Decolonial realism: Ethics, politics and dialectics in Fanon and Dussel

George Ciccariello-Maher
Department of History and Politics, Drexel University, Philadelphia, PA 19104, USA.
gjcm@drexel.edu

Abstract This article approaches contemporary European debates on the subject of realism through the lenses offered by two decolonial thinkers: Fanon and Dussel. Whereas both share with realism a fundamental emphasis on reality as the starting point for theory – an assumption shared by much decolonial thought – they nevertheless provide another layer of specificity in their consideration of the colonial condition, diagnosing a fundamental absence of reciprocity that dictates the course of decolonization as a transformation of reality. Reconsidering the debates on realism in light of these insights therefore provides a powerful basis for both formulating a specifically decolonial realism and for engaging in comparative political theorizing more generally.
Contemporary Political Theory (2014) **13,** 2–22. doi:10.1057/cpt.2013.11;
published online 4 June 2013

Keywords: decolonization; Enrique Dussel; Frantz Fanon; Raymond Geuss; realism

Gordon (1996) once famously asked why existentialism has found such an echo among Black thinkers – from David Walker to Frederick Douglass, from Richard Wright to Fanon and from Toni Morrison to Cornel West – only to come to the fairly obvious conclusion that 'existence' is something that few former slaves can afford to neglect. Something similar could be said of realism: Black 'reality' is as resolutely demanding of attention as is Black 'existence', and indeed the two categories overlap heavily and share much of the same content. This notable importance of 'reality', moreover, is not limited to the formerly enslaved, but extends as well to the formerly colonized, hence the seminal importance of Mariátegui's (1974) *Seven Interpretive Essays*, whose consciously defined subject was nothing less than *Peruvian Reality* . However, the relevance of Gordon's observations to my present topic – realism in decolonial theory – is more than merely structural.[1] If existentialism is about projection, about the abandonment of one's essence to the indeterminacy of a future 'reality' of one's own creation, then this, too, speaks to the relationship between the as yet unfinished project of decolonization and the contemporary provocation, that is, philosophical 'realism'.

In what follows, I use Geuss' recent intervention into the debate regarding philosophical realism as a lens through which to view the work of two decolonial thinkers – Fanon and Dussel – who share many of his concerns, albeit for arguably (and crucially) different reasons. This attempt to grapple with both the advantages and the drawbacks of Geuss' realist approach as well as its congruencies and incongruencies with decolonial thought allows us to see that, while decolonial realism can take some cues from European debates on the subject, the reality it confronts is in many ways more concrete and urgent than these debates may allow. It is on the basis of this insight that, after briefly discussing the example of contemporary Venezuela, I conclude by sketching out both the parameters of a decolonial realism and the implications for comparative political theorizing.

Geuss: Against 'Ethics-First'

In the history of political thought, calls for 'realism' are as frequent as they are diverse in their means and ends. An increasingly 'realist' assessment of human desires, for example, accompanied the break with religious moralism that generated the tendency – from Hobbes to eighteenth-century liberals – to seek political institutions that would moderate and contain human excesses.[2] Toward diametrically opposed ends, the tendency often associated (however erroneously) with Machiavelli seeks to mobilize a comparably realistic interpretation toward the transformation of the existing, the creation and maintenance of new institutions or the use of power toward its own expansion.[3] This 'revolutionary' realism, too, is a multifaceted phenomenon, spanning from the Marxist tradition that emerges out of the critique of Hegelian idealism – particularly the idea that 'material force must be overthrown by material force' (Marx, 1843) – to twentieth-century thinkers from left to right, most often Lenin and Carl Schmitt.[4] 'Realism' in political thought can therefore have a variety of different and even opposing implications depending on what motivates particular thinkers.[5]

In this context, Geuss' recent polemical interventions on the subject of realism are difficult to locate precisely, both for their ambitious breadth and the variety of theoretical influences these interventions reveal. Geuss' primary concern is to prevent political theory from being reduced to merely an 'applied ethics' (Geuss, 2008, p. 6). This 'ethics-first' approach – which Geuss attributes to thinkers as diverse as Kant and Rawls – contains what he characterizes as three interlocking assumptions: that ethics is separate from politics ('pure'); that ethics in fact constitutes a substratum that lies below and is fundamental to politics, and that, in a temporal register, ethical theories can and ought to be first formulated and later applied to the political realm (pp. 6–9). Geuss' response to this 'ethics-first' view, is fourfold: he proposes (i) a political realism that is (ii) rooted in situated action (iii) within historical contexts and whose exercise (iv) takes the form of a flexible 'skill' rather than an abstract deployment of universal theory (pp. 9–16).

Indeed, the category of the universal serves as Geuss' primary concern, making both his critique of idealism and embrace of realism broader and more ambitious than some other variants (Mantena, 2012, p. 456). For Geuss, *a priori* ethical principles tend toward the abstractly universal, rendering their application to different contexts not only difficult, but even contradictory, as competing claims can find equally legitimate normative foundations in different contexts. Crucially, however, while Geuss admits the possibility of a gap – indeed, of a chasm – between what we may believe and 'reality', he does not merely aspire to progressively closer approximations of that reality, but instead defines his realism in terms of *real motivation*, that is, what *really* motivates people to act politically in the world, motivations that can just as easily be illusory. As a result, 'the realist must take powerful illusions seriously', precisely because reality is produced in part as a result of the collective human practices that such illusions can engender, and this nuance will prove crucial to Geuss' relevance to decolonial political theory (Geuss, 2008, p. 9).

In what follows, I consider Geuss' realist imperative in light of the decolonial thought of Fanon and Dussel, both thinkers for whom reality is of overriding importance, and yet whose relation to realism is contested. I argue that for both Fanon and Dussel, as for Geuss, a strictly ethical starting point proves insufficient, and both like Geuss turn instead to more properly *political* concerns to ground thought. For both, as for Geuss, moreover, this insufficiency of the ethical is rooted in a critique of the universal: for Fanon, universal human love, for Dussel, the philosophical paradigm of totality, both intimately linked to ontology. Finally, for Fanon and Dussel, as for Geuss, this critique of the universal only comes into view once we 'take powerful illusions seriously': for Fanon, the illusions that uphold racial oppression and later colonial Manicheism, and for Dussel, structures of global apartheid. For both Fanon and Dussel, the material instantiation of such illusions generates a 'reality' characterized by the coexistence of Being and sub/non-Being, which gives the lie to prevailing universal pretensions, and it is this reality that the decolonial 'realist' must not only diagnose, but also confront and ultimately abolish.

