Michael Burawoy

What Fanon says corresponds to nothing. It is even dangerous to make the Algerians believe the things he says. This would bring them to a utopia. And I think these men [Sartre and Fanon] contributed to what Algeria became because they told stories to Algerians who often did not know their own country any more than the French who spoke about it, and, therefore, the Algerians retained a completely unrealistic utopian illusion of Algeria... [T]he texts of Fanon and Sartre are frightening for their irresponsibility. You would have to be a megalomaniac to think you could say just any such nonsense.

Pierre Bourdieu

Bourdieu’s stance toward Marxism becomes more hostile as we move from Marx to Gramsci and now to Fanon. Bourdieu has abiding respect for the brilliance and insights of Karl Marx and, indeed, as I argued in the first lecture his sociology can be seen as an extension of Marx’s political economy into the realm of culture. It is a political economy of culture. While Bourdieu wants to distance himself from Gramsci – his notions of hegemony, consent, consciousness, ideology and above all the organic intellectual – even here one can detect a niggling respect as he turns Gramsci’s ideas against the communist party.

When it comes to Fanon there is no love lost as we see in the above quote from an interview with James Sueur. He mentions Fanon even more rarely than Gramsci but when he does, it is with venom: “But above all I wanted to get away from speculation – at that

1 From an interview with James Le Sueur, cited in Sueur, Uncivil War, p.282
time [1960s], the works of Frantz Fanon, especially *The Wretched of the Earth*, were the latest fashion, and they struck me as being false and dangerous” (“Fieldwork in Philosophy,” p.7). So the conversation I am about to recount could never have taken place, but nonetheless it is important to construct. We have to let Fanon speak back.

The enmity of Bourdieu for Fanon – there is no evidence that Fanon even knew Bourdieu -- is perhaps all the deeper because they lived in Algeria at the same time, but worlds apart: the one an objective researcher sympathetic to the plight of the colonized, attempting to give the colonized dignity by excavating the truth of their lives while the other, a psychiatrist from Martinique trained in France, dealing directly with the victims of violence on both sides of the colonial divide. The one was attached to the university and ventured into communities as research sites, while the other worked in a mental hospital before committing himself to the liberation movement. To use Gramsci’s terms again, you might say, as a first approximation, the one was a traditional intellectual while the other was an organic intellectual. Certainly, as we shall, see these are conceptions of intellectual they defended in their writings. Inevitably, their own practices as intellectuals are more complex.

Bourdieu’s most well known writings, based on Algeria -- *An Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1972, 1977) and its subsequent transformation into *The Logic of Practice* (1980) – were written long after he had left and they removed Algeria from the context of colonialism. The people, the Kabyle, to whom he refers in these heavily theorized treatises live in a timeless, context free world. By contrast, his less well known works,
written either while he was there or soon thereafter focus more directly on the effects of colonialism – *The Sociology of Algeria* (1958), *Work and Workers in Algeria* (1963), *The Uprooting* (1964). These earlier works are less meta-theoretical but instead wrestle with the problematics of modernization in the very real context of settler colonial rule in Algeria. It is these early writings that are the ones to compare and contrast with Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). If Bourdieu’s project was the reconstruction of modernization theory, Fanon’s project was the reconstruction of Marxism. I shall argue that Fanon’s theory of colonialism and revolution can be seen as the adaptation of Gramsci (whose work, as far as I know, he had never read) to the colonial context.

**Convergent Biographies**

Bourdieu and Fanon are in Algeria at the same time, during the intensive struggles for national liberation (1954-1962). Bourdieu arrived in Algeria in 1954 to do his military service whereupon he becomes absorbed by the fate of the Algerian people. He stays on, taking a position at the University of Algiers, turns from philosophy to ethnology and sociology, and dives into research into all facets of colonial life. Wading into war zones, he becomes a chronicler and witness to the evolving anti-colonial struggles, until his presence becomes politically untenable. He is forced to leave Algeria in 1961 whereupon he returns to France to embark upon a career as sociologist, indelibly imprinted by his Algerian experiences.

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2 The English versions to which I will refer are *The Algerians* (1962) and *Algeria 1960* (1979) (shortened version of the French *Work and Workers in Algeria* (1963).
Fanon arrives in Algeria in 1953, a year before Bourdieu, from France where he had recently completed a degree in medicine and psychiatry in Lyons. In Algeria he is appointed head of the Blida-Joinville Psychiatric Hospital and it is through his patients that he learns of the traumas and horrors of colonialism. Curiously, he also makes field trips to the Kabyle, exploring their social and psychological life in situ. Involving himself in the liberation struggle he is expelled from Algeria in 1956, whereupon he goes to Tunis where he continues his psychiatric work and then to Accra where he becomes a roving ambassador for the FLN (The Algerian National Liberation Front) in different parts of North and West Africa. He dies of leukemia in 1961, just before Algeria achieves independence, but not before he finishes *The Wretched of the Earth*, the bible for liberation struggles across the world.

