

Liberalism and the Politics of Violent Indignation¹

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I

Any return to Frantz Fanon must begin with a nod to the ways in which, however fitting he was in his own period, he may at first glance seem out-of-date in ours.² Fanon's blunt and fierce style of writing distances him from 21st century abstractionists and ironists. His focus on the colonized and colonizer is too Manichaean to please post-colonial lovers of ambiguity and hybridity, including those who underscore Fanon's own hybrid constitution by Martinique, France, and Algeria; black, white, and Arab; Marxism, psychoanalysis, and anti-colonial nationalism. In contrast to Foucauldians, Fanon is consumed as much by top-down as by molecular power, and he views discourse as a battle between mystification and emancipatory political education, not as the ground of inescapable processes of identification and subjectification. His hope for the solidarity of oppressed peoples and faith that justice can be reached through revolution even many leftists have since discarded as naïve. Finally, historical events had not yet fully persuaded Fanon that although national sovereignty may be, in the anti-colonial context, a necessary ideal, it is also, in every context, a problematic ideal.

Nevertheless, Fanon was part of an earthquake that radically reoriented political thought even for those who have forgotten, repressed, or abandoned him. Along with other great Third World intellectuals from his period, Fanon grasped geography as the stage, colonialism as the plot, and whole regions as antagonists in a story of domination and subordination at least as cruel as, and certainly less parochial than, the story of class inequality and exploitation in Western capitalist societies. He re-configured "the people" in the sense of the "popular classes" as "the people" in the sense of the national mass, at the same time that he never forsook the cause of the popular classes for the interests of post-colonial elites. He charted the dialogic constitution of the self, the intimate relationship between racism and colonialism, and the pivotal place of women's bodies in wars of national liberation. He also foresaw as a possibility not, alas, the transcendence of the master/slave relationship in the post-colonial period but instead its metamorphosis through the emergence of ethnonational chauvinism against internal minorities, the triumph of dictators and corrupt national bourgeoisies, and the neo-colonial manipulation of formally independent Third World states.

This paper zooms in on an aspect of Fanon's thought that is too disturbing either to dismiss for being antiquated or to applaud for anticipating us. Indeed, Fanon's denunciation of colonial violence and defense of anti-colonial violence is probably at the root of both the desire to relegate him to the past and the desire to offer a politically

¹ The author reserves the copyright for this paper.

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To say that many may find Fanon outdated is not to say that everyone will or does. For the most recently published volume of fine Fanon scholarship that testifies to his lasting importance, see "Reflections on Fanon," Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Social Theory Forum, *Human Architecture, Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* (Vol. V, Summer 2007).

defanged version of him for the present. Certainly his analysis of violence was for many of his European contemporaries the most damning thing about him, but even his post-colonial friends have felt compelled to chastise him for either exaggerating the role of violence in colonial rule and anti-colonial struggles or failing to register the ways anti-colonial violence recapitulates colonial inhumanities.³ All these reactions and objections, however, must not stop us from drawing on Fanon's analysis to help illuminate some of the gravest conflicts of our age. On the one side, Fanon's expose of European liberal democratic states, especially France, for trumpeting political rule by popular consent while dominating foreign peoples by coercion prefigures the clash today between the Western mantra of global freedom and democracy and the readiness of Western states, especially the United States, to use violence against obdurate regions of the world abroad and exception minorities at home. On the other side, Fanon's portrait of anti-colonial upheaval is one of the few psycho-political tools at our disposal for comprehending the moral-political element that very possibly may inform the violence of non-state actors against the West and very certainly does inform the vicarious pleasure in that violence felt by millions of people in formerly colonized countries. In cases of what I am calling the politics of the violent indignation, the distance between two modalities usually assumed to be counter-opposites – moral sentiment and physical assault – can shrink almost to a dot. Similarly, in such cases, violence may turn out to be not, as Hannah Arendt once famously asserted,⁴ the enemy of public life but instead a prelude to its democratization: a demand voiced in the language of the body, when no other language is heard, that “spectators crushed with their inessentiality”⁵ be treated as subjects, not objects, with the right to participate equally with other subjects in the direction of human affairs.