Fanon: Non-Being and Non-Ethics

Fanon's theoretical relationship to the reality he describes – and as a result, his status as a realist thinker – is both ambiguous and debated. Some focus attention on the infamous first chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth* and Fanon's engagement with the unavoidable recourse to violence in the course of decolonization to paint him as an arch-realist in the vein of the most caricatured Machiavelli.[6] For this Fanon, to be a realist means to 'challenge the colonial situation', and the 'bare reality' of this challenge – decolonization – 'reeks of red-hot cannonballs and bloody knives' (Fanon, 2004, pp. 2–3). 'Decolonization', bluntly put, 'is always a violent event', and confronting colonial reality means coming to terms with action that mirrors its object

(p. 1). Others, focusing on the introduction and conclusion of *Black Skin, White Masks* (and to a lesser degree, the conclusion of *Wretched*), present an image of Fanon the ethical universalist. Here, the emphasis is on his stated goal of building a new humanism, 'the world of *you*', alongside his strident critiques of racial determinism and aspects of the Négritude movement (Fanon, 2008, p. 206).[7]

Many more, unfortunately, skirt the problem entirely by simply distinguishing between an 'early' (universalist) and a 'late' (realist) Fanon, as a way to avoid grappling with the difficult questions that run throughout the corpus of Fanon's thought.[8] Fanon's not-so-subtle, but often overlooked, suggestion at the outset of *Black Skin* that 'The structure of the present work is grounded in temporality' (p. xvi), and his insistence in *Wretched* that decolonization 'is not a discourse on the universal' (p. 6) should be enough to indicate that Fanon has something more complex, dynamic and dialectical in store for readers of both texts. In what follows, I sketch the broad contours of the dialectic running throughout Fanon's work – linking *Black Skin* to *Wretched*, while complicating some prevailing readings of each – with particular attention to the implications for the question of realism.

For Fanon as for Geuss, ethics is bound up with universal claims, but whereas for the latter, this relationship emerges negatively – ethics appears, by virtue of its universalism, as a barrier to realism – Fanon diagnoses what we could see as a perverse inversion of Geuss' challenge. According to Fanon, (i) prevailing reality renders ethics impossible while (ii) ethics itself blocks the universal it purports to represent by obstructing the action necessary to transform that reality and bring the universal into Being. Fanon's theoretical journey that begins in the first pages of *Black Skin* is one that is initially marked by a profound yearning for the universal accomplishment of truly ethical relations. His entire Being ached for the universal, for a fully reconciled world of human love, and it was for the universal that he screamed, wept and finally prayed. Despite such yearning, however, Fanon was repeatedly rebuffed from such universal aspirations, and the internal development of *Black Skin* charts in many ways the disabusal of his universalist pretensions and his dawning realization of just how stubbornly divided his 'reality' was.

The blockage that confronts Fanon falls precisely into Geuss' category of 'powerful illusions': the racial hatred that reduced Fanon and other racialized and colonized subjects to the shadowy realm of non-Being, of less-than-Being. For Fanon as for Geuss, however, these are more than mere ideas, and hence their 'power': such illusions uphold institutions that generate a world in which Black non-Being is a concrete reality rather than simply an erroneous idea. As a result, neither love nor language, science nor reason (which Fanon grapples with in Chapters 1–4 of *Black Skin*) would prove capable of shattering this illusion, but it was an illusion that had to be shattered nonetheless. Fanon finally realizes that 'I had no choice', beating a tactical retreat from the universal in Chapter 5 ('The Lived Experience of the Black Man'), arguably the central chapter of the book, which phenomenologically documents his encounter with a White woman and her child on a train, during the course of which

Fanon himself was 'confronted with his race' (p. 106, p. xvii). This confrontation takes the form of the anguished realization that race, to use Geuss' terms, is *both* an 'illusion' and intensely 'powerful' in its structuring of reality, and that for Fanon and others the only possible path beyond this deadlock is one that passes *through* a realistic recognition of the materiality of race, not its idealist or ethical negation.

This realization lays bare the ontological quality of White supremacy, or in the terms of this discussion, the degree to which its material architecture makes it something that is very much 'real'. What makes race ontological for Fanon is that its basis lies precisely in the question of access to being itself, to full humanity. This is not, then, a question of some relatively privileged beings oppressing others, but of an entire system premised on the existence of, on the one hand, true being, and on the other, mere things. The implications for an interrogation of realism are profound, given the significant overlap between ontology and reality: not only does Fanon's understanding of race mark an apartheid at the heart of humanity itself, but also this division has implications for the possibility of ethics and even for access to 'the real'. Black subjects, according to the young Fanon, are condemned (as in the *damnés* of his later work) to 'a zone of nonbeing, an extraordinarily sterile and arid region, an incline stripped bare of every essential … a veritable hell' (2008, p. xii). Gordon explains the relationship between this 'hellish zone of nonbeing' and ethics in the following terms: for the racialized subject, 'acceptable being is nonexistence, nonappearance, or submergence … At a more philosophical level, the absence of a Self-Other dialectic in racist situations means the eradication of ethical relations. Where ethics is derailed, all is permitted' (Gordon, 2007, p. 11).

Put bluntly, ethics is impossible under conditions of White supremacy, but this is not because White supremacists act unethically: it is because White supremacy as a system of ontological apartheid cannot sustain ethics. The absence of an overarching universal – which for Geuss renders the *application* of preexisting ethical formulae impossible – here makes any overarching ethics impossible *a priori*. This impossibility of ethics provides the basis for Fanon's critical reformulation of the Hegelian master–slave dialectic, one rooted in 'an absolute reciprocity' that, like ethics, is notably absent under White supremacy (Fanon, 2008, p. 191). Despite his dialectical approach and the realistic centering of conflict this approach entails, Hegel nevertheless relies on an understanding of Being as all-encompassing totality that makes a broadly ethical approach possible at least in theory. However, for Fanon, Black subjects lack what he calls 'ontological resistance' in the eyes of the Whites, and therefore even the most basic reciprocity required for Hegel's dialectic to function. Fanon's subject is therefore tasked not only with struggling toward mutual self-consciousness of the in-itself for-itself, but with creating the ontological grounds for setting that progression underway in the first place (p. 90).[9] This struggle for 'symmetry' is also crucially 'a struggle to be in a position for the ethical to emerge', and political struggle thus stands as a precondition for the ethical (Gordon, 2000, p. 35).

With no basis on which to decide what is right and just, however, the right and just do not simply evaporate, but in reality become either ploys of power or moments of resistance. Alongside the 'powerful illusion' of race, there sits uncomfortably the similarly 'powerful illusion' of its non-importance: the ideological insistence – so resonant today – that formal equality is in itself sufficient. Fanon's critique of formal emancipation – which parallels his later critique of formal decolonization – is expressed in the following words: 'As master, the white man told the black man: "You are now free" … The black man was acted upon' (Fanon, 2008, pp. 194–195). In the absence of any basis for Hegel's dialectic of recognition to operate, the *formal* passage from slavery to liberation is not accompanied by a concomitant shift in the *substantive* ontological status of the former slave. In fact, to the extent that the former slave was merely 'acted upon', Fanon would insist that the opposite had occurred: formal emancipation had intervened as a veritable barrier to substantive liberation. Both equality and ethics – here functional stand-ins for the universal – feature in Fanon's formulation *not* as points of departure, but as points of arrival *after* and as a *product* of political struggle, paralleling Geuss' reversal of the 'ethics-first' argument.

