

Revisiting Fanon, From Theory to Practice: Democracy and Development in Africa

by

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Abstract

Martiniquais and French, a psychiatrist by training, political philosopher and political activist by choice, and journalist by trade, Fanon ended his life as an Algerian revolutionary. Over the last four decades, Fanon's work has been interpreted from a wide variety of disciplines, standpoints and perspectives. He has been viewed in turn as psychiatrist, psychoanalyst, philosopher, political analyst, journalist-propagandist, and cultural critic. Such exceptional eclecticism and multi-disciplinarity emerge clearly from the abundant corpus of scholarship on Fanon. This article focuses on what could be called the "second generation" of Fanonian studies that emerged at the beginning of the 21st century and which includes a number of works which re-visit and re-interpret Fanon's life, time, and thought from a variety of postmodernist and postcolonial perspectives. This article concludes that Fanon's enduring legacy, and the continuing relevance of his political thought, lie in an understanding of violence, racism, and the rise of ethnic identity and religious fundamentalism in the global, post-Cold War world.

Introduction

Frantz Fanon was a man of many identities, many talents, and many trades; in this sense, he truly embodied the French ideal of "*un honnête homme du 20^{ème} siècle*" [a well-rounded 20th century man]. Born in Martinique (a French overseas territory in the Caribbean) on July 20, 1925, he grew up as a *Martiniquais*. He went to metropolitan France first as a soldier in World War II, then as a medical student at the University of Lyon. Finally, he moved to Algeria and Tunisia, working as a psychiatrist at the Blida-Joinville Hospital, and later as a propagandist for Algeria's National Liberation Front (FLN) in Tunis during the bloody war of independence against the French (1954-1962). In 1959 Fanon was briefly a diplomat representing the FLN in Ghana. He died of leukemia in a suburban Washington, D.C. hospital on December 6, 1961 at the age of 36, barely seven months before the formal independence of Algeria (July 3, 1962) for which he had fought so hard.

Martiniquais and French, a psychiatrist by training, political philosopher and political activist by choice, and journalist by trade, Fanon ended his life as an Algerian revolutionary. He left us a significant corpus of writings, all of which have been (rather poorly) translated into English. It should come as no surprise, then, that over the last four decades, Fanon's work has been interpreted from a wide variety of disciplines, standpoints and perspectives; he has been viewed in turn as psychiatrist, psychoanalyst, philosopher, political analyst, journalist-propagandist, and cultural critic. Such exceptional eclecticism and multi-disciplinarity emerge clearly from the abundant corpus of scholarship on Fanon. What could be called the "first generation" of Fanonian studies (from the late sixties to the mid-eighties) includes three major biographies and intellectual portraits (Cauter 1970; Geismar 1969; Gendzier 1973); in addition, it includes a number of path-breaking studies on Fanon's social and political thought (Hansen 1977, Jinadu 1986; Mbom 1985; Ngué 1963; Perinbam 1982; Zahar 1974; but see also Martin 1974a; Martin 1974b). The "second generation" of Fanonian studies, emerging at the dawn of the 21st century, includes a number of works which re-visit and re-interpret Fanon's life, time, and thought from a variety of postmodernist and postcolonial perspectives; in addition to Gates (1991) and Sekyi-Otu (1997), the most notable among these are the works of Cherki (2000 & 2006), Gibson (1999 & 2003), Idahosa (2004) and Macey (2000).

This article focuses essentially on the works of these "second generation" of Fanonian scholars, which must be analyzed and interpreted against the background of the works of the "first generation" of Fanonian scholars. Such comparative and contextual analysis leads to the conclusion that Fanon's enduring legacy, and the continuing relevance of his political thought, lie in an understanding of violence, racism, and the rise of ethnic identity and religious fundamentalism in the global, post-Cold War world.