At the same time, we must keep in mind Fanon's warnings about the dangers of speaking to coercive power in the language of force. His insistence on supplanting spontaneous uprisings with political education and organization, his case studies of psyches shattered by colonial wars, and his fear that the dominated might walk through the door opened by violence to become dominators should make us pause before praising the politics of violent indignation as a form of muscular heroics. Fanon shows us indeed that the path from brutality to democracy is circuitous and full of pitfalls, while the path from brutality to self-disintegration or brutality to greater brutality is straight and clear.

I will return to Fanon's preoccupations with violence at the end of my paper. But I want to turn now to the almost diametrically opposed question of how violence has been excised from the left, the right, and above all the liberal center of Western political thought.

II

It is impossible to ignore the coercive capacities of the state today, especially but not at all exclusively in rich Western countries. The wide array of sophisticated weapons technologies; the enormous stock of guns, tanks, aircraft, submarines, bombs, and missiles; the millions of organized armed forces; the spies and counter-insurgency specialists; the departments and research institutes devoted to national defense and offence; the surveillance mechanisms, prisons, and police devoted to domestic order – all these

³ Uday Mehta reiterated these objections to Fanon in response to an earlier version of this paper in a faculty seminar on political violence at Amherst College.

⁴ For Arendt's critique of Fanon on violence, see Chapter Two, “Imperialism, Self-Determination, and Violence” of my *Passion and Paradox: Intellectuals Confront the National Question* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

⁵ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, [1961], 1968), 36.

apparatuses of external destruction and internal repression lurk behind the lives of ordinary citizens even in the proudest of liberal democracies.

In light of this fact, it is highly peculiar that prominent strands of Western political theory contrast political rule with violence instead of seeing the two as fused together.⁶ On the academic left, post-structuralism has treated punitive sovereign authority as a near-defunct method of control, turning its attention to the ways power constitutes subjects with appropriate desires and regulates populations for the purpose of ensuring a certain kind of ordered social life. Post-structuralism has revealed subtle processes of governmentality throughout the social body by which selves are produced as docile subjects, but it has done so at the cost of turning its back on the interest of states in their territorial self-aggrandizement, their commitment to act aggressively on behalf of their own populations or privileged sub-segments of it, and their capacities to wreak destruction on antagonists that defy their will. Still, when the post-9/11 “war on terrorism” spotlighted the state’s right (in the sense of “might makes right”) to sequester, torture, or demolish its enemies, post-structuralism responded as a foe of the sovereign state, not an ally.⁷ Indeed, it perhaps responds as too staunch a foe, given its unwillingness to admit any circumstances in which it might be good that a larger concentration of power exists for the purpose of crushing smaller concentrations.

In contrast, on the far more influential political right, conservatism⁸ grounds political rule in virtue and universal natural law, with violence reserved for, in the words of Leo Strauss,⁹ those “extreme situations” in which the self-preservation of a society and the requirements of justice conflict. The word “extreme” makes it sound as if violence is to be used by the state sparingly and judiciously, but conservatives warn us that no limits on state violence in the name of justice can be set in advance of its use. What the state does in extreme situations will depend on what an “unscrupulous and savage enemy” forces it to do, and since “war casts its shadow on peace,” a just state must always be engaged in unjust “espionage” activities both at home and abroad. As far as harmonizing the natural law of justice with the imperatives of state injustice: conservatism counsels “leaving these sad exigencies covered with the veil with which they are justly covered.”¹⁰ Alternately, it declares that, as the existence of a universal moral law does not mean that all human beings know that law, force against individuals and peoples who uphold false moral laws may be necessary and legitimate. Conservatism’s habit of extolling virtue, justice, and morality while condoning unlimitable force is not however as contradictory as it may seem, or at least the contradiction is not unwitting, for conservatism sees virtue as contrary to human instinct, the temptation to disobedience as strong, and punishment as central to social order. In the age of democracy, ideological ruses are needed to keep that order in tact. Hiding the power machinations of a political elite under the guise of popular sovereignty and promoting national cohesion through friend/enemy distinctions are two of those ruses.

