# 14

# FRANTZ FANON (1925–1961)

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## Introduction

If political theory was late to the study of empire (Pitts, 2010), just war theory was until recently simply absent. On the one hand, this may be because critics of just war theory's relationship with empire situate themselves outside the tradition (e.g. Maldonado-Torres, 2008; Asad 2009); on the other hand, even after the emergence of such critiques, many in the field resisted—or simply dismissed out of hand (e.g. Bellamy, 2017)—a "turn to empire."

Jessica Whyte uncovers an irony in this lack of curiosity about empire in just war thinking: while the "just war revival" is generally dated to the publication of Michael Walzer's *Just and Unjust Wars* in 1977, the language of "just war" was used by representatives of postcolonial states at the preparatory meetings[1] in advance of the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions between 1974 and 1977. And it was the states of the Global North who resisted this language, with the U.S. representative warning of "the dangerous concept of the just war" (Whyte, 2019).

We can treat the Additional Protocols as a rupture, a Pocockian "lost moment" from which to think differently about our present moment. What might an alternative to the "just war revival" that originates with Walzer look like? There is an emerging wave of scholarship which seeks to deepen just war's engagement with colonialism, rather than simply reject the tradition because of its complicity with empire (e.g., Dussel, 2007; Finlay, 2015; Hutchings, 2019; Whyte, 2019; Mares, 2021).

It is in this spirit that I turn to Frantz Fanon, the oft-maligned theorist of the Algerian revolution. He argued that decolonization was necessarily a violent event precisely because it resisted the quotidian violence of the colonial

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world—a violence that was obfuscated by many Western scholars who chastised anti-colonial movements for their "descent" into violence. When Fanon has been treated by just war theorists and specialists in international law, he is generally treated as a theorist of (terrorist) violence (Elshtain, 2007; Saul, 2008). Rather than using just war theory to condemn Fanon, or Fanon to reject the just war tradition, in this chapter I seek to use Fanon to complicate just war thinking, pulling in the direction of an anti-colonial "lost moment" of just war.

## Contexts

Fanon was born in Fort-de-France, Martinique. Living through World War II as well as multiple anti-colonial struggles, Fanon died at the peak of Algeria's revolutionary struggle against colonial France—in Bethesda, Maryland, with his transportation there facilitated by the CIA.

Fanon enlisted in the Free French forces in 1943, fighting in Africa in World War II—experiencing anti-black racism from French soldiers.[2] After the war, he studied psychiatry in Lyon, France. Though a medical student, he regularly attended lectures by the philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Fanon's thesis was interdisciplinary: "drawing on ideas from the anthropologist, philosopher, and sociologist Lucien Levy-Bruhl, Fanon argued that one should, as a psychiatrist, reach to the patient's humanity instead of the material nexus of effects or symptoms" (Gordon, 2015, p. 15).[3] Fanon returned to Martinique, then left for Algeria, joining Blida-Joinville Hospital as a psychiatrist in 1953. Here, Fanon encountered the search for a "nexus of symptoms" as undertaken in a colonial setting. Describing the interactions between French doctors and Algerian patients he witnessed, Fanon wrote, "Fairly soon the doctor . . . worked out a rule of action: with these people you couldn't practice medicine, you had to be a veterinarian" (Fanon, 1965, p. 127). Colonial doctors treated patients as unreliable narrators of their symptoms, and in his own work, Fanon posited an ontological grounding for the practice of engaging colonial patients as zoological specimens.

Fanon resigned from Blida-Joinville in 1956, writing,

> Although the objective conditions under which psychiatry is practiced in Algeria constituted a challenge to common sense, it appeared to me that an effort should be made to attenuate the viciousness of a system of which the doctrinal foundations are a daily defiance of an authentically human outlook.

But finding his role as a psychiatrist as simply an agent in a colonial institution, he concluded, "What is happening is the result neither of an accident nor of a breakdown in the mechanism. The events in Algeria are the logical

consequence of an abortive attempt to decerebralize a people" (Fanon, 1988, pp. 52–53). After his resignation, Fanon traveled widely as a doctor, writer, and representative of the *Front de liberation nationale* (FLN). After refusing treatment in France for cancer, he left for the United States for treatment, dying in 1961.

