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The Rationality of Revolt and Fanon's Relevance, 50 Years Later

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What does it mean to speak of Fanon's relevance fifty years after his death? I suggest that one element to consider might be an epistemological challenge signaled by social movements of the wretched of the earth. Fanon's wretched of the earth is not a story of wretchedness and suffering but of self-fashioning movements which through action become aware of themselves as subjects as they become aware of the betrayals of the leaders who speak in their name. The challenge to university-trained intellectuals who want to aid these popular movements is to hear these voices and support their articulation. Fanonian practices call for a shift in epistemology. Critical of research paradigms developed by the World Bank or other international funding agencies, and focused instead on the articulation of needs from the bottom up, dialogues about education (in and outside the academy) for liberation can be rekindled.

"Relevance"—from a Latin word *relevare*, to lift, from *lavare*, to raise, levitate—to levitate a living Fanon who died in the USA over fifty years ago (December 1961) in cognizance of his own injunction articulated in the opening sentence from his essay "On National Culture": "Each generation must out of relative obscurity discover its mission, fulfill it, or betray it" (*Wretched*: 1 206).[1] The challenge was laid down at the beginning of the fiftieth year of Fanon's death (as well as the fiftieth of his *The Wretched of the Earth*) which began with Revolution—or at least a series of revolts and resistance across the region known as the Arab Spring.[2]

[1] The Constance Farrington translation of *Les damnés de la terre* is designated *Wretched*: 1 and the Philcox translation *Wretched*: 2

[2] This article was written in December 2011. Today (in 2015) we would need to begin by patiently analyzing the counter-revolution within the revolution: The Manichean whirlwind into which all the progressive movements from the Arab spring must contend. Rather than updating this paper to reflect new realities, I have rather left it to stand on its own not alone for historical veracity but quite simply because the dialectic demands that we begin not with conclusions or from hindsight but from within the historic moment and that we reflect on our times willing to engage the contradictions of that moment without knowing the outcome.

Fanon begins *The Wretched* writing of decolonization as a program of complete disorder, an overturning of order—often against the odds—willed collectively from the bottom up. Without time or space for a transition, there is an absolute replacement of one "species" by another (*Wretched*: 1 35). In a period of radical change such absolutes appear quite normal, when, in spite of everything thrown against it, ideas jump across frontiers and people begin again "to make history" (*Wretched*: 1 69-71). In short, once the mind of the oppressed experiences freedom in and through collective actions, its reason becomes a force of revolution. As the Egyptians said of January 25th, 2011: "When we stopped being afraid we knew we would win. We will not again allow ourselves to be scared of a government. This is the revolution in our country, the revolution in our minds." What started with Tunisia and then Tahrir Square has become a new global revolt, spreading to Spain and the Indignados (indignants) movement, to Athens and the massive and continuous demonstrations against vicious structural adjustment, to the urban revolt in England, to the massive student mobilization to end education for profit in Chile, to the "occupy" movement of the 99%.

And yet, as the revolts inevitably face new repression, elite compromises and political maneuverings, Fanonian questions—echoed across the post-colonial world—become more and more timely. (How can the revolution hold onto its epistemological moment, the rationality of revolt?) Surely the question is not whether Fanon is relevant, but why is Fanon relevant now?

Contexts and Geographies

In the penultimate chapter of *Frantz Fanon: A Portrait* Alice Cherki notes that Blida Psychiatric Hospital in Algiers still bears his name, that Fanon has a boulevard and a high school for girls, named after him, though young people have no idea who he is. After independence in Algeria, Fanon was quite quickly marginalized.

Fanon was dead before Algeria gained its independence, yet "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness" ("Les mésaventures de conscience nationale")

chapter of *The Wretched* (based on reflections on his West African experiences as well as his concerns about the Algerian revolution) is a fairly accurate portrayal of what Algeria became with oil money playing an enormously important role in pacifying the population and paying for a bloated and ubiquitous security force.