Fanon: A Personal and Intellectual Portrait

What gives Alice Cherki a distinct advantage over all the above-mentioned authors is that as an Algerian psychiatrist and psychologist who was actively engaged in the Algerian struggle for independence, she knew Fanon personally, both professionally and as a comrade-in-arms. She worked in Fanon's psychiatric wards in both Blida-Joinville and Tunis (at the Manouba clinic), and we learn from Macey (2000: 555, n.72) that she was then the wife of Charles Geromini, a close associate and friend of Fanon in Blida and Tunis (they later divorced). This explains why Cherki's *Frantz Fanon, Portrait* is an exceptionally sensitive and perceptive – yet extremely sympathetic – personal and intellectual portrait of Fanon, focusing naturally on Fanon's years at Blida (1953-56) and Tunis (1957-61). Her intimate knowledge of her subject enables the author to provide unique insights into Fanon's complex and engaging personality, as the following quote clearly demonstrates:

The intense presence of his body and of his voice, his extreme and demanding attentiveness, his intense relation to his own discourse, shaped by him but which also shaped him, allowed him to evoke the most extraordinary fictions while distancing himself from them to end up in new situations linked to actionable projects. (Cherki 2000: 36) [Author's translation from the French]

Indeed, Cherki notes that, much like the late Ivoirian novelist Amadou Kourouma, Fanon re-appropriated and subverted the French language by writing in a flowery and picturesque style close to the spoken language and full of bodily and sensual metaphors.

In addition to a sensitive personal portrait, Cherki also provides the reader with a succinct, accurate, and sympathetic intellectual portrait of Fanon. She shows how for Fanon, change must be preceded by a complete break with the colonial past, leading to the creation of a new culture, a new nation, and a new Algerian man; if this requires the colonized to resort to the same violence used against him by the colonizer, then so be it. For Fanon, this, indeed, is a liberating form of political violence; not an end in itself, but simply a means of liberation (Cherki 2000: 197-200; 259-63). Fanon's concept of violence was in fact very close to that of a prominent FLN leader, Ramdane Abane. A self-taught high school graduate with Marxist leanings, Abane was convinced that just as France had conquered Algeria through violence, nothing but violence would ever shake loose France's grip on Algeria. Abane's favorite dictum, which encapsulated his basic thinking, was: "one corpse in a jacket is always worth more than twenty in uniform."

From the Spring of 1955, Ramdane Abane's philosophy became a central tenet of the FLN military strategy – notably urban terrorism – in its struggle against the French. Thus, the Soummam Conference (August 1956) convened by the FLN – which created the *Conseil National de la Révolution Algérienne* (CNRA) – adopted two of Abane's key principles, namely (a) the primacy of the political over the military; and (b) the primacy of the forces of the "interior" over those of the "exterior" (Horne 2006: 132, 145). This put Abane on a collision course with the colonels heading the military wing of the FLN (led by Houari Boumedienne), strong advocates of the doctrine of "collective" (as opposed to individual) leadership, and eventually to his untimely and mysterious death at the hands of his enemies in Morocco on December 26, 1957 (Horne 2006: 227-29). Cherki reveals that Fanon was deeply affected by the death of Abane, a close friend and comrade-in-arms with whom he had worked very closely when Abane was press attaché in charge of information and propaganda for the FLN, and whom he saw as an exemplary leader of an independent Algeria (Cherki 2000: 146, 151-53). Unfortunately, the post-independence political dominance of the military in Algeria confirmed Abane's and Fanon's worst fears in this regard.