But it is liberalism, the most self-idealizing political theoretical tendency of our times, that most energetically evades violence in politics, not through being tone-deaf to sovereign power or deceitful about its unsavory uses but instead through being *self-*

⁶ I am distinguishing political theorists from theorists of international relations here, who typically emphasize, and defend, those capacities.

⁷ See, for example, Judith Butler, “Indefinite Detention” in her *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004).

⁸ Neo-conservatism and neo-liberalism, being mongrels of a political affair between conservatism and liberalism, are differently implicated in my accounts of conservatism and liberalism in this paper.

⁹ Strauss speaks albeit through the mouthpiece of Aristotle.

¹⁰ Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, [1950],1965), 160.

deceptive in both its repugnance towards violence and conviction that the liberal state can and will bring violence to an end.¹¹ Liberal self-deception is, in intellectual terms, partly the fruit of 17th and 18th century social contract theory, in which violence is what one is said to leave behind when one enters into political society on equal and consensual terms with others. Afterwards, elevated moral sentiments on the part of individuals, a neutral law on the part of the state, and rational public discourse on the part of the people replace force, which is held in reserve internally for use against the few bad apples to be found in any bushel and externally for use against hostile, illiberal states. In the case of individualistic strands of liberalism, this self-deception also stems from a desiccated view of human beings as rationally calculating individuals who, in pursuing their own interests, unintentionally enhance the common good by increasing the stock of goods available to all and hence decreasing the cause for violence in society. Legitimate states – that is, liberal states – exist solely to serve such individuals, resorting to violence only to protect them from outside assault, and then, as a safeguard against the gratuitous sacrifice of individual life for the state, only as a last resort.

III.

Partly because the clash between European liberal principles and European imperialist practices especially riled Fanon, and partly because liberalism's aggressive attempts to globalize its principles rile much of the world today, the way liberalism evades violence in state and society theoretically even as liberal states engage in violence practically deserves our special attention. It may seem perverse at this point to turn to the 17th century theorist of absolute sovereign power, Thomas Hobbes, who underlines the role of violence in human affairs and the benefits of repressive political rule more darkly than any liberal who comes after him. Even the tiniest hints of what will become prevailing notions of the unique virtues of liberal democracy – constitutionalism, the marketplace of ideas, a robust civil society, deliberative democracy, tolerance, pluralism, not to speak of multiculturalism and women's rights – are entirely absent from his work. Nevertheless, while Hobbes is the only thinker claimed by the liberal tradition to give violence the degree of emphasis that Fanon does, he initiates habits of thought that to this day blind liberals to political dynamics that Fanon primes us to see.

In combination with his focus on violence, Hobbes' thought intersects with Fanon's on three key points. First, Hobbes believes in the primacy of desire in human affairs. Consequently, the turbulent life of the passions, above all the struggles for power sparked by greed, insecurity, and a craving for recognition, set the stage for *Leviathan* no less than *The Wretched of the Earth*. Second, Hobbes insists on, not a universal hierarchy of values, but a common psychological constitution of human beings.¹² Different individuals desire different things, but they all experience the hope, pride, pleasure, melancholy, anxiety, and

¹¹ For an account of liberals who entertain liberal values yet recommend non-liberal uses of violence, see Jeanne Morefield's "Liberal Tragedy and the Uses of Imperial History in the Works of Michael Ignatieff and Niall Ferguson," forthcoming in *Theory & Event*, on "tragic liberals" who, despite their "commitment to human equality, the self-determination of states, and the rule of law" (2), endorse empire and the force that comes with imperial politics as a "lesser evil." See also Wendy Brown on imperial liberalism in her *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

