

The Wretched of the Earth –
Frantz Fanon

**“Reciprocal Bases of National Culture and
the Fight for Freedom”**

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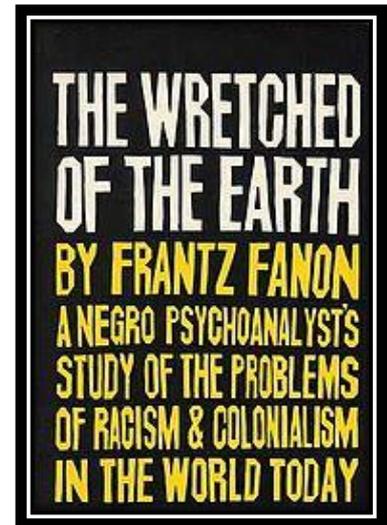


Frantz Fanon (1925 – 1961)

- ▶ Martinique born French Psychiatrist, Philosopher, revolutionary and writer
- ▶ Known as a radical existentialist Humanist
- ▶ Spoke on the issue of Decolonization
- ▶ Psychological analysis of colonial experience
- ▶ Member of Algerian National Liberation Front
- ▶ Died of Leukemia
- ▶ Major Works – *Black Skin, White Masks*, *The Wretched of the Earth*

The Wretched of the Earth

- ▶ Fanon's last work
- ▶ Published by Françoise Maspero
- ▶ Written during the Algerian struggle for independence
- ▶ Known as the classic of decolonization
- ▶ Discusses violence as a means of liberation
- ▶ Preface by Jean Paul Sartre



“On National Culture” – “Reciprocal Bases of Nationalism and the Fight for Freedom”

- ▶ “On National Culture” is the fourth chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth*.
- ▶ The section deals with the legitimacy of the claims of Nation.
- ▶ “Reciprocal Bases of Nationalism and the Fight for Freedom,” a part of “On National Culture” is originally a speech made at the *Second Congress of Black artists and Writers* at Rome in 1959.
- ▶ In the speech he draws a link between nationalism and culture.

Reciprocal Bases of Nationalism and the Fight for Freedom

- ▶ Colonial domination – disrupts cultural life
- ▶ Made possible by
 - The negation of national reality
 - Introduction of new legal relations
 - Banishment of the native customs
 - Expropriation
 - Systematic enslavement

- ▶ Reactions from the natives – Contradictory
 - Masses of people – maintain traditions which are entirely different from those of colonial situation
 - Intellectual – shows solidarity to the culture of the occupying power and criticizes his own culture

The Colonial Situation And National Culture

- ▶ Colonial Situation – halts the national culture
- ▶ National culture under colonial situation is a **contested culture**
- ▶ Occupying power interprets attachment to traditions as refusal to submit
- ▶ By one or two centuries of exploitation – national culture becomes merely a set of:
 - Habits
 - Some traditions of dress
 - Broken down institutions
- ▶ There is no life

What we find are the dregs of culture.

*“The poverty, national oppression, inhibition of culture
are one and the same”*

Reactions of the Native

- ▶ Aggressive patterns of behaviour in natives
- ▶ Colonial Exploitation, Poverty, endemic famine - drive natives to organized revolt
- ▶ Open breach of colonizer's rule
- ▶ Such actions are stirred by:
 - International events
 - The collapse of whole sections of colonial empire
 - Contradictions inherent in the colonial system

The Newfound Tensions and Their Repercussions on the Cultural Plane

LITERATURE

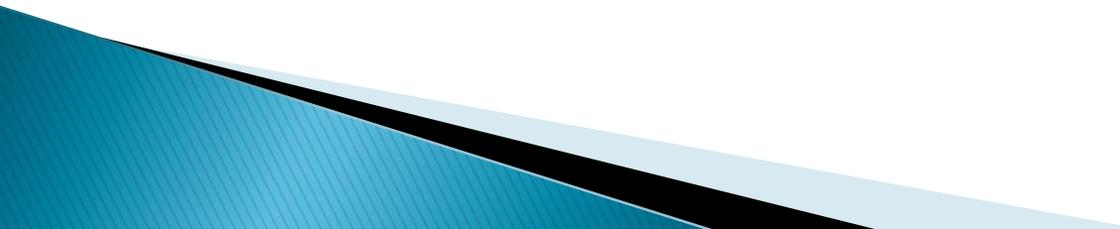
- ▶ Relative over production
- ▶ Reply to the dominating power
- ▶ Intelligentsia who, once were consumers become producers
- ▶ **Forms:** novels, short stories, essays
- ▶ **Themes:** less of hopeless recrimination, violent, resounding, florid writing, precision to literary utterances of the native intellectual, addresses his own people

▶ Features:

- Takes up and clarifies themes which are typically nationalist
- It is a literature of combat because,
 - a) it moulds the national consciousness
 - b) calls on people to fight
 - c) it assumes responsibility
 - d) it is the will to liberty expressed in terms of time and space.