Fanon's thinking cannot be easily "contextualized" in a single cultural milieu; he studied as a psychiatrist, but engaged Hegel, Marx, and Sartre in his writings. He was influenced by Aimé Césaire but critiqued the Négritude movement, ultimately leaving the Caribbean to work in Algeria. Efforts to pin him down and define him in a singular way prove notoriously difficult. His work exists at the intersection of multiple discourses, meaning that defining a "problem space" around which we can organize analysis and critique is necessarily an interdisciplinary effort.

## Texts and Tenets

In his brief life, Fanon wrote three complete books, *Peau noire, masques blanc* (*Black Skin, White Masks,* 1952); *L'an Cinq de la révolution Algérienne (A Dying Colonialism,* 1959); and *Les Damnés de la terre* (*The Wretched of the Earth,* 1961), as well as numerous essays, clinical reports, and plays. A collection of Fanon's essays, *Pour la revolution Africaine* (*Towards the African Revolution,* published posthumously in 1964), explores and expands on themes in the three monographs. A new collection of his out-of-print work, *Écrits sur l'aliénation et la liberté* (*Alienation and Freedom,* 2015), greatly expands our access to his medical, dramatic, and political writings.

Broadly speaking, Fanon confronts the problem of colonialism. Contrary to how much scholarship at the time defined colonialism, Fanon understood colonialism to be an ontological phenomenon as much as a phenomenon of sovereignty and cartography. "Anti-Blackness" was, in Fanon's account, an idea that structured any society dominated by European powers. To engage Fanon's thinking, just war theorists must start from his critiques of language and (false) universality—as language and universality are also central to the just war revival.

Michael Walzer begins *Just and Unjust Wars* by positing a shared moral vocabulary as the basis—and significance—of reviving just war theory (2000, p. 20). He admits that he does not believe he inhabits the moral world of Genghis Kahn, but holds that this vocabulary held in common allows discussions of justice and war to be meaningful both transhistorically and transculturally. While different standards of justice may prevail in different times and places, the shared moral vocabulary means that discussions across contexts are not incommensurable. The possibility of justice, then, begins in language.

Walzer does not go to great lengths to defend this proposition. Recent work in just war theory (e.g., Hutchings, 2019; Mares, 2021) draws attention to

the ways in which supposedly universal categories ("police" or "industrial laborers") utilized in just war thinking can mask ideas that reproduce civilizational hierarchies.

For Fanon, language and universality centered on European man are sites of anti-blackness. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon probes the problem of anti-blackness in medicine, Eurocentric humanist thought, and society more broadly—namely, how ontologizing whiteness creates a falsely universal "human" against which blackness is always found wanting. Black becomes the anti-human, defined through its contrariness to the universal model. This found expression not only in literature and philosophy but also in the medical sciences and all forms of measure and judgment. Lewis Gordon frames Fanon's alternative through the critique of universal systems based on an unassailable centrality of European Man: it is a "demand often imposed upon people of color . . . [to] accept the tenets of Western civilization and thought without being critical of them. Critical Consciousness," which Gordon identifies as part of Fanon's project, "asks not only whether systems are consistently applied but also whether the systems themselves are compatible with other projects" (Gordon, 2015, p. 20). Fanon writes derisively that "today's Blacks want desperately to prove to the white world the existence of a black civilization" (Fanon, 2008, p. 17). Thus, Fanon rejects vindicationist political narratives in which an oppressed group gains "recognition" by demonstrating that their achievements are "as good as" those held to be universally great.

In this complex context, just war theorists should be cautious about how they engage thinkers from anti-colonial traditions. To simply claim that various anti-colonial thinkers and revolutionaries "actually" embodied or complied with aspects of just war thinking would be to risk constructing a vindicationist narrative. What is needed is not to demonstrate that Third Worldist or anti-colonial thinkers can be used to construct a cosmopolitan canon of just war thinkers—that they, too, shared the "universal moral vocabulary"—but rather to allow just war thinking to be profoundly *affected* by critical engagement with anti-colonial thought.

Fanon begins *Black Skin, White Masks* with a proclamation that "a Black is not a man." Blackness is "a zone of nonbeing," and in this work he is "aiming at nothing less than to liberate the black man from himself" (Fanon, 2008, p. xii). The zone of nonbeing is a "hell" simultaneously constructed and obfuscated by the anti-black world. It creates an inferiority complex through "a double process: first, economic. Then, internalization or rather epidermalization of this inferiority" (Fanon, 2008, p. xv). Locating blackness in the epidermis, the skin, makes blackness an experience which can be examined phenomenologically, contrary to colonial scientific attempts to define blackness as akin to species differentiation. The wearing of and shedding of skin are important images in Fanon's construction of the "lived experience" of blackness.