Although Fanon is sharply critical of the Hegelian dialectic, he nevertheless presses on to reformulate that dialectic in a way that foregrounds the struggle required before the existence of reciprocity, the pre-dialectical movement to establish intersubjective symmetry and the very possibility of ethics. This is a struggle that, for the Fanon of *Black Skin*, passes necessarily through blackness as its imposed point of departure, embracing the 'powerful illusion' of race in a desperate bid to transform the reality it upholds. Thus ethics does not disappear entirely, nor is it fully reduced to a cynical ruse concealing the reality of anti-Black racism. Rather, in a manner similar to but distinct from Geuss' formulation, Fanon's ethics become intrinsically tied to the political, existing only in the struggle against this systematic apartheid.[10] It is this struggle and this ethic that transforms Fanon's 'critical' realism – his diagnosis of both the illusion of anti-Blackness and its material weight – into a properly 'dialectical realism' nourished by his 'decolonized' reformulation of Hegel with its emphasis on the category of non-Being.

Fanon's dialectical critique of a reality marked by ontologized inequality and systematic non-Being would be equally clear in the context of the Algerian Revolution, thereby giving his critical, decolonial realism both continuity throughout his work and additional concreteness. If anything, it is in Fanon's later description of the colonial world as fundamentally Manichean, 'a world divided in two' in which 'the two [parts] confront each other, but not in the service of a higher unity' that the absence of a universal ground for ethics appears most starkly (Fanon, 2004, pp. 3–4). Moreover, if Fanon draws the lines as sharply as possible between the two 'different species' that inhabit that divided world – lines that will later be softened once the dialectic of decolonization enters into motion – he does so to make this point precisely: there is no overarching ethic that binds colonizer to

colonized or vice versa, power alone prevails, and in the most concrete of senses 'all is permitted' (p. 5).

Just as it is the White who creates the Black (in *Black Skin*) and the anti-Semite who creates the Jew (in Sartre's model to which Fanon returns repeatedly), so too is it 'the colonist who *fabricated* and *continues to fabricate* the colonized subject' (2004, p. 2). In ethical terms, the colonized subject that results from this process of construction is 'declared impervious to ethics, representing not only the absence of values but also the negation of values. He is, dare we say it, the enemy of values. In other words, absolute evil' (p. 6). The impossibility of ethics thus grows not only from a concretely Manichaean situation characterized by systematic segregation and everyday brutality, but is also inscribed in the very subjects colonization creates. It is very difficult to understand how one can bind evil non-Beings to ethical obligation when they are, in fact, the embodiment of non-ethics, but arguably unlike the Black subject of *Black Skin*, this fact is not lost on the colonized: 'He has always known that his dealings with the colonist would take place in a field of combat. So the colonized subject wastes no time lamenting and almost never searches for justice in the colonial context' (p. 43).

Declared evil and relegated to the zone of non-Being, the colonized is freed from all obligations to the colonizer, and reformulates the basic categories of life accordingly, beginning at the crucial intersection of truth and ethics:

> For the people, only fellow nationals are ever owed the truth. No absolute truth, no discourse on the transparency of the soul can erode this position. In answer to the lie of the colonial situation, the colonized subject responds with a lie … Truth is what hastens the dislocation of the colonial regime, what fosters the emergence of the nation. Truth is what protects the 'natives' and undoes the foreigners. In the colonial context there is no truthful behavior. And good is quite simply what hurts *them* most. (p. 14)

Truth and ethics coincide when reformulated in the process of decolonization, but this is a decidedly one-sided truth–lie and admittedly partial ethics: both this truth–lie and this ethic set out from the critique of the bad faith of prevailing reality, which despite universal pretensions values a part over the whole. Just as the colonized subject is condemned to this partiality, it is condemned to violence as well: its blessing and its curse. 'Without the possibility of innocence, the blackened lives the disaster of appearance where there is no room to appear as nonviolently' (Gordon, 2007, p. 11). Violence is not merely strategically necessary, but *structurally impossible to avoid*: the ontological pre-destiny of the colonized and racialized, for now at least.

It seems relatively uncontroversial to *describe* colonial reality as a space of ethical impossibility, but mere description does not a realist make, and what is more controversial is how Fanon then *responds* to this divided reality. Like confronting White supremacy, 'challenging the colonial world is not a rational confrontation of

viewpoints. It is not a discourse on the universal, but the impassioned claim by the colonized that their world is fundamentally different' (p. 6). Here, the structure of *Wretched* closely parallels that of *Black Skin*, drawing similarly on Fanon's critical reformulation of the dialectic, only here it is not illusory Black identity that is to be reclaimed. Rather, it is the reappropriation by the colonized of both the division and the violence of colonial reality that become their most powerful weapons toward the generation of national consciousness. As Fanon puts it in a passage often overlooked by those who would claim him for the universalist camp, 'The violence which governed the ordering of the colonial world … this *same* violence will be vindicated and appropriated by the colonized', and the Manicheism that colonial violence upholds will provide 'the backbone on which the decolonized society is reorganized' (pp. 5–6). Thus, if the Kantian political idealist would heap scorn onto both this Manicheism and Fanon's ostensible endorsement of it, denying the existence of two 'different species' entirely and rejecting purgative collective violence as a response, Fanon falls squarely into the realist camp. Although Fanon would be the first to insist that this counter-violence of the colonized shares neither the severity nor the reactionary objectives of that of the colonizer, and although it is transformed into something far different in the course of decolonization, his insistence that it is the *same* can be read as a stubbornly realist impulse.[11]

If Fanon's dialectical objective is to push frozen and 'Aristotelian' oppositions – those governed by 'mutual exclusion' according to which 'there is no possible conciliation' – into a dynamic motion, his decolonial horizon insists on the abolition of the ontological apartheid of prevailing 'reality' as the only basis for a true universal. If Fanon's seeming-endorsement of colonial Manicheism would certainly make a Kantian cringe, we should also bear in mind that it would also make many a purported 'realist' blush as well, as more than a detached observation it is a call for revolutionary action. However, despite the exclusion of the colonized from the realm of ethics, for Fanon as for Geuss, the ethical does not disappear entirely simply upon its rejection as an overarching universal. Rather, it becomes endogenous to the process of liberation, contextualized within the Manichaeism that structures reality, a one-sided ethic that provides the only basis upon which we could even hope for the universal.

The dialectical nature of Fanon's decolonial realism – the precise way that it approaches the existing with an eye to the future – both explains predominant misinterpretations of his thought and points us beyond Geuss' broader but less specific realist approach. Those who would claim Fanon as a universalist neglect his reappropriation of both the ethical division of reality and the violence it engenders, while those who would decry him as a bloodthirsty realist of the caricatured 'Machiavellian' stripe equally neglect the moment in which this reappropriation enters into dialectical motion and reality is transformed as a result. Accounting for both allows us to put into play a more complex and dynamic relationship between the particularity of existing reality and the universal ethical aspirations that Fanon shares

with the most devout of idealists, his new humanism. Historical change, the transformation of this Manichaean reality, is 'desired, clamored for, and demanded', and even if we were to distinguish the reality of the colonial situation from the appeals to human nature that motivate much of the realist canon, it is clear that, for Fanon, transformation of the two proceeds concomitantly, as decolonization 'fundamentally alters being' and creates 'a new humanity' (2004, pp. 1–2).

