The Limits of Black Political Empowerment

Fanon, Marx, ‘the Poors’ and the ‘new reality of the nation’ in South Africa

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People who had given everything, wonder with their empty hands and bellies, as to the reality of their victory.

— Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth

In an earlier paper, written in reaction to those who argued that the African National Congress (ANC) had no alternative but to implement neoliberal economic policies in the context of the ‘Washington Consensus’, I discussed the strategic choices and ideological pitfalls of the ‘political class’ who took over state power in South Africa after the end of apartheid and implemented its own homegrown structural adjustment programme (Gibson 2001). Much of this transition has been scripted by political science ‘transition literature’ and much of it is proactive, mapping out what should be done to establish a ‘pacted’, ‘elite’ democracy overseeing neoliberal economic policies (O’Donnell, Schmitter & Whitehead 1986). From another vantage point, I argued that Frantz Fanon’s The Wretched of the Earth is perhaps one of the most perceptive critiques of the transition literature available. This paper continues the discussion.

At the end of the critical chapter, ‘Spontaneity, its Strengths and Weaknesses’, Fanon writes, ‘The people find out the iniquitous fact that exploitation can wear a black face, or an Arab one, and they raise the cry of “Treason”! But the cry is mistaken; and the mistake must be corrected. The treason is not national but social’ (Fanon 1968: 145, my emphasis). I want to consider this ‘social’ treason by looking at the logic of South Africa’s self-limiting political transition from apartheid in light of Fanon’s humanism, which poses not only a theoretical challenge, but also, grounded in the concrete struggle of ordinary people, offers an ideological alternative to the existing ‘white’ (namely, bourgeois and elite) one that has come to ‘wear a black face’.

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Humanism has become more important in the battle of ideas, as seen in the *Mail & Guardian’s* 16-page pull-out on South Africa’s decade of democracy compiled by Wiser at the University of the Witwatersrand under the editorial title, ‘A Critical Humanism’ (July 2004). What is noteworthy is that spaces to debate ideas about new humanisms are developing even if, in this particular case, the theoretical discussion is limited and ungrounded in the reality of ordinary people’s lives. Namely, the measurement of ‘how far we’ve come’ is made in constitutional changes while the issue of basic survival in post-apartheid South Africa is bracketed off. As part of this dialogue, however, I want to suggest another standpoint by underlining Fanon’s dialectical methodology. For Fanon, the dialectic was alive: phenomenological rather than abstract; it was about lived experience, yes, but lived experience as resistance, revolt and struggle reflected in actuality and in ideas. Fanon’s famous criticism of Jean-Paul Sartre for not understanding the lived experience of the black (the literal title of the fifth chapter in *Black Skin White Masks* 1967) alludes to a methodological difference I want to underline here between synthetic thought and negativity. This difference is essential to a proper understanding of Fanon’s dialectic (Gibson 2003: 24-42). While Sartre’s argument appears dialectical in that negation is eventually subsumed into a higher synthesis, Sartre makes light of Hegel’s insight that all negation tends to see itself as absolute and lends momentum to the dialectical process. Instead, Sartre imposes a mechanical schema: thesis = white / antithesis = black / synthesis = multiracialism. Because, for Sartre, black consciousness merely contributes to this inevitable and pre-existing goal, Fanon feels that Sartre has curtailed possible future acts and undermined his subjectivity. In other words, Sartre the existentialist has forgotten the specificity of the lived experience of the black, reducing it to what he called a ‘minor’ term in the dialectic; he has sublimated the specificity of black lived experience by a pre-existing abstract universal, ‘the proletariat’. Interestingly, Sartre also creates a division between race and class, thus skipping their specific—that is, experiential and logical—interrelatedness. Fanon’s point here is not only the importance of black consciousness, but also that the dialectic is a movement that develops through contradiction and struggle rather than one that elides them. Translated politically it can be seen as the difference between a movement emerging from below and working out its ideas in the untidy politics of open discussion and disagreement and a movement whose pre-existing meaning is given in political directives from above.
Such a dialectic of reciprocity, made concrete in terms of a national liberation movement against colonialism, is not reducible to the dialectic of labour, although one cannot deny the centrality of labour. Fanon is not simply replacing one dialectic (the anti-colonial) for another (the class struggle) but, through a logic of interpenetration, deepening each. The result is a much more open-ended or, as Fanon puts it, 'untidy' dialectic that is best understood in a social context. At least that is where Fanon saw the possibility of freedom. For such a possibility is never automatically realized; indeed, it requires communication that is guaranteed only by what Fanon calls the 'consciousness of the self' (Fanon 1968: 247). Thus, at the same time, Fanon hammers away at the inadequacy of national consciousness for it is at the very moment that the victory of colonialism seems to be won that a more serious problem appears—an exploitation that wears a black face.

Part one of this paper focuses on the question of emancipation and the trap of seeing 'black political empowerment' as proof of South Africa's triumph. Using Marx's argument from 'On the Jewish Question', I argue that black political emancipation in South Africa is not full emancipation because it leaves the state of human emancipation unfinished. I then move to a consideration of issues of agency and resistance by re-engaging both Marx and Fanon's conceptions of emergent subjectivities, such as 'the poor' who are no longer in quotation marks but are self-representing. Finally, noting Fanon's engagement with Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire*, I argue that Fanon's critique of the nationalist bourgeoisie's 'social treason', seen through the lens of 'black political empowerment', requires committed intellectuals to rethink the ground and sources of humanism.

The inadequacies of political emancipation

*Now it must be said that the masses show themselves totally incapable of appreciating the long way they have come. The peasant who goes on scratching a living from the soil, and the unemployed who never find employment do not manage, in spite of public holidays and flags, new and brightly-colored though they may be, to convince themselves that anything has really changed in their lives.*

—Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

Political emancipation, Marx writes in his 1843 essay 'On the Jewish Question' (Marx 1975a), is certainly a big step forward in what he calls 'the prevailing scheme of things'. This offers a good way to
think about South Africa 10 years after the end of apartheid, where formal political equality and universal suffrage are seen as enormous steps forward in the prevailing scheme. But it is the prevailing scheme of things—the South African state (inherited from apartheid) and the disciplining whip of capitalist neoliberal globalization—that remains the determinant.

Marx argues that the limitation of political emancipation is reflected in the lack of social and economic change and emanates from the growing social isolation in a society where, as he puts it later, the fetishism of commodities rules, reifies and crushes social relations, creating ‘material relations between persons and social relations between things’ (Marx 1976: 166). How this essay speaks to us today has to do with Marx’s conception of political and human emancipation in a society where the individual leads an imaginary life as a citizen of the state and a real life as an alienated and monadic isolated being, an object of the capitalist economy. Marx’s essay does not have much to say about political economy because he has neither discovered the key to political economy, namely alienated labour, nor the proletariat as the key to its critique (that would come in the following year), but he gives us some important insights into the dialectic of political and human rights. And it is his critique of the limitation of civil rights that I want to focus on here, namely, the paradox that political empowerment within the state is a mighty step forward for what becomes clear is the social content of disenfranchisement and thus that clarity shows exactly what is lacking, namely human liberation.