For Fanon, blackness means one is to be defined through an "epidermal racial schema." Blackness makes impossible the romantic striving for equality or an end to alienation through effort, self-improvement, and association; Fanon refers to such striving as "a psychological phenomenon that consists in believing the world will open up as borders are broken down" (Fanon, 2008, p. 5). In a reflection on language, he writes that the educated black man believes that "he proves himself through his language" (Fanon, 2008, p. 8). Yet, the black man speaking perfect French becomes an oddity precisely because he remains a black man: "The fact is the European has a set idea of the black man, and there is nothing more exasperating than to hear: 'How long have you lived in France? You speak such good French'" (Fanon, 2008, p. 18). To be black in an anti-black society means that one's skin is paramount; both the fear and the praise of blackness in such a society reinforce that one is, first and foremost, black.

The epidermal racial schema is key to understanding the most famous moment in *Black Skin, White Masks*; in Chapter 5, "The Lived Experience of the Black Man," Fanon writes of being "seen" by a young French boy on a train:

> "Look! A Negro!"[4] It was a passing sting. I attempted a smile.
>
> "Look! A Negro!" Absolutely. I was beginning to enjoy myself.
>
> "Look! A Negro!" The circle was gradually getting smaller. I was really enjoying myself.
>
> "*Maman*, look, a Negro; I'm scared!" Scared! Scared! Now they were beginning to be scared of me. I wanted to kill myself laughing, but laughter had become out of the question.
>
> I couldn't take it any longer, for I already knew there were legends, stories, history, and especially the *historicity* that Jaspers had taught me. As a result, the body schema, attacked in several places, collapsed, giving way to an epidermal racial schema.
>
> *(Fanon, 2008, pp. 91–92)*

The epidermal racial schema forces Fanon to live outside of his own body and in the "skin" created through countless images, drawn from "legends, stories, history," that the young boy and his mother have already received and internalized. To the child, Fanon is an object of fascination and horror *because* the child already "understands" what black skin in an anti-black society means.

Reflecting on the legitimation of state violence against black bodies, Robert Gooding-Williams draws on Fanon to argue that such legitimations draw attention to—rather than away from—images of violence, "to affix these images to that body, as if to say repeatedly, "Look, a Negro!". . .[the] black body [becomes] that of a wild "Hulk-like" and "wounded" animal whose

every gesture threatened the existence of civilized society" (Gooding-Williams, 2006, p. 10). *Embracing* images of state violence "proves" the black body's potential aggression; defenders of such violence point to every fist or bent knee as a potential blow to be legitimately feared. Juries and publics are reminded that it is right to fear the black body, even as it is subjected to violence by agents of the state. Fanon's (and Gooding-Williams') focus on sight, image, and how these project prejudice onto the body helps us to cast a critical eye on ways in which the search for violent threats may validate the projection of threats onto Othered bodies—even as claims of universality and respect for "humanity" abound.

Fanon's rejection of a falsely universal "humanity" is particularly relevant for thinking about noncombatants. Alternately referred to as "discrimination" and "distinction," *jus in bello* is premised on a claim that certain people may be legitimately killed in war while others may not. Terrorism (whether by sub-national groups or state terror) is the rejection of the principle of distinction. People are killed "indiscriminately," not in the sense of "randomly" but in the sense that there is no discrimination between "legitimate" and "illegitimate" targets—groups may be defined as "objective enemies" and that alone justifies their killing (Elshtain, 2004, p. 18). Walzer (2000) cites dramatized scenes of bombing in the film *The Battle of Algiers* to describe a tactic that targets "people for who they are," while Elshtain (2007) names Fanon as the "theorist of terrorism" who seeks liberation for some (the "colonized") by the indiscriminate killing of others ("colonizers"). This is an impoverished view of Fanon's theories of complicity, which both relies too heavily on Jean-Paul Sartre's reading of Fanon, as well as an uncharitable reading of a single chapter, "On violence."

More recent just war theorists (McMahan, 2009; Mares, 2021) probe the question of "morally liable civilians" by investigating whether civilians who would not traditionally be classified as "direct participants in hostilities" (the standard set forth in the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions) might be legitimate targets in certain contexts, such as settler colonialism. Fanon offers different understandings of responsibility and collaboration, thinking more broadly about their significance for the foundation of new political communities.

