



# Fanon Beyond Marx: Toward Sociology of (Post)Colonialism\*

Jaeyoun Won

Yonsei University

*The issue of colonialism has not gained much attention from the Canons of Sociology, but R.W. Connell challenges us to rethink about the issues of Orientalism and colonialism within the traditions of sociology. In this paper, I take Connell's work as legitimate challenges to one of the Canons, Marx, and consider Frantz Fanon's works as devising what is missing in Marx's theory. I consider Marx's theory not as 'iron doctrine,' but as something can be revised and developed through continuous efforts by its critical successors, in this case, — Frantz Fanon. Marx, like the rest of the Canons of sociology, is not exempt from Orientalism. My focus lies on how Fanon stretches and elaborates Marx's theory in the colonial context. By bringing Fanon to the field of sociological theory, I attempt to rethink the Canons of Sociology in the context of colonialism.*

**Keywords:** Frantz Fanon, colonialism, the Canons of Sociology, Marx, Sociological Theory

*The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways,  
the point, however, is to change it. — Karl Marx  
What matters is not to know the world but to change it. — Frantz Fanon*

## INTRODUCTION

Sociology is a discipline that emerged from Western modernity. The Canons of sociology<sup>1</sup> attempt to understand the transition from pre-industrial agrarian society to modern industrial capitalism. Although historical in nature, in terms of space, their research interests lie in

---

\* For their meticulous and thoughtful comments, I am deeply grateful to three anonymous reviewers of *Korean Journal of Sociology*. Their comments were very helpful in clarifying my ideas and elaborating arguments. My appreciation also goes to Michael Burawoy and Ou-Byung Chae for their stimulating discussions on Frantz Fanon. This article benefited greatly from the assistance of Jeongha Kim for her careful proofreading. Direct all correspondence to Jaeyoun Won, Department of Sociology, Yonsei University, Seoul, Korea (jywon@yonsei.ac.kr)

<sup>1</sup> The Canons of Sociology refers to the founding fathers of sociology such as Marx, Weber and Durkheim.

understanding the ‘new’ society (capitalism), rising mainly in Western Europe. Henceforth, to the Canons of Sociology, the studies on the non-Western societies were merely of secondary interests to support their theories of historical change of the West. The traditions of sociology have had a danger of Euro-American Centralism based upon global expansion and colonization of the Western Empire (Connell 1997; Said 1993). As Connell argues, “Sociology was formed within the culture of imperialism and embodied a cultural response to the colonized world (1997: 1518-9).” R.W. Connell argues that these traditions of imperialism and Orientalism have contaminated and continued throughout the history of sociology.

One of the more contemporary examples would be Barrington Moore’s (1966) classical work, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. In classical comparative studies of the origins and the development of modern society, Moore mainly discusses three conceptual destinations of modernization—democracy, fascism and communism. However, Moore’s ambitious framework is not completely exhaustive to include all cases since he does not fully discuss the other possible types of modernization—for instance, colonization (Kim 1994). Moore also excludes the case of smaller countries, because “smaller countries depend economically and politically on big and powerful ones mean[ing] that the decisive causes of their politics lie outside their own boundaries (xiii).” By acknowledging the issue of imperialism, but treating these colonial countries as exceptional cases,<sup>2</sup> Moore’s argument has a similar danger of ignoring the issues of colonialism as the traditions of sociology have had (Connell 1997). Once again, the trends of Euro-Americanism are repeated in the major comparative works of sociology, and what sociologists call “the Classic,” others rename “the colonial discourse” (Spivak 1988).

In this context, this paper is an invitation to engage in the challenges of colonialism and orientalist bias that sociological theory has been charged of, through an investigation of the critical dialogue between Marx and Fanon, the former as one of the Canons of sociology, and the latter as one of (post)colonial theorists. My argument is not to ignore these challenges, but rather to understand them as devising what has been missing in the Canons of sociological theory, and ultimately providing a more coherent framework. This does not mean that we should bury the Canon simply because they are Orientalists, either.<sup>3</sup> Rather, in my view, the Canons can be rejuvenated with a critical engagement and dialogue with these challenges.

In this paper, I consider Marx’s theory not as ‘iron doctrine,’ but as something can be

---

<sup>2</sup> I gratefully acknowledge Reviewer B for this point. To Moore’s framework, colonialism is “abnormal” and “exceptional” case of modernization.

<sup>3</sup> Weber also has been criticized for projecting a Western notion of society on to non-Western contexts, seeing the West as a presence of rationality, and the non-West as absence of rationality (Hamilton 1985). Durkheim also was influenced by Spencer’s notion of Darwinian evolution and functional interdependence, and his idea of social change from mechanical to organic solidarity can be interpreted as a modernist idea, assuming a linear progress from simple, pre-modern society to complex modern society. However, these discussions about two other Canons are beyond a scope of this paper.

revised and developed through continuous efforts by its critical successors- Frantz Fanon. Marx, like the rest of the Canons of Sociology, is not exempt from Orientalism. This is where I turn my attention to Frantz Fanon, whom Jean-Paul Sartre (1963) called “the voice of the Third World.” I attempt to figure out how Frantz Fanon elaborates Marx’s theory of revolution in the light of new conditions, the colonial and post-colonialism. My intention for this paper is to investigate how Fanon addresses Marx’s blank spot of colonialism, and how he tries to develop theory of revolution in non-Western societies in his dialogue with Karl Marx. As Fanon (1963: 40) argues, “This is why Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched every time we have to do with the colonial problem.” My focus lies on how Fanon “stretches,” and elaborates Marx’s theory in the colonial context in multiple ways. The discussion below proceeds in five parts. I first discuss briefly the background of Fanon with the idea of Fanon beyond Marx. The second part discusses how Fanon addresses the blank spot of Marx’s theory—the issues of colonialism. The third part discusses how Fanon revises Marx’s class analysis in the colonial context by changing the revolutionary agents from proletariat to peasants and lumpen-proletariat. The fourth section discusses how Fanon reinterprets Marx’s historical materialism in the colonial context. Finally, I discuss how Fanon articulates the theory of post-revolutionary society by shedding light on the issue of National Liberation and the creation of New Human Beings.