¹² This is why, by looking inside themselves, men can "read and know, what are the thoughts, and Passions, of all other men upon like occasions." Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, [1651], 2005), 10.

humiliation that accompany desire's satisfaction or frustration. Whatever his other flaws, Hobbes never makes the mistake of presenting the differential cultural psychology, so infuriating to Fanon, that depicts one group of human beings as so fundamentally unlike another as to be incapable of feeling fury at intentional deprivation or contemptuous ill-treatment. Third, Hobbes ridicules the notion that nature makes some men fit to command and others fit to obey them. "Nature has made men ...equal, in the facilities of body, and mind,"¹³ but even if it had not, men so strongly believe themselves to be the equal of all other men that they will fight to the death against any attempts to subordinate them. The same conviction that there are no masters or slaves by nature obviously animates Fanon's life's work.

At the same time, Hobbes' theory of politics is incongruous with Fanon's in three prototypically liberal ways. First, Hobbes believes that while all men "naturally love Liberty, and Dominion over others,"¹⁴ no man is so superior in capabilities to any other that he can obtain permanent mastery over others for himself. It is precisely the rough equality of individuals in combination with the infinity of human appetite and the scarcity of goods to satisfy it that precipitates an endless war that no one is able to win. That war, in turn, gives all individuals an equal interest in authorizing a sovereign power to rule absolutely over them. Not only is political society grounded in natural individual equality; vis-à-vis sovereign political power, every man stands in a relation of equality with every other man. While liberals after Hobbes depart from his bleak view of human nature and absolutist politics, they never revise the idea that political authority bears down on all individuals with identical pressure and that it does so as a result of their consent.

Second, while Hobbes presents appetites and aversions as the fundamental motive force of human action in the state of nature, his psychology takes a sharply moral-rationalistic turn as soon as men realize they would live more securely inside political society than out. From the moment they decide to leave the mayhem of natural existence, their actions reflect a moralized prudential rationality that requires them to seek peace, lay down the right to all things, accommodate themselves to all other men, perform their covenants, and be contented with the same liberty against others that they would allow them against themselves. Hobbes' association of amoral passions with individuals outside political society; moral rationality with law-abiding individuals inside, and immoral passions with members of the Commonwealth who disobey the law continues to characterize the liberal tradition today. Except for rebellion against a tyrant by the people as a whole, the tradition has difficulty grasping violence inside society that is political, not private; propelled by the perception of social injustice, not an expression of immorality; and the often self-destructive manifestation of visceral anger, not self-interested rational choice.

Third, *Leviathan* is the story of the substitution of the violence that results from individual liberty in the state of nature (the subject of Book I, "Of Man") by the justice and peace that results from absolute sovereign power (the subject of Book II, "Of Commonwealth"). If a list of crimes and punishments features prominently in Book II, its purpose is not to flaunt a gratuitous will to power of the sovereign or to prove the incorrigibility of individuals inside society but to establish the lineaments of an order in which natural passions can be restrained equitably for the good of all. In short, Hobbes

¹³ Ibid., 88.

¹⁴ *Leviathan*, 117.

portrays political rule as producing, albeit through the threat of sovereign punishment, as close as it is possible to get to the end of violence inside a single society.¹⁵

Through his claims that political society is grounded in the equality of individuals, replaces unbridled passions with moral reason, and produces not more violence but justice and peace for the common good, even this consummate realist ends up sanitizing political order, individual and group motivation in organized society, and the aims and results of sovereign power. As the liberal tradition after Hobbes comes to conceive of human nature and political society in increasingly benign terms, the chasm between liberal theory and the practical world becomes more and more pronounced. This chasm does find one early moment of crystalline self-consciousness in the contradiction between Rousseau's portrait of the ideal political society in *The Social Contract* and his account of the development of actual political societies in the *Discourse on the Origins of Social Inequality*. For all the invective that liberals have hurled at Rousseau's utopian vision,¹⁶ they are much more likely, when conjuring up the *actual* workings of liberal political societies, to draw on *The Social Contract's* normative concepts of egalitarianism, moral rationality, and political virtue than they are to draw on the *Discourse's* empirical description of the state's foundation in economic exploitation, political trickery, and the psychological interplay of elite arrogance and popular envy. After Rousseau, that is, the habit of representing liberal ideals as if they were liberal realities occurs with exasperating regularity.¹⁷