In one of his most celebrated chapters on “The Pitfalls of National Consciousness” in *Les damnés de la terre*, Fanon paints a vivid and realistic portrait of the emerging African nationalist elite:

The national bourgeoisie that takes over power at independence is an under-developed bourgeoisie (...) In less-developed countries, the national bourgeoisie is not geared toward production, invention, building or work. It is merely acting as intermediary and is imbued with a business – rather than entrepreneurial – mentality (...) The national bourgeoisie discovers its historical mission: to serve as intermediary (...) as a transmission-belt for a fake capitalism that takes on the mask of neo-colonialism. The national bourgeoisie is content with merely assuming the role of business agent of the Western bourgeoisie. (Fanon 1979: 96, 98) [Author’s translation]

Alice Cherki confirms and documents Fanon’s concerns in this regard, notably with regard to the impending independence of such French colonies as Congo and Cameroon, whose nationalist elites were preparing to take over power from the French colonial administrators without radically transforming the colonial economic infrastructure, and whose governments were plagued by nepotism, corruption and internal power struggles (2000: 205, 213). Recent developments in Eritrea (which gained independence in 1993) and South Africa (which came under majority rule in 1994) confirm Fanon’s analysis. Thus, in her recent book on South Africa, Mueni wa Muiu (2008) demonstrates that the transition from apartheid to liberal democracy was a neo-colonial settlement that left the economy and the military/security sector under the control of the white minority, while increasing wide socio-economic disparities between rich and poor, men, and women. Deeply disappointed by this neo-colonial dispensation dominated by a “compradore” bourgeoisie hopelessly linked to Western economic and financial interests, Fanon increasingly came to view the peasantry as the only hope for the African revolution, indeed as *the revolutionary class par excellence* (Cherki 2000: 213-14).

Post-Modernist Readings of Fanon

Ever since Homi Bhabha’s famously convoluted and esoteric foreword to the second English edition of *Black Skin, White Masks* (1986), and in the wake of works such as that of Ato Sekyi-Otu’s *Fanon’s Dialectic of Experience* (1997), Fanon has been re-visited, re-interpreted, and re-appropriated by all manner of “post” theorists – most notably by the postmodernist and postcolonial schools. In the words of Nigel Gibson, “By attempting to get beyond Manicheanism, Fanon was part of an emerging postcolonial debate about subjugation and subjectivity, about discourse and agency, about power and identity, about tradition and modernity, *avant la lettre*” (Gibson 2003: 7).

This explains why “over the past decades, the Fanon of *The Wretched of the Earth*, the political theorist of national liberation and its pitfalls, has been eclipsed by the Fanon concerned with race and representation” (Gibson 2003: 2) – i.e. the Fanon of *Black Skin, White Masks*. In other words, as P.L.E. Idahosa cogently remarks, Fanon has now become a First World (rather than Third World) theorist and a precursor of the politics of racial and cultural identity of post-colonialism and of resistance (Idahosa 2004). Macey concurs: “With the decline of Third Worldism, attention has shifted away from *Les Damnés de la terre* and back to *Peau noire, masques blancs*, which is more widely read now (...) than at any time since its publication in 1952 (...) The new interest in Fanon’s first book is a product of the emergence of post-colonial studies as a distinct (...) discipline” (Macey 2000: 25-26).

The Populist Dimension of Fanon’s Thought

In *The Populist Dimension to African Political Thought* (2004), Idahosa re-explores the political thought of Fanon in comparative perspective, alongside the thought of such prominent African nationalist leaders as Amilcar Cabral (Guinea-Bissau) and Julius Nyerere (Tanzania). Idahosa argues that these political thinkers’ discourses of the sixties are still relevant today and need to be taken seriously “because they constitute an interesting legacy [of] which people *should* be reminded” and “because they speak to a problematic that has not gone away” (Idahosa 2004: 6; emphasis in the original). According to Idahosa, Fanon’s experience was unique in the sense that “Fanon was the revolutionary witnessing national liberation (...)” (Idahosa 2004: 52). The author then goes on to situate the political thought and practice of Fanon within the context of the nationalist and populist problematic. He observes that for populists like Fanon, nationalism and national sovereignty embodied in an independent nation-state are a means and a beginning, not the end, as it is to the nationalists.

