

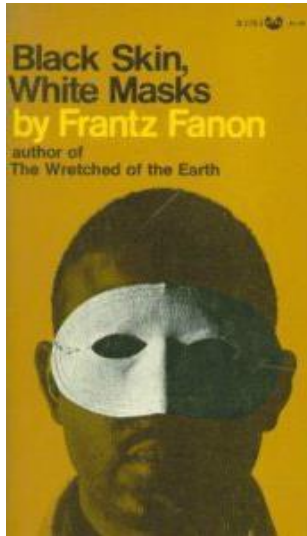
Frantz Fanon: An Introduction



Psychoanalyst and philosopher, Frantz Fanon (1925-1961) had, by the time of his untimely death from leukemia, amassed a body of critical work that today establishes his position as a leading theoretician of (among other issues):

- black consciousness and identity
- nationalism and its failings
- the objectification of the performative black body
- colonial rule and the inherently "violent" task of decolonization.
- language as an index of power
- miscegenation

Fanon's popularity and influence on post-colonial readings of black liberation and nationalism comes in part from his ideas, but also in part from his near cult-like persona as an active participant in the Algerian revolution of the 1950's. Che Guevara, Malcolm X, Steve Biko, and many other revolutionaries idolized him. Unlike many of today's postcolonial critics, Fanon's contribution to current understandings of nationalism and decolonization emerged *during* and not after the exigencies of colonial rule. Some have sought to see Fanon's vehement, and perhaps ethnocentric and reductive advocacy of Anti-Colonialism, in



the context of that Algerian struggle—a moment of social transformation that preceded the emergence of the poststructuralism of the 1960s and 1970s that underwrite the projects of so many postcolonial critics today. Born on the island of Martinique, Fanon fought with allied forces against Nazi Germany in Europe during World War II and afterwards studied psychiatry in France, where he published his first book, *Black Skin, White Masks* (Peau noire, masques blancs – 1952), about internalized racism. Here he articulated a radical anti-racist humanism adhering neither to assimilation into a white-supremacist mainstream nor to reactionary philosophies of black superiority. While practicing medicine in Antilles, northern Africa, during the French-Algerian war, Fanon authored two books outlining an insurgent Third World uprising: *A Dying colonialism, or Year Five of the Algerian Revolution* (L'An V de la revolution algerienne – 1959), and *The Wretched of the Earth* (Les Damnes de la terre – 1961). In *The Wretched of the Earth*, he goes beyond a preoccupation with Europe's pretensions to being a universal standard of civilization in order to take up the struggles and consciousness of

the colonized “natives” as they rise up and reclaim simultaneously their lands and their human dignity. It is possible to see Fanon's most enduring legacy as his decision to craft the moral core of decolonization theory as a commitment to the individual human dignity of each member of populations typically dismissed as “the masses.”

[This introduction is based on many sources, including Tracey Nicholls' article for the peer reviewed Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy.]

I. Watch the following videos:

Frantz Fanon: An Introduction – [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#)

II. Read the following parts of these articles:

A) [Fanon on Race and Globalization by Nazneen Kane](#)

Read from the bottom of page 5 (“Cultural Artifact”) to the end of the article on page 9.

B) [Fanon on Colonialism and the Psychology of Oppression by Blake Hilton](#)

Read from the section on “Native American Oppression” on page 8 (p. 52 of the pdf) to the article's end on p. 14.

III. Write and Share: Write a reflection on the thing that most interested you in all this reading and watching. About 250 words. Email your answers to me. We'll share in class.