### FANON’S BACKGROUND: IS FANON A MARXIST?

Frantz Fanon (1925-1961) was born in 1925 on the island of Martinique, and studied medicine in France (Gibson 1999). After studying psychiatry in France, he worked for a brief period in colonial Algeria where he joined the Algerian freedom fighters in their insurrection against French colonialism (Hansen 1974). He was a psychiatrist, an activist, a diplomat, a journalist, and, if I can add, a sociologist who deeply engaged with Marx’s theory. He wrote four books dealing with colonialism, racism, decolonization and national liberation. His first book, *Black Skin, White Masks* was published one hundred years after Marx’s *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* in 1951, based upon his experience as an alienated black intellectual in a white society, and this book is about how black/white relationship is operated not only as racial relationship, but also as a psychological relationship (Bulhan 1985).<sup>4</sup>

From 1953, Fanon started working as a head of the psychiatry department at the Blida-Joinville Hospital in Algeria (Adam 1993). His patients exhibited all the pathologies of

---

<sup>4</sup> It is based upon Fanon’s personal experiences in France, which rejected him in spite of his aspiration and assumption. This personal experience of alienation is a key to understand Fanon’s idea. For this, I am grateful for Reviewer A’s point on the critical nature of “contacts” between intellectuals from the Third World and their education in the First World.

individuals who have been immersed in violence in their daily lives, and their psyches are shaken by massive killings and tortures. Fanon feels the need to leave medicine to change colonial society in order to cure these people (Fairchild 1994). His book, *the Wretched of the Earth* is a classic for national liberation struggle as well as theory of colonization/ decolonization. It was published right after Fanon died of leukemia at the age of 37 in December 1961.

There has been a continuous discussion about whether Frantz Fanon can be considered as a Marxist. Quite a few commentators have their own take on Fanon's relation with Marx. Some argue that there is no problem of viewing Fanon as Marxist (Worsely 1969; 1972). For example, Tony Martin argues, "Fanon was Marxist in the sense that Lenin or Castro or Mao are Marxist," (1970: 385). Dennis Forsythe (1973) calls Fanon, "The Marx of the Third World." On the other hand, there are opposing views that seeing Fanon not as a Marxist, but a populist. Jack Woddis (1972) claims that Fanon is not a Marxist at all, but has an idea of petty-bourgeoisie, arguing that "Fanon used the slogans of anarchism an ideology that is an expression of the viewpoint of the petty bourgeoisie (Wallerstein 1979: 252)." This view may make sense if we define the concept of Marxist through Leninist Lens or a more dogmatic Lens. However, maybe Hobsbawm's take on Fanon is a more fair evaluation between two opposing views, saying "Fanon is incomprehensible outside the context of Marxism and the international communist movement (1973: 6)." Similarly, Adolfo Gilly who wrote an introduction for Fanon's *A Dying Colonialism* echoed Hobsbawm's opinion, saying "He was not a Marxist. But he was approaching Marxism through the same essential door (Gilly 1965: 2)."

This problem is not easy to resolve, since Marx does not see himself as a Marxist. If Marx was not a Marxist in a dogmatic Marxist sense, then is Fanon a Marxist? It is certainly true that Fanon's engagement with Marx is crucial for his analysis of racism and colonialism. However, Fanon himself was very critical of the organized political parties associated with Marxism (Fanon 1963; Gibson 1999; Gilly 1965).<sup>5</sup> Thus, if Marx beyond Marx (Negri 1984) is possible, then Fanon beyond Marx can be also plausible. This is not to say that he adhered rigidly to every word that has come down to us from Marx's pen or blindly follow and apply Marx's theory in the new context. Rather, I try to read Fanon's effort to go beyond the traditional Marxist framework, and by doing this, Fanon can be understood somebody beyond the binary opposition between Marxist and Non-Marxist. That is, Fanon accepted the three dimensions of Marx's theory—class analysis, historical materialism, and theory of revolution, and proceeded from there to elaborate on those arguments and modify them where necessary to suit his own historical and geographical context of colonialism. To earlier Marxists like Lenin, nationalism

<sup>5</sup> For example, the French Communist Party often called the Algerian national liberation struggle as "reactionary," considering Algeria as a part of France. So-called "Socialists," "Communists," or "Marxists" often act against anti-colonization struggle."

and nationalist movement may be “reactionary,” and “opportunistic,” but Fanon argues otherwise. Let’s see how Fanon does this in the context of Colonialism.

## THE BLANK SPOT OF MARX’S THEORY: (POST)COLONIALISM

As for Marx, the basic idea of colonialism can be traced to *the German Ideology*.

... above all the extension of markets into a world market ... called forth a new phase of historical development ... through the colonization of the newly discovered countries the commercial struggle of the nations amongst one another was given new fuel and accordingly greater extension and animosity (Tucker 1978: 182).

Apparently, Marx awares of the new phase of capitalist expansion to the Third World. Although Marx implies the theory of colonization, he never fully developed this. In this matter, Tucker points out that to Marx and Engels, the natural epicenter of revolution is the Europe’s advanced capitalism.

a socialist Europe and North America would lead the rest of the world to socialist revolution by force of example (Tucker 1978: 676).