We might say that both Bourdieu and Fanon were well prepared to develop original interpretations of their Algerian experience. Bourdieu grew up in a small village in the Béarn, where his father graduated from sharecropper to postal employee. Only his brilliance as a scholar took him all the way to the École Normale Superieure. Fanon grew up in Martinique in a Creole family, with middle class aspirations, before entering the Free French Army in 1943 and after the war studied in Lyon. They both had bitter experiences of marginalization in France, the one based on class to which Bourdieu alludes in *Sketch for a Self-Analysis* and the other based on race that Fanon exposed in his celebrated, *Black Skin, White Masks*. They were well equipped to recognize the abominable racial exclusions and oppression that were the essence of colonialism. Still, their formal training had to be adjusted to the new context. They both converged on
sociology – the one from philosophy that for Bourdieu was far too removed from the study of lived experience and the other from psychiatry that had difficulty grasping the structural and systemic character of colonial oppression.

**Colonialism and its Supercession**

Given their divergent embeddedness in colonial Algeria, one might expect Bourdieu, the French sociologist who remains in Algeria after military service and Fanon, the Martiniquan psychiatrist, already subjected to racism in France, to adopt different stances toward the colonial situation. Such an expectation of divergence is intensified if one takes into consideration Bourdieu’s later condemnation of Fanon’s writing as “speculative,” “irresponsible,” and “dangerous.” One can only be surprised, therefore, by the striking parallels in their assessment of the structure of colonialism, of the war against colonialism, and of the supercession of colonialism. To convince you of their uncanny convergence I will quote extensively from two texts, both written in 1961, one year before Algeria’s independence, namely Bourdieu’s article “Revolution Within the Revolution” that was added to his book, *The Algerians* and Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*.

We can start with the very meaning of colonialism which both view as a system of domination in which force prevails. Bourdieu writes,

> In short, when carried along by its own internal logic, the colonial system tends to develop all the consequences implied at the time of its founding – the complete separation of the social castes. Violent revolution and repression by force fit in perfectly with the logical coherence of the system... Indeed, the war plainly revealed the true basis for the colonial order: the relation, backed by
force, which allows the dominant caste to keep the dominated caste in a position of inferiority.

(“The Revolution within the Revolution,” p.146)

Fanon’s language is more evocative, but the meaning is similar:

Their first encounter was marked by violence and their existence together—that is to say the exploitation of the native by the settler-- was carried on by dint of a great array of bayonets and cannons. (The Wretched of the Earth, p.36)

For Fanon, like Bourdieu, the colonial situation implies domination but also separation, or more precisely segregation -- a fundamentally unequal segregation that admits of no compromise:

The zone where the natives live is not complementary to the zone inhabited by the settlers. The two zones are opposed, but not in the service of a higher unity. Obedient to the rules of pure Aristotelian logic, they both follow the principle of reciprocal exclusivity. No conciliation is possible, for of the two terms, one is superfluous. (The Wretched of the Earth, pp.38-9)

Parallels in their description of colonial domination are echoed in their accounts of the subjective experience of colonialism. Thus, for example, Bourdieu writes that “respect and dignity” is the first demand of the dominated because they have experienced colonialism as ‘humiliation or alienation” (p.151). In the same way Fanon writes that colonialism “dehumanizes the native, or to speak plainly it turns him into an animal” (p.42). But “[The native] knows that he is not an animal; and it is precisely at the moment he realizes his humanity that he begins to sharpen the weapons with which he will secure its victory” (p.43). As Bourdieu says, echoing Fanon:

The colonial situation thus creates the “contemptible” person at the same time that it creates the contemptuous attitude; but it creates in turn a spirit of revolt against this contempt; and so the tension that is tearing the whole society to pieces keeps on increasing. (The Algerians, p.134)
While Bourdieu’s idea of a caste system perhaps implies a more harmonious order than Fanon’s racial order, he has no doubt that the colonial system sows the seeds of its own destruction, a “great upheaval,” in which “the great mass of peasants … have been carried along in the whirlwind of violence which is sweeping away even the vestiges of the past” (p.188) Held together by violence it could only be undone by violence.³

That only a revolution can abolish the colonial system, that any changes to be made must be subject to the law of all or nothing, are facts now consciously realized, even if only confusedly, just as much by members of the dominant society as by the members of the dominated society…

Thus it must be granted that the primary and indeed the sole radical challenge to the system was the one that system itself engendered; the revolt against the principles on which it was founded. (“Revolution Within the Revolution,” p.146)