In contemporary South Africa, the political rights won with the end of apartheid correspond neatly with ‘black political empowerment’, that is, a universal franchise and government owned by an African nationalist organization, the ANC. Because black political empowerment in the South African state has occurred as just that, within the South African state inherited from capitalist apartheid, and circumscribes political rights as individual egotistical rights based on private property, it indicates the degree to which the mass of black South Africans have remained disenfranchised. This is not a personal issue of this or that black leader that is to blame but, as Marx puts it, the ‘sophistry of the political state itself’ (Marx 1975a: 221). That is to say, black political empowerment within the state in no way constitutes the negation of the state but the very opposite: black political empowerment constitutes a ‘perfection’ of the state as a fetishized and thus apparently ‘neutral’ and transcendental object that ‘just needs to work better’. This contradiction stems from the problematical charac-
ter of the category of political emancipation in which the political life of the people is relegated to a mere means of reinforcing the egoistic self-interest of those in possession of the material and social means to exercise their rights in society (Marx 1975a: 226). This class determination is only one side of the equation. The other side of the equation is that the people’s political and civil rights are abrogated as soon as they come into conflict with dominant political interests.

It is particularly interesting, that in the South African situation, the ruling nationalist party continues to use the language of race in its triumphing of capitalism while at the same time it does not see race as a political phenomenon—that is to say as part of the material capitalist world. The failure of post-apartheid South Africa to address economic inequality has been widely discussed (Terreblanche 2004, Bond 2004). My point here is that any talk about a fundamental structural change in the economy has become limited to the discourse of ‘black economic empowerment’ and the development of a ‘multiracial’ capitalist class. For example, President Thabo Mbeki has been an ardent proponent of black economic empowerment insisting that,

we abandon our embarrassment about the possibility of the emergence of successful and therefore prosperous black owners of productive property ... and think and act in a manner consistent with a realistic response to the real world ... As part of our continuing struggle to wipe out the legacy of racism we must work to ensure that there emerges a black bourgeoisie. (Mbeki 1999, my emphases)

While this call to be ‘realistic’ might be a necessary one, Mbeki presents the problem as psychological—or as an ‘inferiority complex’ (Fanon 1967, see also Biko 1978: 19-26)—as if race and class are no longer complicit in the reality of post-apartheid South Africa and that economic success does not conspire with ‘social treason’. As Fanon points out, coupling the psychological critique with his philosophical humanism, this compulsion to ‘prove ourselves’ is neither correct nor reasonable but a ‘nauseating mimicry’ of the white ex-colonial masters (Fanon 1968: 95, 311) where ‘being is reduced to having’ (Fanon 1967a: 44).  

Marx also speaks of the reduction of being to having as a key element of capitalist reification. He argues in his 1844 essays that this subsumption makes us,

so stupid and one-sided that an object is only ours when we have it, when it exists for us as capital or when we directly possess, eat, drink, wear,
inhabit etc., in short when we use it ... Therefore all physical and intellectual senses have been replaced by the simple estrangement of all the senses—the sense of having. So that it might give birth to its inner wealth, human nature had to be reduced to this absolute poverty. (Marx 1975c: 352)

If this sounds too much like a moral imperative, let’s not forget the ‘real’ materiality of not-having in contemporary society, which reduces being to a nothing, and also the materiality of the revolt of the non-being and the have-nots, namely the material poverty of ‘the poors’ in the real world of South Africa; in other words, that which has been inherited from apartheid in the context of neoliberal capitalist globalisation.

With the recognition of political rights, the majority of South Africans have in no way risen above the material horizon of social inequality upon which the apartheid state and economy developed. The 2003 United Nations Development Program (UNDP) ‘South Africa Human Development Report’ found that poverty and income inequalities have increased, not decreased, since 1994. This shocking fact needs to be reiterated for the majority of the world’s publics who welcomed the end of apartheid but are not fully aware that the socio-economic situation has not changed. In fact, a leading South African academic, Sampie Terreblanche, has recently argued that ‘the quality of life of the poorer 50% has deteriorated considerably in the post-apartheid period’ (Terreblanche 2004: 28, my emphasis). Terreblanche calls this the ‘dark side’ of contemporary South African society. Post-apartheid South Africa, he continues, ‘has been transformed from a rigid, racially-divided society into a highly-stratified class society’ with an increasing income inequality within the ‘racial groups’ especially, adds a 2004 UNDP report, among Africans and those formerly designated as coloureds and Indians. Yet Terreblanche also observes that ‘the highly-stratified class society has not been cleared of its erstwhile rigid, racial ... legacy of apartheid and colonialism’ (Terreblanche 2004: 33-4). One third of the 15 million in the ‘bourgeois classes’, he adds, are white, while only two per cent of the 30 million people in the ‘lower classes’ are white. And interestingly, the UNDP report notes that the share of white households in the top fifth of the income scale actually grew between 1995 and 2000 (quoted in Harsch 2004: 5). One can quibble about the figures, but taken as a whole, South Africa’s black population is, if not worse off, pretty much in the same desperate situation as before.

In this context Mbeki’s conception of ‘the real’ (abandoning the embarrassment of being a successful black capitalist) remains a fairy-
tale that elides the debilitating legacy of apartheid—exploitation and poverty. But let’s not kid ourselves. Such rhetoric is steeped in what Ghanian novelist Ayi Kwei Armah once called the fetish of the ‘gleam’ of power (Armah 1968) with the BMWs and jet-setting cosmopolitanism that goes along with it. ‘The gleam’ always ignores or covers over the reality of exploitation and the pauperization on which it is built. It is an elite conception, which elides the most basic human commitment without any kind of ‘embarrassment’ (even in a bourgeois moral sense) of the well-being of the other. With this sleight of hand, the idea of liberation is transformed into the egotistical market-based activity that is indeed ‘stupid and one-sided’.

But it is not simply the number of black millionaires, black managers, or a critique of corporate tokenism that is at issue here. The black bourgeoisie Mbeki speaks of are not the street traders or car guards, they are not found in ‘the informal economy’ that the World Bank touts as the basis for economic empowerment, just as the very lifeblood of capitalist reproduction is not petty entrepreneurship but human labour. Let’s be honest about what Mbeki calls the ‘legacy of racism’: South Africa’s wealth is directly correlated to the quite literal exhaustion and destruction of African labour. What Marx calls capitalism’s ‘werewolf hunger’ for labour is so vividly represented, for example, in South Africa’s gold mines, which, as Bolivian tin miners famously put it, ‘eat us’. But the distress created by the legacy of apartheid and repackaged by neoliberal capitalism is universal, not partial and includes ‘hidden’—often gender specific—labour (domestic, household, subsistence, informal, and so on, which have been crucial to South Africa’s ‘development’ in general and to its mining in particular); the distress is seen all around and is not restricted to towns but extends to rural districts where great expropriations of land fundamentally undermine attempts at self-sufficiency.

If the end of apartheid ended apartheid laws, it did not end the law of capital. It certainly did not free blacks from having to sell their labour power, nor has it ended the pauperization of labour—employed and unemployed. Indeed one could say that it has expanded the law of capital. Despite the empowerment of the elite, or perhaps because of it, working people (unemployed and employed) have not been freed from the discipline of waged labour. After all, the terms *surplus labour* and *surplus population* are not limited to apartheid but express realities of neoliberal capitalism, where, for example, the popular victory against pass laws has become in the post-apartheid period the perpetual motion of people. From rural areas and from the cities there
A circling mass, forever seeking ways to make ends meet amid the wealth of Africa's wealthiest city ... As fast as the globally competitive agricultural economy is spewing out and driving them towards the cities, the cities are ejecting them and pushing them to the margins. The formal economy relies on this vast surplus labour army. (Greenberg 2004: 31)

In other words, in its neoliberal phase, present reality is mired not only in the legacy of apartheid and segregation as policies of labour, which are being reconfigured under the 'free market', but also in the reality of a South African capitalism built by black labour. Thus Mbeki's need to forget about the embarrassment and to embrace 'the gleam' of capitalist success and material accumulation is a very 'white' idea. And in the face of the inhumanity of poverty, the wealth and opulence of the rich are indeed, to use Fanon's moral term, 'scandalous', particularly because it is founded on slavery and nourished by blood (Fanon 1968: 96).

