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# **A Fanonian Critique of Lebow's *A Cultural Theory of International Relations***

Robbie Shilliam

Ned Lebow's new project is not so much a cultural theory of international relations as an affective praxis of modernity. Lebow seeks to elucidate the psychical drivers of intersubjective identity formation that dynamically constitute status hierarchies in societies. And through this understanding Lebow holds that present-day possibilities of structural transformations in international relations might be clearly guided by practical reason. In what follows I mount a sympathetic critique of Lebow's affective praxis based upon its effective circumscription of psychical life to elite European men. Lebow pays hardly any attention to the psychic drivers of colonisation and decolonisation as felt by the colonised. Using the work of Frantz Fanon, I shall suggest that shifting the focus to the colonial and post-colonial world brings to light a set of considerations on the psychic sources of affect in modernity that remain obfuscated when the European elite man is conflated as the modern subject.

Keywords: colonialism, culture, Fanon

## **Introduction: Lebow's Affective Praxis**

Ned Lebow's new book is an incredibly rich theoretical and historical treatise on the cultural motivations for war- and peace-making in international relations. Given the numerous tantalising and challenging threads of Lebow's argument, I wish to concentrate on one that I believe does a great service to IR theory: the focus on *affect* as a crucial dimension of the cultures of modern international relations.<sup>1</sup> Lebow challenges

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My thanks to the editors for inviting me to contribute to this valuable forum. Thanks also to Robert Deuchars for discussions on phenomenology.

1. Richard Ned Lebow, *A Cultural Theory of International Relations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 514–15. Lebow is not alone in this endeavour. For recent contributions see Earl Gammon, 'Affect and the Rise of the Self-Regulating Market', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 37, no. 2 (December 2008): 251–78; Roland Bleiker and Emma Hutchison, 'Fear No More: Emotions and World Politics', *Review of International Studies* 34, no. 5 (2008): 115–135.

the predominant assumption to be found in much IR theory that rational interest drives preference formations. And while he aligns himself broadly within the constructivist camp, he differs from the usual constructivist approach: instead of interrogating identity formation in terms of disembodied representational structures, Lebow focuses upon the psyche of the agent.<sup>2</sup> His claim is that affect, that is to say the psychical *feeling* of social structures and interrelations, determines political action.

Lebow draws from classical Greek thought two prime psychical drives – the appetite and the spirit – along with a powerful emotion – fear – as well as the motives of practical reason. Lebow argues that the various orderings of these drives, emotions and motives within individual psyches give rise to ‘dynamic status hierarchies’ in society that bring to the fore one of these psychical elements. Lebow further argues that studying the establishment, dissolution and transformation of these various hierarchies can provide a cultural theory of change in the structures of international relations.<sup>3</sup> Lebow notes that liberal and Marxist thought focuses purely upon the appetite as the drive for material satiation,<sup>4</sup> while realist thought tends to naturalise the quest for survival that arises when the psyche is gripped by the emotion of fear.<sup>5</sup> What has yet to be satisfactorily investigated, claims Lebow, is the *spirit*, which has the goal of achieving honour and standing in society.<sup>6</sup> The drive of the spirit is to acquire and protect self-esteem amongst peers through the admiration of – and attempt to emulate – certain skills and deeds.<sup>7</sup>

Lebow claims that the drive of the spirit has been eclipsed by concern for appetite and fear in modern social and political thought. This is to be expected, he argues, because modernity places value primarily upon the common individual and the uniqueness and autonomy of each inner life such that the classic notion of virtue (associated with the public display of honourable skills and deeds) disappears from social-scientific enquiry. Understood as an atomised and discrete entity, the modern psyche is presumed to be driven solely by instrumental reason in order to pursue the satiation of individual appetite.<sup>8</sup> It seems to me that a core purpose of Lebow’s book is to show that the spirit did *not* disappear from the human condition with modernisation; rather, the fundamental psychic drive for honour and standing has continued in different cultural forms that still require the satiation of these drives in social settings, and not solely within the inner life of the psyche.<sup>9</sup> Lebow argues that modern cultural forms cause the spirit to be pursued vicariously

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2. Lebow, *A Cultural Theory of International Relations*, 6, 114.

3. *Ibid.*, 26–8.

4. *Ibid.*, 15.

5. *Ibid.*, 89–90.

6. Lebow does not use the term in the Hegelian sense.

7. *Ibid.*, 15, 64–5.