To speak about relevance, then, is also to speak about historic context. Fanon was recruited into the FLN during the battle of Algiers. Although a committed anticolonialist he had not moved to Algeria to join a revolution but to take up the job as director of psychiatry at Blida-Joinville Hospital. It was a job he wanted and he put enormous energy into fighting to reform how psychiatry was practiced in the hospital. He created space—both practical and intellectual (such as reading groups) for himself and his colleagues—to institute a kind of Tosquellean[3] inspired institutional sociotherapy to humanize the asylum where the patient would become "a subject in his or her liberation" and the doctor an "equal partner in the fight for freedom" (*Portrait* 36). In a sense that would become Fanon's political philosophy. The Algerian war of national liberation—declared a year after he arrived—politicized him and radicalized him, as he began to see and treat its effects in the hospital and in his work. He was asked by the FLN to use his skills as a psychiatrist to treat those who had been tortured. He began to clandestinely treat the tortured while treating the torturer as part of his hospital work. Indeed his comments in *L'An cinq de la revolution Algérienne* ("Year Five of the Algerian revolution" published as *A Dying Colonialism* in English) bear this experience out not only in his withering critique of the medical profession involved in torture but also in his desire to find the human being behind the colonizer believing that liberation would put an end to the colonized and the colonizer (*Dying* 24) and his condemnation (though understanding) of those who have thrown themselves into revolutionary action with "physiological brutality that centuries of oppression give rise to and feed" (*Dying* 25). At Blida the situation became untenable and

[3] Fanon studied and practiced with Tosquelles before leaving France for Algiers. Tosquelles who was a radical critic of psychiatric practice and was carrying out a program of sociotherapy at Saint Alban hospital in France, had grown up in Catalonia and had been the head of psychological services for the Republicans during the Spanish civil war.

he simply couldn't continue. As he wrote in his letter of resignation, how could he treat mental illness in a society that drives people to a desperate solution? Such a society, he added, needs to be replaced (*Toward* 53). With the authorities closing in on the Hospital, which was suspected as a hotbed of support for the FLN, he resigned before he could be arrested and began to work full time for the revolution.

This was part of Fanon's context.

At the same time it was not surprising that, when the opportunity arose, Fanon would join a revolutionary movement or as Edouard Glissant (*Discourse* 25) put it, act on his ideas.[4] And yet, at the same time it was not only acting on ideas because for Fanon ideas were always influenced by practice and were also transformative. One can see in *Black Skin White Masks* that he was in a sense already a revolutionary, and given the chance he would "take part in a revolution" as Jean Ayme put it (quoted in *Portrait* 94). But at the time Fanon was a revolutionary who was not deeply political. Fanon had been introduced to Ayme, a psychiatrist, anticolonist activist and Trotskyist, in September 1956 when he had given his paper at the first Congress of Black Writers and Artists. And in Ayme's Paris apartment, in early 1957—where he stayed before leaving to join the FLN in Tunis—he spent his time reading about revolutionary politics.

He had been recruited by Ramdane Abane, the Kabylian leader of the FLN who became Fanon's mentor. Abane, who has an airport named after him in Kabylia, had been a key figure in the 1956 FLN conference held in the Soummam valley, which had criticized the militarization of the revolution, insisted on a collective political control, and put forward a vision of a future Algeria that remained Fanon's.[5] They both, argues Cherki, believed

[4] Glissant writes (*Discourse* 25) that "it is difficult for a French Caribbean individual to be the brother, friend, or quite simply the associate or fellow countryman of Fanon. Because, of all the French Caribbean intellectuals, he is the only one to have *acted on his ideas*, through his involvement in the Algerian struggle." Fanon made a "complete break" and yet Martinican intellectuals have failed to recognize him almost at all. He adds (*Discourse* 69) that they could not find in Fanon a figure who "awakened (in the deepest sense of the word) the peoples of the contemporary world."

[5] Additionally it is likely that Fanon took over the Soummam Platform's analysis of the agrarian question: "The massive participation of the population (peasants) in the Revolution … has

in the "revolutionary dismantling of the colonial state" (*Portrait* 105); a principle that remains crucial to the contemporary global revolt. Central to the Soummam platform was a vision of the future Algeria as a secular democratic society with the "primacy of citizenship over identities (Arab, Amazigh, Muslim, [Jewish], Christian, European, etc.)" (Abane, "Brief Encounters" 39). It was an idea emphasized (in italics) in *Year 5*: "in the new society that is being built there are only Algerians. From the outset, therefore, every individual living in Algeria is an Algerian" (*Dying* 152). They are (self) creating a people and a future rather than being defined by some essential identity: "We want an Algeria open to all, in which every kind of genius can grow" (*Dying* 152, 32). Abane was liquidated by the FLN at the turn of 1958. Fanon died before Algeria gained its independence in 1962 and was quickly marginalized, then dismissed as irrelevant and out of touch for not understanding the power of Islam (a charge that has been repeated for 50 years). In France, the story was similar. *Les Damnés de la terre* was criticized as romantic and Fanon dismissed as an interloper to the Algerian revolution. The book only sold a few thousand copies.

