrangements. From this perspective, framing racialised others as external threats distorts the structure of ethical relation itself, since the subject is never fully outside proximity but

always already implicated within it.

Contemporary analyses of vulnerability and rightlessness deepen this insight within political contexts. Agamben[26] examines forms of abandonment produced through sovereign power; Gündoğdu[27] shows how migrants occupy precarious positions within modern rights discourse; and Ziarek reframes vulnerability as a condition generating obligation rather than a deficit to be managed[28]. More recent discussions of border securitisation and migration governance[29–31] further illustrate how sovereignty often consolidates itself through narratives of threat, containment, and defensive closure.

These analyses do not negate the necessity of political regulation. They suggest, however, that vulnerability and exposure precede juridical ordering rather than emerging only after it. When anti-Black exclusion is framed as the defense of an intact or self-contained identity, it attempts to deny this prior condition of exposure by treating shared implication as optional contact rather than as a constitutive feature of social existence itself.

5.3. Performative Contradiction and the Ethics of Relational Being

At this point, the central normative claim of the argument can be clarified more directly. If culture exists only through temporal mediation and spatial relation, and if relational exposure precedes sovereign assertion, then exclusionary identity involves a performative contradiction. It attempts to defend identities that themselves emerge only through historical and relational extension while simultaneously denying those very conditions. Sovereignty is invoked as though it could provide insulation from relation, even though sovereignty itself presupposes the relational field within which it becomes meaningful.

The contradiction does not operate only at the level of abstract logic. As the previous section showed, exclusion also deforms perception, recognition, and knowledge within lived experience. Normatively, this deformation can be understood as a form of ethical refusal: a refusal to acknowledge shared entanglement, interdependence, and asymmetrical responsibility. Yet the excluding subject never truly escapes relation. What occurs instead is a narrowing of the horizon within which identity, understanding, and coexistence become possible.

The argument nevertheless must avoid moral simplification. Political communities continue to possess the authority to regulate membership, migration, and legal order. Benhabib's[44] account of democratic iterations illustrates how universal norms may be continually reinterpreted within particular historical and political contexts without collapsing into relativism. The critique developed here therefore does not reject governance or political boundaries as such. What it challenges is the attempt to ground those boundaries in a metaphysics of cultural self-sufficiency, purity, or ontological closure.

5.4. Cohabitation as Ontological Condition

Within this analysis, cohabitation appears less as a concession granted to external others than as a condition internal to cultural existence itself. Temporal mediation and spatial relation mean that identity is always already co-constituted through forms of historical and relational entanglement. Exclusionary identity attempts to reinterpret this condition as though it were merely contingent or externally imposed. Yet to deny cohabitation is ultimately to deny the very structure through which identity takes shape and persists. Anti-Black hostility, when justified in the name of preserving cultural integrity, therefore rests upon the fiction that integrity exists prior to relation and entanglement. The ontological and phenomenological analyses developed here instead suggest that such a fiction cannot be sustained.

The normative implication follows from this condition rather than being externally imposed upon it. Responsibility is not an additional moral obligation placed upon otherwise self-contained identities but emerges from relational existence itself. Hospitality is therefore not simply an act of exceptional generosity beyond ordinary social life, but an acknowledgment of a shared world already constituted through relation, exposure, and coexistence. Sovereignty may remain politically operative and institutionally necessary, yet it cannot coherently justify racialised exclusion in the name of ontological purity or cultural self-sufficiency.

6. Extensibility, Pluralism, and the Reconfiguration of Cultural Self-Understanding

The preceding analysis has argued that cultural identity takes shape through historical mediation and relational

interdependence and is shaped through phenomenological as well as epistemic processes unfolding within shared social worlds. The broader implications of this argument can now be clarified through questions of pluralism and democratic coexistence.

The question is no longer only whether anti-Black exclusion is unjust. It is whether the conceptual grammar through which exclusion is defended can withstand philosophical scrutiny once the ontology of extensibility is clarified.

6.1. Extensibility and the Limits of Multicultural Frameworks

The concept of extensibility reframes pluralism by suggesting that identity does not exist as a pre-given unit but develops within relational entanglement. While such frameworks have produced important normative gains, they frequently leave intact the substantialist model of identity that the present argument contests.