In his 1956 speech given to the first congress of black writers Fanon wonders about the emergence of a 'post-racist' society. He says that 'for a time it looked as though racism had disappeared. [But] this soul-soothing, unreal impression was simply the consequence of the evolution of forms of exploitation' (Fanon 1967b: 37). This change—from overt to more subtle forms of racism—is seen in the discourse about the poor in South Africa. Under apartheid and colonial rule, the African poor were poor because it was 'their nature' as Africans; today the African poor are poor because it is 'their nature' as 'the poor' (Pithouse 2003). In today's multicultural South Africa, forgetting the fact that 90% of the poor are black, simply indicates the assumed logical relationship between poverty and race: that the language of apartheid has been replaced by the colour of money, the language of corporate capitalism and markets. It is not only that exploitation can wear a 'black mask', but that racism can take many forms that indicates how deeply it is embedded in South Africa's socio-economic structure and, consequently, how deep the uprooting of that structure needs to be.

Additionally, just as black elites seek political empowerment in the state, black political emancipation is not emancipation from racism because it leaves the state of human emancipation unfinished. Wasn't this exactly what Fanon was talking about in his critique of the pitfalls of national consciousness, namely that the nationalist bour-
geoisie can achieve political empowerment in the state without transforming the state of reality? Mbeki himself has gestured toward such a conclusion in a paper called ‘The Historical Injustice’ delivered just after Steve Biko’s death in February 1978. After referring to Fanon’s critique of the senility of the national bourgeoisie, Mbeki argues that ‘black capitalism, instead of being the antithesis is rather confirmation of parasitism with no redeeming features whatsoever, without any extenuating circumstances to excuse its existence. If you want to see a living example, go to the Transkei’ (Mbeki 1978: 10). This is certainly in direct contradiction to the ‘reality’ he refers to in his later (1999) speech, discussed earlier. But, even still, his critique of black capitalism remains a moral imperative centered on an objectified and suffering humanity (rather than grounded in the ‘reality’ of elemental resistance in the Transkei), and while the difference between the two Mbeki quotes remains politically significant – and, he would no doubt argue, relate to different political contexts—they betray his synthetic and technical thinking, which underlies the failure of the ANC to chart a philosophic divide.* Mbeki, in Fanon’s words, cannot escape the process of his own contradictions (Fanon 1968: 165).

For Marx, the principle of contradiction and the incompleteness of liberation are not only the limitation of the new political leadership, but also what he calls ‘the nature and the category of political emancipation’ (Marx 1975a 226). The class character of this determination is reflected most clearly in the relegation of political and civil life of the common people to being flag waving supporters for those in power who speak in the name of the people. This is to say that as a member of civil society, the individual is apolitical, or, as Fanon argues in The Wretched of the Earth, depoliticized, only to be brought back at scripted events to legitimate the political elite while the party becomes simply administrative, encouraging an administrative (and technicist) mentality rather than a humanist programme, while leaders such as Mandela act as figureheads (the revered ‘father of the nation’); simultaneously, the social life of the masses qua political actors is thus abrogated in favour of an individual and politically ant-social ‘representation’. And, in practice, when civil rights come into conflict with the political life of the country—i.e., threaten the administrative life of ‘the Party’—they are trumped and violated. The loyalty of the opposition is therefore decided in advance; in the end loyalty to the party trumps everything else and mass action becomes by definition, disloyalty to the ‘Party’, the ‘Nation’, the ‘Revolution’, and so forth. Politics returns to the Manicheanism of the previous
period. And as the regime sees threat everywhere, the byword becomes ‘those who are not for us are against us’.

Marx’s dictum—the more powerful the state, the more political the nation (1975b: 412)—seems to be correct, for the elite must use all its abilities and ideological obfuscation to depoliticize the danger. The state, as the World Bank has recently emphasized, is more, not less, important as an enforcer of neoliberal privatization and the party remains its ‘unmasked, unpainted, unscrupulous and cynical’ representative (Fanon 1968: 171). Fanon maintains that the leader who had stood for ‘moral power’ (Fanon 1968: 166) and almost in a dreamlike way had embodied the aspirations of the people, plays an important role pacifying the people through drunken celebrations of the anti-colonial period (Fanon 1968: 169) while, ‘the party, a true instrument of the power of the bourgeoisie, reinforces the machine, and ensures that the people are hemmed in and immobilized’ (Fanon: 1968: 165, 171-2).

The question for South Africa is: what are the new social forces that can challenge the hegemony of this dominant bourgeois party?

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The Poors

At first ... England tried to abolish pauperism by charity and administrative measures ... [where] charity is cunningly combined with revenge of the bourgeoisie in the poor laws ... Then it came to see in the progressive advance of pauperism not the inevitable consequence of modern industry but on the contrary the consequence of the English poor rate. It regarded the universal distress merely as a specific feature of English legislation. What was previously ascribed to a lack of charity now began to be attributed to an excess of charity. Finally, poverty came to be regarded as the fault of the poor themselves, and consequently they were punished for it.

— Marx, ‘Critical Notes on the “King of Prussia and Social Reform”’

In 1844, Marx discovered, so to speak, the proletariat. Of course class struggle existed before as he puts it most famously in the Communist Manifesto. But it was the actions of the Silesian Weavers in 1844 who not only smashed up the machines like the Luddites before them but also tore up property deeds that caught Marx’s attention and generated for him new theoretical threads. For these ‘backward’ weavers, turning against not only the visible enemy (the industrialists) but also against the hidden enemy (the bankers) manifested for Marx a new stage of consciousness and organization that went beyond the ‘more
advanced' English and French workers' struggles of the time (Marx 1975b: 415). Marx thus finds in the human actions of the German poor the key that enables him to conceive a praxis in contrast not only to the elitism of the social reformists who, through administrative methods, wanted to make pauperism a 'national institution', but also to his former comrades (today's vanguardists) who assumed the German poor needed to be taught to see beyond 'their hearth, their factory, their district' (Marx 1975b: 415). Rather than playing schoolmaster, the educators themselves needed to be educated by the actions of the weavers. 'The cleverness of the German poor', he adds in a dialectical quip, 'stands in inverse ratio to the cleverness of the poor Germans' (Marx 1975a: 416).

Marx had already indicated the importance of the actions of the poor two years earlier, in his first economic essay of 1842. In this article about legislation against wood-stealing, which again took up the cause of the poor—a class, he says, 'who occup[ies] the same position in civil society as dead wood does in nature' (Van Leeuwen 1972: 192)—he champions the rights of custom and communal tradition against the property rights of rising capitalism and 'primitive accumulation' or, to put it in modern parlance, the right to the commons, to communal land, market-gardening and subsistence farming against enclosure and privatization.^

With the worldwide struggles against contemporary 'primitive accumulation' around land, water privatization and electricity cut-offs in mind, Marx asks: 'if every violation of property ... is called theft, is not all private property theft?' In other words, if privatization of the commons is by definition theft, then the principles of justice (based on private property) are based in theft—'the law lies and the poor are sacrificed to a legal lie' (Marx 1975b: 228). Two years later (in 1844) he takes a crucial step. The German poor he had been defending in his journalistic writings had gone further than the politicians and expressed a practical solution to the theoretical problem of alienation. Not versed in the discourse of polities, it was not the isolation from the political community that had moved the German poor, but their isolation from their own physical and spiritual life. In short, the actions of the Silesian Weavers gave Marx's philosophical humanism a human concretion grounded in the materiality of necessity. Indeed, the Silesian poor beckoned a new humanism—what Marx in Capital calls 'new passions and new forces' for the reconstruction of society where 'human power is its own end' (Marx 1976: 928). These new passions and forces go beyond identity politics and moral discourse.
For it is not in the realm of politics—i.e., elections, votes and the surrounding parliamentary discourse—but in the immediate struggles of the poors that a new basis of 'truth' is found.