One can say that Marx’s perspective is tainted with Orientalism (Connell 1997; Said 1979), and underestimates the revolutionary potential of the rest of the world. Marx’s view has a danger of being criticizing on its Euro-American centralism, and of disregarding revolutionary potentials of the rest of the world. Marx does not specify the revolutionary conditions in non-Western society. In this sense, Marx’s view on Asia is similar to that of a modernist perspective. It was the destiny of Asian societies to follow the way of capitalist development in modern Europe. Marx’s view on the Orient can be found in his contributions to the *New York Daily Tribune*. In *the British Rule in India*, Marx sees the Western invasion as the revolutionary force to Asian society; so-called, the only social revolution ever heard of in Asia. Capitalist mode of production has a revolutionary force to change Asia, and Asia does not have capabilities to develop itself. As Marx discusses in the future results of British Rule in India, “England has to fulfill a double mission in India: one destructive, the other regenerating - the annihilation of old Asiatic society, and the laying of the material foundations of Western Society in Asia (Tucker 1978: 659).” One clear example of this is the building of railway system in India. The introduction of new forces of production would destroy the old, static Indian caste system, and open a space for bourgeois domination. Asian society is an example of pre-capitalist mode of production.

Of course, Marx is also very critical of capitalist development in Asia. He was aware of the ‘barbarism’ of bourgeois civilization and the danger of rule of capital. Yet, he does not believe that there could be a resistance and struggle against this new Western capitalist rule. The alternative vision and counter-hegemony to capitalism should have emerged from the most developed capitalist country at the time- England or America, not from the Orient (Tucker 1978: 523). In general, Marx contends that the Western domination of Asia has a positive impact, providing a chance and incentive for Asian society to develop into capitalist society by ‘laying the material foundations of Western society in Asia.’ Otherwise, Asian society is left behind and undeveloped from Marx’s perspective. This is similar to what Connell (1997) calls the idea of ‘global difference,’ presuming the idea of progress from the primitive to the advanced.

In *the Wretched of the Earth* (1963), Fanon challenges Marx’s theory into a more international context to shed light on the potential for revolution in the colonial Third World. According to Fanon, without the existence of colony, the advance of capitalism is infeasible. The development of advanced Western capitalism is based on the exploitation of the Third World. That is why Fanon sees Europe as being created by the Third World (Fanon 1963: 102). Those unique characteristics of advanced capitalism can not be separated from the issue of colonization.

This European opulence is literally scandalous, for it has been founded on slavery, it has been nourished with the blood of slaves and it comes directly from the soil and from the subsoil of that underdeveloped world. The well-being and the progress of Europe have been built up with the sweat and the dead bodies of Negroes, Arabs, Indians, and the yellow races (Fanon 1963: 96).

Marx’s theory is vulnerable to the critiques of Euro-central theory of revolution, and Fanon turns Marx’s theory upside down, and now Europe is not the center of the world anymore. The Third World provides the stage on which will be solved “the problems to which Europe has not been able to find the answers (1963: 253),” where the simple, mechanical dogmatic Marxist framework does not work. The next section discusses how Fanon revises Marxist class analysis in the colonial context by changing the revolutionary agents from proletariat to peasants and lumpen-proletariat. In the colonial situation, the two class analysis of bourgeois and proletariat does not work.

## CLASS ANALYSIS: FROM EXPLOITATION TO MARGINALIZATION

Generally, the working class is regarded as the agency of the revolution in Marx’s theory,

whereas the peasant is considered as the conservative, reactionary as Marx's discussion of the peasant in *the Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1963) shows. It is generally accepted that the realization of future order is realized through collective movement of the working class organized around the communist party, and that Marx does not believe in the revolutionary role of the peasantry. However, Fanon highly estimates the revolutionary role of the peasants in the colonial Third World, and actually argues that peasants are more revolutionary than urban workers. Thus, Marx's view on the peasantry appears to be contradictory to Fanon's argument. In this section, I make an attempt to compromise these contradictory views on the peasants, asserting that the conservative nature of the peasantry is contingent upon the historical conditions.

It is true that Marx leave the revolutionary role to the proletariat under capitalism. As Marx points out in *the German Ideology*,

Only the proletarians of the present day, who are completely shut off from all self-activity, are in a position to achieve a complete and no longer restricted self-activity, which consists in the appropriation of a totality of productive forces and in the thus postulated development of a totality of capacities (Tucker 1978: 191).

Workers are revolutionary class under capitalist mode of production, when they are faced with capitalist class, and exploited by them. This can be confirmed in Communist Manifesto.

Of all the classes that stand face to face with the bourgeois today, the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class (Tucker 1978: 482).

As the above two passage clearly indicate, the workers are revolutionary class in today (or the present day)'s capitalism. This is surely historical argument that the revolutionary class is decided by a complex of given social conditions. Then, it might be problematic to conclude that the peasants are reactionary all the time. We need to examine under precisely what conditions the peasants are reactionary, and under what conditions they can take the revolutionary role. Marx's argument of the peasants as "much as potatoes in a sack from a sack of potatoes" (Marx 1963: 123) need to be reinvestigated. In the following passages in the 18th Brumaire, Marx implies that not all the peasants are conservative.

The Bonaparte dynasty represents not the revolutionary, but the conservative peasants; not the peasant that strikes out beyond the condition of his social existence (Marx 1963: 125).

Not only does Marx point out the conservative nature of some fractions of peasants, but also he

admits the existence of progressive peasants. To me, Marx's understanding of the peasant is not one-sided, but the peasants has contradictory characters—both conservative and progressive, although he mainly discusses the reactionary nature of peasants in *the 18th Brumaire*. In debates with Bakunin, Marx clearly indicates the contradictory nature of the peasants.

either the peasant will start to create obstacles and bring about the fall of any worker revolution, as he has done heretofore in France, or else the proletariat must take steps as a result of which the situation of the peasant will directly improve and which will therefore bring him (the peasant) over to the side of revolution (Tucker 1978: 543).