Fanon, similarly, writes of the necessity of violence to overthrow the order:

The native who decides to put the program into practice, and to become its moving force, is ready for violence at all times. From birth it is clear to him that this narrow world, strewn with prohibitions, can only be called into question by absolute violence. (The Wretched of the Earth, p.37)

Moreover, both see the cathartic and unifying effect of violence. In Bourdieu’s language the war dissolves “false solicitude,” attempts at conciliation and all forms of concession are so many tactics of the dominant to hold on to their power: “…attempts at trickery or subterfuge are at once revealed in their true light. The war helped to bring about a heightened awareness” (p.153). Repression and war leads to the spiraling of hostilities, the deepening of the schism that divides the two sides. The war becomes a

³ In Pascalian Meditations Bourdieu writes of the difficulty of changing the habitus, calling for all sorts of bodily practices. Fanon is saying the same, the internalization of oppression is so deep that the colonized can only transform themselves through violence.
cultural agent, dissolving resignation, replacing symbolic refusal of colonial domination, for example in the insistent wearing of the veil, what Bourdieu calls traditional traditionalism, with aggressive demands for rights to welfare, education. Pride, he says, replaces shame.

The feeling of being engaged in a common adventure, of being subject to a common destiny, of confronting the same adversary, of sharing the same preoccupations, the same sufferings and the same aspirations, widened and deepened the sentiment solidarity, a sentiment which was undergoing at the same time a veritable transformation as the idea of fraternity tended to lose any ethnical or religious coloration and became synonymous with national solidarity. (“Revolution Within the Revolution,” p.162)

This is the “revolution within the revolution,” the revolutionary transformation of consciousness, the substitution of an assertive solidarity for a resentful deference. How different is this revolution within the revolution from Fanon’s account of the national liberation struggle?

We have said that the native’s violence unifies the people… Violence is in action all-inclusive and national. It follows that it is closely involved in the liquidation of regionalism and of tribalism… At the level of individuals, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect. (The Wretched of the Earth, p.94)

Both Fanon and Bourdieu concentrate on the destruction of the peasantry through the expropriation of land. Fanon writes: “For a colonized people the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity” (p.44). Bourdieu writes:

The peasant can exist only when rooted to the land, the land where he was born, which he received from his parents and to which he is attached by his habits and his memories. Once he has been
uprooted there is a good chance that he will cease to exist as a peasant, that the instinctive and irrational passion which binds him to his peasant existence will die within him. (p.172)

While the land is central to both, Bourdieu’s analysis is far richer in that it examines details of the resettlement camps created during the Algerian war, the forced removals conducted in the name of protecting the natives, but clearly aimed at flushing out the national liberation army from its bases of support in the rural areas.

Finally, if Fanon is guilty of speculation and utopianism so too is Bourdieu. Let us first hear Fanon who writes of two paths – the National Bourgeois road and the National Liberation – the former leading to dictatorship and repression and other to a participatory democracy. “The bourgeois leaders of underdeveloped countries imprison national consciousness in sterile formalism. It is only when men and women are included on a vast scale in enlightened and fruitful work that form and body are given to that consciousness. … Otherwise there is anarchy, repression, and the resurgence of tribal parties and federalism” (The Wretched of the Earth, pp.204-5). Bourdieu, too, arrives at the same question of socialism or barbarism:

A society which has been so greatly revolutionized demands that revolutionary solutions be devised to meet its problems. It will insist that a way be found to mobilize these masses who have been freed from the traditional disciplines and thrown into a chaotic, disillusioned world, by holding up before them a collective ideal, the building of a harmonious social order and the development of a modern economy capable of assuring employment and a decent standard of living for all. Algeria contains such explosive forces that it could well be that there now remains
only a choice between chaos and an original form of socialism that will have been carefully designed to meet the needs of the actual situation. (*Revolution in the Revolution*, pp.192-3)\(^4\)

Notwithstanding differences in rhetorical style, the two critics of colonialism converge in their assessment of the colonialism and its denouement. That being the case what is the source of Bourdieu’s venom? It’s not clear that Bourdieu’s account is any less “dangerous”, “speculative” and “irresponsible” than Fanon’s. This being the case is it Fanon’s engaged stance that Bourdieu objects to? In this regard Bourdieu presents himself as the outsider evaluating political options, whereas Fanon is the insider, clearly identified with the National Liberation Struggle, diagnosing the disaster that would befall Algeria if it took the Nation Bourgeois Road. Or is it the theoretical framework that Bourdieu dislikes? In contrast to Bourdieu, who views colonialism through the lens of modernization theory -- the passage from traditional society to modernity, Fanon views it through the Marxist lens of the transition from capitalism to socialism. We shall unearth the divergences embedded in these theoretical frames, first, before considering their very different political stances.