IV

Certainly Fanon is not the first thinker to depict actual political rule as resting on inequality, not equality. From inside the tradition, as noted above, Rousseau argued that an original equality of individuals and peaceful state of nature gave way to increasing inequality, a war between the rich and the poor, and finally "the most deliberate project that ever entered the human mind," by which the rich convinced the poor to unite under common institutions securing "for everyone the possession of what belongs to him."¹⁸ From outside the tradition, Marx on the one side exposed the modern state as both instrument of the ruling class and a heavenly sphere of equality, liberty, and fraternity that obscured an earthly sphere of inequality, exploitation, and egoism. Nietzsche on the other side saw the state as the creation of a conquering race that "lays its terrible claws upon a populace"¹⁹ and by the institution of law and justice puts "an end to the senseless raging of *ressentiment* among the weaker powers that stand under it..."²⁰ Partly in synch but partly

¹⁵ Insofar as each political society agrees to respect every other's right to domestic sovereignty, an international system of Leviathans also suggests as the possibility of a diminution (although, in the absence of a super-Leviathan, not the deletion) of violence in the world at large.

¹⁶ However, liberals are no more hostile to the text than conservatives and post-structuralists. Liberals deride *The Social Contract* for its statist collectivism, conservatives for its naïve optimism, and post-structuralists for its homogenizing totalism.

¹⁷ Contemporary Kantians and proponents of deliberative democracy are most guilty of this failing. To note this habit, by the way, is not to say that the empirical realities of liberal states are simply unhappy accidents or that liberal ideals themselves are unproblematic. For an extended argument on this point, see Uday Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

¹⁸ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The First and Second Discourses* (New York: St. Martin's Press, [1755], 1964), 158-9.

¹⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* (New York: Vintage Press, [1887], 1969), 86.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 75. For a perceptive account of the echoes among Nietzsche, Fanon, and Hegel, see Judith Rollins, "'And the Last Shall be First': The Master/Slave Dialectic in Hegel, Nietzsche and Fanon," in *Human Architecture*, 163-178.

against all these thinkers,²¹ Fanon believed the main line of fissure to be that between predatory capitalist countries and regions of the world penetrated by them. In the case of liberal imperialist states, this was simultaneously a fissure between domestic political societies claiming to be based on equality, rationality, and rule by law for the common good (however ideological that claim might be²²); and the violent rule of those same political societies over other peoples claimed to be inferior for the sake of the material and psychological benefits of dominating them.²³

By this point the world is all too familiar with, as Fanon puts it, “the rifle butts and napalm”²⁴ by which Europe imposed itself on non-European peoples against their will. Instead, I want to emphasize Fanon’s analysis of the counter-violence of the colonized as the physical expression of somatic impulses, material despair, moral outrage, fantastical wishes, and strategic deductions from experiencing colonial violence. Against the colonial system of physical segregation and prohibition, in which “the first thing which the native learns is to stay in his place, and not to go beyond certain limits,” violence is the muscular release of the built-up aggressive energy of the perpetually restrained and provoked. Against the difference between the luxury of the settler’s town and the cramped quarters of the native’s town, violence evinces both envy and the physical desperation of those living in a “geography of hunger.” Against the racial divide between the possessing class and the dispossessed, and the treatment of the native as a racial or civilizational inferior without his being “convinced of his inferiority,” violence is the expression of resentment at and rebellion against a sub-human status. Against foreign domination, violence is the effort of the slave to extirpate all vestiges of the slave mentality in order to become, not an equal, but a master: “the native is an oppressed person whose permanent dream is to become the persecutor.” Finally, in the school for violence opened by his dominators in which every native receives a political education, violence is the lesson learned that liberation “can only ... be achieved by force.”²⁵