Translated into English in 1963 by an African-American poet, Constance Farrington, *The Wretched of the Earth* was published in 1965 in the United States, going through innumerable printings and becoming a best seller in the revolutionary year of 1968 when it was subtitled A Handbook for the Black Revolution. As Kathleen Cleaver puts it ("Back to Africa" 214):

> *The Wretched of the Earth* became essential reading for Black revolutionaries in America and profoundly influenced their thinking. Fanon's analysis seemed to explain and to justify the spontaneous violence ravaging across the country, and linked the incipient insurrections to the rise of a revolutionary movement.

The colonial world that Fanon wrote about "bore a striking resemblance," she added ("Back to Africa" 215), "to the world that American blacks lived."

profoundly marked the character of resistance … For the peasant population is deeply convinced that its thirst for land can only be satisfied by the victory of national independence" (Abane, "Brief Encounters" 38).

Of course the influence had been mutual since the descriptions of Black American life by writers such as Richard Wright played an important role in the development of Fanon's *Black Skin White Masks*. For Cleaver ("Back to Africa" 216), what was especially relevant to the Black Panthers "was Fanon's analysis of colonialism and the necessity of violence". And associating Algeria with Fanon, some Panthers and other Black American revolutionaries fled to Algeria in the late 1960s. Thus it was through the Panthers that Fanon returned momentarily to Algeria, but significantly shorn of his critique of national independence. Read so narrowly, Fanon was reduced to just another anticolonial figure. Yet just as Eldridge Cleaver was opening the First Pan African Cultural Festival in 1969, Fanon had made his way across the Limpopo into the heart of settler colonial Africa—apartheid South Africa with Black Power inspired Black theology writers providing an important link between Fanon and Biko. Travelling to South Africa, Fanon became essential for the development of Black Consciousness; a movement that was explicitly a praxis-oriented philosophy which became a crucial turning point in South Africa's anti-apartheid struggle.

My recent work *Fanonian Practices in South Africa* can be understood in terms of thinking about Fanon's relevance. It begins with Biko's engagement with Fanon. Biko, who has a hospital named after him in Pretoria, was murdered in 1977 and warned in a Fanonian vein in the early 1970s that it was possible to create a "capitalist black society, black middle class," in South Africa, and "succeed in putting across to the world a pretty convincing, integrated picture, with still 70 percent of the population being underdogs" ("Interview" 42). You see, hospitals, airports, roads as well as shack settlements, can be renamed after revolutionaries, yet it turns out that not much changes for the bulk of the people. Now nearly 40 years after Biko's statement, Fanon's "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness"—an essay written from within the Algerian revolution—provides a forecast for the postindependent nation, and a keen analysis of the dreadful cost of its failure is an uncanny portrait of postapartheid South Africa. So the second moment of Fanonian practice is a critique of contemporary postcolonial reality. In other words, the lasting value of employing Fanon's critical insights and method.

The source is not only *The Wretched*, where he calls the national bourgeoisie "unabashedly … antinational," opting, he adds, for an "abhorrent path of a conventional bourgeoisie, a bourgeois bourgeoisie that is dismally, inanely, and cynically bourgeois" (*Wretched* 2:99), but also *Black Skin White Masks,* which concludes with Fanon's disgust of bourgeois life, which he considers sterile and suffocating. In the Antilles there have been struggles for freedom, he adds, but too often they have been conducted in terms and values *given by the white master* and creating profoundly ambivalent situations and neurotic behaviors. Fanon left the Antilles to study in France, but after his World War Two experiences he no longer believed in the French mission and profoundly disapproved of Césaire's support for assimilation. Instead, he argued that while the French Black was "doomed to hold his tongue" the American Black was screaming against the "curtain of the sky," referring directly to Richard Wright's *Twelve Million Black Voices*. Published five years later, Wright's collection *White Man Listen* specifically an essay "The psychological reactions of oppressed people", articulates with *Black Skin White Masks*. Wright's critique of Mannoni's *Prospero and Caliban*[6] was similar to Fanon's critique in *Black Skin* but Fanon had also moved on. *White Man Listen* is interestingly dedicated to Eric Williams and to "the Westernized and tragic elite of Asia, Africa and the West Indies—men who are distrusted, misunderstood, maligned by left and right." Fanon wrote about these elites in *Black Skin* and in *The Wretched*. Indeed they remain crucial to the postindependence situation, but in a section of the *El Moudjahid* in October 1959 titled "Les idées et les faits" Fanon reviewed (the article is unsigned, but I am assuming it is by Fanon) Wright's book critically because of its singular focus on the tragedy of these elites. To Fanon, Wright's work felt distant to the real