Beginning instead with Chapter 5 of *A Dying Colonialism*, "Algeria's European Minority," readers gain an important insight into Fanon's views on collaboration, political foundations, and the meaning of "colonizer" in his texts. In this, Fanon distinguishes himself from Albert Memmi's formulation in *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (1955) and demonstrates the shortcomings of his ungenerous interpreters.

Memmi argued that it was impossible for the European living in the colonies to *not* be a colonizer. Colonial privilege could not be relinquished short of physically abandoning the colony; affective commitments to colonialism

were not required for one to be a colonizer.[5] Sartre's preface to *The Wretched of the Earth* appears to make such a categorical distinction: "For in the first phase of the revolt killing is a necessity: killing a European is killing two birds with one stone, eliminating in one go oppressor and oppressed: leaving one man dead and the other man free" (Sartre, 2004, p. lv). Sartre certainly grasps the generative act of violence—but to reduce Fanon's theorization to the act of an African killing a European simply misrepresents Fanon. Fanon's essay "Algeria's European Minority" demonstrates the shortcomings of understanding "colonizer" and "European" as easily interchangeable.

In 1959, newly elected president Charles de Gaulle called for a "democratic" solution to the ongoing Algerian civil war. Writing in response to this political development, Fanon notes that "In Algeria, democracy is tantamount to treason" (Fanon, 1965, p. 150). Political life is controlled by the settler establishment in a system that continental fascism imitated.[6] While de Gaulle's call might sound reasonable to outsiders, settler colonial fascists would never allow a truly democratic resolution to unfold, thus making "European democrats" a fugitive minority.

"European democrats"—Fanon's term for those who would support popular rule in Algeria, overthrowing the settler state—act in secret. "Drowned in the European mass, they live in a world of values that their principles reject and condemn. . . . This democratic European, accustomed to semi-clandestine contacts with Algerians, unwittingly learns the laws of revolutionary action" (Fanon, 1965, pp. 150–151). Fanon recognizes this democrat as party to the struggle, insisting that "not a single Frenchman has revealed to the colonialist police information vital to the Revolution" (Fanon, 1965, p. 151) and noting a variety of ways they have assisted, from withholding information during interrogation to providing (embargoed) medicine and food to anti-colonial forces.

What does this make the European democrat? Fanon insists,

> *For the FLN, in the new society that is being built, there are only Algerians. From the outset, therefore, every individual living in Algeria is Algerian. In tomorrow's independent Algeria it will be up to every Algerian to assume Algerian citizenship or to reject it in favor of another.*
>
> *(Italics in original; Fanon, 1965, p. 152)*

Thus, neither colonized and black, nor nationality and blackness are interchangeable in Fanon's formulation. The nation must be open to all who would accept it.[7] Later, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon writes that "the colonist is no longer interested in staying on and coexisting once the colonial context has disappeared" (Fanon, 2004, p. 9). Reading *Wretched* together with this essay clarifies that "the colonist" is simply one who is wedded to the colonial system; this is not a call for ethnic cleansing, for the European

democrat will choose to stay. The contrast between European democrat and the colonizer may be read as parallel to Germans who resisted Nazi rule and those who supported or acquiesced to Nazi rule—these are not simply neighbors who hold "different political beliefs."

Resistance to settler colonial fascism is a moment when the European democrat transcends the "mask of whiteness" and embraces the *idea* of a new nation not structured on anti-blackness. The struggle is generative of Fanon's "new man," meaning this essay captures how the European democrat may strive toward liberation. It thus serves as a parallel to the more famous parts of Fanon's *oeuvre*, which focus on the black man's struggle toward liberation.

Fanon's European democrat allows him to distinguish between those who recognize and support justice and those who do not. Analytic/revisionist just war theorists ask, "can a soldier know the justice of their own cause?" Among just war theorists, "the epistemic problem" has been a central feature since the analytic turn (McMahan, 2004, 2009). Against both Walzerians and international lawyers, who insist that the matter of the justice of a particular war is a matter for states while soldiers cannot be expected to opine or act on that basis, revisionist just war theorists hold that soldiers (and civilians) must be expected to make moral evaluations of wars waged by their states. A corollary to this is that there could be "just and unjust warriors." Against the "moral equality of combatants" thesis, which holds that every soldier fighting for a legitimate authority has a right to fight, soldiers fighting for an unjust cause (which they could reasonably know is unjust) are "unjust warriors" who have no moral right to kill "just warriors."