8. On these points see *ibid.*, 14, 61, 314–15.

9. *Ibid.*, 64.

through *national* honour and standing.<sup>10</sup> Thus he is at pains to show that while the irreducible starting point of his cultural theory of international relations is the individual psyche,<sup>11</sup> this psyche cannot be treated as a reified entity but instead is the affective source of intersubjective identity formation that underpins the cultural status hierarchies of (modern) societies.

To draw out these dynamic psychical interconnections Lebow deploys Max Weber's method of constructing ideal types of social rule. Ideal types have no real existence but can be used as a refractive lens upon historical narratives in order to illuminate and clarify the *specific* political and ethical challenges that frame contemporary cultural life. Lebow's historical narrative seeks to illuminate how the spirit remains a constant motivating force in the creation, dissolution and transformation of dynamic status hierarchies *across* the classical, medieval and modern worlds. Through this ideal-typical narrative, Lebow challenges IR theory to recognise that it has fallen prey to the modern presumption that the disenchantment of the world dissolves the spirit. His narratives of the world wars of the 20th century and the recent US intervention in Iraq seek to re-centre the spirit as a causal affective force in the making of war and peace.

Moreover, although Lebow does not wish to present a world history with a telos,<sup>12</sup> his Weberian narrative is explicitly prescriptive insofar as it seeks to elucidate the satiation of spirit – especially in its vicarious articulation as nationalism – as a prime causal factor of modern wars. Crucial to this narrative is Lebow's identification of anger as the emotion that primarily drives the spirit, especially when self-esteem has been slighted.<sup>13</sup> In counterbalance, Lebow paints the ideal type of a practical reason-based world wherein actors are educated into understanding that the pure pursuit of spirit (and appetite) ultimately leads to the dissolution of the present *nomos*.<sup>14</sup> The reason-based world will never be mirrored in reality. Nevertheless, the image acts as a regulative fiction to convince actors of the virtues of restraining their psychic drives so that the stark warrior-based status hierarchy of inter-state relations might be tempered by an emulation of the ideal-typical reason-based world of domestic status hierarchies made possible by democratic culture.<sup>15</sup>

We might therefore summarise Lebow's project not so much as a cultural theory of international relations but more as an *affective praxis of modernity*. In other words, Lebow seeks to elucidate the psychical drivers of intersubjective identity formation that dynamically constitute status hierarchies in societies. And through this understanding Lebow holds

10. Ibid., 62.

11. Hence his approval of social psychology as the one modern discipline that somewhat resurrects the Greek enquiry into the spirit. Ibid., 133.

12. Ibid., 103.

13. Ibid., 61, 69.

14. Ibid., 77–81.

15. This seems, to me, to be the message behind Chapter 10.

that present-day possibilities of structural transformation in international relations might be clearly guided by practical reason. Situating an argument that explains the agencies and structures of international relations through the affective energies of the psyche is a bold and productive endeavour that potentially pushes IR theory one step closer to relating to its rarefied field of enquiry 'as if humans mattered'.

It is towards this end that I would like to mount a sympathetic critique of Lebow's affective praxis based upon its circumscription of psychical life to elite European men. Lebow pays hardly any attention to the psychic drivers of colonisation and decolonisation as felt by the colonized, even though his narrative of the spirit in modernity hinges upon late 19th-century European imperialism. And although in Chapter 8 Lebow examines Japanese imperialism, he does so, again, at an elite level, and furthermore he does not dwell on the context in which Japanese elites had to legitimise their standing within a colonial-racialised world order that denied them a standard of civilisation.<sup>16</sup> In fine, Lebow's bearer of culture in general is *archetypically* a particular psychical subject, the European elite man.

In what follows, I move the geo-cultural locus of affective praxis into social worlds the beings of which have always intimately related to the imperial centres, but have nevertheless been systematically segregated from them in much historical and sociological thought. Using the work of Frantz Fanon, I shall suggest how this move into the colonial and post-colonial world brings to light a set of considerations on the psychic sources of affect in modernity that remain obfuscated when the European elite man is conflated as *the* modern subject. As a sympathetic critique, I shall, wherever possible, explicate Fanon's affective praxis using the terminology associated with Lebow's project; however, this strategy will also reveal the particularity – rather than universality – of the psyche of the European elite man as a bearer of modern culture.