In the case of France, the peasants are the obstacles to revolution, but they can be brought into the side of revolution. Even under capitalism, the peasants can be located in the revolutionary side. It might be wrong to assume that the peasant always play a reactionary role. Then, under precisely what conditions can the peasants play a revolutionary role? However, once again, Marx does not clearly mention exactly when the peasant can play a revolutionary role.<sup>6</sup>

In this sense, Fanon's theory is a turning point in the agency issue of class struggle. Fanon's discussion help to understand under what conditions the peasants can be progressive. Fanon insists that the peasants play a major revolutionary role in the colonial Third World. Just like Marx's credits to workers, Fanon sees the peasants as the only 'real' revolutionary in colonial countries because they are the most marginalized group under colonialism.

in the colonial countries the peasants alone are revolutionary, for they have nothing to lose and everything to gain ... (Fanon 1963: 61).

In the colonial territories the proletariat is the nucleus of the colonized population which has been most pampered by the colonial regime. The embryonic proletariat of the towns is in comparatively privileged position. In the Capitalist countries the working class had nothing to lose; in the colonial countries the working class has everything to lose ... they constitute the "bourgeois" fraction of the colonized people (Fanon 1963: 86).

In colonial situation, the peasants are the most revolutionary because they do not get any benefits from the colonial rule. They are the people who always answer the call to rebellion, but workers as labor aristocracy, as privileged class have everything to lose. Fanon's discussion on the peasants is based on his critical dialogue with Marx's view on the peasants.

---

<sup>6</sup> For more detailed discussion of defining characteristics of peasants, see Wolf (1966; 1969) and Paige (1975).

In his *Critique of the Gotha Program*, Marx (Tucker 1978: 532) suggested that peasant discontent could be channeled into support for proletarian-led parties. As a matter of fact, one can say that Marx saw more revolutionary potential in the peasantry than is implied by the often cited “sack of potatoes” would suggest. However, in the colonial context, the individualistic behavior that Marx ascribed to the peasants in *the Eighteenth Brumaire* has now become the hallmark of the proletariat, who has something to lose.

Also, Fanon knows very well that the peasants sometimes become very conservative, as he points out “... the bulk of the peasants often constitute a brake on the revolution. Generally in industrialized countries the peasantry as whole are the least aware, the worst organized .... show a whole range of characteristics—individualism, lack of discipline, liking for money (1963: 111).” However, the peasantry becomes disciplined, altruistic, and collective under colonialism when they are excluded from the advantages of colonialism. As Fanon stated in details,

The reality of the colonial world is that the overwhelming element in the pollution is poor peasants who are miserably treated, and starved by colonialism, which at the same time robs them of their homeland. And, of all the classes in the colonial world, it is the poor peasants who stand in direct confrontation to the government and the white ruling class.

Each day, every member of the poor peasantry has to struggle to survive and fight in order to retain a scrap of humanity. Too, on numerous occasions the peasants have rebelled against their colonial masters and suffered grievously for failure at the hands of the colonial police and the military (Fanon 1963: 111).

Fanon accepted view that the peasants can be more conservative in a more industrialized country, but they can be more progressive in less industrialized context like the colonial situation. Some peasants act as a brake, other peasants answer the call to revolution. To Fanon, it is the dispossessed, rural, “poor” peasants who have revolutionary potential in the colonial context. The poor peasants have propensities toward waves of uncontrollable rage, and that possessing bloodthirsty instincts (Perinbam 1973). Then, how can we understand the nature of peasants to the development of the industry? A possible answer can be found in Marx’s argument in *The Poverty of Philosophy* as well as *the Communist Manifesto*.

An oppressed class is the vital condition for every society founded on the antagonism of classes. The emancipation of the oppressed class thus implies necessarily the creation of a new society (Tucker 1978: 218).

The “dangerous class,” the social scum, that passively rotting mass thrown by the

lowest layers of old society, may, here and there, be swept into the movement by a proletarian revolution. Its conditions of life, however, prepare it far more for the part of a bribed tool of reactionary intrigue (Tucker 1978: 482).

Workers are not major agency of the revolution in every setting, and it is probably too vulgar and mechanical to regard the peasants as inherently conservative all the time. Unlike industrialized advanced capitalism, the peasants are the most marginalized, the most oppressed class in the colonial Third World. The peasants in a colonial situation are excluded from the dominant relations of production. They can become progressive in this setting according to Fanon. The peasantry is the overwhelming proportion of the colonized, and rebellious by virtue of being expropriated from their land. The working class that Fanon says is a privileged, pampered group, and their conditions are still better than those of peasantry who live in a very insecure existence. The working class receives living wage and stable employment, so they have “everything” to lose from national liberation struggle. As stated, workers are actually labor aristocracy, constituting the bourgeois fraction of the colonized people, thus cannot represent any interests other than their own.

To Fanon, another agency for the class struggle is surprisingly, the lumpen proletariat, the scums of the society in Marx. Instead of the proletariat, the working population, the lumpen-proletariat instead leads the revolution in the urban context and provides the link between the rural and urban movements as an extension of the peasantry. As Fanon counterclaims Marx,

It is within this mass of humanity, this people of the shanty towns, at the core of the lumpenproletariat, that the rebellion will find its urban spearhead. For the lumpenproletariat, that horde of starving men, uprooted from their tribe and from their clan, constitutes one of the most spontaneous and the most radically revolutionary forces of a colonized people ... The constitution of a lumpenproletariat is a phenomenon which obeys its own logic, ... The lumpenproletariat, once it is constituted, brings all its forces to endanger the “security” of the town, and is the sign of the irrevocable decay, the gangrene ever present at the heart of colonial domination ... the pimps, the hooligans, the unemployed, and the petty criminals ... These classless idlers ... the prostitutes, and the maids who are paid two pounds a month, all the hopeless dregs of humanity ... march proudly in the great procession of the awakened nation (Fanon 1963: 129-30).