As a populist, Fanon recognizes the reality of class conflict and acknowledges that the nation-state benefits classes unequally; Idahosa observes that “Populism’s principal concern is with its peasant constituency and it sees the state as rational only insofar as it serves peasant interests and recognizes popular demand” (Idahosa 2004: 32). The author then goes on to analyze Fanon’s model of development within the populist problematic. He argues that in his quest for an alternative path to capitalist development, Fanon believed that Africa could educate Europe; he saw the need for a new ideology and new institutions as the basis for political and socio-economic transformation and participatory, people-centered democracy. Using a Marxist analytical framework which occasionally draws on the recent postcolonial and postmodern literature, Idahosa concludes – like Fanon and Cabral – that the African peasantry should, indeed, be seen as the revolutionary class *par excellence*. The central role of culture in revolutionary transformation, as thoughtfully analyzed by Fanon and Cabral, is another key issue addressed by the author.

Fanon: The Post-colonial Imagination

In *Fanon: The Postcolonial Imagination* (2003), Nigel Gibson, editor of a collection of essays on Fanon (1999), definitely frames his argument within the postmodernist school of thought. Considering Fanon's *oeuvre* [body of work] as a whole, he argues that Fanon's understanding of the colonial world is not Manichean and undertakes to "bring Fanon's thought back to life and present the vitality of an intellectual on fire" (Gibson 2003: 14). Central to Fanon's thought, according to Gibson, is his conception of dialectic, particularly the dialectic of experience: "I maintain that it is Fanon's conception of lived experience, when considered in the historical epoch of anti-colonial struggle, that provides the creative principle. I argue that Fanon translates lived experience of this struggle as a 'radical mutation in consciousness'" (Gibson 2003: 10). In typical postmodernist fashion, Gibson painstakingly historicizes, problematizes, and contextualizes Fanon's *expériences vécues* as a Martiniquais/French *engagé* intellectual, as well as an Algerian revolutionary. For him, *Black Skin, White Masks* illustrates Fanon's uncanny ability to synthesize and critically engage phenomenological and psychoanalytic theory, drawing in particular on Hegel's master/slave dialectic, and on the phenomenology of Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, using a methodology through which "race becomes the lens through which social relations and theories of time are judged" (Gibson 2003: 16). Drawing on the lived experience of the Jew and the Black in Western societies, Fanon, notes Gibson, observes the inability of Blacks to gain recognition from whites, which leads the former to retreat into Black consciousness as a means of self-assertion, as a possible ground for mutual reciprocity, and as a way of transcending the colonial mindset.

In subsequent chapters, Gibson explores in turn Black people's inferiority complex from a psychoanalytical standpoint, the politics of *négritude* as an expression of cultural nationalism, the theory and practice of revolutionary violence in the context of Algeria, and nationalism and a new humanism in a postcolonial context. Starting from the observation that "the great danger that threatens Africa is the absence of ideology" (Fanon 1964: 211), Fanon intends to enlighten the world and to create a basis for a new human reciprocity representing a new beginning: "We must start anew, invent new concepts and try to create a new man" (Fanon 1979: 233). Noting that Fanon's most enduring legacy today is to have formulated a series of problematic rather than answers, Gibson concludes his study by observing that Fanon's postcolonial imagination remains a challenge for contemporary Africa: "Fanon's insistence on bringing 'invention into existence' and to imagine a future is in fact a concrete response to the thread-bare technical economic authoritarianism of structural adjustment, the grim reaper which continues to haunt the continent" (Gibson 2003: 204-5).

De-constructing and Debunking Fanon

David Macey's *Frantz Fanon: A Biography* (2000) differs significantly from the previous three books in terms of size, approach, and content. A British translator of French by profession and author of a critically-acclaimed biography of Michel Foucault (Macey 1993), Macey has produced a massive and erudite tome--although, as we shall see, bigger is not necessarily better, including 505 pages of text and 79 pages of notes. The work falls within a well-honed genre, exemplified by the works of such authors as Peter Geismar (1971), Irene Gendzier (1973), and (more recently) Alice Cherki (2000 & 2006). Yet Macey's work differs from his predecessors' in that it includes an extremely exhaustive and detailed study of the historical, political, and intellectual context of the life, times and thought of Fanon. For example, Macey devotes thirteen pages (Macey 2000: 278-91) to the first Congress of Black Writers and Artists (Paris, September 1956), and four pages (Macey 2000: 371-5) to the second Congress (Rome, March-April 1959), both of which Fanon attended and addressed. And, unlike the other authors, Macey has much to say about Fanon's early years, growing up as a boy and adolescent in Martinique, to which he devotes no less than 80 pages (Macey 2000: 31-111).