[6] Wright's review of the English translation of Mannoni's book (which was published in 1956) in *The Nation* (Oct 20, 1956) was similar to Fanon's critique in *Black Skin White Masks*. Titled "The Neuroses of Conquest," Wright praised Mannoni's book for focusing on the psychology of the "restless" Europeans who set out for a world "that would permit free play for their repressed instincts," but he criticized Mannoni for creating the impression that the Madagascar "natives are somehow the White man's burden." Like Fanon's alienated Black, "the native", Wright argues, vainly attempts "to embrace the world of white faces that rejects it" and in reaction to this rejection "seeks refuge in tradition." But he concludes "but it is too late" there is "heaven in neither."

life and death struggles for liberation (and liberty) that were taking place across the continent and to which Fanon was intimately connected.

The Reality of the Nation

The damnation of the world's majority inscribed in the Manichean geographies so well described by Fanon in *The Wretched* does not end with the negotiated settlement and the withdrawal of formal colonial rule. The violence that orders colonialism, the violence that follows the colonized home and enters every pore of their body, is reconfigured in the contemporary world of razor wire transit camps and detention zones, in rural pauperization and in the shanty towns and shack settlements. It is the silent scream of much of the world's population, who appear most of the time without solidarity, without agency, without speech. Beyond the gated citadels, beyond the zones of tourism, in the zone of often bare existence, there seems no way out. And yet, at a moment like ours there is all of a sudden made absolutely clear the rationality of rebellion. So, the shocking relevance of a Fanonian political will.

Yet more than a simple us and them, the "we" for Fanon was always a creative "we," a "we" of political action and praxis, thinking and reasoning. Indeed this was not only his critique of colonialism but also of the neocolonial afterlife. "Colonialism is not a thinking machine," Fanon argues, but all too often its aftermath, the new nation, is mired in the same mindlessness, indeed a stupidity created by the national bourgeoisie's will to power often mediated by crude force against the very people who made liberation possible. In contrast, Fanon's "we," for example, is wonderfully articulated in Derek Walcott's poem, "The Schooner Flight": "Either I'm nobody or I'm a nation." It is the nobodies, the damned, the impoverished and landless who for Fanon becomes the source, the basis, the truth of the "reality of the nation" (the first title of *A Dying Colonialism*).

The articulation of these movements with Fanon, is the third element of *Fanonian Practices*. Since this notion of truth has created some concern

among scholars, let me try to explain it, for it can't be understood without a notion of how social change creates subjectivity. Fanon "is no fan of folklore and its modes of authenticity," argues Radkrishnan. "He is interested in the self-fashioning of the people toward a legitimate postcolonial national consciousness. I would even say that Fanon is not so much interested in the task of authentic representation … but the task of producing the people." And by producing themselves, he adds "they are creating the subjectivity that they want to be" (*World Between* 95).

In other words, in a period of social change what becomes obvious seemed just earlier outrageous. Who could have imagined great political changes such as the fall of the Berlin Wall or the end of apartheid? Outside these rather grand events are the local and grassroots movements that conceptually open up space for thinking that seems not only outside the realm of the possible but often encourage voices that are often silenced. Fanon intimates in *Year 5* and in *The Wretched* that these voices are much louder and understood more easily when conceptualized in terms of the rationality of revolt.