If Fanon's subject is engaged in a struggle for being itself, then this is also and simultaneously a struggle over the basis of 'reality'. Fanon's decolonial realism, far from cowing to the existing as vulgar *Realpolitik* would have it, instead recognizes the material weight of the illusions upholding the prevailing order, harnessing those illusions and that weight to fight to destroy that order. His realism is thus driven by the contradiction between reality and the universal, setting into motion a process whose conclusion is ever deferred: starting from reality, but always oriented toward its reconstitution, this is a dialectical movement that leads toward the universal without determining or foreclosing on its possibilities ahead of time. As for Geuss, the struggle against the gap that exists between illusion and reality is of paramount importance, but arguably beyond Geuss, this struggle appears even more imperative and more daunting, in part because it does not operate in the realm of thought but is instead concretely instantiated in colonial institutions and engendered in the less-than-human subjects these institutions generate.

Dussel: Ethics *through* Politics

To all external appearances, Argentine-Mexican philosopher of liberation Dussel is a profoundly ethical thinker in a way that Fanon is not, and so we confront two distinct but interlocking challenges in attempting to view Dussel through a realist lens alongside Fanon. The first concern is that his work is fundamentally and primarily ethical, and a brief look at his extensive list of publications reveals a progression that might worry Geuss: Dussel's massive *Ethics of Liberation* precedes his subsequent *Politics of Liberation* by nearly a decade.[12] The profound influence of Levinas on Dussel, too, might lead us to worry that he falls into what Geuss terms the 'ethics-first' camp, as might his occasional turn to the exhortative register, as when he encourages young people to embrace the *noble vocation of politics* (Dussel, 2008, p. xv).[13] Or his frequent resort of the concept of the 'preferential option', which derives from liberation theology and appears on the surface as a pre-political ethic determining the subject of liberation: the poor for their poverty, the oppressed for their oppression. Second and relatedly, the *form* that Dussel's ethic takes as a result of Levinas's influence grows out of a sharp critique of dialectics, potentially rendering his own decolonial thought incompatible with Fanon's dialectical realism. However, once we grasp the internal twist that Levinas introduces into Dussel's thought – one which pushes him from the realm of Hegelian dialectics to what he

calls 'ana-dialectics' – we will be in a better position to assess both Dussel's relevance to a decolonial realism and to Fanon in a way that might resolve both concerns simultaneously.

This complexity can be grasped through a brief sketch of Dussel's intellectual development through three thinkers who influenced his early theoretical trajectory in decisive ways: Heidegger, Hegel, and Levinas. Unlike Fanon, Dussel neither set out initially from nor remained within the ambit of Hegelian dialectics. Instead, his point of theoretical departure was an early enthusiasm for the universal soil of Heideggerian ontology, and he only turned to Hegel when frustrated by the difficulty of mapping singular and undifferentiated ontological thinking onto the realities of global inequality. The Hegelian dialectic thus came as a relief to Dussel because, through its emphasis on rupture, it allowed him to call into question the prevailing reality in a way that a non-dialectical ontology could not: dialectics 'denies the security and obviousness of everyday life, and opens out on encompassing ontological structures, which are never exhaustively known' (Barber, 1998, p. 26). However, as Fanon was acutely aware, despite its emphasis on the internal rupture of the totality, Hegel's thought was still very much ontological, and whereas Dussel had sought refuge in dialectics, he would not be fully awoken from what he called his 'ontological slumber' until his encounter with Levinas' ethics of alterity (Alcoff and Mendieta, 2000, pp. 20–21).

While Dussel internalizes Levinas' critique of dialectics as a conservative and totalizing ontological discourse, however, formulating instead an 'analectics' in which the 'ana' refers to the realm of the beyond, to exteriority, to the Other, this ostensible rejection and replacement of dialectics is not total. Instead, Dussel's analectics, his ethical prioritization of the Other and the vast space beyond the totality appears in *Philosophy of Liberation* not as a *method per se*, but instead as a 'moment' in what he calls an 'ana-dialectical method' (Dussel, 1985, p. 158). Responding to the insufficiency *not* of dialectical thought itself but to both the conservative closure of some approaches to dialectics and the abstract negativity of others, Dussel's ana-dialectic instead seeks to ground a reformulated dialectic in an analectical starting point, allowing the category of exteriority to serve as what he deems 'the foothold for new unfoldings', for a politics of transformation not confined to immanence (p. 158). Alongside the internal rupture posed by dialectics, then, Dussel attempts to inject the outward rupture of the totality toward that that it excludes.

Still, though, the realist could find grounds for concern: this is a dialectic that *sets out from* the Other in which the ethical moment of the '*affirmation* of exteriority' appears to come first (p. 160). Upon closer look, however, Dussel's concept of exteriority differs both in its content and application from that of Levinas, and Dussel's own critique of Levinas's Eurocentrism can be seen as symptomatic of this conceptual distinction. For Levinas (1991, pp. 35, 290), exteriority is as absolute as it is metaphysical, and so omnipresent as to be equivalent to being itself. For Dussel, however, exteriority – which he also calls 'interior transcendentality' – cannot be

understood unambiguously in any of these terms (1985, p. 39). Like Fanon, Dussel sets out not from Being, but from 'non-Being, nothingness, otherness, exteriority', and it is precisely in terms of this exteriority as non-Being that metaphysics – a category he maintains – is defined: 'Metaphysics … is knowing how to ponder the world [read: reality] from the exteriority of the other' (pp. 14, 48).[14] For Dussel, moreover, this exteriority is neither as absolute nor as universally distributed as for Levinas: while every individual bears some transcendental potential, he argues, their exteriority exists only *in relation to* specific systems of oppression, and as these institutional systems are multiple and overlapping, exteriority too is expressed in a multiplicity of subject-positions. However, what is crucial is that Dussel refuses Levinasian abstraction and insists on formulating these positions concretely, which becomes evident in what is, for him, the paradigmatic case of exteriority: *hunger*.

Hunger is both incredibly concrete and 'subversive', as it entails the need to transcend the political reality that generates it, that is, its condition of possibility (p. 42). Thus, the 'face', for Levinas the absolute basis for a universal openness toward alterity, is for Dussel neither absolute nor universal, but instead 'reveals a people before it reveals an individual', its physiognomy etched by the centuries (p. 44). This move, in which metaphysical alterity is equivalent to anthropological exteriority, gestures toward Dussel's most fundamental break with Levinas. Not only is the concept of exteriority understood as a concrete instantiation of non-Being (as in Fanon), but Dussel further maps this category primarily onto global structures of colonialism and dependency: 'the center is; the periphery is not' (p. 6). His text is replete with references to colonization and efforts at its opposite, and he switches effortlessly between the depths of abstraction and discussion of the Sandinistas and the CIA. Complicating some prevailing and undifferentiated celebrations of Third World nationalism, Dussel effectively maps exteriority onto the intersection of class and nation, arguing that 'the oppressed or popular classes of dependent nations' possess 'the maximum exteriority', and it is though this 'metaphysical alterity' that they alone 'can project a real and new alternative for future humanity' (p. 71).