**Bourdieu: Between Tradition and Modernity**

One might rightly be skeptical of putting Bourdieu in the camp of modernization theory if only because of his abiding concern with domination and reflexivity, not usually the concerns of modernization theorists! Still what little he has of a theory of history is

\(^4\) Writing with Sayad in 1964, Bourdieu analyzes the possibilities of socialism, very much in terms familiar from Durkheim. They cast doubt on the feasibility of self-organized, decentralized socialism based on autonomous peasant organization of the farms vacated by colonialists just as they fear the possibility of a centralized authoritarian socialism imposed from above. Like Fanon they hope for a educative leadership responsive to needs from below. They easily fall back, however, on the cultural legacies of tradition to explain economic and political regression.
reminiscent of Durkheim but especially Weber, namely the unexplained advance of
differentiation, understood as the rise of relatively autonomous fields (analogous to
Weber’s value spheres) without any serious consideration of the type of society that
might lie beyond the present. Like Weber Bourdieu is critical of the present, and like
Weber does not provide any escape from or diminution of domination.

The roots of Bourdieu’s modernization theory can be found in his writings on
Algeria. It is modernization theory with a difference. First, and most obviously, while
Bourdieu repeatedly refers to colonialism as the clash of civilizations, this is a very
unequal clash as regards the material and political forces each side can summon up (The
Algerians, p.117, pp.119-120). He is most critical, therefore, of the culturalist
interpretation of Algerian society that ignores the coercive context of colonialism. In
Algeria, 1960 he explicitly criticizes Daniel Lerner’s Passing of Traditional Society for
his characterization of modernity as recognition of other, the expression of empathy, and
as a rationality freely chosen by people. Bourdieu argues that modernity and tradition, as
orientations to the world, are not freely chosen but spring from specific material
conditions.

Inspired by Weber’s Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism Bourdieu asks
what one might mean by traditional and modern ethos. Undoubtedly, this is where
Bourdieu is most original, drawing on Husserl, he argues that modernity involves an
orientation to a future that is rationally planned whereas traditionalism involves a
becoming of the future out of the present, a repetition of the present. He pins modernity
and tradition on different classes within the colonial context – a stable working class has the security to think imaginatively and rationally about future alternatives whereas the peasantry is stuck in an eternal cycle of the present. However, the unstable, marginal, uprooted semi-employed “subproletariat” of the cities and the rural proletariat, displaced from their lands into resettlement camps, live from hand to mouth. They exhibit a traditionalism of despair, oriented to the immediacy of the here and now, cognizant of the possibilities of an alternative future which they are denied, their traditionalism is markedly different from “traditional traditionalism” which knows no future other than one continuous with the present.

Curiously, this leads Bourdieu to the orthodox Marxist position that the Algerian working class, because it is rooted in stable employment, is revolutionary while the uprooted peasantry or urban subproletariat can only break out into spontaneous, senseless revolt.

On the one hand, there is the revolt of emotion, the uncertain and incoherent expression of a condition characterized by uncertainty and incoherence; on the other hand, there is revolutionary radicalism, springing from the systematic consideration of reality. These two attitudes correspond to two types of material conditions of existence: on the one hand the sub-proletarians of the towns and the uprooted peasants whose whole existence is constraint and arbitrariness; on the other hand the regular workers of the modern sector, provided with the minimum of security and guarantees which allow aspirations and opinions to be put into perspective. Disorganization of daily conduct prohibits the formation of the system of rational projects and forecasts of which the revolutionary consciousness is one aspect. (Algeria 1960, p.62)
The uprooted may be a “force for revolution” but not a “revolutionary force,” that is they cannot self-consciously promote and rationally organize the transformation of society.

The latter possibility is reserved for the working class!

To those who have the “privilege” of undergoing permanent and “rational” exploitation and of enjoying the corresponding advantages also belongs the privilege of a truly revolutionary consciousness. This realistic aiming at the future (l’avenir) is only accessible to those who have the means to confront the present and to look for ways of beginning to implement their hopes, instead of giving way to resigned surrender or to the magical impatience of those who are too crushed by the present to be able to look to anything other than a utopian future (un futur), an immediate, magical negation of the present. (Algeria 1960, p.63)

What a contrast with the working class depicted in Distinction that is unable to recognize its own subjugation, limited in its imagination and bound by necessity. Yet in the above formulation of the revolutionary working class there is no reference to the peculiarity of the colonial working class that would make it revolutionary, so it remains a mystery how to reconcile these two perspectives. Perhaps, we can put this down to Bourdieu’s youthful “speculative” sociology that had yet to fully develop the notion of symbolic domination.