Fanon’s proposition of marginalized or excluded people (the peasants and the lumpen proletariat) as the agency of revolution needs further discussion. As Marx stated above, the starting point for a revolutionary class being “oppression,” but oppression itself can take more than two forms—with or without exploitation. Wage laborers and serfs are exploited directly

whereas often the bulk of the peasantry in a colonial situation is oppressed by the colonial regime, by being excluded from the dominant relations of production. Colonialism depends upon workers therefore gives them concessions but not on peasants who are marginalized. Workers have leverage power whereas peasants and lumpenproletariat, including the prostitutes, the hooligans, the maids, and the unemployed have revolutionary power. To Fanon, a revolutionary agent is not to be “exploited” as proletariat, but is to be “excluded” as peasantry and lumpen-proletariat.

The peasants and the lumpen-proletariat are outsiders of the colonial regime, and they had not been successful within the colonial system. The excluded, the marginalized, not the exploited are the revolutionary agent under the colonialism. This is the irony of agency for Fanon; the formerly a disadvantage becomes an advantage for the national liberation struggle. On surface, this seems to be at odds with Marx, but it could be Fanon’s major contribution, highlighting the revolutionary potential of the excluded rather than the exploited. As in the title, *the Wretched of the Earth* are the marginalized, excluded, the disposed, the displaced in the colonial societies—the peasants and the lumpen-proletariat.

## REVISITING THE HISTORICAL MATERIALISM IN THE COLONIAL CONTEXT

In general, Marx assumes a separation of base and superstructure, economic base and the state, but they are more intertwined, inseparable in a colonial context according to Fanon. In a colonial context, the society exists as a divided society between black and white, white affluence and black poverty. The relationship between the two is not only economic, but also cultural and ideological, as Fanon argues “questions of race are but a superstructure, a mantle, an obscure ideological emanation concealing an economic reality (1967b: 28) ... And racism is only the emotional, affective, sometimes intellectual explanation of this inferiorization (41).” Racism is an ideology that justifies economic exploitation, colonization, since the black native is animal to the white settler. Thus, it would be a mistake to discuss racism without any relation to the issues of economic exploitation. The native is not a human, and this is a racist ideology, which denies humanity to the colonized who are seen as animals. As Fanon pointed out, racism “belongs to the shameless exploitation of one group of men by another which has reached a higher stage of technical development ... The habit of considering racism as a mental quirk, as a psychological flaw, must be abandoned (1967b: 38).” Thus, racism is not just a mental or psychological issue, but closely related with the material condition and exploitation.

In the colonial situation, the superstructure of the society, the state, the ideology, cannot be separated from the economic base. They are intertwined with the economic foundation, and as Fanon argues in various parts of his writings,

In the colonies the economic substructure is also a superstructure. The cause is the consequences; you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich (Fanon 1963: 31).

The Negro problem does not resolve itself into the problem of Negroes living among white men but rather of Negroes exploited, enslaved, despised by a colonialist, Capitalist society that is only accidentally white (Fanon 1967a: 202).

The racial problem is covered by economic discrimination ... A Negro worker will be on the side of the Mullato worker against the middle class Negro. Here we have proof that questions of race are but a superstructure, a mantle, an obscure ideological emancipation concealing an economic reality (Fanon 1967b: 33).

Fanon also points out that the colonial domination of the Third World means not only economic domination but also the destruction of the spirit and the personality of people in the Third World. In this sense, his theory of colonization is more comprehensive than Lenin's theory of Imperialism by pointing out the consequences of the colonization at the micro, psychological level. Henceforth, the psyche of people in the Third World are sloughed off, neglected, despised, and inferiorized. Though a psychological interpretation of the black problem is critical, yet the effective diagnose of the racial problem entails a comprehensive recognition of social and economic realities. Fanon thinks it is very difficult to apply a strict class analysis to the racial categories directly, but at the same time, and the racial matter is not a mere mental, psychological phenomenon. As Fanon stated, "If there is an inferiority complex, it is the outcome of a double process: primarily, economic, subsequently, the internalization or the epidermalisation of this inferiority (1967a: 11) ... Beyond the black-skinned men of race, it is the battle of the world proletariat that is his song (133)."

Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967a) deals with the problem of colonial alienation, the question of the ontological existence of the Black man in a white-dominated world. The black is forced to "act white," and put on an illusionary "white mask."<sup>7</sup> The white only recognizes the skin of the black, and sees the complete Otherness in black. The black becomes a thing, and an animal to the white, since "the Negro is bad, the Negro is mean, the Negro is ugly ... (1967a: 113) ... I am made of the irrational (123) ... abnormal (143) ... backward and simple (126)." The black is enslaved by their inferiority, and the white is enslaved by their superiority. The white, European, imperialist culture is considered universal, normative, rational and superior. In contrast, the black has self-hate, they are constantly trying to run away from their

---

<sup>7</sup> Fanon felt "there were too many Negroes in Paris." This is a statement to express Fanon's disgust for the Black bourgeoisies in Paris who tried to be more "French" than the French. They try to imitate and assimilate French culture.

own individuality and to annihilate their presence. This is a very creative application of alienation in the matter of race.

