COLONIALISM AND REVOLUTION: FANON MEETS BOURDIEU

Michael Burawoy

Fourth Conversation with Pierre Bourdieu, Havens Center, April 10, 2008
OVERVIEW

• I. Question of “Habitus”!
• II. Introduction: Bourdieu vs. Fanon
• III. Convergent views of Colonial Domination
• IV. Bourdieu: Between Tradition and Modernity
• V. Fanon: Between Capitalism and Socialism
• VI. Fanon vs. Bourdieu
• VII. Transverse Trajectories
I: THE QUESTION OF “HABITUS”

- Is there such an entity as “habitus” the bodily incorporation of social structures?
- If it exists can we identify it other than through its effects?
- How adaptable, flexible is the habitus?
- If it exists does it matter? If so when?
- Is habitus a folk or a scientific concept?
Bourdieu vs. Burawoy

- Layered Habitus
- Misrecognition
- Situational Contradiction between disposition and structure

- Dual Consciousness
- Mystification
- Processual Contradiction between disposition and structure

THE QUESTION OF STATE SOCIALISM
II: INTRODUCTION: BOURDIEU vs. FANON

- Bourdieu’s animosity toward Fanon
- Convergent Biographies
III. CONVERGENT VIEWS OF COLONIALISM

- Naked force prevails
- Segregation of colonizers and colonized
- Dehumanization of the colonized
- Dispossession of peasantry of land
- Necessity of violence to overthrow colonialism
- War generates dignity and self-respect, transformation of consciousness
- Socialism or Barbarism
IV. BOURDIEU: BETWEEN TRADITION AND MODERNITY

- Critic of Modernization Theory
- Orientation to the future
BOURDIEU: BETWEEN TRADITION AND MODERNITY

- Critic of Modernization Theory
- Orientation to the future

Working Class

Revolutionary Consciousness (Modernity)

Peasantry

Traditional Traditionalism
BOURDIEU AND REVOLUTIONARY CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE WORKING CLASS

“To those who have the “privilege” of undergoing permanent and “rational” exploitation and of enjoying the corresponding advantages also belongs the privilege of a truly revolutionary consciousness. This realistic aiming at the future (l’avenir) is only accessible to those who have the means to confront the present and to look for ways of beginning to implement their hopes, instead of giving way to resigned surrender or to the magical impatience of those who are too crushed by the present to be able to look to anything other than a utopian future (un futur), an immediate, magical negation of the present.” (Algeria 1960, p.63)
BOURDIEU: BETWEEN TRADITION AND MODERNITY

- Critic of Modernization Theory
- Orientation to the future

Working Class

Uprooted

Revolutionary Consciousness (Modernity)

Traditionalism of Despair

Peasantry

Subproletarians

Traditional Traditionalism
On the one hand, there is the revolt of emotion, the uncertain and incoherent expression of a condition characterized by uncertainty and incoherence; on the other hand, there is revolutionary radicalism, springing from the systematic consideration of reality. These two attitudes correspond to two types of material conditions of existence: on the one hand the sub-proletarians of the towns and the uprooted peasants whose whole existence is constraint and arbitrariness; on the other hand the regular workers of the modern sector, provided with the minimum of security and guarantees which allow aspirations and opinions to be put into perspective. Disorganization of daily conduct prohibits the formation of the system of rational projects and forecasts of which the revolutionary consciousness is one aspect. (*Algeria 1960*, p.62)
V. FANON: BETWEEN CAPITALISM AND SOCIALISM

- Orientation to future, extrication from past
- Gramsci applied to anti-colonial struggles
- National Bourgeois vs National Liberation
Colonial State
Settler Farmers

National Bourgeoisie
Parasitic Working Class

COLONIZERS
COLONIZED
URBAN BLOC
Colonial State

Colonizers

Settler Farmers

Traditional Leaders

Volcanic Peasantry

URBAN BLOC

Parasitic Working Class

National Bourgeoisie

RURAL BLOC
Colonial State

Settler Farmers

National Bourgeoisie

Parasitic Working Class

Lumpenproletariat

Volcanic Peasantry

Colony Colony

URBAN BLOC

RURAL BLOC

COLONIZERS

COLONIZED
VI. BOURDIEU vs. FANON

- Revolutionary Class
- Intellectuals
- Decolonization Roads
- Violence
VII. TRANSVERSE TRAJECTORIES

FANON

Black Skins,
White Masks
TRANSVERSE TRAJECTORIES

FANON

Black Skins,
White Masks

The Wretched
of the Earth
TRANSVERSE TRAJECTORIES

FANON

BOURDIEU

*Black Skins, White Masks*

*Distinction*

*The Wretched of the Earth*
TRANSVERSE TRAJECTORIES

Fanon

Black Skins, White Masks

The Wretched of the Earth

Bourdieu

Distinction

Revolution within the Revolution
TRANSVERSE TRAJECTORIES

FANON

BOURDIEU

SOCIAL REPRODUCTION

BLACK SKINS, WHITE MASKS

SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

THE WRETCHED OF THE EARTH

REVOLUTION WITHIN THE REVOLUTION

DISTINCTION
TRANSVERSE TRAJECTORIES

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FINAL THOUGHTS

• Two Bourdieu’s
• From Kabylia to French Society
• Racial Domination
• Class Analysis
• Intellectual