Yet, contrary to Cherki, Idahosa, and Gibson, Macey at no time demonstrates any personal empathy toward his subject. Indeed, his whole enterprise seems to be one of demolition, of slowly, subtly, and systematically chipping away at Fanon's thought, personality, and achievements, until, by page 505, the whole edifice comes tumbling down, as if eaten away by termites, leaving Fanon's legacy irrevocably and permanently tarnished. A few examples shall suffice to illustrate this point. Thus, Macey initially portrays Fanon as an advocate of violence: "Fanon came to be seen as the apostle of violence, the prophet of a violent Third World revolution that posed an even greater threat to the West than communism. He was the horseman of a new apocalypse, the preacher of the gospel of the wretched of the earth (...)" (Macey 2000: 2). Yet, he later contradicts himself, stating that "[Fanon] proved to have a personal horror of violence (...) He does not 'glorify' violence and in fact rarely describes it in any detail (...) The violence Fanon evokes is instrumental and he never dwells or gloats on its effects (...) It is almost absurd to criticize Fanon for his advocacy of violence" (Macey 2000: 461, 475). Yet his parting words on the subject seem, once again, to contradict these statements: "Fanon (...) certainly had a talent for hate and he did advocate and justify a violence that I can no longer justify" (Macey 2000: 505). So, if we are to believe Macey, Fanon had a "talent for hate" and was, after all, an "advocate" of violence? Such a conclusion is totally inconsistent with what we know from other authors and witnesses (such as Cherki) of Fanon the humanist and freedom fighter, or Fanon the medical practitioner and theoretician of liberation, and it is definitely at odds with our analysis of Fanon's concept of violence in the context of Cherki's work (see above).

Another recurrent assertion in Macey's work is the claim that while Fanon was a good psychiatrist, he was not a psychoanalyst and therefore could not speak with any authority or write intelligently on a subject on which he had only "textual" or "eclectic" knowledge (Macey 2000: 19, 134, 163, 187, 323). The point seems somewhat overstated and irrelevant, as Alice Cherki—herself a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst—makes clear. Cherki notes that while Fanon was not a psychoanalyst in the sense that he had no practical, personal experience of the discipline, in Tunisia he successfully problematized the concept of trauma in relation to Algerian victims of French colonialism, building on the works of Freud, Ferenczi, and Lacan. In brief, Cherki believed that "Fanon possessed a tremendous intuition about the unconscious and a great erudition in psychoanalytic theory." Discussing Fanon's years in Tunis as a journalist-editorialist for *El Moudjahid*--the central organ of Algeria's National Liberation Front/FLN -- Macey refers to Fanon as a "polemicist" (Macey 2000: 326) (rather than a propagandist), declaring that Fanon was not a great journalist: "Fanon's articles do not provide a coherent or complete history of the Algerian war. Major events are overlooked or mentioned only in passing" (Macey 2000: 334). About his time as an ambassador of the GPRA (*Gouvernement Provisoire de la République Algérienne*/Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic) in Accra (Ghana), Macey notes that Fanon was sorely lacking in political judgment and diplomatic skills: "He was not a natural diplomat (...) His faith in Sékou Touré [then President of Guinea] (...) points to a certain lack of both political judgment and political experience. Fanon was a good propagandist, but not a subtle one (...) Intolerant and much given to making sudden but irreversible decisions, he was not master of the art of compromise" (Macey 2000: 415). For Macey, "recognizing that Fanon could be -- and often was -- wrong is part of what Henry Louis Gates has called 'the challenge of re-historicizing Fanon'" (Macey 2000: 29; Gates 1991; 458n).