Thus, in contrast with Hobbes’ *Leviathan*, violence in *The Wretched of the Earth* appears against a backdrop of not a state of nature but a certain kind of solidified social order, not a rough equality of individuals but an entrenched Master/Slave relation, not an anarchic war of all against all but the administered despotism of one people over another. For Fanon, in short, the violence of the colonized is not the result of the absence of political

²¹ Marx makes the same point about the fissure, but does not see it as the main fissure.

²² And of course it *was* ideological from Fanon’s point of view. As he depicts it, inside the capitalist countries, the educational system, structure of moral reflexes, and other features of ideological bewilderment “create around the exploited person an atmosphere of submission and of inhibition which lightens the task of policing considerably” (*The Wretched of the Earth*, 38).

²³ To be sure, Hobbes himself alludes to imperialism and does not flinch from using the phrase “Master/Slave relation” with respect to it, when he describes the Roman Empire as a monarchy of, not one man, but one whole people over another, and also when he distinguishes commonwealths acquired through force or conquest from commonwealths established through institution. Unlike both liberals and Fanon, however, Hobbes insists that the rights and consequences of “despotically” sovereign power are identical with those of sovereign power established by consent, for in each case the sovereign rules absolutely over society with the same benefit to both that their members can avoid the “perpetual war of every man against his neighbor” (*Leviathan*, 145).

²⁴ *The Wretched of the Earth*, 38.

²⁵ *The Wretched of the Earth*, 61, 96, 53, 53, 73. It is, Fanon notes, when the native responds to colonial rule in kind that the settler begins to speak the language of non-violence, even as he participates with the native in the dialogue of “[t]error, counter-terror, violence, counter-violence.” In reaction to that dialogue, the outcry of “civilized consciences at the killing of a few Europeans” is matched by their studied silence at the slaughter of whole Third World populations (*Ibid.*, 89).

order but instead is a reaction against a particular kind of political order, aimed at replacing “a certain ‘species’ of men” in institutions of power “by another ‘species.’”²⁶ This is what we might call his insight into the *political* character of non-state political violence.

Fanon’s second insight concerns the *psychological* character of such violence. Fanon clearly has an appreciation for the vertical depth of the self – the unconscious dimensions of identity and desire – that Hobbes does not. But Fanon also has a far more complex reading of horizontal ties among selves than Hobbes does. Hobbes sees each self as an atomized individual encapsulated in his own mental world of self-propelled appetites and aversions. All of his passions, including the fear of other selves as competitors or obstacles in the way of satisfying his desires but also the desire for recognition as a source of enhanced power for fulfilling other desires, are inherently solipsistic. For Fanon, the strongest passion driving the colonized to violence is an anger that is inherently gregarious. The anger of the colonized is gregarious first in that its source is a social system that gave birth to both the native who feels the anger and the settler who is its target; second in that the native is oppressed as a member of a group and so strikes out against oppression in solidarity with fellow members; and third in that the anger is a protest against the refusal of the settler to recognize the native’s humanity. Recognition, in turn, is desired not simply as a means to some other end but as an end in itself. The violence issuing from the anger of the colonized is thus fundamentally communicative and normative. It has as its most positive goal – yes, the settler’s farm – but also a transformed, reciprocal relationship among peoples that continues to elude the world today.

V

Unlike the relatively crude and simple violence of states, the modalities of non-state violence are unnervingly multiple. More unnervingly, as Eqbal Ahmed reminds us,²⁷ they can and often do bleed into each other. Most unnervingly of all, certain instances of each are brutal enough that state violence to control them can be, from the vantage point of the vulnerable, the lesser evil. A short list of these modalities includes, in random order:

First, the propensity to violence of the masculine self and very probably the biological male that strongly influences every other modality listed here.