Finally, this break with the Levinasian concept of exteriority informs Dussel's own direct critique of the Eurocentrism of a thinker who so inspired him. Dussel recalls a 1971 conversation with Levinas in which it became evident that the latter had never considered the possibility of an exteriority located outside Europe, in the colonized and formerly colonized global periphery (1975, p. 8).[15] This was more than a mere coincidental oversight, however, and Dussel further identified the metaphysical absoluteness of Levinas' Other as a source of his 'equivocation' (1974, p. 181).[16] By formulating exteriority as absolute and equivalent to Being, Levinas had obscured the concrete existence of non-Being and – worse still from the realist perspective – he had run the risk of erecting yet another 'false universalism' of the sort that Dussel, like Fanon and Geuss, are so keen to debunk (Barber, 1998, p. 57). If realism generally understood rejects such abstract universals, decolonial realism sets out from a more resolute rejection of existing reality and a more concrete recognition of

the dangers of such universals, which often do more to uphold ontological apartheid than to tear it down.

Once we recognize the concrete reality of this exteriority, which refers in the first place to the struggles of Latin American and other Third World peoples against structures of inequality and exclusion that are both global and domestic, the picture of Dussel as an ethics-first idealist is stood on its head. To turn ethically toward these subjects is to recognize the political nature of their existing and ongoing struggles, and thus Dussel turns this seemingly ethical 'preferential option' into an opportunity to re-center politics. If philosophy has always pondered 'the nonphilosophical; the reality', this has not always been for the better, and Dussel insists that the history of Western philosophy has simultaneously been a history of the 'practical oppression of peripheries' (pp. 3, 5). His own philosophy of liberation seeks to invert this picture by 'rethink[ing] everything that has been though until now', as well as

> what has never been thought before: the very process of the liberation of dependent and peripheral countries. This subject is the praxis of liberation itself. The option for this praxis is the beginning of a philosophical proto-discourse. *Politics introduces ethics, which in turn introduces philosophy.* (p. 173, translation modified)

Despite the centrality of ethics to Dussel's task, then, this is not a question of applying an ideal ethical system that dictates how one *ought* to act, but rather of deriving a negative ought from the experience and assessment of political conditions. We *ought not* to be poor thereby provides the basis for a reconceptualization and re-creation of contemporary life: 'beyond Being, transcending it, there is still reality' (p. 41).

In the process of 'rising from the abstract to the concrete' – as Dussel is often fond of paraphrasing Marx – his own intellectual career, his progression from philosophy of liberation to ethics of liberation and on to politics of liberation is thereby inverted at the very outset (that is, it is already *within* the ostensibly philosophical stage of Dussel's development that he recognizes politics as primary). The preferential option for the poor/victim is therefore not pre-political, but an expression of a new form of politics and power entirely, one not rooted in domination and that requires a complete rethinking. Further, far from entailing an abstract and ethics-first approach, the 'ethico-political option' for the poor and global periphery can be seen as embracing as Fanon did the divided nature of reality, rather than subsuming it into a misleading and false universalism (p. 175). Here, Dussel's work can be seen as responding to one of the most powerful critiques of 'realism' – that it lacks a sufficient principle to act – and the two elements of Dussel's response both complement and transcend existing realist thought.

The first part of the response grows from Dussel's impetus toward rethinking fundamental categories, and gestures toward two very different ideas of realism: a pure Machiavellianism versus the sort of politics-containing-ethics of Geuss. Kantian

idealists would critique Geuss and others for their lack of a universal basis to judge political action, with the implication that to root ethics in politics is to subject the ethical to the dangerous demands of political rationality (in a Machiavellian fashion). However, as another realist Williams argues, this view simply assumes that politics *is* Machiavellian:

> If the power of one lot of people over another is to represent a solution to the first political question, and not itself be part of the problem, something has to be said to explain … what the difference is between the solution and the problem, and that cannot be simply an account of successful domination. (Williams, 2005, p. 5)

In other words, the difficulty of finding a solution within politics is one that is rooted in our assumption that politics *is* domination, rather than the overcoming of domination, and Dussel's project of rethinking fundamental political categories seeks precisely to overcome such prevailing assumptions. Toward this end, he begins his most concise foray into political theorizing, not from the 'will to power' but instead from what he calls the 'will to live', with an eye toward theorizing 'a *positive* understanding of political power, which nevertheless bears in mind that power is frequently *fetishized*, corrupted, and denaturalized as *domination*' (Dussel, 2008, p. 13).

In many ways, the crowning achievement of this rethinking is a new formulation of an old political subject, the people, which is itself internally inscribed with the tension between analectics and dialectics. For Dussel, the people as a political category embodies a fusion of Levinasian ethics of alterity (or exteriority) with a renewed dialectical vision – this time that of Marx – which means concretely that the people comprises both those excluded *from* (exteriority) and oppressed *within* (totality) the prevailing political system (Dussel, 2008, p. 78). This reformulation of the people as a political subject that acts with a foot planted solidly on the ground of exteriority gestures toward a second response by Dussel to the critics of realism, one which European realists are often less equipped to handle. When responding to critics of his realist approach, Geuss turns to demonstrating that his realism *does* contain sufficient ethical content to act, and that this content can be derived from politics. Dussel's approach is starkly different, however, as it does not assume that the formulation of ethical principles precedes action and instead centers the existing praxis of the oppressed: as he insists, the people does not merely *exist*, but rather comes into existence when its components enter into struggle to dismantle structures of global apartheid (2008, pp. 74–75).

An Interpretive Excursus on Venezuelan Reality

Before concluding, I want to briefly turn to contemporary Venezuela, where I regularly engage in research, for a practical example of both the imperative toward

political realism as well as the imperative to move beyond Geuss and decolonize European realism in the manner of Fanon and Dussel. When it comes to grasping contemporary Venezuelan 'reality' – especially with regard to the (late) Chávez regime and the transformative process known as the 'Bolivarian Revolution' – ethics-first critiques are a dime a dozen. Whether it be questions of purported press censorship, presidential term limits, combative and 'violent' rhetoric, friendly relations with unsavory regimes in Iran and formerly Libya, there seems to be no shortage of intellectuals in Venezuela and abroad eager to impose their own universal ethical framework onto Venezuelan society. Moreover, the division marked by such a perspective gestures to something more fundamental: a powerful division of Venezuelan society into two sides to such a degree that it often seems as though the parties involved are simply speaking different languages. Here, Geuss' realism certainly takes us part of the way: it rejects such abstract ethical impositions and demands that we situate such concerns in the context of concrete political action; it allows us to recognize that such mutual incomprehension does not simply result from an intellectual failure to properly apply universal categories; and it turns our attention rightly to the task of diagnosing contemporary political realities. However, when we turn to the question of how this is to be done, his realist lens becomes a bit murkier.