For Fanon, violence introduces its own epistemic problem; in fighting, the colonized comes to recognize himself. In the first chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth*, "On Violence," Fanon makes clear that one cannot assume such knowledge will be held *prior to* any fighting. Violence in this way is generative, epistemically speaking.

Fanon begins from the premise that "decolonization is always a violent event" (Fanon, 2004, p. 1). But that is largely because the colonial world is a violent one:

> The colonized world is divided in two. The dividing line, the border, is represented by the barracks and the police stations. In the colonies, the official, legitimate agent, the spokesperson for the colonizer and the regime of oppression, is the police officer and the soldier.
>
> *(Fanon, 2004, p. 3)*

It is the experience of violence and counter-violence, attacks and reprisals, which awakens the colonized to the true nature of the regime and his exclusion from "the human:"

> The most alienated of the colonized are once and for all demystified by this pendulum motion of terror and counterterror. They see for themselves that

> any number of speeches on human equality cannot mask the absurdity whereby seven Frenchmen killed or wounded in an ambush . . . sparks the indignation of civilized consciences, whereas the sacking of the Guergour *douars*, the Djerah *dechra*, and the massacre of the population behind the ambush count for nothing.
>
> *(Fanon, 2004, p. 47)*

This experience of alienation forecloses the possibility of a search "for justice in the colonial context" (Fanon, 2004, p. 43).

Violence is ever-present in the colonial situation: the colonized are ruled by a quotidian violence called "order." Because the colonized are alienated from "the human," they are defined as an ever-present threat to that "order." Robyn Marasco clarifies how Fanon's reading of colonial violence and counter-violence escapes many academic analyses:

> Political historians and analysts often tell the story of violence . . . [depicting] resistance movements that begin in nonviolence and "fall" or "lapse" into violence when initial hopes are disappointed. Fanon presents . . . an alternative temporality of violence. . . . He describes a social structure built on systematic and institutionalized violence, a resistance movement that begins in sporadic and volatile fits of violence, a political organization that emerges to give form and direction to violence that is spontaneous and unpredictable, and *then* the introduction of nonviolence as a reactionary and desperate appeal for compromise.
>
> *(Marasco, 2015, p. 159)*

By Fanon's reading, violence is always present in the colonial situation; it is through the experience of violence that the colonized comes to recognize both the impossibility of justice in the colonies *and* the possibility of his own liberation. Fanon frames the generative process thusly: "Decolonization is truly the creation of new men. But such a creation cannot be attributed to a supernatural power: The "thing" colonized becomes a man through the very process of liberation" (Fanon, 2004, p. 2). "Consciousness raising" cannot be done *prior to* violence.

This construction of anti-colonial violence challenges how "the epistemic problem" is constructed in revisionist just war theory. Approaching war from the perspective of ethical theory, the epistemic problem assumes an antecedent state of peace in which deliberation occurs. Just war as a *political* theory cannot posit this. Fanon's thinking in this chapter, as well as in Chapter 5, "On Colonial War and Mental Disorders," shows how these ideas and positions emerge within a violent context, not antecedent deliberation.

But it would be incorrect to say that anti-colonial thinkers, and Fanon in particular, embraced a moral equality of combatants. Whyte notes that Vo Nguyen Giap's writings on war (which Whyte identifies as an alternate form

of just war thinking) bear a striking resemblance to recent revisionist work on the moral *in*equality of combatants.

> "Justice," the North Vietnamese delegation contended, "demands that there should not be equal treatment between war criminals and their victims.". . . the Vietnamese delegation introduced a draft article that aimed to deny [POW] status to "war criminals" —defined as all those who fought on the side of the aggressor. . . . They argued that combatants on the US side waged an unjust war of aggression and were thus, by definition, war criminals who did not deserve the same rights.
>
> *(Whyte, 2019, p. 878)*

Fanon would likely have agreed; the French paratroopers deployed to crush FLN resistance to colonial French rule were unjust fighters, deserving no particular protection.