If culture is intrinsically extensible—historically mediated and relationally co-constituted—identity cannot be understood as pre-political possession subsequently recognised or misrecognised. It forms within shared entanglement. What is at stake here is less a conflict between unity and diversity than the acknowledgment or denial of relational plurality[2,50]. Gilroy's notion of conviviality points toward this insight by describing multiculture as an ordinary dimension of social life rather than as an exceptional condition requiring justification. Bhambra[51] similarly argues that European modernity is already structured through postcolonial entanglements, even where national narratives attempt to disavow those histories. Vertovec's[3] account of superdiversity documents important demographic transformations, though it does not always examine the ontological assumptions through which cultures continue to describe themselves as internally closed.

The concept of extensibility reorients these debates by placing relationality at the level of cultural being itself. From this perspective, anti-Black exclusion appears as an attempt to retroactively purify identities that were never historically or relationally pure to begin with.

6.2. Postcolonial Entanglement and Historical Amnesia

Temporal extensibility carries particular significance in postcolonial contexts. European national identities, for example, cannot be separated from colonial histories that reshaped economic systems, linguistic formations, political institutions, and cultural imaginaries. Yet these entanglements are frequently narrated as external episodes or peripheral events rather than as constitutive dimensions of modern identity itself.

Mills' analysis of white ignorance helps explain how such historical entanglements become systematically obscured within dominant frameworks of knowledge[8]. Santos[36] extends this diagnosis through the concept of epistemicide, showing how knowledge systems situated outside dominant epistemic structures are marginalised, suppressed, or erased. When colonial histories recede from collective memory, contemporary racialised presence can more easily be interpreted as intrusion rather than as part of a longer historical continuity shaped through empire, migration, labour, and exchange.

The denial of historical entanglement therefore reinforces the illusion of spatial separation and cultural self-sufficiency. The phenomenological distortion examined earlier—where relational co-presence is experienced as destabilising or invasive—depends in part upon this epistemic contraction. Anti-Black exclusion is sustained not only through fear or affective anxiety, but also through forms of historical amnesia that detach the present from the histories through which it was constituted.

Under these conditions, extensibility calls for a broader epistemic reorientation. To recognise culture as historically mediated is also to recognise that present forms of plurality emerge from long trajectories of entanglement, circulation, and co-constitution rather than from sudden disruption imposed from outside.

6.3. Democratic Self-Understanding and Relational Responsibility

If cultural identity is extensible, democratic self-understanding must also be reconsidered accordingly. Democracy cannot be understood solely as deliberation among self-contained constituencies or internally complete communities. It unfolds instead within forms of relational interdependence shaped by unequal histories, shared institutions, and ongoing processes of coexistence.

Benhabib's[44] concept of democratic iterations illustrates how universal principles are continually reinterpreted

within changing historical and political contexts. Yet such processes presuppose some acknowledgment of a shared world and mutual implication. When segments of the polity are represented as fundamentally external, alien, or incompatible with the social body, the conditions of democratic reciprocity begin to fracture. In this sense, relational responsibility—articulated through Levinasian exposure and Derridean hospitality—also acquires a civic and political dimension. It becomes part of the conditions under which democratic life itself remains possible rather than remaining confined to interpersonal morality alone.

Anti-Black exclusion undermines democratic coexistence precisely because it denies the relational structure through which democratic life is constituted and sustained.

6.4. Extensibility and the Risk of Romanticisation

A final clarification remains necessary. Affirming extensibility does not amount to romanticising plurality or denying the existence of conflict. Relations are also shaped by asymmetry, domination, exploitation, and violence. Creolisation does not dissolve hierarchy, just as hybridity does not neutralise material inequality or historical power. The present argument therefore does not claim that relational ontology automatically produces justice or reconciliation. It argues instead that attempts to deny relational ontology generate forms of distortion at ontological, phenomenological, and political levels. Conflict itself unfolds within conditions of entanglement; it cannot justify the fiction of fully separate or self-contained identities.

The phenomenological example concerning the territorialisation of neutrality illustrated how even ordinary spatial arrangements may encode asymmetry and racialised expectations. Extensibility does not erase such asymmetries or the realities of exclusion. It clarifies instead that these tensions continue to unfold within conditions of unavoidable proximity, interdependence, and shared historical relation.

6.5. Anti-Black Exclusion as Ontological Contraction

The broader implication of the argument can be stated more clearly: anti-Black exclusion is not merely a discriminatory practice or a political miscalculation, but a contraction of the relational horizon through which identity is sustained. Mbembe's account of racial reason similarly demonstrates how modern forms of exclusion depend upon narratives of separation and purification that obscure historical entanglement and mutual implication [52].