Second, the wars of some against all in conditions of scarcity and state collapse that Mbembe dissects in “Sovereignty as a form of expenditure.”²⁸ These wars resemble the worst of the many nightmares that trouble the sleep of conservatives and are close to Hobbes’ war of all against all but not identical with it, both because they are waged among the strong and against the weak, and because they are the upshot not of a state of nature but of a social and political history, however instinctually infused human history may be.

Third, the professional and often aestheticized violence of independent warrior castes – perhaps the only modality to have suffered a steep decline in modern life.

Fourth, the violence of revenge against previously suffered insults and injuries.

Fifth, the violence that agitates liberals, of the criminal lawbreaker who free-rides on the lawful obedience of the majority.

Sixth, the violence of the sadist who engages in cruelty as a pleasure in itself.

²⁶ *The Wretched of the Earth*, 35.

²⁷ “Terrorism: Theirs and Ours” (1998), in Carolee Bengelsdorf, Margaret Cerullo, and Yogesh Chandrani, eds., *The Selected Writings of Eqbal Ahmad* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 257-266.

²⁸ Achille Mbembe, “Sovereignty as a Form of Expenditure,” in Thomas Blom Hansen and Finn Stepputat, eds., *Sovereign Bodies* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), 148-166.

Seventh, the violence of political sects that try to force a recalcitrant reality into line with their ideals.

Eighth, the violence of campaigns against social pollution, which are genocidal, whether potentially or actually.

Ninth, the violence intrinsic to searches for sovereignty, individual and collective.

Tenth, the violence that results from the taste for violence that the other modalities stimulate.

But finally – although connected in its cause to the desire for revenge and its effect to searches for sovereignty – there is the violence or vicarious pleasure in violence sparked by moral indignation against perceived injustice. The injustice that incensed Fanon was the colonialism of all European powers, yes, but especially colonialisms of those European powers touting freedom, equality, and humanity as their civilizational gift to mankind. The methods used today by the most militarily powerful liberal state to do hypocritically what illiberal states do without moral pretensions surely also would make Fanon's blood boil. These American methods include corralling the lion's share of the world's resources under the guise of market freedom while keeping the world's poor populations at bay, and remaking the world through "soft power" if possible but "hard power" if necessary, for the "good of the world" but regardless of the perspectives on the good of most of the world's population. These present injuries of post-colonialism, overlaid on the past injuries of colonialism, form the backdrop against which the violent indignation of those at the receiving end of liberal sovereign power can and must be at least partly understood.

To call this the violence of *moral* indignation is not to say that the perpetrator of injustice is always correctly recognized by the indignant or that perceived instances of injustice are always correctly perceived. It is not to say that many uglier modalities of violence are not intermixed with this modality. It is not to say that the subjects of violence are necessarily innocent of the wish to become masters or that they would invariably inject a greater quantity of justice into the world than there was before if they attained sovereign freedom. It *is* to say that moral reason, emotional passion, and physical force are so powerfully fused in the violence of moral indignation that anyone wishing to decrease it, or at least the popular sympathy for it, must begin by listening and responding (in a real instead of merely apparent way) to bitter grievances that have their origins in a troubled social history.

In our age, republican forms of liberal democracy such as France, individualist forms such as the United States, and ethnonational forms such as Israel, all lack both the conceptual sensitivity to comprehend the politics of violent indignation and the political will to defuse it by transforming the relations that gave rise to it. But applying Fanon's insights on the politics of violent indignation to these three national contexts is a project that must await another occasion and different tools than political theory alone can provide.²⁹

²⁹ For my political theoretical analysis of the case of Israel – a liberal democratic ethnonational state founded on the colonizing of territory (but through the exclusion, not exploitation, of peoples) – see "Is the Right to Sovereignty as Human Right" (manuscript form) and "Jewish Nationalism and the Question of Palestine" (*Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* [Vol 8, no 1, 2006], 24-39).