As we shall see he was combating different intellectual enemies: in France he was fighting the Trotskyists, the Communists, the Maoists, etc. who believed in a revolutionary working class whereas in Algeria he was fighting against Fanon and the FLN who claimed the peasants formed a revolutionary class. (See Algeria 1960, p.62)

Be that as it may the analysis so far is of individual consciousness, very much in the Weberian tradition that seeks to demarcate traditional from modern disposition. Bourdieu’s contribution is to focus on time horizons. When it comes to comparing traditional and modern society he is closer to Durkheim’s Manichean world of
mechanical and organic solidarity. At one extreme, Bourdieu reconstructs a harmonious order of self-reproduction through rituals of gift exchange and kinship patterns, and expressed, for example, in the organization of the Kabyle house. This order, unsullied by colonialism, is dominated by a strong collective consciousness, reminiscent of Durkheim’s mechanical solidarity. This romantic redemption has been defended by Bourdieu and his followers as reversing the contempt of colonialism towards its subjects, giving them the dignity of an autonomous culture. Silverstein refers to this, following Herzfeld, as a structural nostalgia that can be a weapon in an anti-colonial struggle, as for example in the defense of the veil.

At the other extreme, there is modern Algeria, beset by colonialism that has created a relatively secure working class, separated from an unstable subproletariat, a dispossessed peasantry consigned to resettlement camps, and a rural proletariat dependent on colonial farmers. This is a vision of a society dominated by pathological forms of the division of labor. On the one hand there is a forced division of labor, the imposition of unequal conditions epitomized by colonial domination itself and on the other hand there is an anomic division of labor caused by the transition to modernity. Bourdieu repeatedly describes Algerians, especially intellectuals but also peasant and workers, as caught between two opposed worlds. Trying to enact a split habitus, they find themselves in a state of confusion, often leading to outbursts of irrational behavior, mesmerized by utopian dreams.

All these contradictions affect the inner nature of “the man between two worlds”—the intellectual, the man who formerly worked in France, the city dweller—is exposed to the conflicts created by the weakening of the traditional systems of sanctions and by the development of a double set of
moral standards... [T]his man, cast between two worlds and rejected by both, lives a sort of
double inner life, is a prey to frustration and inner conflict, with the result that he is constantly
being tempted to adopt either an attitude of uneasy overidentification or one of rebellious
negativism. (*The Algerians*, pp.142-4)

The antinomies of modernity and tradition lead to what he will later call
hysteresis, in which learned behaviors from one field (rural/traditional) impede
adaptation to another field (urban/modern). By failing to adapt smoothly to a modern
capitalist economy, Algeria teaches us how difficult it is to implant the dispositions
necessary for capitalism. Or so Bourdieu claims. This idea of cultural lag, rooted in the
habitus, also explains why emancipation from the colonists does not imply liberation
from the colonial system. Caught between the old and the new, Algerians carry within
them the contradictions of the colonial order. These ideas were also at the core of
modernization theory of the 1960s as expounded by such figures as Clifford Geertz, Alex
Inkeles, and Edward Shils. To explain the plight of so-called “new nations” and the
impediments to the flowering of modernity they invoked the heavy weight of primordial
ties and tradition. Bourdieu provides us with precious little evidence of cultural lag, that
the colonized were confused, caught between two worlds, held back by a traditional
habitus. The one example he gives of the Kabyle cook shows quite the opposite – a man
who moves with great entrepreneurial adroitness from one job to another. There is little
evidence of held back by inertia from some traditional habitus.

Bourdieu adopted what was the conventional wisdom of his time -- a presumed
passage from tradition to modernity, breeding anomie for those in transit. While Bourdieu
did pay attention to different classes, it was to see how their fate was expressed in terms of individual consciousness, the internalization of colonial domination. He was no more interested in the formation of classes, class struggle and class alliances than he was in racial formations. Therefore, he couldn’t see the fate of the colony or the ex-colony in terms of the working out of social forces – collective actors -- operating within limits defined by the colonial political economy. For that we need to turn to Frantz Fanon.

**Fanon: Between Capitalism and Socialism**

If Bourdieu sees colonial domination through the Manichean categories of modernity and tradition, Fanon sees it through the bifocal lens of capitalism and socialism. Will Algeria and its colonial revolution give rise to capitalism or socialism, which he tries to demonstrate will be barbarism or socialism? If Bourdieu, like Weber, is concerned about the extrication from the past, Fanon, like Marx is interested in the direction of the future.