In South Africa, the power of co-option and gestures toward inclusion—i.e., hegemony—are probably more sophisticated than in 19th century Prussia. Despite the fact that the quality of life of the majority of South Africa's population has not improved since the end of apartheid, the ANC remains hegemonic and has won every national election with an increasing share of the votes cast. This is a quandary, and critics have pointed to a number of factors to try to understand this phenomena: the declining number of voters despite the larger percentage of the votes cast (which means that the ANC is getting a lower percentage of eligible voters); the lack of a credible opposition; the continuing ability of the ANC to call on its left—ANC militants, the Communist Party and COSATU—to support it and its claim to legitimacy, which makes a vote against it 'illegitimate'; the power to co-opt and buy off oppositional politicians, and so on. I have already mentioned how Fanon speaks of the myriad ways in which claiming legitimacy 'for the people' makes illegitimate those who oppose it. Here I want rethink this issue with Marx's point above about the Silesian weavers, namely that elite parliamentary politics—which involve the population in a vote every five years and in the technicist language of politics—works to fragment and reify social consciousness, encouraging 'privatized' and isolated (i.e., alienated) thinking, and has very little to do with everyday struggles. This doesn't directly answer the question of how the ANC has become electorally hegemonic, but it begins to shed light on the limitation of the apparent consent. Ashwin Desai expresses this limitation in an insightful interview:

If Thabo Mbeki comes around, or Mandela, to remember the 16 June Soweto uprising, people still see the need to go the meeting and chant the slogans of the party of liberation: the ANC, slayer of apartheid. But the next day they are fighting evictions, and denouncing the ANC as a party of neoliberalism. (Desai 2003: 488)

'The people' are right on both counts. The ANC did fight apartheid and was a party to liberation, but it is now the party enforcing evictions and electricity cut-offs. Rather than the people's collective schizophrenia, this expresses, as Desai points out, the schizophrenia of the ANC, which so quickly embraced neoliberal structural adjustment and gave up on its earlier populist promises.
Positivistic social science—especially those that derive attitudes from voting patterns and surveys—cannot deal with this ‘schizophrenia’, and Marxists often have trouble with it too, speaking of a ‘false consciousness’ and stressing the division between what Marx has called an ‘in itself’ and ‘for itself’ consciousness. I do not think that ‘false consciousness’ is a particularly useful way to go about trying to understand the issue. It ends up not only in the search for a ‘true consciousness’ (with which ‘false consciousness’ must be combated) but also with the thinking that the potentiality of a ‘for itself’ consciousness exists outside of workers’ experience and is always something they should have, almost in a categorical sense, and thus something that should be brought to them from the outside (by the party, the intellectual, the leader and so forth).

I want to return to Marx’s understanding of ‘truth’ as emerging from workers’ actions and thus upsetting old categories and ways of thinking. For it is the practical questions of everyday life that compels the dialectic even if at the same time what workers say in their everyday discourse is contradictory and retrogressive. By focusing on lived experience, which contradicts society’s dominant ideas, we arrive at a social situation and the social struggle, which illuminates the difference between the poor—fragmented, isolated, beaten down and cut-off—and the poors as an active collectivity fighting cut-offs through collective action. After all, for Marx, material conditions create social consciousness but it is the real struggles of necessity that create new ways of thinking. In short, struggles for basic services in the community (e.g., the ‘right’ to electricity) not only change subjectivity but also change the way we think and speak about politics. For Marx the struggle for the eight-hour day—in other words, the simple question, ‘when does my work day end and my day begin’—is greater than what he calls ‘the pompous catalogue of the inalienable rights of man’ (Marx 1976: 416).

The simplicity of Marx’s understanding remains extraordinarily relevant in the context of the low-wage, long-hours of seasonal, casual and ‘flexible’ sweated labour that characterize the working life of much of the world’s population for whom policies of ‘jobs for all’ do not address the question of the kind of labour they demand. Just as the simple question that emerges around the ANC’s vaunted ‘house’-building programme—what indeed constitutes a home in post-apartheid South Africa as the size of a house continues to diminish?—or the simple question, ‘what will I do when they cut off my electricity?’ is a vital philosophical question, the issue of what
kind of labour human beings should do goes to the core of human rights. For Fanon it touched on the issue of truth itself.

In *The Wretched of the Earth* Fanon first poses the unemployed, the poor, the starving peasant, and the fellah (a derogatory term used by the French to refer to the Partisans) as ‘the truth’ because unlike the moral universalism claimed by European colonialism, and mimicked by the nationalist bourgeoisie trained in its elite universities, the oppressed (when listened to and taken seriously) understand the most practical human questions. Rather than a discourse about individual morality and bourgeois right, ‘truth’, Fanon maintains, ‘is the property of the national cause’. Truth, in other words, emerges in the struggle against the dominant powers and thus is ‘that which hurries up the break-up of the colonialist regime’ (Fanon 1968: 50). In this sense, perhaps ‘the poors’ are akin to Fanon’s starving peasant, who, disregarded by the nationalist parties and outside the system, ‘have nothing to lose’ (Fanon 1968: 61). It is from these ‘truths’—the actions of the poors, the ‘detritus and dead wood’ of society who constitute the Achilles’ heel of post-apartheid South Africa—that, in all its contradictoriness, a new expression of subjectivity emerges. Indeed, just as Fanon understood that the poor could be bought off with a few kind words and a few crumbs—that their consciousness was rudimentary and subject to manipulation by the powers that be (Fanon 1968: 138-40)—he emphasized the power of new concepts born in the struggle to set forth a new person (Fanon 1968: 316).

I am wondering whether we can say that Girlie Amod’s statement, ‘We’re not Indians, we are the poors’, which Ashwin Desai used for the title of his book (2002), was not only a response to an ethnic (divide and rule) slur by an ANC councillor, but like Fanon’s description of the black sugar worker in *Black Skin White Masks* (Fanon 1967a: 224) proof that life cannot be conceived other than in the form of a battle against exploitation, misery, and hunger, and that the statement represents an implicit philosophical statement about global self-identity? In other words, is it a kind of Fanonian ‘new concept’? Rather than dead wood, ‘the poors’, who have ‘begun to jump the firebreaks of race and place’ (Desai 2002: 7) not only speak out but challenge committed intellectuals to listen. Indeed, the apparently marginalized and localized battles for survival of the poors have global reverberations; they are part of a global condition, which is understood by people around the world.