First, this mutual incomprehensibility is not the result, as Geuss' work would suggest, of long-term historical developments that manifest in a general situation of historical relativism (or the cultural differences more conservative scholars might interject). In Venezuela, the roots of such mutual incomprehension are both more recent and more concrete. For many decades, Venezuelan society was considered among the most stable and harmonious in all Latin America. As economic crisis set in during the 1980s and governments responded with neoliberal measures, however, what had appeared to be one harmonious Venezuela was suddenly revealed as two, especially in massive rebellions of 1989 and a pair of failed coups in 1992 (Ciccariello-Maher, 2013). It is this process that we must grasp if we are to speak of the contemporary 'reality' on which a realist politics might be founded.

Here, Geuss might indeed agree that questions of legitimacy need to be rooted within this process, and this point is not lost on most Venezuelans actively involved in either supporting or opposing the Chávez government. To critique authoritarianism or insufficient separation of powers within the Venezuelan state requires that we grapple with the contending visions of democracy – representative versus direct – that the two sides embrace. Opposing friendly relations with unpleasant regimes abroad, similarly, entails concrete political consequences: a renunciation of efforts to foster Third World anti-imperial solidarity in general and serious economic implications more concretely (especially with regard to Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries). We can ultimately oppose these policies, but only *after* judging them in the context of the political process underway, and we can judge the process itself

only through an assessment of the very different political projects Chavistas and anti-Chavistas aspire to build. Unless we can engage in debates according to these parameters, taking seriously the concrete implications of political positions, we should refrain entirely, and I do not think that Geuss would balk at my invocation of Mao's (1930) dictum: 'No investigation, no right to speak'.

Second, however, it remains to assess the nature of this process, and here differences *vis-à-vis* Geuss threaten to deepen. The division that has exploded into Venezuelan society of late – between 'the oligarchy' and 'the people', anti-Chavistas and Chavistas – is not wholly reducible to this weighing of opposing political projects. Rather than merely the emergence of a latent dispute, the origin of the Venezuelan process lies in the sort of non-Being diagnosed by Fanon as characteristic of colonial reality and further formulated by Dussel as exteriority. Division emerged seemingly *ex nihilo* in 1989 precisely because an entire sector of Venezuelan society had been for so long condemned to a condition of non-existence and prevailing harmony was premised on their invisibility. Where the false universal of equality under an ostensibly post-colonial situation had prevented this division from becoming manifest, the process that has now been unleashed is one which, in Fanonian–Dusselian terms, 'allow[s] for the appearance – the full entrance into being – of the oppressed and excluded *pueblo* in Venezuelan social life' (Ciccariello-Maher, 2010).

Third, taking seriously the political process underway in Venezuela means also taking seriously its Manichean dynamic, which as with Fanon is both apparently absolute and dialectically transformative when reappropriated by the colonized. There might be grounds for worry, then, when Geuss associates good/evil dichotomies with the very same 'ethics-first' moralism he seeks to unseat (Geuss, 2008, p. 39). Such 'dichotomous categories … with nothing in between', he writes, have 'little to tell us about real politics' (p. 101). From a decolonial perspective, however, we have seen that the task is a fundamentally different and arguably more difficult one that begs the question: what if these 'dichotomous categories' provide the very basis for the reality we inhabit? Furthermore, what is to be done if even this dichotomy – by operating on the ontological level of dividing Being from non-Being, and thereby legible from illegible – is concealed by the structures we are seeking to diagnose? In such a situation, to reject dichotomous thinking as overly ethical is to neglect the capacity of dialectical oppositions to unravel themselves in a way that transforms reality, and ironically itself smacks of an 'ethics-first' approach. As in the case of Fanon, nothing is more constitutive of contemporary Venezuelan 'reality' than this Manicheism, and more often than not, a resort to an ethics-first position serves to moralistically reject such oppositions rather than taking their dynamic seriously. The resulting counter-violence of the colonized – which I should insist, rarely takes the form of concrete violence – is neither ethical nor *un*ethical: it is forcibly extra- and even anti-ethical by virtue of the structured situation within which it emerges.

Toward a Decolonial Realism

To return to where I ostensibly began, Fanonian philosopher Gordon repeatedly revisits the question that lies as unspoken subtext of both anti-Black racism and existential responses to it: 'Why do they [Black people] go on?' (1996, p. 5). While the incredulity built into this question is revealing, Fanon provides one answer to this quandary, doing so in a way that is both characteristically blunt and reveals the limitations of prevailing realism: 'to fight is the only solution' (2008, p. 199). For some, reality is not something one must deign to recognize, and acting is not something to be justified beforehand. One must simply go on, move forward and make decisions one way or another in full cognizance of the possible consequences. While rightly shifting political thought from the study of beliefs or ideals to the 'study of actions', Geussian realism remains precisely a study *of* actions, eliding the question of study *by* actors (Geuss, 2008, p. 11). Put differently, if Geuss rejects the mere application of an external ethic *to* politics, he still speaks as though it is an external actor who will formulate a properly political ethics. However, in so doing, some of the power of his own realism is lost.

With decolonial realism, we confront something far more precise than a multiplicity of historical–contextual differences: a systematically imposed structure of dominance manifested in a hegemonic conception of 'the real'. The 'postcolonial' world is not one characterized simply by arbitrary cultural difference, but a very precise pattern of imposed ontological difference. Geuss' historical relativism might at first glance echo Fanon's description of the confrontation between colonized and colonizer, but the critique that Fanon puts forth on the basis of that description is even more powerful than that of Geuss: not only is ethics insufficient, but it also constitutes an *active* barrier to the dialectical recomposition of the universal it ostensibly upholds. In thinking this process of (ana-)dialectical rupture and recomposition, both Fanon and Dussel set out from the already-acting victims of this concrete historical structure in an effort to then construct political principles alongside, but not before, the action of those already engaged in resistance. Thus, whereas on the one hand, decolonial thought puts a sharper point on Geuss' realist impetus, on the other hand and in the same gesture it also reveals some drawbacks of his approach.