Macey is no more indulgent vis-à-vis Fanon's *oeuvre*. Thus, he characterizes *L'An V de la Révolution algérienne* as lacking in sources, "reproducing the stereotypes of the very colonialism he was fighting (...) [and] idealistic in the extreme and even dangerously confused in some respects" (Macey 2000: 408-410). However, Macey reserves his greatest scorn for Fanon's *magnum opus*, *Les damnés de la terre*, which he characterizes as "an inflammatory text" (Macey 2000: 18), poorly researched, lacking in hard facts and statistics, disparate, and replete with sweeping generalizations. Finally, as his allusion to Fanon's "talent for hate" demonstrates, Macey is not adverse to questioning Fanon's character and moral integrity, as when he alleges that Fanon has a tendency to bend the truth: "Other episodes reveal a considerable discrepancy between what he said or endorsed in public and what he said in private, and indicate that his definition of 'true' was decidedly instrumental (...)" (Macey 2000: 355) or when he alludes -- without any shred of evidence--to Fanon's "repressed homosexuality" (Macey 2000: 440-41).

Yet Macey himself is not immune to error. Thus he mistakenly refers to the Malian scholar Amadou Hampaté Bâ as a “Senegalese writer” (Macey 2000: 373); he wrongly evokes Fanon’s warning about threats posed by tensions between Ghana (instead of Gambia) and Senegal; he erroneously states that “the Belgian Congo had become officially independent at the beginning of the month” [June 1960] (Macey 2000: 433), when in fact Congo achieved independence at the end of the month, on June 30, 1960. And he describes Fanon’s party “traveling through thick tropical forest” (Macey 2000: 442) on the road between Mopti and Douentza in Mali, a part of the Sahel well known for its extremely sparse vegetation.

As a professional translator, Macey quite rightly observes that both *Peau noire, masques blancs* and *Les damnés de la terre* suffer from seriously flawed translations by Charles Lam Markmann and Constance Farrington, respectively. That being indeed the case, it would be preferable for Mr. Macey to refrain from criticizing and debunking Fanon and defaming his character, and instead to provide the English-speaking readership with a long-overdue, new and improved translation of these two seminal works, a job which he is better qualified than anyone to undertake.

Fanon and Contemporary Violence in Algeria

Both Alice Cherki (290-295) and David Macey (502-503) briefly evoke the continuing relevance of Fanon’s theory of violence to the bloody Algerian civil war of the 1990s and early 21st century – which has morphed into low-intensity conflict over the last five years. According to the testimonies of two former Algerian military officers, a “dirty” civil war opposing the Algerian government’s security forces to various fundamentalist Islamic groups has, since 1992, resulted in over 200,000 deaths so far. What makes this war “dirty” is the fact that it has been deliberately engineered by a military junta of eleven generals who effectively rule the country, using President Abdelaziz Bouteflika as a front man. These eminently corrupt and obscenely wealthy generals, acting through various agencies – most notably military intelligence and fake Islamic opposition groups created, financed, and manipulated by them – sow mayhem, chaos, and desolation throughout the country, raping, maiming, torturing, and killing hundreds of thousands of innocent men, women, and children. It is no coincidence that the dirty methods used in this war – counterinsurgency, manipulation, deception, torture – are precisely the same that were used by the French military during the war of liberation of 1954-1962 (Horne 1977; Stora 2006). The fact is that all the generals associated with the Algerian military “mafia” were, until the last few months preceding independence, part of the French military, and only joined the GPRA at the eleventh hour (Aboud 2002; Souaïdia 2001; Stora 2001; Stora 2004).