The organization of these struggles around issues of subsistence—what the Italian playwright Dario Fo popularized as ‘Can’t Pay, Won’t
Pay’—have histories dating back to the struggle against colonialism, but they are often sidelined during the immediate independence period. In South Africa, the irony is that it is the very anti-apartheid ‘community’ leaders, now speaking the language of private property and profit, who are under attack by the poors (Desai 2002: 50-55). While resistance to utility privatization begs the content of ‘right’—the pitting of the human rights of ‘the poors’, literally cut off from the basic needs of water, electricity and shelter, against the ‘rights’ of private property—it also raises the larger question of political self-organization: can new civic organizations that have emerged from struggles for basic human rights open up new spaces from where visions and the practice of an alternative post-apartheid South Africa, of rights and responsibilities, may be organized and discussed? Do and can these new mass-based organizations constitute counter-hegemonic movements that are capable of not only representing themselves, but also of developing through discussion with intellectuals and activists alternative ‘philosophic’ programmes (social, political and economic)? Or do they erupt spontaneously around an issue and die off just as quickly and thus remain significant and effective only insofar as they are spontaneous, single-issue campaigns working to gain access to or incorporation in the state? In other words, what are the legacies of spontaneous and mass movement organizations after they have disappeared? The responsibility is not alone the local organizations’, but also that of the intellectuals who are committed to labouring on what Rosa Luxemburg calls the most precious and lasting aspect of an apparently ‘chaotic’ and ‘disorganized’ movement: ‘its mental sediment’ (Luxemberg 1999: 9). After all, the truth that the poors understand (as a self-developing subject) shrivels and dies—becomes tragic—unless it is nurtured by discussion, openness, and comradeship. As Fanon puts it, ‘Brother, sister, friend—these are the words outlawed by the colonialist bourgeoisie, because for them my brother is my purse, my friend is part of my scheme to get on’ (Fanon 1968: 47). Against the discourse of property rights and the ‘colourless knickknacks’ of ‘bourgeois individualism’, it is the ‘forms of organization of the struggle’ that suggest a different vocabulary. The difficult question revolves not only on the issue of spontaneity and organization but also on their relationship to philosophic principle and vision.20

Fanon did not fully plumb this issue, but he did recognize that the culture of elitism led to a self-devaluing on one side and the need to move beyond the immediacy of force to the mediation of reasoning,
on the other; to tease out the rebellion's own 'rational basis' (Fanon 1968: 146). Fanon does not operate under romantic illusions that there will be an immediate understanding of the most complicated problems (Fanon 1968: 193). This is why he emphasizes a dialectical process, a deepening spiral rather than a straight line that works its way through contradictions rather than proclaiming, once and for all, the automatic construction of new identities. For the articulation of 'the truth' is of course fragmented and fragmentary. In fact, the harsh realities of life under neoliberal capitalism means that new movements are always shot through with contradictions, including retrogressive ideologies, and that these reactionary ideologies have to be faced squarely and openly.

'Fear', and I am talking about a life on the edge created by daily battles of survival as well as the fear not to step out of line (increasing Manicheanism in the post 9/11 world) still remains an important determinant in politics, as Biko puts it (1978: 73). The neoliberal polices which create fragmented market-based identities of haves and have-nots are bolstered by a politics of divide and rule where the marginal are always by definition a fragmented mass. In such an oppressive condition where worth is judged on the basis of 'the gleam', ongoing psychological liberation—the liberation of the mind—remains indispensable precisely because self-consciousness cannot come about all at once. In light of this it is the intellectual's role to continually undermine ideologies that characterize the poor, the marginalized, the masses as backward and incapable of governing themselves and at the same time battle other self-appointed 'liberation' ideologues who by proclaiming themselves as the consciousness and 'leadership of the proletariat' add to the weight of inertia. This elitist attitude relies on and encourages a lack of self-worth among the common people who are often told that their ideas carry little weight. Yet because of the lack of esteem for their own ideas, the honest, radical intellectual, as Fanon puts it, is crucial in eliciting and clarifying to itself the marginalized up-to-now subjugated knowledge (Fanon 1968 146). Antonio Gramsci usefully explained this process in a subsection of The Prison Notebooks:

[The Philosophy of Praxis] is consciousness full of contradictions, in which the philosopher himself, understood both individually and as an entire social group, not only grasps the contradictions, but posits himself as an element of the contradiction and elevates this element to a principle of knowledge and therefore action'. (Gramsci 1971: 405)
It is in this sense that engaging contradictions and creating a movement of thought and self-clarity become important, pushing ideas so that they become a material force.

Fanon’s perspective, derived from the specific social context of movements against colonialism, has been articulated in the new South African struggles. A vision of an alternative to capitalism that can be gleaned from the practice of the common people in organized contradiction to reality enables Fanon to make concrete Marx’s contention that the realm of freedom is based on the transformation of alienated labour into a form of self-realization. ‘If conditions of work are not modified’, Fanon warns, ‘centuries will be needed to humanize this world which has been forced down to animal level’ (Fanon 1968: 100). Indeed, for Fanon, the practice of participatory democracy is central; the necessary modifications in the conditions of labour can only be effected through people making decisions, experimenting at a local level, learning by mistakes and, says Fanon, ‘starting a new history’ (Fanon 1968: 99, 188-9). For Fanon, decision-making is an expression and act of creation of the social individual. From a psychological point of view, non-alienating activity is essential to an individual’s sense of self. At the same time, the new social relations engender the reproduction of a newly-created self who understands that ‘slavery is opposed to work and that work presupposes liberty, responsibility, and consciousness’, a notion Fanon bases on what some have considered the outrageous claim that ‘in those districts where we have been able to carry out successfully these interesting experiments, we have watched man being created by revolutionary beginnings’ (Fanon 1968: 192). Whatever the concrete limitation of these new beginnings, this notion of prefiguration is quite different from the discourse of nationalism because it conceptualizes a novel and breathtakingly simple idea of ‘development’ based on a new idea of organization and philosophy. Fraught with contradictions, the biggest problematic—as was seen in South Africa—was the speed at which grassroots organizations committed to radical transformation were marginalized, the masses of people reduced to a strategic tool of another political project in the negotiation period of the early 1990s.
Fanon, *The Eighteenth Brumaire* and ‘The Will to Liberty’

Bourgeois revolutions ... storm from success to success; their dramaturgical effects outdo each other; people and things seem set in sparkling brilliance; ecstasy is the everyday spirit; but they are short lived; soon they have attained their zenith, and a long crapulent depression lays holds of society ... On the other hand, Proletarian revolutions ... criticize themselves constantly, interrupt themselves continually in their own course, come back to the apparently accomplished in order to begin afresh, deride with unmerciful thoroughness the inadequacies, weaknesses and paltriness of their first attempts ... until a situation has been created which makes all turning back impossible and the conditions cry out: ‘Hic Rhodus, hic Salta.’

— Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire*

Political revolutions do not attack the basis of centralized power, namely the state, but seek to capture it, Marx opined in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, arguing that ‘all revolutions perfected the [state] machine—along with the repressive measures, the resources and centralization of governmental power—instead of smashing it’ (Marx 1975d: 122). The state is considered, as I mentioned earlier, a neutral power which, in the liberal history of political theory, is a political body that stops us from descending into anarchy and entering into the war of ‘all against all’, as Thomas Hobbes puts it. But we have learnt that rather than simply a transcendent, value-neutral object (even if understood as also a Leviathan), the state is an object of some desire and that all the parties that contend for domination regard ‘the possession of this huge edifice as the principal spoils of the victor’ (Marx 1975d: 122).