For example, the land question is an essential but often unspoken issue for post-apartheid South Africans expressing the structural legacies of colonialism and apartheid and the unfinished character of South Africa's liberation, but the landless were not invited to the 2011 UN conference on climate change in Durban, South Africa, though they experience the full force of extreme weather and have to spend their time dealing with it. At the time I received an article by Reverend Mavuso of the Rural Network in South Africa, an organization of poor and landless rural people and part of the poor people's alliance, that reminded me of Fanon's critique of tourism, which he viewed as a quintessential postcolonial industry with the nationalist elites becoming the "organizers of parties." This is not just a Caribbean experience but a global one and has become the experience of post-apartheid South Africa with private game parks and Safaris taking over land.

Presented to the world as "eco-tourism", the Reverend gets straight to the point: "game farming and the tourism industry are evicting the poor, "rob[ing us of our] … land … *and replac[ing us] … with animals*" (my emphasis). In post-apartheid South Africa, thousands are evicted with the

promise of jobs but the jobs turn out to be few, as poorly paid domestic workers or security guards.

In short, in contrast to exclusive global conferences, a truly humanist environmentalism begins with the realities, the needs and experiences of the poor. It is an epistemological challenge, a shift in the geography of reason.

Fanon argues in the conclusion to *The Wretched* that we have to work out new concepts. Where will those new concepts come from? Fifty years after *The Wretched of the Earth* I am suggesting that we consider the *maturity of the struggle* that is expressed in the rationality of the global rebellions. For Fanon, to engage this reason is not synonymous with systematizing "indigenous knowledge" or culture. It is the rebellion—which is at the same time always for Fanon a mental liberation—that encourages nuance and encourages radical intellectuals engaged in and with these movements to "put their theoretical knowledge to the service of the people" (*Wretched* 1: 113) and work out new concepts in a non-technical, non-professional and concrete language in the "the practice of action" (*Wretched* 1:147). Working out new concepts and discussions of liberation are often the first casualty of a movement facing repression and violence. And yet it is these very conditions, when activists consider reflexive thought a luxury and a hindrance to action, that cry out for the "opening of minds" and the imagination.

"We imagine cities where politicians, policy makers, engineers and urban planners think with us and not for us," argues S'bu Zikode, the former president of Abahlali baseMjondolo, expressing the right to the city in the most concrete terms. Abahlali baseMjondolo—part of the subtitle of *Fanonian Practices*, which translates as people who live in shacks, is an organization of about 30,000 shack dwellers in South Africa that was created in 2005 after the residents of one shack community realized that land that had been promised was being cleared for other buildings. The organization is decentralized, autonomous, self-reliant and deeply democratic. What is interesting about Abahlali is its self-organization and thinking born of experience and discussion in what they call the "university of the shacks." They call it living learning. Quite in contrast to technical education, learning is a collective and living thing mediated by their experience of struggle. Abahlali confronts the

"fact of shackness" and turns it on their head. Dismissed and dehumanized, they insist on being counted in the new South Africa. Their idea of "citizenship" (including all who live in the shacks in democratic decision making regardless of ancestry, ethnicity, gender, age etc.) connects with Fanon's political notion of citizenship formed in and from the social struggle. So when Zikode speaks of imagination, it is one produced collectively by long discussions in the shack settlements. "We imagine cities where the social value of land is put before its commercial value," he continues. "We imagine cities where shack settlements are all offered the option of participatory upgrades and where people will only move elsewhere when that is their free choice. We imagine the quick improvement of local living conditions by the provision of water, electricity, paths, stairs and roads while housing is being discussed, planned and built. We imagine cities without evictions, without state violence being used to disconnect people from electricity and water and without any repression of organisations and movements. We imagine cities without the transit camps that have become the permanent alternative housing solution for many poor people since the declaration of the Millennium Development Goals by the United Nations. We reject, completely, the way in which the Millennium Development Goals have reduced the measure of progress to the numbers of 'housing opportunities delivered' when in fact progress should be measured in terms of people's dignity as this is understood by the people themselves" ("Upgrades").

Such imaginings come from thinking and discussions that jibe with Fanon's notion of political education. He presents what he calls the militant who wants to take shortcuts in the name of getting things done not only as anti-intellectual but *atrocious*, inhuman and sterile. Instead, he insists the search for truth is the "responsibility of the community" (*Wretched* 2:139). In *The Wretched*, Fanon speaks of the meeting, of this coming together, as the practical and ethical foundation of the liberated society, as "a liturgical act"; liturgical acts which "are privileged occasions given to a human being to listen and to speak … and put forward new ideas …" (*Wretched* 1:195).