Regarding this endemic civil war, what Cherki, Gibson and Macey fail to point out is that this senseless, and indiscriminate violence, best characterized as state-sponsored terrorism, which primarily affects innocent civilians, has absolutely nothing in common with the revolutionary, cathartic violence advocated by Fanon. And the Algerian military junta—whose authoritarian rule both Abane and Fanon accurately foresaw—exhibits the worst features of the national bourgeoisie so vividly portrayed by Fanon in the *Wretched of the Earth*: “As an agent of the bourgeoisie’s political power and as part of the state structure, the party is merely an instrument of control and coercion of the people, and as such it is clearly anti-democratic (...) The army becomes the main agent of the systematic oppression of the people, and, in the absence of any legislature, will become the arbiter. Sooner or later, the army will become aware of its power, and it will dangle over government’s head the constant threat of a *coup d’état*” (Fanon 1979: 113, 115).

New Perspectives on Democracy and Development in Africa

Of all the authors of the “second generation” of Fanonian studies, it is undoubtedly Idahosa who opens up the most promising vistas on the future of democracy and development in Africa. Idahosa clearly shows that in his quest for an alternative path to capitalist development, Fanon saw the need for a new ideology and new institutions as the basis for political and socio-economic transformation and participatory, people-centered democracy. For Idahosa, Fanon’s major contribution is to have opened to African people an alternative path to Western liberal democracy and capitalist development, exemplified by the powerful and thought-provoking ideas included in the concluding sentences of *Les damnés de la terre*:

Come on, comrades, let us decide to change course, here and now (...) Let us abandon our dreams, our old beliefs, and our old friendships (...) Let us abandon this Europe which constantly talks about man, yet exterminates man wherever she finds him, at home or abroad (...) Come on, comrades, the European game is definitely up, we must find something else. We can do anything today, provided we do not blindly imitate Europe, provided we are not obsessed by the desire to catch up with Europe (...) Let us decide to not imitate Europe, and let us focus our thoughts and energies in a new direction. Let us invent the whole man that Europe has been incapable of bringing to life (...) The Third World must start a new history of man (...) If we are to satisfy the demands and needs of our peoples, we must look elsewhere than in Europe (...) For Europe, for ourselves and for humanity (...) we must shed our skin, invent new concepts, and create a new man. (Fanon 1979: 229-233) [author’s translation]

In essence, Fanon is telling African people, leaders and scholars that for popular democracy and development to succeed in Africa, they must stop blindly following the West; they must stop aping Western culture, traditions, ideas, and institutions; they must think outside of the box; and, above all, they must be bold and innovative, and develop their own ideas, concepts and institutions based on African culture, values, and traditions. Fanon also saw the youth and women as key actors in the African revolution, as well as the main agents of political change and socio-economic transformation in post-colonial Africa. The words of wisdom that the late former president of Tanzania, *Mwalimu* Julius Nyerere, left for the benefit of Africans on the occasion of his seventy-fifth birthday evoke similar ideas:

Africa (...) is isolated. Therefore, to develop, it will have to depend upon its own resources basically, internal resources, nationally, and Africa will have to depend upon Africa. The leadership of the future will have to devise, try to carry out policies of maximum national self-reliance and maximum collective self-reliance. They have no other choice. *Hamna* ! [meaning: "there is none" in Ki-Swahili]. (Nyerere 2000)

This alternative path to Western liberal democracy and capitalist development is precisely the line of thinking of an emerging African scholarship, exemplified by the Ghanaian scholar Daniel Osabu-Kle (2000), the late Nigerian political scientist Claude Ake (1996), as well as (more recently) by two African political scientists, Mueni wa Muiu and Guy Martin (Muiu & Martin 2009).

In *Compatible Cultural Democracy* (2000), Daniel Osabu-Kle argues that neither liberal democracy nor socialism or the military provide the cure to Africa's democracy and development predicament. The author's main thesis is that a democracy based on African culture is the only type that can lead to development (Osabu-Kle 2000: 274). To protect the continent, Osabu-Kle argues, an African high command should be created within the broader framework of a United States of Africa *à la* Kwame Nkrumah. The author also advocates the creation of a youth organization to educate youth about African culture and history. Osabu-Kle concludes that it is only when Afro-centrism replaces Euro-centrism, and a new type of democracy – *Jaku* democracy – is established that Africans both inside and outside the continent will be proud (Osabu-Kle 2000: 278).