In *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, Marx writes that after the revolution, a state of siege is imposed on the country and ‘every stirring in society’ is repressed ‘by the means of state power’ (Marx 1975d: 119). His statement that ‘the bourgeoisie never wearied of crying out to the revolution ... “be silent, keep still!”’ is echoed by Fanon who writes that ‘[e]mbryo oppositions are eliminated’, and the masses are kept in check (Fanon 1968: 181-2) as the party leaders ‘behave like common-sergeant-majors, frequently reminding the people of the need for “silence in the ranks”’ (Fanon 1968: 183).

Marx and Fanon’s critiques of the fetish of state power relate directly to the actions of the ANC and post-apartheid South Africa. While attitudes to the state relate directly to the problematic of ‘social treason’, mentioned earlier, my concern in the following is to highlight the importance of the subjective in Fanon’s engagement with *The Eighteenth Brumaire*. 
In *The Wretched*, Fanon reiterates Marx’s differentiation between bourgeois and proletarian revolutions arguing that in the latter the hitherto subjugated nobodies become protagonists, the absolutely dehumanized now becomes an absolute historicity, ‘living inside history’ (Fanon 1968: 147). What Marx calls the ‘practical-critical activity’ inherent in proletarian revolutions is seen by Fanon in the emergence of a new language and a new vocabulary (Fanon 1968: 46). Thus Fanon’s insistence that the ‘clarity of ideas must be profoundly dialectical’ (Fanon 1968: 193) means that beyond the spatial Manicheanism of apartheid, time must become, as Marx puts it, the space for human development. Fanon’s proposal that time be set aside and space be created for public dialogue, discussion and the proposal of new ideas and experimentation—the process of self determination—is analogous to Marx’s discussion of the constant critical reevaluations that characterize proletarian revolutions. And it is this idea of the objectivity of subjectivity, both critical and practical. Indeed the new passions and new forces (what Fanon calls the creation of a new person) and the power of ideas remains so alive in *The Wretched* that the book should be considered both a retrospective—that is, a profound critique of anti-colonial movements—and a perspective for the future.

Fanon opens the conclusion to *Black Skin* with the following quotation from *The Eighteenth Brumaire*:

The social revolution ... cannot draw its poetry from the past, but only from the future. It cannot begin with itself before it has stripped itself of all its superstitions concerning the past. Earlier revolutions relied on memories out of world history in order to drug themselves against their own content ... Before the expression exceeding the content; now the content exceeds the expression. (Fanon 1967a: 223)

Decolonization is revolutionary insofar as the content exceeds the expression, and is thus understood as an historical process not an inevitability. Fanon makes this clear in a 1960 article on Africa’s liberation, arguing that, ‘It is rigorously false to pretend and to believe that this decolonization is the fruit of an *objective dialectic*’ (Fanon 1967b: 170, my emphasis). And, at the very point in *The Wretched* that Fanon speaks of decolonization as a ‘programme of complete disorder’, he adds:

That is to say that it cannot be understood, it cannot become intelligible nor clear to itself except in the exact measure that we discern the move-
ments which give it *historical* form and content. (Fanon 1968: 36, my emphasis)

The programme of complete disorder breaks up the timeless spatial vortex of colonial Manicheanism, which was kept in place by lines of force, and out of this challenge a new history begins. The uprooting of the old society is a double process, for ‘the thing’—the dehumanized ‘native’—becomes human ‘during the same process by which it frees itself’ (Fanon 1968 36-7). This, I think, is critical to a new understanding of Fanon’s conception of subjectivity (the *historical* protagonist) and humanism (and what I am saying here is that the poors have become historical protagonists).

The double movement implies that far from a simple substitution of one regime for another, the very process of substitution indicates the transition from Manichean to dialectical logic where the ‘will to liberty is expressed in terms of time and space’ (Fanon 1968: 240). Embedded in Fanon’s description of colonial compartmentalization is its dialectical re-ordering marking out a new society. ‘If we examine closely this system of compartments we will at least be able to reveal the *lines of force* it implies. This approach to the colonial world, it’s ordering and its geographical layout will allow us to mark out the lines on which a decolonized society will be reorganized’ (Fanon 1968: 38, my emphasis). The examination will also indicate the limits to reorganization.

Decolonization involves more than eradicating the lines of force—the police station, barracks, and border check points—that keep the zones apart; it requires fundamental social and economic change. Continuous revolution—in Marx’s words, a continuously unfolding dialectic and constant self-criticism—is central to what Fanon means by ‘transform[ing] the national revolution into a social revolution’ (Fanon 1967c: 169) and the revelations of new lines of force in the name of nation, the market, private property, and the continuing legacy of apartheid rule with emphasis on the urban to the detriment of the rural areas, mark out future challenges. Fanon’s reference to the revolution’s ‘form and content’, and his insistence that the creation of new subjectivities are not the result of ‘supernatural powers’, but are born in the social process, are reminiscent of his quotation from *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, that the revolution ‘cannot begin with itself before it has stripped itself of all superstitions concerning the past’ and has found its ‘own content’ rather than ‘drug[ging] [itself] against [its] own content’. This seems incredibly germane to South
Africa where the content of the movements against apartheid far exceeded the political leadership and its intellectuals who were ‘drugged’ by the political transition.24

For Fanon to find an appropriate content—to transcend the colonial vortex—requires emphasizing the subjective side of the dialectic, or perhaps understanding in Gramsci’s way that ‘[o]bjective always means “humanly objective”, which can be held to correspond to historically subjective’ (Gramsci 1971: 445). In other words, subjectivity becomes objectivity through praxis or, as Fanon puts it in his ‘Letter to the Resident Minister’, objectivity is ‘a subjective attitude in organized contradiction with reality’ (Fanon 1967b: 53, my emphasis). The subjective side of the dialectic appears in Fanon’s profound re-telling of the lived experience of anti-colonial political activity. Under the pressure of his critical analysis, the activities described disclose an experience that ‘explodes the old colonial truths and reveals unexpected facets which bring out new meanings and pinpoint the contradictions camouflaged by these facts’ (Fanon 1968: 147). In short, Fanon’s conception of truth is not separated from subjective life and from a self-understanding which, in its unfolding as a self-referential absolute, is the ‘rebellion’ that ‘gives proof of its rational basis’ (Fanon 1968: 146). In other words, by reflecting on itself, the rebellion provides its own social content and vision of an alternative society.

‘The [T]reason of the Intellectuals’25

It so happens that the unpreparedness of the educated classes, the lack of practical links between them and mass of the people, their laziness, and, let it be said, their cowardice at the decisive moment of the struggle will give rise to tragic mishaps.

— Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth

Fanon’s invocation ‘to change the world’, as he puts it in Black Skin White Masks, is more than a rhetorical fillip to conclude his analysis of the racial Manicheanism of the colonial condition.26 Like Marx’s analysis of proletarian revolution in The Eighteenth Brumaire, Fanon’s painstaking confrontation with the pitfalls of the revolution conceives the ‘new person’ not as a miraculous creation, but as a product of a constant movement and principled criticism. Such criticism is not a priori. The disappearance of the colonized and the
appearance of a new humanity are ‘prefigured in the objectives and methods of the conflict’ (Fanon 1968: 197). Such objectives are neither simple reflections of spontaneous activity nor the enactment of pre-existing aims. Content neither with praising its strengths nor critici zing its weaknesses, this prefiguration is a fruit of the hard labour of ‘tarrying with the negative’ (Hegel 1977: 19). In other words, the sources of human objectivity must include the practice of thinking. The new concepts that Fanon is anxious to set forth at the conclusion of The Wretched are indeed the product of the movements’ own self-reflection. In contrast, it would not be far-fetched to label the race for positions in the new regime as ‘the treason of the intellectuals’.