For Fanon colonialism is a terrain of struggle. It is less an extrication from that past, Bourdieu calls traditional traditionalism, and more a struggle for the future. National independence involves a struggle against colonialism, Gramsci’s *war of movement*, but it is also a struggle over the form of postcoloniality, a *war of position* between those who organize and fight to *replace* the colonizers – black succeeds white -- under the hegemony of National Bourgeoisie and those who seek to *transform* the class structure under the hegemony of National Liberation. The violent anti-colonial struggle exists alongside a struggle for the future order, whether it be the road toward a peripheral and
dependent capitalism or the road toward a democratic socialism. Where Gramsci seemed to think that the war of position either preceded the war of movement (in the West where there was a strong and autonomous civil society), or followed the war of movement (in the case of the East, Russia in particular, where socialism would be constituted from above after the revolution), for Fanon the two wars had to be simultaneous, which rendered them far more complex, difficult and uncertain. It was too easy to allow the anti-colonial struggle to take precedence and let the denouement of colonialism look after itself. If that were the case democratic socialism could never be victorious.

The political fulcrum of the National Bourgeois road is an incipient national bourgeoisie (traders, merchants, small capitalists, appendages of international capital) and their intellectuals (recruited from teachers, civil servants, lawyers and other professionals). The National Bourgeois road is also supported by the working class, which Fanon views as pampered and parasitic in the colonial context. In another language we might call them a labor aristocracy -- as compared with the massive impoverished peasantry -- that has everything to lose from a postcolonial transformation of the class structure. It is here that Bourdieu and Fanon diverge dramatically. Where Bourdieu argues that revolutionary impetus derives from being integrated into capitalism since this gives the minimal security to imagine and plan an alternative future, Fanon sees exploitation as a mark of privilege that leads workers to support the reformist road of a National Bourgeoisie.
For Fanon, the revolutionary struggle centers on the dispossessed peasantry which has nothing to lose. To be sure, Fanon recognizes that the peasantry itself can only erupt in an undisciplined spontaneity. Hence it is necessary for intellectuals to direct and organize the volcanic energy of the peasantry. Such radical intellectuals emerge in the towns. Exposing the venality of the native elites, opposing the bourgeois road, dissident intellectuals are expelled from the urban areas and join the ranks of the peasantry. Together the radical intellectuals and rebellious peasantry form a potent combustion that is the foundation of the National Liberation struggle. For his part, Bourdieu will remain skeptical of, if not outright hostile to, the very notion of such “organic” intellectuals, fearing that they will either impose their own interests on or will be dragged down by those they supposedly represent. For Bourdieu the politically engaged intellectual must remain at a distance from all classes.

Be that as it may, for Fanon there are two projects vying for hegemony within the colonized classes: the one centering on the national bourgeoisie carried forth by their own intellectuals – teachers, civil servants, frustrated professionals of various sorts -- with the working class in tow and the other centering on the peasantry locked in a symbiotic embrace with their organic intellectuals. Each bloc seeks to secure the support of two vacillating classes: the lumpenproletariat or subproletariat of the urban areas recently uprooted from the countryside, and the traditional leaders. *The Wretched of the Earth* offers as an assessment of the balance of these disparate class forces within the broader anti-colonial struggle. The colonizers can play their own role in shaping the balance.
between these two tendencies, and when they see the writing on the wall, they throw their weight behind the National Bourgeoisie.

Should the National Bourgeoisie win this struggle for control over the anti-colonial movement then, Fanon avers, the successor native ruling elites cannot build a true hegemony, which would require economic resources they do not possess. They are a dominated bourgeoisie -- dominated by the international bourgeoisie – only capable of becoming an imitative and parasitical class. Under its rule, the immediate post-independence multi-party democracy soon degenerates into a one party state and thence to a one-man dictatorship – racism, tribalism and a narrow nationalism will once more rear their heads. Fanon expressed vividly what would indeed come to pass throughout the subcontinent of postcolonial Africa. This was no empty speculation, nor irresponsible prophecy. It was how things turned out.

By painting the National Bourgeois road in such dire colors, Fanon hopes to convince us that the only progressive road is National Liberation, the transformation of the class structure for a democratic socialism. But how feasible was this? Even if the balance of class forces favors the hegemony of the revolutionary forces could they bring about a democratic socialism? Rather optimistically, Fanon argues that black Africa can not only demand but can enforce reparations from Western capitalism because the latter needs Africa’s markets, not just its natural resources but also its purchasing power. Perhaps Fanon was naïve about the possibilities of a democratic socialism, but the naiveté sprung from a desperation that saw the pitfalls of the national bourgeoisie.
Fanon paints a strong contrast between the metropolis and the colony. Postfiguring Gramsci whom he seems to have never read Fanon compares the colony with the metropolis where a solid civil society mediates between the state and subordinate classes.