When Fanon was young, he was told to “stop acting like a nigger (Hansen 1974),” whenever he misbehaved. In France, he was expected to behave like a black man or like a nigger, so for a black man, his writing was exceptional and amazing (Bulhan 1985). That is, Fanon was not treated as a human being. The black is dehumanized, and their culture is abandoned, sloughed off, neglected, despised, thus they are anxious, insecure, devalued, hypersensitive, and feel worthless without no true self-consciousness. As Fanon (1967a: 10) points out, “what is often called the black soul is a white man’s artifact.” The meaning of being “Black” is already there as white men’s creation, pre-existing for the black. Therefore, the black exists for somewhere else and for something else, and the great of values of the white world such as fraternity, equality and liberty are only applying to the white people. The “normal” black people become “abnormal” when they have contact with the white world. In short, Fanon has examined the ontological existence of the Black man in a white-dominated world and covers the subject matter of the psychology of colonial rule, and these serious problems can not be resolved without violent decolonization process.

## NATIONAL LIBERATION: THE MAKING OF THE NEW HUMAN BEINGS

Marx discusses several clues about post-revolutionary, communist society,<sup>8</sup> and in his Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx argued that the revolution is the end of the prehistory of human society, and a beginning of real human history (Tucker 1978: 5). Marx sees history as a process of self-development of the human species culminating in communism, and “communism is the positive abolition of private property, of human self-alienation, and thus the real appropriation of human nature, through and for man (Bottomore et al 1983: 88).” Revolution not only changes society but also creates the ‘new’ human being. Through the participation in revolution, human beings can realize their true human essence.

In addition, revolution is a world-historical event, the emancipation of people all over the world. The outcomes of revolution are the disappearance of exploitation among people as well as among nations. In *Communist Manifesto*, Marx points out the aspect of national liberation as the outcome of revolution.

In proportion as the exploitation of one individual by another is put an end to, the exploitation of one nation by another will also be put an end to. In proportion as the

---

<sup>8</sup> For example, in *The German Ideology*, Marx (1978: 160) talks about ‘regulation of production,’ ‘voluntary division of labor—hunting in the morning, fishing in the afternoon, and criticizing after dinner.’ In *Communist Manifesto*, Marx (1978: 490) discusses ten potential features of the most advanced societies.

antagonism between classes within nation vanishes, the hostility of one nation to another will come to an end (Tucker 1978: 488-9).

Marx suggests the possibility of national liberation in his theory of revolution, but he does not have a concrete, comprehensive theory of national liberation. A theory of national liberation still remains for further discussion, and to Marxist like Lenin (1974), this idea of national liberation, which Lenin calls chauvinistic, is very opportunistic, and had a danger of supporting reactionary, counter-revolutionary leaders in each nation.

To Fanon, one of most important outcomes of national liberation struggle is creation of 'new' human beings because the essence of revolution is the struggle for the regaining human dignity. It is in the name of new "man" that Fanon criticizes against human degradation and the colonial alienation, and Fanon adds the creative characteristics of human being in post-revolutionary society. The very act of engaging in the national liberation struggle, and the active participation in revolution makes it possible for people to become more creative being. In post-revolutionary society, there is no exploitation among nations, so the outcome of revolution is decolonization, and at the same time it is the veritable creation of new men (Fanon 1963), as he hopes that "the enslavement of man by man cease forever (1967a: 183) ... changes man and renews society ... This oxygen creates and shapes a new humanity (1965: 181)."

However, how is this possible? The answer, in irony, lies in the violent nature of revolution. The violence makes the native to obtain more positive and creative qualities.

... for the colonized people this violence, because it constitutes their only work, invests their characters with positive and creative qualities...the mobilization of the masses, when it arises out of the war of liberation, introduces into each man's consciousness the ideas of a common cause, of a national destiny, and of a collective history (Fanon 1963: 93).

To Marx, violent struggle is essential in the process of revolution, but he does not deny the possibility of using peaceful means to achieve revolutionary goals. Marx claims that in some advanced countries the workers might be able to achieve the socialist goals by peaceful means. This is well expressed in Marx's *The possibility of Non-Violent Revolution*, the *Amsterdam Speech*. As Marx stated, "We do not deny that there are countries such as America, England, Holland- where the workers can attain their goal by peaceful means (Tucker 1978: 523)."

Marx assumes that in a few advanced capitalist countries, the peaceful transformation of the society is possible. Violence itself is not necessarily identical with revolution. However, Fanon signifies and articulates more international characters of revolution, i.e. the abolition of class exploitation within a nation vis-à-vis among nations. Fanon also claims that the process of

violent post-colonial struggle is the very process of creating the post-revolutionary human being with positive qualities. These discussions can be viewed as the succession and elaboration of Marx's idea on the outcome of revolution—the beginning of true history of mankind. As Fanon argues,

“The process of the liberation of man, independently of the concrete situations in which he finds himself, include, and concern the whole of humanity ... This is one of the roots of the immense solidarity that unites the oppressed peoples to the exploited masses of the colonialist country (Fanon 1967b: 144).”

“This huge task which consists of reintroducing mankind into the world, the whole of mankind, will be carried out with the indispensable help of the European people (Fanon 1963: 106).”

“Let us try to create the whole man, whom Europe has been incapable of bringing to triumphant birth (Fanon 1963: 253).”