Given the dismal, frequently horrific, consequences of revolutions in the 20th century, Fanon’s claims for the redemptive power of revolution to transform life for the better may seem little more than dreams of another era. Yet, as I have insisted, for him the revolution is not simply an act but also a hermeneutical space that challenges the material and ideological basis of power and helps to create new, unforeseen meaning and powers of the mind: in other words, a transformative ‘fighting culture’ (Gibson 2003) is intimately linked to mental liberation, for it is the essence of the fight which explodes old colonial truths and reveals unexpected facets, which bring about new meaning (Fanon 1968: 147). The changing attitudes allow space to be created in which a liberatory ideology can be developed, articulated and discussed in the heat of the battle. Thus we can find in Fanon’s description of revolution a dialectical theory of social movement as transformative, as well as a warning that the greatest threat to Africa’s liberation is the lack of a liberatory ideology. All this might seem dreadfully idealistic and unrealistic, yet the great tragedy of the township movements of the late 1980s was the strictures placed on open discourse about the future. This was, as Fanon puts it—and perhaps very few would have accepted in the heat of the battle and the states of emergencies—the greatest threat.

During his stay in Accra as a representative of the provisional Algerian government to Ghana, Fanon took a trip through to the Algerian frontier. In his notebook, he made the following summation:

Colonialism and its derivatives do not, as a matter of fact, constitute the present enemies of Africa. In a short time this continent will be liberated. For my part the deeper I enter into the culture and political circles the surer I am that the great danger that threatens Africa is the absence of ideology. (Fanon 1967b: 186, my emphasis)
Of course there are plenty of ideologies and plenty of ideologists and, having just come from Nkrumah's Ghana, Fanon gives added concretion to the warning (see Gibson 1999). Today there are copious numbers of intellectuals working for the World Bank, the UN, talk radio, working as TV news commentators and university professors, as well as those who ply their trade for the dominant political parties and interest groups. A much smaller number of intellectuals give their energies to fighting injustice and a smaller number work with human rights organizations and social movements. But I am thinking of a different kind of intellectual: oppositional, a fighter against injustice, involved in social struggles, but not infected by what Fanon calls intellectual laziness, that is, a willingness to keep attuned to the challenges emerging from below, especially from social action. (Parenthetically, political activists are intellectuals and have a responsibility to reflect on liberation ideas. Not to accept that responsibility is a form of intellectual laziness, just as intellectuals who have broken with the ruling ideology have a responsibility to keep open the precious spaces for independent discourse.) Intellectuals on the left often have one thing in common with liberals: an elitist attitude towards working people. This is frequently justified by a culture of immediacy that pervades a global neoliberal capitalist order where movements, especially poor people's movements that are under-resourced and facing attack by the state, are often hard-pressed to open up a discussion of their long-term and principled goals. Thus any discussion about ideas becomes a discussion of strategy. So what can a small group of 'honest' intellectuals, who are fairly insignificant and powerless and who operate in a period of retrogression, do?

Fanon is unique among intellectuals in that he recognizes the necessity not only of the battle of ideas but also that movements for freedom themselves express a 'form of theory'. The first step is taking history from below, in the making, and taking lived experience seriously, which also means taking seriously the theoretical preparation—clearing the mind or intellectual disintoxication, as Fanon might put it. The intellectual lives in an 'unstable zone', Fanon argues. Often schooled by colonialism (or at least in its mindset), the intellectual is apt to uncritically praise the externals, the inert outer garments of culture (Fanon 1968: 224). What Fanon calls the 'sacredness' of the Sari (Fanon 1968: 221), or the hollowness of multiculturalism, represents a reification of culture that operates within the terms inherited from colonialism. These are expressions of alienation and of the intellectual's disconnectedness. Instead, to really break with bour-
geois culture, it is not enough to praise a culture of survival. The intellectual has to become aware of the culture of discouragement that the people have internalized and patiently explain the interconnectedness of issues. At the Second Congress of Black Artist and Writers, held in Rome in 1959, Fanon spoke of the dual and integrated role for the radical intellectual as being in the service of both ‘the people’ and developing a ‘new humanism’. The latter was truly a theoretical and practical task that found its sources in philosophic thought and in people’s anti-colonial actions.

Fanon’s conception of freedom and the unleashing of the creative powers of the mind of the African are thus inseparable from his realistic assessment of independent Africa—fragile, endangered and surrounded by imperialist forces and ideologies. Yet it is in this context that Fanon reminds intellectuals that their active participation in the building of ‘the reality of the nation’ means discovering and encouraging a cacophony of ‘universalizing values’ already existing in both activities and in the ‘will of the people’ (Fanon 1968: 247), without which nationalism leads ‘up a blind alley’ (Fanon 1968: 204). Post-apartheid South Africa has entered that blind alley. Yet, at the same time, the actions of ‘the poors’ shake up the current celebratory morality and point to the social treason of the ANC. The struggles around basic human needs in South Africa, which have forced themselves to be heard, commit radical intellectuals to lend their ears and their resources to the needs of the dispossessed, and thus to battle the privatization of space and to open new spaces in which a new humanism can be voiced and discussed.
NOTES

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Third Annual Frantz Fanon lecture at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Westville Campus, July 2004, under the title 'Fanon, Marx and the New Reality of the Nation: black political empowerment and the challenges of a new humanism in South Africa'. I would like to thank Richard Pithouse, Fazel Khan, and the staff at the Centre for Civil Society for organizing the event, Professor Percy Magobo More for chairing it and for the many working people who came to hear it. A review of the lecture by Mavuso Dingani is available at http://www.nu.ac.za/ccs/default.asp?3,28,11,1276. I would also like to thank Asako Serizawa for her close reading of and critical comments about this paper. I know that I have failed to answer all of them. The subtitle 'The New Reality of the Nation' was Fanon's working title for _A Dying Colonialism_.

2. I hope to make clear in the following that the claim to 'logical' interdependence is not fanciful. It has its roots in what Marx calls the 'rosy dawn' of capitalist accumulation, which includes the extirpation and expropriation of Africans as slaves.

3. In terms of Fanon's notion of national consciousness, see Fanon (1968), pp.148-205 and Gibson (2003), pp.177-205.

4. In this topsy-turvy world, religion itself represents a 'real', albeit alienated, response to alienation as 'the heart of the heartless world' (Marx 1975e: 244).

5. It is often overlooked that Marx's first use of the term 'revolution in permanence' is in this essay. He most openly calls for such a revolution in his 1850 Address to the Communist League: 'The relationship of the revolutionary workers' party to the petty-bourgeois democrats is this: it marches together with them against the faction, which it aims at overthrowing, it opposes them in everything whereby they seek to consolidate their position in their own interests ... Their battle cry must be: "The Revolution in Permanence".'

6. In _Black Skin White Mask_ Fanon analyzes the novels of Mayotte Capecia as an expression of mimicry. Capecia, Fanon argues, wishes to turn white, both literally and figuratively. Why? Because one becomes rich through Whiteness (with a capital W), and as she understands it, one is white above a certain financial level (or as Fanon says in _The Wretched_, you are white because you are rich (Fanon 1968: 40)). In other words, by becoming rich you become white. The question here is to what extent is South Africa a post-racist society? After all, the black bourgeoisie has emerged at the expense of the majority of blacks. If, for Capecia, her wish to be white ('living on the hill that dominates the city' and entering into high society) means you've made it, for Fanon, it means that _being is reduced to having_. In other words, 'Whiteness', understood here as 'making it', is an attitude of mind and way of being based on colonial oppression and capitalist expansion (see 1967a: 42-44).