The challenge that this emerging decolonial canon poses to contemporary realism is twofold, simultaneously methodological and concretely political: decolonial realism entails a dialectical view of reality as a complex in motion, to be both grappled with and transformed, but it also – in insisting on the blindness of Hegelian dialectics to the realm of non-Being/exteriority – transforms that dialectic in the process of offering concrete indications of where to look for division, motion and transformation. For decolonial realism, inversely, the existence of this intolerable apartheid at the foundation of reality means that its transformation is all the more radical, the oppositions it entails all the more ruthless. The goal is to shake the world

in a fundamental way, to tear down the barriers dividing Being from its opposite, a transformation of reality that Fanon even goes so far as to deem 'the end of the world, by Jove', and which he follows his mentor Aimé Césaire in considering 'the only thing in the world worth starting' (Fanon, 2008, pp. 193, 76). As a result, Mantena might be arguably correct in her recent assessment of Gandhi as a realist of sorts, but this realism – from a Fanonian–Dusselian perspective – falls short as a *decolonial* realism. For Mantena, Gandhi was far from the uncritical idealist many assume, and was instead committed to non-violent action not for moral reasons, but as a practical constraint on the negative implications of human action. She thus situates Gandhi within the tradition of 'moderating realism' so prevalent in European thinkers from Montesquieu to Burke (2012, p. 455). According to Mantena, 'for Gandhian realism the question of the given is less about marking a line between what can and cannot be changed than the necessary starting point for the work of politics' (2012, p. 468). Despite its ostensible modesty, however, this 'starting point', is determined not so much by the concrete specificity of the colonial situation, but rather by the 'inherent [read: universal] dangers' of political life and violence more specifically.

By failing to recognize the relegation of the colonized to the 'zone of nonbeing', in other words failing to grasp an essential function of colonization, by neglecting the profundity of the (ontological) division of colonial society and the condemnation to violence this entailed, Gandhi presumed a degree of reciprocity between colonizer and colonized and undertook action on this basis. The paradoxical result is that, while Gandhi certainly formulated a 'transformational realism' (p. 455), from a Fanonian–Dusselian perspective his approach simultaneously underestimated and exaggerated that transformative potential: on the level of subjective action, Gandhi was overly self-limiting in the means available to the *colonized*, but ironically more optimistic on a broader level about the ability of the colonized – despite this limitation – to force the hand of the *colonizer* and dictate the terms of struggle (Mantena, 2012, p. 468).[17] In this sense, Fanon with Dussel would see Gandhi as idealist in his neglect of colonial 'reality' in its specificity – in the absence of reciprocity it entails – but would make such an assessment from within not only the realm of political action (as Geuss and other realists insist that we must), but also the process of decolonization itself, which seeks to replace that reality with another one entirely.

What does this mean for how we think politics comparatively? What are the stakes for the burgeoning field that has come to be known as 'comparative political theory'? First, that a call for realism in comparative theorizing is in order, which in part coincides with the more general contextualist impetus: we cannot compare what we do not grasp, and we cannot grasp thought divorced from the conditions of its genesis. Second, however, this context and these conditions are important not merely because they provide the basis for competing realities (as for Geuss), but because the historical structure of reality is one premised on their distinction. When we compare, as we often do, texts from thinkers writing from across what Mignolo (2002) has called 'the colonial difference', we must be aware of the ways in which, rather than

merely drawing together a conversation, our task is instead to draw back the curtain to reveal the historical-structural absence of reciprocity and recognition that made this a non-conversation in the first place. As political theory expands its horizons, taking seriously both non-Western thought in its own right and the imperative to engage in comparative political theorizing, these questions become increasingly urgent.

Notes

1 I drop the optimistically conclusive 'post-' for the more dynamic 'de-' for a reason. The newly burgeoning field of decolonial studies surpasses both post-colonial thought (and indeed emerged as a Latin-American split from the perceived Eurocentrism of subaltern studies) and the study of decolonization concretely understood. Decolonial thought sets out from the understanding of colonization as a complex comprising not only the political and economic, but also questions of epistemology, gender, sexuality, race and the lasting legacies of colonization for each (what Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano pioneered under the concept of 'coloniality'). On coloniality, see Moraña *et al* (eds). (2008). On the critique of post-colonial studies, see Mignolo and Tlostanova (2007). For a taste of emerging decolonial theory, see the double issue of the journal *Transmodernity* dedicated to the subject (Issues 1.2 and 1.3), edited by Maldonado-Torres (2011, 2012).

2 Mantena (2012, p. 455) similarly distinguishes between 'transformational' and 'moderating' realisms.

3 An entire revisionist literature disputes this age-old equation of Machiavelli with the phenomenon we have come to call 'Machiavellianism'. Strauss famously characterized Machiavelli as a 'teacher of evil', and his nonchalance at beginning from this 'old-fashioned and simple opinion' speaks volumes about prevailing interpretations (1958, p. 9). Many have argued that Machiavelli's *virtù* was far more substantive than mere *Realpolitik* or the subordination of means to ends. Furthermore, scholars have consistently found in *The Discourses* a Machiavelli concerned with questions of class and popular democracy. For recent interventions in this direction, see the special section on Machiavelli in *Political Theory*, comprising essays by McCormick (2012) and Winter (2012).

4 Here, too, we must be careful. Machiavelli, for example, wrote of maintaining power as much as taking and transforming it. Furthermore, the far reaches of revolutionary thought also run the risk of losing contact with 'reality' in an abstract Jacobinism that views society as a *tabula rasa* to be shaped by revolutionaries. Thus, Edmund Burke, very much a realist, assailed the abstraction of the Rights of Man in the French Revolution, a critique taken up by both moderates (for example, Alexis de Tocqueville's *The Old Regime and the Revolution*) and revolutionaries (for example, Georges Sorel's *Reflections on Violence*).

5 See the recent debate in the *European Journal of Political Theory* on the subject (North, 2010).

6 The classic account is Arendt (1969), although she insisted that there was something quite unrealistic about Fanon's optimism with regard to violence. In the same year, Tucker (1978) submitted his thesis comparing Fanon and Machiavelli, but did so precisely through a rejection of the Machiavelli of caricature. In a later publication, he would argue that, like Fanon, 'Machiavelli deals compellingly with what *is* while not rejecting what ultimately ought to be' (p. 397).

7 In different ways, see Gates (1999), Posnock (1997) and Gilroy (2002). Here Fanon's relation to 'realism' overlaps with the question of the reality of race. For a critical survey of the race question in Fanon, see Cusick (2007).

8 In different ways, see Bhabha's 1986 foreword to the British edition of *Black Skin* (1999) and Robinson (1993). Even many of the more nuanced approaches to Fanon's thought neglect the precise temporality of action in the present, suggesting, for example, that the time for identity has passed. For a critique of

this distinction, and the way that it overlaps with post-structural and (determinist) dialectical readings, see Alessandrini (2009).

9 For a similar formulation of the Fanonian critique of Hegel in the context of the murder of Trayvon Martin, see my 'The Dialectics of Standing One's Ground' (2012).

10 Despite having systematically plumbed the ethical dimension of Fanon's thought, Maldonado-Torres (2008) is clear about this. At a recent round table discussion commemorating the 50th anniversary of Fanon's death and the publication of *The Wretched of the Earth*, he puts the ethical–political relation in Fanon as follows: 'there is a decolonial ethics in Fanon's response to this [colonial] context, but this ethics is also a politics, because the ethics that leads this subject to have a relation, to make herself or himself available to the other slave, to join in the struggle of liberation, at the end it is a struggle of liberation that they are after' (Ciccariello-Maher *et al*, 2013).

11 I have argued elsewhere (2010) that the importance of this violence lies mostly in its 'symbolic' function of re-establishing the Being of the colonized.