However, unlike Marx, Europe alone does not have capabilities to create the new human beings. As the creators of colonialism, racism, Europe has its fundamental limits and problems. Therefore, it is “a question of the Third World starting a new history of Man (Fanon 1963: 315).” Yes, the help from Europeans are necessary and significant, but they should be a part of the violent post-colonial struggle in the colonies. Fanon hopes to achieve the termination of the enslavement of man by another man, a healthy encounter between black and white as human beings through this process of unity for post-colonization. In this sense, the emancipation Fanon wanted was never about segregation or separation, but the society where a man is respected as a man, but not expected to behave like a black man or nigger like they do in Europe. Fanon was angered by this oppression of man by another man, by the dehumanization of man, and by the fact that Europe was an example of negation of the values it claimed, revealing the fundamental hypocrisy of the white world. In Europe, Fanon was “deprived of the possibility of being a man (1967a: 88),” and what Fanon sees in Europe instead was a “negation of man and an avalanche of murders (1963: 252),” so it has become the task of the Third World to start a new history of man, avoiding the crimes committed by Europe. Fanon wants to fight against degradation and for the dignity of man, and the freedom of mankind, so decolonization is “the veritable creation of new men (1963: 36).” What Fanon assert is the rise of a new spirit and the creation of a new species humanity in the course of the national liberation struggle, as he states, “the thesis that men changes at the same time that they change the world (1967b: 30) ... it transforms spectators crushed with their inessentiality into privileged actors ... introduced by new men, and with it a new language and new humanity ...

The last shall be first and the first and last (1963: 36-37).” The revolution for decolonization is changing humanity essentially.

Fanon conceives the possibilities of both violence and the compromise, and these are two ways to get to post-colonial society. One is to socialist autarky by violent revolution, the other is to neo-colony by non-violent compromise. Violence is the only method to achieve real national liberation since colonial rule itself is a violent one, and no conciliation is possible under colonial rule (Fanon 1963: 39). There seems to be non-violent way to break down the colonial rule, but it only leads to neo-colony. As Fanon asserts,

decolonization is always a violent phenomenon (1963: 35) ... the combat between native and settler takes the form of an armed and open struggle (83) ... the existence of an armed struggle shows that the people are decided to trust to violent methods only (84).

I do not carry innocence to the point of believing that appeals to reason or to respect for human dignity can alter reality. For the Negro who works on a sugar plantation ... there is only one solution—to fight (Fanon 1967a: 224).

Violence is unavoidable because there is initial violence from above, the colonizers. There seems to be no consent, but only coercions prevail. The violence by from below, the colonized is a response to violent rule by the colonizers, thus decolonization is a violent process in essence. In this violent struggle, as we discussed above, the peasants play a significant role.

... for peasants there is no compromise, no possible coming to terms... the exploited man sees that his liberation implies the use of all means, and that of force first and foremost ... it is violence in its natural state, and it will only yield when confronted with greater violence (Fanon 1963: 61).

Under colonial rule, compromise to violent colonial administration means giving up the ‘real’ national liberation. Compromise can not kick out the colonial rule, but just transfer the power to the native compromisers. Thus, Fanon insists that it is the intuition of the colonized masses that their liberation must, and can only, be achieved by force (Fanon 1963: 73). Although Marx implies the possible peaceful way to achieve revolutionary goals in a few capitalist countries, this issue still remains problematic. There are non-violent possibilities, but they end up with the reform, class compromise, so it is very difficult to accomplish the revolutionary goals to Fanon. In this matter, Fanon contends that violence is essential in national liberation struggle. Only violent struggle can get rid of the violent colonial rule. Violence is the inevitable, necessary evil to destroy the harsh, despotic, violent colonial rule.

The positive feature of violence is that it actually cleanses the mind of the colonial process through violence. The violence frees the colonized of their inferiority complex, and it is a way of ridding oneself of the particular psychic that has been implanted by colonialism. It is an engagement with the world to liberate oneself from the prior colonialism.

At the level of individuals, 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 (1963: 94).

Violence cleanses, unifies, and creates the foundations for the new society. Violence is not only necessary to destroy the old colonial regime but creates the foundations of a new one.

## CONCLUSION: RETHINKING MARX, RETHINKING THE CANONS

Marx's theory of revolution focuses on revolution in the West, but do not have clear alternative visions for underdeveloped, colonized society.<sup>9</sup> Marx's theory of revolution can be understood as an effort to provide the post-capitalist vision of the society in the 19th century European capitalism. In this sense, R. W. Connell is right to point out the problematic character in the Canons of Sociology, including Marx. Throughout this paper, I take Connell's work as legitimate challenges to Marx's theory, but I think Fanon's revision of Marx's theory in the colonial context is one way to address this blank spot of colonialism. I have discussed that Fanon's theory can be understood as efforts to finish the unfinished, insufficient, unsatisfactory parts of Marx's theory through a critical dialogue with Marx.

According to Burawoy (1990), the most coherent scientific model is Lakatos' methodology of scientific research program. Lakatos' theory outlines a hard core of postulates which are protected from refutation by the development of a series of auxiliary theories. In this view, anomalies are challenges that are essentials for deepening theoretical insights (Wright et al. 1992: 180). If Marx's theory has a danger of Orientalistic discourses, then I see the challenges by Connell to Marx's theory as demands for auxiliary theories to fill the lacunae. These efforts can be interpreted as developing a newer, a more coherent Marxist framework. Marxist theory needs to be elaborated to seize the "newness" of non-Western world, and Fanon beyond Marx can be more "Marxist" than dogmatic ones. In this paper, Fanon's efforts have been understood as devising what is missing in Marx's theory, and in this way, the "classics" of the Canons can be revived in the new historical context.

---

<sup>9</sup> The possible reason is that Marx's theory is operating at the level of modes of production in general, not at the level of certain historical moment of particular countries. One of the few exceptions is *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, where Marx investigates the dynamics of class struggle in the concrete, particular phase of history (Won 2008).

Once again, I am not saying that the ideas of Marx, or other Canons of sociology are the 'iron doctrine,' which should be defended at any cost. R. W. Connell may be right. Marx and other Canons of sociology have problems in their views of non-European societies. If this is the case, then should we bury the canon? If not, why not? Sociological theory including Marx's theory would remain a degenerate research program if it remains exclusive and defensive against the critiques of colonialism. For sociology to be a progressive research program, it should produce a newer framework for (post)colonialism to move beyond the old Euro-American bias. I believe that sociology is a discipline that is reflexive and critical in its nature. Then, this task is left to us, the contemporary generation of sociologists, who are teaching theories to the next generation.