7. Thus the psychological liberation that Biko speaks about, in 'Fear—An Important Determinant in South African Politics', is not automatically realized with the end of apartheid; it is in fact sublimated and turned inward, which is why Biko understands the character of dehumanization that results from being treated as an extension of a broom or lever of a machine (Biko 1978: 68).

8. By 'philosophic divide' I mean a 'moment' in thought that becomes the basis for understanding a historical period. These are rare occurrences, and Fanon
expresses such a divide not only as a critic of Western rationalism but through the concretion of the dialectic of liberation on the African continent. This point is clearly articulated in the conclusion to *The Wretched* (e.g., 35-7, 310-316). With regard to Mbeki’s ‘schizophrenic’ comment, my point is that while the later (1999) quote, belying an intellectual and moral degeneration, betrays the ‘social treason’ that exploitation can wear a black face, the earlier quote objectifies ‘the Transkei’ rather than illustrates the subjectivity of revolt. See also Dunayevskaya 2002: 3-5.

9. Following Robert Dahl, the mainstream political science transition literature calls this ‘polyarchy’, not democracy, because it is an elite pact about economic policy with limited political participation. As an international policy, see also William Robinson (1996).

10. It was Richard Pithouse’s (2003) article that inspired me to return to Marx’s articles on ‘the poor’.

11. By the 1840s working class ‘combinations’ were already a part of political life, especially after mass action (including the Luddite riots of 1811 and 1812) won the repeal of the Anti-Combination acts in 1824 and concomitantly led to the first capitalist crisis of overproduction and depression. Worker revolt and capitalist crisis blew apart the Ricardian School.

12. In his 1859 preface to the *Introduction to the Contribution of Political Economy*, Marx noted that his articles on the Moselle peasants were the ‘first’ that occasioned his concern for economic issues. I am not sure whether anyone has considered these articles as part of Marx’s analysis of ‘primitive accumulation’ but such an approach would be fruitful. Marx argues that the struggle over collecting dead wood is the fight between what was regarded as communal land and centuries-old inalienable rights and the emerging capitalist notion of ‘property’ right and privatization. Rather than championing ‘capitalist development’, Marx champions ‘custom’, laying claim to the law of custom as the ‘law of these undermost, dispossessed, and elementary masses and of them alone’, for the dispossessed, he says, have no other law.

13. The examples are numerous for they express the problem of quantitative methods in sociology, market research about ‘attitudes’, and so on. There is a famous sociological study of British car workers, which argues that 77% of the workers had a ‘co-operative attitude to management’ having ‘little tendency to interpret employer-worker relations in fundamentally “opposition terms”’. Scarcely one month after the publication the car workers broke into open rebellion with the workers attempting to take over the main office, calling on the director to be strung up while singing the red flag (see Robin Blackburn 1967). Another example of apparent schizophrenia is that of American autoworkers during World War 2. In *Wartime Strikes*, Martin Glaberman (1980) tells how a majority of the workers voted in favour of a ‘patriotic’ no-strike pledge and then how, in the same period, a majority of them walked off the job on wildcat strikes.

14. Karl Marx 1976b: 211. There is also a truth to false consciousness in that the fetish that attaches itself to commodities is an expression of the way things really are! Thus writing of a ‘class for itself’ did not mean that Marx had given up his disdain for Proudhon and others. For Marx criticism meant a ruthless criticism of all that exists and not a proclamation of ‘Truth’ to which we should all kneel. Also consult Georg Lukács’s classic essay on this issue—‘Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat’, and the brilliant ‘What is Orthodox Marxism’,
written in 1919 (Lukács 1971). The shortcoming of Lukács, it should be remem-
bered, is that he ends up solving the 'antinomy' of self-consciousness and alien-
atation by falling back on an external unifier—the Party as the 'standpoint of the
proletariat'. Lukács' 'discovery' of Marx's 1844 essay 'Alienated Labour' did not
move him to reconsider, as his 1967 introduction sadly confirms.

15. This is exactly the point that Marx makes against Proudhon in the Poverty of Phi-
losophy: in the place of dialectical movement is placed the dogmatic distinction
between good and bad; thus 'there is no longer any dialectics but only, at most,
absolutely pure morality' (1976b: 168-9). This pure morality, which is translated
into a set of principles workers should follow, is echoed in the directives of the
modern vanguardists.

16. The problem, in other words, is not the backward 'poor' but the false conscious-
ness of the intellectuals and the 'poverty of philosophy'. Dunayevskaya (1958)
claims that Marx reframed the structure of Capital on the basis of workers'
struggles in the 1860s (chapter four).

17. As Ashwin Desai put it, summing up the feelings of many who think that the
issue is not simply the 'right to work': 'Why should I be fighting for jobs? I don't
want to fight for jobs. I don't want to go and work in one of those factories. I
don't want to work in a Taiwanese sweatshop. I don't want to work in an export
processing zone. I am not raising the banner of jobs for all'. Quoted in Naidoo
and Veriava 2004: 44.

18. A point made in a critical review of my Fanon lecture at the University of
KwaZulu Natal, Durban. See Mavuso Dingani, 'The 2004 Annual Frantz Fanon

19. A question asked by miners on strike in the United States in 1949. See

20. For a debate among activist-intellectuals about some of these issues as they relate
to the struggles against eviction in Mandela Park, Cape Town, see the Journal of

21. See Gibson (2003), especially chapter six.

22. Also see Ashwin Desai's 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Nelson Mbeki',

23. Some critics regard Marx's Eighteenth Brumaire—especially its opening
pages—as Fanon's philosophical leitmotif, especially Marx's conception of his-
torical materialism: human beings make history but not in the circumstances of
their own choosing (see Tony Martin, 1999). While Fanon may have taken the
title of The Wretched of the Earth from The Internationale, one can locate the
subjects of The 18th Brumaire in Fanon's The Wretched, especially in the central
chapters, 'The Strengths and Weaknesses of Spontaneity' and 'The Pitfalls of
National Consciousness', which have become almost a script for post-colonial
Africa.

24. In present-day South Africa the new lines of force are represented by the priva-
tization of public spaces in the 'deracialized' bourgeois urban areas; the rich
gated suburbia; and the outlying and apartheid and post-apartheid 'housing' and
squatter camps for the poor.

Perhaps it does not need to be said, but apart from the suggestive title, Benda's
conservative neo-Platonist views have nothing to do with my argument. I men-
tion this only because of Jinadu Adele's analogy (1986: 156, 238) between
Fanon's concept of political education and Plato's concept of 'philosopher kings'.
In contrast, see Gibson 2003: 192-200.

26. It is often lamented that Fanon's claims about 'The Revolution' creating the 'new person' are naïve, and even a dangerously utopian addenda to his explication of colonial relations (see Memmi 1971). These caveats, however, betray a banal understanding.

27. In other words, an anti-intellectualism where ideas are reduced to strategy, assuming that the masses are not particularly interested in ideas and that the only ideas worth their salt are those that address the immediate tasks—for example, the leftist intellectual who wants a programme for action, not a humanist programme that involves a real discussion of ideas. James Connolly, the Irish revolutionary, put it well: 'revolution is never practical until the time of revolution comes and then it alone is practical.'

28. For example, Raya Dunayevskaya (1958) argues, 'the movement from practice is a form of theory'.

REFERENCES

Blackburn, Robin. 1967. 'Inequality and Exploitation', New Left Review, 42.