Again at the local level, in *The Wretched* Fanon gives the seemingly banal example of lentil production during the liberation struggle, writing of the

creation of production/consumption committees among the peasants and FLN which he says encouraged theoretical questions about the accumulation of capital: "In the regions where we were able to conduct these enlightening experiments," he argues, "we witnessed the edification of man through revolutionary beginnings" because people began to realize that "one works more with one's brain and ones heart than with one's muscles" (*Wretched* 2:133, see 1:292).

Talking of the political economy of food he speaks of an education for liberation, "We did not have any technicians or planners coming from big Western universities; but in these liberated regions the daily ration went up to the hitherto unheard-of figure of 3,200 calories. [But t]he people were not content with [this] …. They started asking themselves theoretical questions: for example, why did certain districts never see an orange before the war of liberation, while thousands of tons are exported every year abroad? Why were grapes unknown to a great many Algerians whereas the European peoples enjoyed them by the million? Today, the people have a very clear notion of what belongs to them."

This type of shift in cognition represents a shift in epistemology.

3. Education for liberation?

The mandate for the College of the Bahamas is to "foster the intellectual development of students and the wider community by encouraging critical analysis and independent thought" and the Fanon symposium is considered part of the project to attain University status through contributing to that discussion. Yet critical and independent thought can never be guaranteed and certainly can't be assured by a university. In this final section I want to consider the problematic of a university in the postcolony as it articulates with movements and thinking outside of it.

Real grassroot social movements open up new spaces for thinking. Yet on the other hand the global university of the 21st century not only often looks elsewhere but actively seeks to suppress these spaces. The quest to be

"world class" is couched by the term "excellence" seen through a neocolonial prism and neoliberal vision of monetizing everything. At best the new movements become researched—the paradigms often developed by the World Bank or other funding agencies—they are never allowed to ask theoretical questions. It is a neocolonial arrangement.

Recognizing that the colonized intellectual committed to social change is fundamentally alienated from the people, Fanon suggests a methodology that fundamentally challenges the elitism, internalized values and ways of thinking they have imbibed. Perhaps the same, often depending on context, can be said of the postcolonial intellectual. In *Black Skin White Masks*, for example, Fanon argues that this alienation and neurosis is a normal and expected development, that is to say a product of books, newspapers, schools, as well as texts, advertisements, films, radio—what we might call hegemonic culture. How then do we go about creating space for a critical humanities as a consciously *decolonizing* project (by decolonizing I do not simply mean the formal end of colonialism but, following Fanon, the form and content of pedagogies and practices devoted to the decolonization of the humanities and the articulation of what Fanon called a new humanism, a truly worldly emancipatory humanism)? Since such a conception runs counter to the university in the global market place that judges itself in those terms, what is to be done within the situation and places we find ourselves? Also on what philosophic ground and from what principle do we ask the question? Certainly, we cannot take the existence of a public sphere, of public intellectuals, and any claim of intellectual autonomy as either guaranteed or unproblematic.

For Fanon education is always political education and in practice all education is ideological in all its forms of socialization and in its disciplines. In other words education helps us organize our lives, helps us think and act, helps us think and create images of justice. Fanon means something different by political education. Just as for Fanon culture has to become a fighting culture, education is committed to total liberation. Decolonial education has to be a total critique and a transformative experiential process. Indeed this notion of education as transformative is often recognized on the private

level in the rhetoric of individual entrepreneurship that often powers the discourse of the university's value, but the issue for a decolonial *national* education is an education that helps create a social consciousness and a social individual. Fanon is not concerned with educating the power elites to lead but to promote self-confidence among the mass of people; to teach the masses, as he puts it, that everything depends on them. This is not simply a version of community or adult education and certainly not of a hyperdermic notion of conscientization. Let me give an example that focuses less on content than form. In *A Dying Colonialism* Fanon has an essay on the radio, "the voice of Algeria." What becomes clear is the importance of the form of the meeting. He describes a room of people listening to the radio, and the militant—namely the teacher—is among them, but (jammed by the French) there is only white noise on the radio. After a long discussion the participants agree about what has taken place; the teacher becomes an informed discussant, not a director. The form of the class room is a democratic space, and the result is in a sense the point that political education is about self-empowerment as social individuals. It is a new collectivity, a new solidarity. The reference to the voice of Algeria is simply an example that helps to emphasize the processes at stake. The wider issue of the politics of pedagogy and curriculum must include the geography and architecture of the postcolonial university, its buildings, its gates, its barriers, it classrooms and all its spatial set ups. Colonialism, Fanon argues, is totalitarian. It inhabits every relationship and every space. The university produces and reproduces reification and thus has to be thoroughly reconsidered. But that reconsideration doesn't come in one fell swoop; it is a process and a praxis, but one that also must include its philosophy and its raison d'être.