The final chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth,* "Colonial War and Mental Disorders," is dominated by a series of (anonymized) clinical case studies. If the argument of Chapter 1, "On Violence," is about the transformative and generative power of violence in anti-colonial struggle and in making "the new man," then "Colonial War and Mental Disorders" can be read dialectically as the radically unpredictable effects of violence on individuals. The case studies include both Algerians and French-Algerians traumatized by the violence of colonialism, revolution, and counterterrorism: "We believe that in the cases presented here the triggering factor is principally the bloody, pitiless atmosphere, the generalization of inhuman practices, of people's lasting impression that they are witnessing a veritable apocalypse" (Fanon, 2004, p. 183). Fanon's first example is of a "militant, who never for a moment had thought of recanting, [who] fully realized the price he had had to pay in his person for national independence" (Fanon, 2004, p. 185). This chapter should temper romantic readings of "On Violence" that laud the raw emancipatory potential of anti-colonial violence and cause the reader to question whether the triumphal tone Fanon used in chapter one was truly his own voice, or whether he was ventriloquizing at times for rhetorical purposes.

Fanon recounts his therapy sessions with a French-Algerian police inspector who had tortured suspected FLN fighters and collaborators. "He has lost his appetite and his sleep is disturbed by nightmares. . . . At home he has a constant desire to give everyone a beating. And he violently assaults his children, even his twenty-month-old baby" and eventually turned on his wife (Fanon, 2004, p. 197). Fanon reflects,

> This man knew perfectly well that all his problems stemmed directly from the type of work conducted in the interrogation rooms. . . . As he had no intention of giving up his job as a torturer . . . he asked me in plain language

> to help him torture Algerian patriots without having a guilty conscience, without any behavioral problems, and with a total peace of mind.
>
> *(Fanon, 2004, pp. 198–199)*

Fanon contrasts this with another French policeman he treated (Case No. 4), who had sworn, "Doctor, I'm sick of this job. If you can cure me, I'll request a transfer to France. If they refuse, I'll resign" (Fanon, 2004, p. 196). Both policemen had similar experiences, and one could recognize the injustice of his actions. So, it is not so simple as to say that Fanon "disproves" (revisionist) just war thinking, or that he confirms it; rather, we should take this as an opportunity to *complicate* just war thinking by asking whether the construction of "the epistemic problem" and the moral *in*equality of combatants is ultimately counter-productive? Does this binary framing—moral equality versus inequality—ultimately result in an intractable stalemate? Is there a way to think *with* Fanon to embrace a both/and approach to moral liability?

Here, a question arises for the vocation of the just war theorist. The police inspector discussed earlier came to Fanon looking for scientific, secular absolution for his work as a torturer; he wanted Fanon to "cure" him, such that his work as a torturer did not affect his "normal" life and so that he would no longer beat his children or tie up his wife. He knew his cause to be just, that extreme measures were warranted, and expected Fanon to aid him in carrying out these duties. Fanon, in understanding that "normalizing" colonial violence was an indelible part of his job as a psychiatrist in a colonial context, could not reconcile this with his calling to psychiatry. Just war theorists need to reflect on their calling as well.

Moral authority is called upon to justify torture. In Argentina's *guerra sucia*, the Catholic church offered absolution and encouragement to soldiers fighting the scourges of "communism" and "terrorism," up to and including condoning torture. The Argentine Catholic Church openly opined that the *junta* was fighting a just war (Osiel, 2001). In America's War on Terror, Jean Elsthain argued that "torture lite" (techniques defined as torture by the Convention Against Torture that Elshtain sought to make ambiguous) was a "tragic necessity" in the fight against Islamist terrorism (Elshtain, 2005). In the Israeli context, Michael L. Gross wrote, "Torture is permitted as a last resort to save innocent lives as long as the innocent are not tortured. Even ticking bombs do not override the life of the innocent" (Gross, 2010, p. 137). The Argentine Catholic Church, Elshtain, and Gross provide a cautionary tale about deeming "unjust" fighters to be without moral standing.

Fanon resigned rather than participate in the charade of scientifically "normalizing" colonial brutality. What is the responsibility of the just war theorist when institutions in which they are engaged, or colleagues and fellow just war theorists, offer such absolution for torture, repression, or atrocities? Is there more required of this vocation than scholarly debates?