## REFERENCES

- Adam, Hussein M. 1993. "Fanon as a Democratic Theorist." *African Affairs* 92(369): 449-518.
- Bhaba, Homi. 1999. "Remembering Fanon: Self, Psyche, and the Colonial Condition," pp. 179-96 in *Rethinking Fanon*, edited by Nigel C. Gibson. New York: Humanity Books.
- Bottomore, Tom (ed.). 1983. *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Buck-Morss, Susan. 2000. "Hegel and Haiti." *Critical Inquiry* 26(4): 821-65.
- Bulhan, Hussein A. 1985. *Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression*. New York: Plenum Publishing.
- Burawoy, Michael. 1990. "Marxism as Science: Historical Challenges and Theoretical Growth" *American Sociological Review* 55(6): 775-93.
- Chae, Ou-Byung. 2006. "Non-Western Colonial Rule and Its Aftermath: Postcolonial State Formation in South Korea." Ph.D. Dissertation from Univ. of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
- Connell, R. W. 1997. "Why Is Classical Theory Classical." *American Journal of Sociology* 102(6): 1511-57.
- Draper, Hal. 1990. *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution*. Vol. 1-4. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Gates Jr., Henry Louis. 1991. "Critical Fanonism." *Critical Inquiry* 17(3): 457-70.
- Gibson, Nigel C. (edited). 1999. *Rethinking Fanon: The Continuing Dialogue*. New York: Humanity Books.
- Gilly, Adolfo. 1965. "Introduction." pp.1-21 in *A Dying Colonialism*. New York: Grove Press.
- Fairchild, Halford H. 1994. "Frantz Fanon's The Wretched of the Earth in Contemporary Perspective." *Journal of Black Studies* 25(2): 191-9.
- Fanon, Frantz. 1963. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Weidenfeld.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1965. *A Dying Colonialism*. New York: Grove Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1967a. *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1967b. *Toward the African Revolution: Political Essays*. New York: Grove Press.
- Forsythe, Dennis. 1970. "Frantz Fanon: Black Theoretician." *The Black Scholar* 1: 2-10.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1973. "Frantz Fanon—The Marx of the Third World." *Phylon* 34(2): 160-70.
- Feuchtwang, Stephan. 1985. "Fanon's Politics of Culture: The Colonial Situation and Its Extension." *Economy and Society* 14(4): 450-73.
- Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. New York: International Publishers.
- Hamilton, Gary G. 1985. "Why No Capitalism in China? Negative Questions in Historical Comparative Research." *Journal of Developing Societies* 1(2): 187-211.
- Hansen, Emmanuel. 1974. "Frantz Fanon: Portrait of a Revolutionary." *Transitions* 46: 25-36.
- Hobsbawm, E. J. 1973. "Passionate Witness." Review of Irene L. Gendzier, Frantz Fanon: A Critical Study. *The New York Review of Books*, February 22, pp. 6-10.
- Kebede, Messay. 2001. "The Rehabilitation of Violence and the Violence of Rehabilitation: Fanon and Colonialism." *Journal of Black Studies* 31(5): 539-62.
- Kim, Dongno. 1994. "Peasants, State, and Landlords: National Crisis and the Transformation of Agrarian Society in Pre-Colonial Korea." Ph.D. Dissertation, Univ. of Chicago.
- Lenin, Vladimir. 1974. *State and Revolution*. New York: International Publishers.

- Martin, Tony. 1970. "Rescuing Fanon from the Critics." *African Studies Review* 13 (December): 381-99.
- Marx, Karl. 1963. *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. New York: International Publishers.
- McLellan, David. 1977. *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Moore, Barrington Jr. 1966. *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Negri, Antonio. 1984. *Marx Beyond Marx: Lessons on the Grundrisse*. Massachusetts: Bergin and Garvey Publishers, Inc.
- Nurse-Bray, Paul. 1980. "Race and Nation: Ideology in the Thought of Frantz Fanon." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 18(1): 135-42.
- Paige, Jeffery M. 1975. *Agrarian Revolution: Social Movements and Export Agriculture in the Underdeveloped World*. New York: Free Press.
- Pernibam, B. Marie. 1973. "Fanon and the Revolutionary Peasantry—the Algerian Case." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 11(3): 427-45.
- Said, Edward. W. 1979. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1993. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Sarte, Jean-Paul. 1963. "Preface" to *the Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Weidenfield.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 1988. "Can the Subaltern Speak." pp. 271-313 in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Tucker, Robert (ed.). 1978. *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd. ed. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Wallerstein, Immanuel. 1979. "Fanon and the Revolutionary Class." pp. 250-68 in *Capitalist World Economy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Woddis, Jack. 1972. *New Theories of Revolution: A Commentary on the Views of Frantz Fanon, Régis Debray and Hebert Marcuse*. London and New York: International.
- Wolf, Eric. 1966. *Peasants*. New York: Prentice Hall.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1969. *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Won, Jaeyoun. 2008. "Why is Marx Classical?: The 18<sup>th</sup> Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte and Marxist Legacy in Historical Sociology." *Development and Society* 37(2): 219-41.
- Worsley, Peter. 1969. "Frantz Fanon: Evolution of a Revolutionary—Revolutionary Theories." *Monthly Review* 21: 30-49.
- Worsley, Peter. 1972. "Frantz Fanon and the Lumpenproletariat." *Socialist Register* 9: 193-230.
- Wright, E. O., Andrew Levine, and Elliot Sober. 1992. *Reconstructing Marxism*. London: Verso.

[Submitted April 1, 2009; Accepted June 4, 2009]