12 The three-volume *Politics* is still in the final stages, but a short handbook version was translated as *Twenty Theses on Politics* (2008). Dussel's (2013) massive *Ethics* is forthcoming in English .

13 For a substantive discussion of Dussel and Levinas alongside Fanon, see Maldonado-Torres (2008).

14 Not coincidentally, Dussel, like Fanon frames, the division between Being and non-Being as one that renders Hegel's master-slave dialectic 'no longer possible' (p. 51).

15 For a similar critique, see Bernasconi (1997). Barber frames this as 'overcoming Levinas', but is at pains to emphasize that this overcoming involves the dialectical preservation of much of Levinas's contribution (1998, pp. 50–51). Bell (2006, p. 112) has argued that whereas 'Levinas does not politicize his concept of the other', Dussel does. Slabodsky (2010) has sought to use Dussel toward reconsidering this critique of Levinas's Eurocentrism.

16 While his own decision to cut the Gordian knot of metaphysics by mapping alterity onto global geopolitics can be critiqued, this it is not for the same reasons (see Maldonado-Torres, 2008). Kohn and McBride (2011, p. 133), for example, diagnose Dussel's slippage between abstract metaphysics and concrete particularity and between a multiplicity of overlapping systems and subject positions and singular references to a single system.

17 I am grateful to Corey Robin for drawing my attention to this second aspect.

References

Alcoff, L.M. and Mendieta, E. (eds.) (2000) Introduction. In: *Thinking from the Underside of History*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Alessandrini, A. (2009) The humanism effect: Fanon, foucault, and ethics without subjects. *Foucault Studies* 7(September): 64–80.

Arendt, H. (1969) Reflections on violence. *New York Review of Books* 12(4).

Barber, M. (1998) *Ethical Hermeneutics: Rationality in Enrique Dussel's Philosophy of Liberation*. New York: Fordham University Press.

Bell, S. (2006) Levinas and Alterity Politics. In: A. Horowitz and G. Horowitz (eds.) *Difficult Justice*. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press.

Bernasconi, R. (1997) African philosophy's challenge to continental philosophy. In: E. Eze (ed.) *Postcolonial African Philosophy*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Bhabha, H. (1999) Remembering Fanon: Self, psyche, and the colonial condition. In: N. Gibson (ed.) *Rethinking Fanon*. Amherst, NY: Humanity Books.

Ciccariello-Maher, G. (2010) Jumpstarting the decolonial engine: Symbolic violence from Fanon to Chávez. *Theory & Event* 13(1).

Ciccariello-Maher, G. (2012) The dialectics of standing one's ground. *Theory & Event* 15(3).
Ciccariello-Maher, G. (2013) *We Created Chávez: A People's History of the Venezuelan Revolution*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
Ciccariello-Maher, G., Gordon, L.R. and Maldonado-Torres, N. (2013) Frantz Fanon, 50 years on: A memorial roundtable. *Radical Philosophy Review* 16(1).
Cusick, C. (2007) Fanon's black skin, white masks on race consciousness. *AmeriQuests* 4(1).
Dussel, E. (1974) *Método para una filosofía de la liberación*. Salamanca, Spain: Ediciones Sígueme.
Dussel, E. (1975) *Para una fundamentación filosófica de la liberación Latinoamericana*. Buenos Aires, Argentina: Editorial Bonum.
Dussel, E. (1985) *Philosophy of Liberation*. Translated by A. Martinez and C. Morkovsky. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock.
Dussel, E. (2008) *Twenty Theses on Politics*. Translated by G. Ciccariello-Maher. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
Dussel, E. (2013) *Ethics of Liberation*. In: A.A. Vallega (ed.). Translated by E. Mendieta, C. Pérez Bustillo, Y. Angulo and N. Maldonado-Torres. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
Fanon, F. (2004) *The Wretched of the Earth*. Translated by R. Philcox. New York: Grove Press.
Fanon, F. (2008) *Black Skin, White Masks*. Translated by R. Philcox. New York: Grove Press.
Gates, H. L. (1999) Critical Fanonism. In: N. Gibson (ed.) *Rethinking Fanon*. Amherst, NY: Humanity Books.
Geuss, R. (2008) *Philosophy and Real Politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
Gilroy, P. (2002) *Against Race*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Gordon, L.R. (ed.) (1996) *Existence in Black*. London: Routledge.
Gordon, L.R. (2000) *Existentia Africana*. London: Routledge.
Gordon, L.R. (2007) Through the hellish zone of nonbeing. *Human Architecture* 5(Summer): 5–11.
Kohn, M. and McBride, K. (2011) *Political Theories of Decolonization*. New York: Oxford University Press.
Levinas, E. (1991) *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*. The Hague, the Netherlands: Kluwer.
Maldonado-Torres, N. (2008) *Against War: Views from the Underside of Modernity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
Maldonado-Torres, N. (ed.) (2011) Thinking through the decolonial turn. *Transmodernity* 1(2).
Maldonado-Torres, N. (ed.) (2012) Decoloniality at large. *Transmodernity* 1(3).
Mantena, K. (2012) Another realism: The politics of Gandhian nonviolence. *American Political Science Review* 106(2): 455–470.
Mao, T.-T. (1930) Oppose Book Worship (May). Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1966.
Mariátegui, J.C. (1974) *Seven Interpretive Essays on Peruvian Reality*. Translated by M.Urquidi. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
Marx, K. (1843) A contribution to the critique of Hegel's philosophy of right. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/intro.htm, accessed 15 August 2012.
McCormick, J. (2012) Subdue the senate: Machiavelli's 'way of freedom' or path to Tyranny? *Political Theory* 40(6): 714–735.
Mignolo, W.D. (2002) The geopolitics of knowledge and the colonial difference. *South Atlantic Quarterly* 101(1): 57–96.
Mignolo, W. and Tlostanova, M. (2007) The logic of coloniality and the limits of postcoloniality. In: J. Hawley and R. Krishnaswamy (eds.) *The Postcolonial and the Global*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
Moraña, M., Dussel, E. and Jáuregui, C. (eds.) (2008) *Coloniality at Large*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
North, R. (ed.) (2010) Political realism. *European Journal of Political Theory* 9(4).
Posnock, R. (1997) How it feels to be a problem. *Critical Inquiry* 23(2): 323–349.
Robinson, C. (1993) The appropriation of Frantz Fanon. *Race & Class* 35(1): 79–91.

Slabodsky, S. (2010) Emmanuel Levinas's geopolitics: Overlooked conversations between rabbinical and third world decolonialisms. *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 18(2): 147–165.

Strauss, L. (1958) *Thoughts on Machiavelli*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Tucker, G. (1978) Machiavelli and Fanon: Ethics, violence, and action. *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 16(3): 397–415.

Winter, Y. (2012) Plebeian politics: Machiavelli and the ciompi uprising. *Political Theory* 40(6): 736–766.

Williams, B. (2005) *In the Beginning Was the Deed*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.