## Controversies

If Fanon is known for his defense of violence, it is important not to give a sanitized account of his work. His writings on violence certainly *appeal* to those who would violently resist domination. Some of this appeal comes from reading "On Violence" in isolation from his other works, but there is no doubt that for Fanon, violence *in itself* is something to be grappled with, and sometimes embraced in its messiness, rather than simply condemned—and certainly not moralized. Fanon thus rejects both the liberal attempt to engage in violence with "clean hands" through moralizing its own violence, as well as offering a deeper engagement with the messiness of violence than Sartre's (1948), Walzer's (1973), and Rawls' (discussed in this volume) "dirty hands" justifications, which recognize the necessity of exceptional moments but fail to grapple with the trauma of extreme violence.

The embrace of extreme violence against colonialism may be at odds with the just war revival, with modern just war's emphasis on restraining violence, but it bears striking parallels to the justification of extreme violence against "barbarians" by some classical just war theorists like Vitoria and Vattel (Brunstetter, 2021). Fanon argues that the violence of the colonized is repurposing the violence of the colonist—in this way, Fanon's *theorizing* violence may be repurposing the violence of the just war tradition. "The challenge now is to seize this violence as it realigns itself" (Fanon, 2004, p. 21).

One controversial aspect of Fanon is his insistence that decolonization requires the destruction of all traces of the colonial world, rather than creating a new nation on the boulevards built by European conquerors:

> To dislocate the colonial world does not mean that once the borders have been eliminated there will be a right of way between the two sectors. To destroy the colonial world means nothing less than demolishing the colonists' sector, burying it deep within the earth or banishing it from the territory.
>
> *(Fanon, 2004, p. 6)*

If the destruction of all traces of colonialism is the *telos* of true decolonization, can post-conflict reconciliation be possible, or will "true decolonization" simply reject that as another colonial residue?

In not shying away from violence, Fanon also rejects peace as an imperative in itself: "Enlightened by violence, the people's consciousness rebels against any pacification" (Fanon, 2004, p. 52). Nonviolence in the colonial context is often, in Fanon's account, an exhortation by the colonial bourgeoisie and outsiders made against the colonized, which aims to preserve the broader colonial system. While many associate nonviolence with Martin Luther King (discussed in a later chapter in this volume) or Gandhi's *satyagraha*, that is not what Fanon is critiquing: his despised "nonviolence" is the premature

end of struggle, appointing the colonial bourgeoisie to be the representatives of "the people," and negotiating how this privileged class will assume responsibility for the colonial state. Ending the struggle will maintain the subordinated position of the colonized, which violence can end: "For the last can be the first only after a murderous and decisive confrontation between the two protagonists" (Fanon, 2004, p. 3).

Reading Fanon as a theorist of violence, rather than engaging his writings on language and ontology, reduces him to a revolutionary pedagogue or tactician—an itinerant foreigner-revolutionary. Paired with his Marxism, this approach confuses him for a Martinican Che Guevara. Evidence of this confusion can be seen in Christopher Finlay's sympathetic pairing of the two in the final chapter of *Terrorism and the Right to Resist*; asking whether terrorism could ever be justified, Finlay examines "On Violence" with Guevara's *Guerrilla Warfare*. Focusing on a "pedagogic function" of revolutionary violence, Finlay argues "Fanon recognized [violence's] dramaturgical importance too but also imagined that it could help to restore lost agency to the oppressed through their participation" (Finlay, 2015, p. 295).

Finlay demonstrates the dangers of reading Fanon primarily for an account of violence, when he claims that for Fanon, "[T]he individual could be cured of the traumatic scars of violent colonization. 'At the level of individuals,' Fanon writes, 'violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect'" (Finlay, 2015, p. 296).

The cited passage, however, does not refer to *individual trauma*, which will leave lasting scars, but rather to the mindset of inferiority cultivated by colonialism. The cleansing, Fanon argues a few sentences later, will prepare the newly emancipated people for an egalitarian society, against those who would centralize authority in themselves:

> [T]he people have come to realize that liberation was the achievement of each and every one and no special merit should go to the leader. Violence hoists the people up to the level of the leader. . . . When they have used violence to achieve national liberation, the masses allow nobody to come forward as "liberator".
>
> *(Fanon, 2004, p. 51)*

Against Finlay, a careful reading of *Wretched* reveals that the violence of colonialism and decolonization *traumatizes* all sides, which importantly means that the anti-colonial rebels must yield to a subsequent generation to lead the newly independent state. The insistence that *neither* the heroes of anti-colonial war nor the colonized bourgeoisie should assume leadership of the new state also means that Fanon, though popular among revolutionaries, is often hated by leaders of postcolonial states.