▶ Stories:

- Storytellers begin to be innovative
- Lively episodes in place of inert ones
- Modernize the old stories of struggle
- Instead of “this all happened long ago,” we have “what we are going to speak of happened somewhere else, but it might well have happened here today and it may happen tomorrow”
- Characters like highway robbers and anti social vagabonds are remodelled.

- ▶ **Epic**: becomes an authentic form and takes on a cultural value
 - ▶ **Comedy** and **Farce** disappeared
 - ▶ **Drama** becomes part of the common lot of the people
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HANDICRAFTS

- ▶ A new vigour is seen
- ▶ Eg: arms tend to be raised from the body
- ▶ By carving figures and faces which are full of life and by taking a group fixed on the same pedestal the artist invites participation in an organized movement.

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CERAMICS AND POTTERY-MAKING

- ▶ Formalism is abandoned.
- ▶ Jugs, jars and trays are first modified imperceptibly, then most savagely.
- ▶ Used colours that symbolized harmony.

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JAZZ AND BLUES

- ▶ Jazz is a kind of music that originated at the beginning of the 20th century, within the African American communities of the Southern United States
- ▶ Blues is a form of folk music which arose in part from the work songs of the African-American workers on plantations.
- ▶ Certain forbidden genres and blues now assert themselves
- ▶ New styles like bebop appeared which was opposed by the white jazz specialists.
- ▶ Bebop, developed in the 1940s is characterized by fast tempo, instrumental virtuosity and improvisation based on the combination of harmonic structural melody.



- ▶ To the whites, Jazz should only be the despairing, broken down nostalgia of an old negro.
 - ▶ In all these cultural forms we find themes that are capable of assembling of people for a precise purpose.
 - ▶ National consciousness brings out changes in cultural forms which in turn helps build up national feelings.
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Colonial Situation, National Liberation and Culture

- ▶ In colonial situation, culture deprived of support of nation and state falls and dies
- ▶ National liberation is the solution for the existence of culture
- ▶ Nation ensures the conditions for culture.
- ▶ The national character of the culture makes such a culture open to other cultures.
- ▶ The nation gives life to national culture

Struggle and Culture

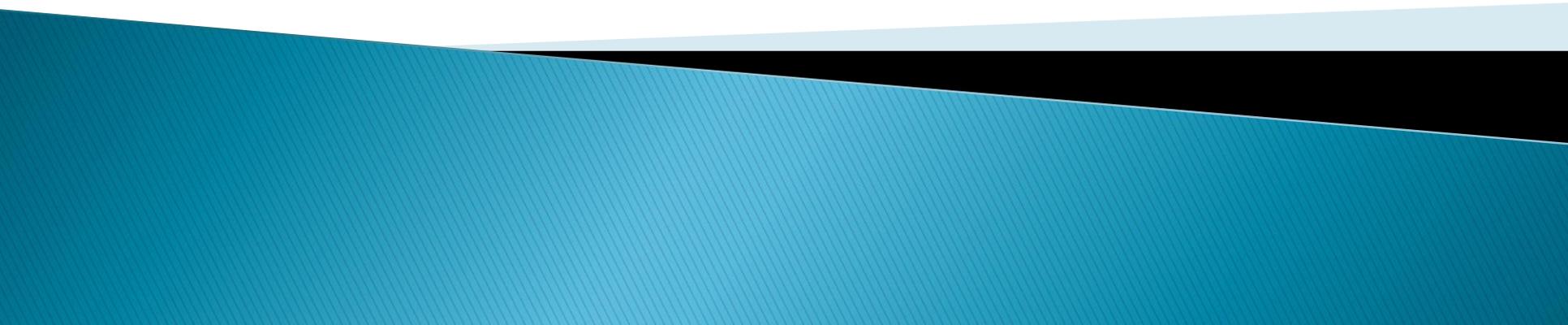
- ▶ Fanon asks a series of questions
 - What are the relations between struggle and culture?
 - Is there a suspension of the culture during the conflict?
 - Is the national struggle an expression of culture?
 - Is the battle for freedom itself a negation of culture?
 - In short

“Is the struggle for freedom a cultural phenomenon or not?”
- ▶ He provides answers by drawing on the impact of struggle on national culture.
- ▶ The struggle for freedom will mobilize all classes of people, but does not give back the culture its former value.

Nationalism and Internationalism

- ▶ It is at the heart of national consciousness that international consciousness lives and grows.
- ▶ Only an international dimension will enable the culture to influence and permeate other cultures which makes the existence of this culture possible.
- ▶ Thus this two fold emerging, that is national and international consciousness is ultimately the source of culture.

THANK YOU

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