In *Democracy and Development in Africa* (1996), Claude Ake argues that the African state is an instrument of political domination and economic exploitation of the people in the hands of the African elite, rather than an agent of democracy and development. According to Ake, a suitable democracy for Africa should have the following characteristics: a democracy in which people have some real decision-making power; a social democracy that emphasizes concrete political, social, and economic rights; a democracy that puts as much emphasis on collective rights as it does on individual rights; and a democracy of incorporation, which should be as inclusive as possible (Ake 1996: 132, 139; Martin 1998).

The development strategy derived from such a people-driven democratization process should be based on: a popular development strategy; self-reliance; empowerment, and confidence; and self-realization rather than alienation (Ake 1996:140-42; Martin 1998).

Building on the works of various African scholars (including Ake and Osabu-Kle) Mueni wa Muiu and Guy Martin (2009) propose a new paradigm of the African state. This new paradigm called *Fundi wa Afrika* (i.e. the “builder” or “tailor” of Africa) uses a long-term historical perspective to present an exhaustive, panoramic view of the issues at stake in Africa’s economic, political, and social development so that Africans can get out of the African predicament. More specifically, *Fundi* (a) analyzes the creation and evolution of the African state (from indigenous to colonial and postcolonial), using a long-term historical perspective; (b) shows how internal and external events and actors in Africa shaped the state and its leadership; and (c) prescribes what the ideal state and its leadership (as determined by the Africans themselves) should be (Muiu & Martin 2009:194, 212).

Like Fanon and Nyerere, *Fundi* urges Africans to be autonomous and self-reliant; in particular, it calls on Africans to get rid, once and for all, of their dependency syndrome; to cease to be supplicants in international economic forums and institutions; to take control of the resources within their borders for the sole benefit of every African; and to focus production on domestic needs rather than on export markets (Mueni & Martin 2009: 195, 198, 214). Like Fanon, *Fundi* sees the African youth and women as key agents of political change and socio-economic transformation in Africa (Muiu & Martin, 2009: 199, 201-202). Finally, Muiu and Martin argue that a new, stable, and modern African state based on five political entities--the *Federation of African States* (FAS) – should be built on the functional remnants of indigenous African political systems and institutions, and should be based on African values, traditions, and culture (Muiu & Martin 2009: 206-216).

Conclusion

When all is said and done, what is Fanon’s most enduring legacy according to the “second generation” of Fanonian scholars? For Macey, it is Fanon’s combination of anger and generosity. For Cherki, it is the continuing relevance of Fanon’s thought to an understanding of violence, racism, and the rise of ethnic identity and religious fundamentalism in the global, post-Cold War world. For Gibson, it is to have formulated a series of problematic rather than answers, but it is also the fact that Fanon’s post-colonial imagination remains a challenge for contemporary Africa, a challenge to imagine a future outside of the straitjacket of the IMF and World Bank-imposed Structural Adjustment Programs (Bond 2005). For Idahosa, it is to have opened to African people an alternative path to Western liberal democracy and capitalist development, a path followed, some fifty years later, by a new generation of African scholars exemplified by Claude Ake, Daniel Osabu-Kle, and Mueni wa Muiu.

The essence of Fanon's thought is perhaps best captured by his prefatory and concluding words in *Black Skin, White Masks*: "I do not come armed with decisive truths (...) My final prayer: Oh, my body, always make me a man who asks questions" (Fanon 1965: 25, 208). Shortly before his death, Fanon had written to a friend that "what matters is not death, but to know (...) whether we have achieved the maximum for the ideas we have made our own (...) The cause of the people, the cause of justice and liberty" (Zahar 1974: xx).

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