## Legacy

Fanon has a powerful global legacy among both revolutionary movements (Gibson, 2011; Gordon, 2015; Ciccariello-Maher, 2017) as well as in academic circles. Particular examples include Steve Biko and the resistance movement against Apartheid in South Africa and the Black Panthers in the United States. In academia, Fanon has confounded postcolonial theorists, served as a canonical figure in the founding of Caribbean philosophy, and exerts a strong influence on Black Studies programs. I want to depart from Fanon's particular legacy and think about what sort of legacy Fanon, and anticolonialism more broadly, *could* have on just war thinking.

As explored in *Just War Thinkers*, just war theory before Walzer experienced a revival among Catholic theologians through the work of Paul Ramsey, and his student James Turner Johnson, in the 1960s and early 1970s (Ramsey, 1968; Johnson, 1975). A parallel aborted revival, however, exists, which is revealing. Whyte (2019) recovers the attempt by postcolonial states to use just war language to challenge international humanitarian law in the preparatory meetings to the Additional Protocols (AP I) in the early 1970s. These new participants in international order reasoned that major powers had dominated previous conventions and that existing international law reflected the preferences of those states in ways that confirm Charles Mills' understanding of the racial world order discussed in the final chapter of this volume; in particular, colonial powers were not bound to treat captured anti-colonial fighters as POWs because these were not "international conflicts." Instead, captured anti-colonial fighters could be simply labeled "terrorists" and denied POW protections. Newly independent states at the convention instead turned to an older language of justice—just war—to challenge existing international law. The U.S. representative to the Additional Protocols warned of "the dangerous concept of the just war" invoked by postcolonial states to undermine the moral and legal authority of Great Powers. Ultimately, the United States did not become a signatory to AP I.

Walzer's *Just and Unjust Wars* appeared shortly after the conclusion of the Additional Protocols but did not reference them or the 1973 UN resolution 3103 regarding the status of combatants in conflicts against colonial, alien, and racist regimes. Colonialism does not figure prominently in *Just and Unjust Wars*; indeed, the only sustained treatment of colonial contexts in the book occurs in the section on terrorism. Walzer analyzes four examples of terrorism: a 1910's IRA bomber who abandoned his bicycle bomb in the wrong location, killing civilians instead of destroying the intended target; Zionist Stern Gang assassins killing a British imperial official in Egypt in 1944; Viet Cong assassins during the wars against first France and then the United States; and (dramatized) scenes of bombing in the film *The Battle of Algiers* (Walzer, 2000, pp. 197–206). It is the final example that, for Walzer, captures the essence of what would become "modern terrorism" and most clearly demonstrates what is irredeemably unjust about such a tactic.

Walzer locates the problem of terrorism in struggles against imperial powers; and while he is ambivalent about the early twentieth-century cases, he is unreservedly repulsed by the tactics deployed by the African and Southeast Asian anti-colonial resistances. In this way, Walzer's framing casts decolonization as an original sin of the postcolonial state rather than an indictment of the racist state-system. In turning to Fanon, I demonstrate the poverty of a Walzerian analysis that reduces decolonization to the question of terrorism. Fanon offers just war theory a different entry point: we must learn to theorize *with* those whose causes were presumptively unjust, those who were prohibited (by earlier just war theorists, even!) from fighting back against the violence of European civilizing missions.

## Notes

1 The Diplomatic Conference on the Reaffirmation and Development of International Humanitarian Law Applicable in Armed Conflicts.
2 See the essay "West Indians and Africans" in *Toward the African Revolution* for Fanon's account.
3 In modern therapy, this is referred to as "patient-in-context."
4 In the original French, an anti-black slur is used. Multiple translators opted to render it as "Negro."
5 Memmi abandoned these positions over the anti-Semitism that emerged in many postcolonial states. *Decolonization and the Decolonized* (2008) documents his frustration with the corruption and anti-Semitism of the postcolonial world.
6 Fanon, echoing Césaire's *Discours sur le colonialism,* held that Nazism brought to Europe a system that was pioneered in Europe's overseas colonies. Recent scholarship confirms that colonial rule was far more brutal than "official" accounts let on (Elkins, 2022).
7 That the independent Algerian government did not implement this tolerant approach is a tragedy of decolonization, perhaps demonstrating Fanon's naivete, but it is not *reflective* of Fanon's theorizing.

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