In total, the analyses of temporal mediation, relationality, affective orientation, and epistemic stabilisation suggest that exclusion cannot restore self-sufficiency or cultural purity. What it produces instead is a narrowing of the horizon within which identity, recognition, and coexistence become possible. The excluding subject remains historically and relationally entangled with what it seeks to reject. Cultural identity, therefore, cannot be purified through the denial of the very conditions that sustain and constitute it.

Extensibility consequently carries both diagnostic and critical significance. It reveals the instability of substantialist conceptions of identity while also exposing the existential and cultural costs of contraction. Anti-Black hostility ultimately impoverishes not only those subjected to exclusion, but also the broader cultural world within which exclusion itself continues to operate.

7. Conclusions

The central question guiding this analysis has been whether cultural identity can coherently be defended through racialised exclusion. The discussion argued that such exclusion depends upon a substantialist conception of culture that becomes difficult to sustain once culture is approached hermeneutically and relationally. Cultural continuity does not persist through insulated preservation, but through historically mediated reinterpretation and relational co-presence across time and space.

Cultural extensibility operates both structurally and existentially, shaping how subjects inhabit social space, interpret difference, and approach recognition. Identity does not precede relation as a self-contained substance; it emerges within relational fields that cannot be abandoned without distortion. Attempts to eliminate this openness do not restore coherence or purity, but instead produce defensive closure, narrowing the horizon within which identity remains intelligible.

Relational extensibility, however, does not guarantee ethical reciprocity or political justice. As Fanon's analysis

of overdetermination and Mills' account of structured ignorance both demonstrate, relational co-presence may become phenomenologically and epistemically distorted. Recognition can collapse into objectification, proximity may be experienced as threat, and epistemic closure can obscure the histories of interdependence through which identities were constituted. Exclusion therefore does not produce genuine separation. What it produces instead is deformation within a relational field that cannot ultimately be abolished.

The normative discussion further clarified that hospitality[24] and responsibility[25] articulate ethical demands emerging from relational existence itself, even where racial hierarchy suppresses or disfigures those demands. Anti-Black exclusion consequently appears not only unjust, but internally contradictory. Mbembe's[52] account of racial reason as a logic of separation shaping modern political imaginaries converges closely with the ontological critique developed here: exclusion attempts to preserve identity by denying the historical and relational processes through which identity is constituted. Balibar's[53] notion of "equaliberty"—the inseparability of equality and freedom—further illuminates the political implications of this contradiction.

Contemporary discussions of multiculturalism, superdiversity, and ordinary multiculture reinforce the present argument by showing that plurality is a structural feature of contemporary societies rather than an exceptional condition[2,3,50]. Modood[54] further argues that interculturalism is best understood as a version of multiculturalism rather than an alternative paradigm, indicating that both are responses to a plurality already presupposed.. Cohabitation therefore appears less as an external burden imposed upon self-sufficient identities than as one of the conditions through which identity itself takes shape.

If cultural being unfolds through extensibility across time and space, then cohabitation must be understood as a condition of identity rather than as a secondary concession granted after identity is formed. Ethical responsibility arises not from abstract generosity but from recognition of the inescapable relationality that already constitutes us. The question is no longer whether relation occurs, but how it is inhabited when its constitutive openness is experienced as threat rather than mutual articulation. The ethics of cohabitation begins from an ontological insight reinforced through phenomenological analysis: culture persists through extension across time, across space, and across difference. Relational exposure precedes attempts at sovereign self-assertion. Political regulation may be necessary, but it cannot ground ontological separation. Exclusionary identity seeks insulation from the relational conditions that render political identity intelligible.

The implication should not be confused with either romantic pluralism or naïve universalism. Extensibility does not abolish conflict or asymmetry. It instead situates both within a shared relational field. Anti-Black exclusion consequently constricts the horizon within which cultural vitality becomes possible.

The critique developed throughout this article is ontological as well as political: exclusion contradicts the structure through which cultural being becomes intelligible. The article's contribution to philosophy of race and social ontology lies in demonstrating that exclusionary identity claims depend upon a substantialist conception of culture that becomes difficult to sustain once culture is understood through the dual framework of cultural extensibility and ontological contraction. These concepts provide a new vocabulary for analysing how identities persist through relation while simultaneously attempting to deny it. To deny this is to deny the conditions of one's own belonging and to deform the relational field within which both self and other become possible.

In this sense, exclusion weakens the very relational field through which cultural identities continue to endure and become intelligible.

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