In the capitalist countries a multitude of moral teachers, counselors and “bewilderers” separate the exploited from those in power. In the colonial countries, on the contrary, the policeman and the soldier, by their immediate presence and their frequent and direct action maintain contact with the native and advise him by means of rifle butts and napalm not to budge. (The Wretched of the Earth, p.38)

This is none other than Gramsci’s distinction between hegemony and dictatorship. Fanon takes a Gramscian view of the integration of the working class in the West which has “nothing to lose” and “in the long run everything to gain” (Fanon, pp.108-9), unlike the pampered colonial working class which has “everything to lose” because of “the privileged place which they hold in the colonial system” where they “constitute also the bourgeois fraction of the colonized people” (Fanon, p.109).

Equally, the contrast between a Western bourgeoisie and the ex-colony’s national bourgeoisie is stark. On the one hand, there is the economic power and moral leadership of a true (metropolitan) bourgeoisie that accumulates capital (175) and extends material concessions to the working class (165), masking racism behind its “proclamation of mankind’s outstanding dignity”(163). On the other hand, there is the “underdeveloped” middle class of the periphery which does not have the economic means to ensure its domination, but makes up for its backwardness by conspicuous consumption and
reversion to open tribalism and racism. “Bereft of ideas, because it lives to itself and cuts itself off from the people, undermined by its hereditary incapacity to think in terms of all the problems of the nation … the national middle class will have nothing better to do than take on the role of manager for Western enterprise, and it will in practice set up its country as the brothel of Europe” (p.154).

In short, bourgeois hegemony cannot be constituted, let alone sustained, in the ex-colony. It inevitably veers toward a political despotism based on an ever narrower economic base. It starts out by copying Western institutions -- political constitutions and the outward manifestations of its economy -- but quickly degenerates from a multi-party democracy to a one party state to one man dictatorship. The fate of Africa is prophetically captured in the vivid language of Frantz Fanon.

**Dialogue Between Bourdieu and Fanon**

The war in Algeria weighed heavily upon the French nation, exciting deep passions and creating deep schisms. It imperiled domestic peace and brought down a political regime. In his preface to Bourdieu’s *The Algerians* Raymond Aron writes, “Those who care about the destiny of France and of the West cannot remain indifferent to Algeria; they will find in this volume the necessary data for reflection and judgment” (1961, p.v). Against Bourdieu’s “data” and “reflection and judgment” is their unstated nemesis – Fanon’s “speculation,” “irresponsibility,” and “megalomania.”
The bulk of *The Algerians* is a thin secondhand anthropology of different groups that make up the Algerian population. In recognizing their distinctive cultures Bourdieu claims to be returning dignity to the Algerian people – a dignity denied not only by the colonial regime but also by Fanon and the FLN. In calling for a revolution that would break with the past, a revolution that dissolves culture into race or class, Fanon, on the other hand, was stripping the colonized of their human birthright. Yet this is so different to the later Bourdieu who, like Fanon, sees the culture of the dominated as a dominated culture with few redeeming values. In this regard what is the difference between the traditionalism of the colonized and the traditionalism of the French working class?

The ostensible object of Bourdieu’s harsh attack on Fanon was the “Maoist” view of the revolution, whose engine was the peasantry. Having been dispossessed of their land, Fanon argued, the peasantry had nothing to lose. Bourdieu was incensed by this “pretentious foolishness” (cited in Le Sueur, p.284). The peasantry was “overwhelmed by the war, by the concentration camps, and by the mass deportations,” and so to claim that it was revolutionary was “completely idiotic” (Le Sueur, p.284). Bourdieu attempted to put the picture right with his two books: *The Uprooted* (with Abdelmalek Sayad) which dealt the crisis of agriculture and *Work and Workers in Algeria* which dealt with the urban context. Bourdieu discounts Fanon’s experience derived from his practice as a psychiatrist and his work with the FLN. In fact Fanon was only too aware of the decimation of the Algerian peasantry, having even done field work of his own among the Kabyle (Macey, 2000: 234-36). He considered their instinctive rebelliousness to come
Where Fanon and Bourdieu really disagree is not so much over the characterization of the peasantry but over the role of intellectuals. In Fanon’s view they had a crucial role to play in disciplining, educating and channeling the spontaneous eruptions of the peasantry. As we have seen in previous lectures Bourdieu would subject the idea of the organic intellectual to withering contempt. Intellectuals deceive themselves as well as those they seek to represent if they think they can cross the gulf that separates their habitus from that of the dominated. Whether they admit it or not intellectuals who claim to represent the interests of the people are actually advancing their own cause as the dominated fraction of the dominant class by manipulating the people. Dialogue between radical intellectuals from the towns “with the police on their track” and the peasantry – “mettlesome masses of people who are rebels by instinct” (The Wretched of the Earth, p.127) -- is a fantasy. What emerges is the stance of the traditional intellectual who stands aloof from mass struggles, openly hostile to the very notion of the organic intellectual.