This is not a call to the barricades even if it is a call to ideological combat to have one's ears open, to not confine new development in *a priori* categories. In other words, a decolonial praxis would have to begin from the movement from practice not simply where the people dwell in those thousands of revolts taking place across the country but in their self-organization. Ideological combat, or a fighting culture, as Fanon explains in *The Wretched,* is quite simply engaged intellectual work. In other words, and this is obvious,

it is not about intellectuals going to the rural areas to pick up a scythe and be with the people. I am not saying that that can't be done, but that is not intellectual work, and it certainly does not challenge the division between mental and manual labor. So to conclude, what makes possible the intellectual capacity to see into the reasons for popular action, or in short, the rationality of revolt?

In the revolutionary moment of the anticolonial struggle Fanon writes of the "honest intellectual," who, committed to social change, enters what he calls an "occult zone," engaging the notion of the transformation of reality with a real sense of uncertainty while also coming to understand what is humanly possible. This zone is a space that is being shaped by a movement which, he says in "On National Culture," is beginning to call everything into question (*Wretched* 1:227). "The zone of hidden fluctuation" (*Wretched* 2:163) or "occult instability" (*Wretched* 1:227) "where the people dwell" is not a ghostly movement but is corporeally alive. If honest intellectuals feel the instability of it, it is because they cannot really take a living role, that is to say a disalienated role, in this movement unless they recognize the extent of their alienation from it (*Wretched* 1: 226). But the intellectual's role need not be a mysterious one. Rather it can be quite practical, grounded in a sharing of reason where trust is implicit. This of course means that the intellectual must give up the position of privilege and begin to comprehend that the "workless," "less than human" and "useless" people do think concretely in terms of social transformation (see *Wretched* 1:127). After all, this new zone of movement and self-movement—what one might also call a radical zone of dialectical leaps in thought and activity—is a space where souls "are crystallized and perceptions and lives transfigured" (translation altered *Wretched* 1:227; 2:163). Fanon's language is almost transcendental here but Fanon is not speaking of some heavenly space of some future afterlife; he locates the space very much in the contingent now and that is being lived, quite practically and unstably, in the present. This ramshackle *movement* from practice as a form of theory (see *Marxism and Freedom*), that is to say as both force and reason, is inherently uncertain and also, at the same time, *unexceptional*. It challenges education as it is commonly accepted (instru-

mental, technical or even the professionally "critical") and decenters it, moving it closer to the reason or reasoning of so many of those who have been considered unreasonable, but who in a dialectical logic are implicitly proposing a new humanism.

One of the challenges of my book *Fanonian Practices in South Africa, from Biko to Abahlali* is epistemological; it is to think of thinking from the underside of humanity, if you will—where a genuine rupture, the leap from necessity to freedom, can be born. The struggle school is a struggle, as Richard Pithouse puts it. And let's be clear for activists who are connected with the University, sometimes that school comes into contradiction with the University system and can have dire costs both in terms of employment and in terms of threats of violence. Fanon talks about "snatching" knowledge from the colonial universities; he is also aware of the great sacrifices that this can entail. In *The Wretched* he makes a point to distinguish between the hobnobbing postcolonial intelligentsia and the honest intellectual who abhors careerism, distrusts the race for positions, and who is still committed to fundamental change even if he or she presently does not see its possibility.

What if the vaunted position of "intellectual" does not require a degree from a "world class" institution? The public intellectual without a university accreditation is becoming almost unthinkable. But to be relevant the national university has to be transformative, self-critical and also open to the experiences and minds of the common people who have been often excluded; not simply an accrediting agency for service industries, the university instead must be dedicated to the growth of every kind of genius.

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