Fanon not only affirms the key role of the organic intellectual in the anti-colonial struggle, but becomes one himself – spokesman for the National Liberation Struggle. In this regard his race must be seen as an asset, although not an unequivocal asset, coming as he did from Martinique via France. His analysis aims precisely at examining the balance of class forces within the anti-colonial struggle, and the strategic possibilities of
building a hegemonic bloc to advance the National Liberation struggle as against the National Bourgeois road. The contrast with Bourdieu lies on the partisanship of his position. Thus, at one point, writing with Sayad in 1964, Bourdieu says revolution was inevitable, and speculates about a possible socialism, whereas Fanon is concerned about the balance of social interests represented in the struggle, and about the type of society it would engender. His is not a view from the academy, however engaged, but from the battle lines of a violent war.

Arguably, closer to Bourdieu is Fanon’s earlier book, *Black Skins, White Masks*, written in 1952 while he was in France. Coming from an aspiring bourgeois family in Martinique, Fanon’s self-conception as a Frenchman was shattered by metropolitan racism. *Black Skins, White Masks* is a social and psychological analysis of the dilemmas of the black man and woman rejected by the white society which they desire, the everyday character of racism, the interweaving of sexuality and racism, the self-defeating strategies of overcoming racism. The book ends on a universalistic note, aspiring to the transcendence of racism, but with no path to get there. Shifting to Algeria Fanon finds in the national liberation struggle the possibility of such a transcendence – a revolutionary struggle of the most marginalized, a struggle with humanist visions so different from the aspirations of the incipient black bourgeoisie to replace the settler class, aspirations that reproduced the very pathologies he described in *Black Skin, White Masks*. In other words, *The Wretched of the Earth* is the solution to the seemingly insuperable problems set out in *Black Skins, White Masks*. 
Curiously, *Black Skins, White Masks* has a Bourdieuan flavor in that its revolves around the mismatch between a habitus formed in Martinique and the French racial order. Fanon analyzes the self-defeating response to this mismatch – black people who seek to be more French than French, i.e., overidentification with the oppressor, or who seek to overcome the stigma of race with sexual partners drawn from the oppressor, and the hostilities and contempt such strategies engender within the subjugated race. The misfit of habitus and field is key to Bourdieu’s analysis of social change whereas for Fanon the gap between expectations and opportunities, aspirations and possibilities leads not to social change but the reproduction of domination, and alienation. Only a violent settler colonialism can possibly engender the race and class struggles necessary for social transformation. Fanon’s Lacanian psychology goes far deeper into the racial psyche than Bourdieu’s mechanical formation of the habitus through an unexamined process of introjection of social structure.\(^5\) Ironically, Fanon offers a far richer account of racial oppression as symbolic domination than Bourdieu whose concept this is.

If Fanon’s work moves from the reproduction of domination to social transformation, Bourdieu’s work takes the reverse trajectory. Bourdieu’s early writings on Algeria dwelt on colonial domination and its consequences for different groups, while his later writings depend on the recreation of a mythical Kabyle society, mythical because it is cut off from any historical context. The concepts at the heart of Bourdieu’s analysis of French capitalism – habitus, capital, symbolic power, misrecognition, classifications

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\(^5\) When the habitus is at odds with the field, either it adapts (and makes a virtue of a necessity), or it doesn’t adapt and the field is challenged. There is little consideration, let alone theory, of the internal dynamics of a psyche. It is black box, invoked to explain discrepant or deviant behaviors.
and even field – are first developed in a functionalist analysis of the Kabyle, gift exchange or the organization of the house.\(^6\) A romantic analysis of Algeria provides the foundation for Bourdieu’s conception of advanced capitalism – so no wonder it is concerned with reproduction. Bourdieu starts with an analysis of transformation – the revolutionary character of the working class and of anti-colonial struggles – but ends up with a functionalist analysis, skeptical of the possibilities of social transformation. Historical change comes about through an unexplained metaphysics of differentiation. Fanon, on the other hand, starts with the psycho-social mechanisms that reproduce a racial order but he ends up pursuing a project of its transformation and supercession of colonialism and racism.

Perhaps it might be said, in the spirit of reconciliation, that Bourdieu’s critical pessimism corresponds better to a postsocialist world which eclipses alternatives to capitalism, while Fanon’s revolutionary optimism better fits a postcolonial world which has not yet banished such alternatives. But, just as fundamentally, the two stand for opposed conceptions of the intellectual -- the traditional and organic – conceptions that in many ways they themselves personify.

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\(^6\) Here, of course, the model is Durkheim’s *Elementary forms of Religious Life* where Durkheim claims that the simple discloses the underlying physiognomy of the complex.