## Colonial Modernity and the Culture of Human Being

Strictly speaking, Lebow seeks to explain the affective dimensions of elite culture rather than culture per se, and he justifies this circumscription of his project by reference to Aristotelian definitions:

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16. See, famously, Gerrit W. Gong, *The Standard of 'Civilization' in International Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 6; and on Japan and the Versailles Treaty see Paul Gordon Lauren, *Power and Prejudice: The Politics and Diplomacy of Racial Discrimination* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988), Ch. 3. It is interesting to return to an earlier work by Lebow, which investigates the social psychology of anti-Irish prejudice in 19th-century Britain through an imperialist lens. See Richard Ned Lebow, *White Britain and Black Ireland: The Influence of Stereotypes on Colonial Policy* (Philadelphia, PA: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1976). Lebow does investigate colonial imperialism as a power relation; the problem lies in the lens he uses to do so.

Anger is a luxury that can only be felt by those in a position to seek revenge. Slaves and subordinates cannot allow themselves to feel anger. It is also senseless to feel anger towards those who cannot become aware of our anger.<sup>17</sup>

It is not surprising that Lebow effectively denies subaltern agency considering that he relies upon a proponent of 'natural slavery' to delineate the scope of who can feel anger towards power. True, there are moments when the affections of the European masses break through into Lebow's account.<sup>18</sup> However, the psyches of the most subaltern – the non-European colonised masses – are made effectively invisible.<sup>19</sup>

The invisibility of the colonised has been challenged for as long as intellectuals have spoken of 'modernity'. One of the latest incarnations of this critique is the notion of 'colonial modernity'. But while a number of anthropological studies have shown how modern forms of governance developed in the colonies to be then exported back to the European metropolis, here I am concerned with a deeper understanding of the colonial inflection of modernity, the very making of the secular subject of 'human' and the humanist praxis that claims that this subject is the maker of all things, including its own destiny. This critique of humanism is especially vociferous in articulations of colonial modernity that focus upon the Americas and the problematic construction of the Occident as a driver of European thought on the modern condition.<sup>20</sup>

Briefly put, the critique holds that a particular group of humanity – elite European men – colonised the universalist category of 'human' with the effect that their privilege of being categorised as human necessitated a swathe of the world's population being categorised as proto-human and even subhuman. The human subject was first tentatively sketched out in the Spanish debates regarding the 'savage' Amerindians wherein the difficulty of assessing their humanity through purely Christian sources necessitated a resurrection of Aristotle's category of the natural slave. It should be noted that Aristotle did not deny that slaves had reason *per se*, but rather that they lacked the capacity for practical reason (*eudaimonia*)

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17. Lebow, *A Cultural Theory of International Relations*, 69.

18. *Ibid.*, 322–7.

19. Again, there are a few telling allusions to these masses, for example *ibid.*, 419.

20. For example, Enrique D. Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of 'the Other' and the Myth of Modernity* (New York: Continuum, 1995); Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); Anibal Quijano, 'Coloniality of Power and Eurocentrism in Latin America', *International Sociology* 15, no. 2 (June 2000): 215–32; Sylvia Wynter, 'Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, its Overrepresentation – An Argument', *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 257–337; Couze Venn, 'Occidentalism and its Discontents', in *New Ethnicities, Old Racisms?*, ed. P. Cohen (London: Zed Books, 1999), 37–62.

understood as deliberated virtuous action.<sup>21</sup> However, when slotted into a Christian framework of good/evil, Aristotle's category became imbued with a Manichean racism of human/non-human that it had not previously possessed. Come the era of Atlantic slavery, the human was sketched out in starkest opposition to the African slave, and, after abolition, became defined in broader terms primarily by the subhuman body of the primitive African and South Seas islander.

By this reasoning, the making of the human – the quintessential modern subject that is maker of all things *including* his own conditions of existence – proceeded by secularising Manichean categories of Christian good and evil into categories of human and less-than-human. While the epidermis was mobilised to provide racial visibility for taxonomies of humanness, it was the mental content of these racial beings that justified the construction of, to paraphrase Lebow, a global Manichean colonial status hierarchy. Specifically, the ability to rationalise the interests of oneself as an autonomous individual functioned as the scientific test for determining who should and should not be enfranchised as human. Those who could not or were disallowed this rationalisation by virtue of their social positioning – children, women, sexual 'deviants', peasants, slaves and primitives – were (at best) proto-humans, i.e. possessing a human potential that might or might not be realised, or, when interpolated as a racial being, *subhumans* possessing an inherited inability to think rationally.<sup>22</sup> In sum, the subject of colonial modernity, the human, was mapped onto a *particular body* – male, elite and especially European 'white' – the epidermis of which was then rendered transparent so that the socially situated experiences that accompanied this particular body could be made universal and hence representative of humanity.<sup>23</sup>

This understanding of modernity as a colonially inflected condition challenges Lebow's project to consider that an affective praxis of modernity should seek to shed light not only upon the relationship between interest and feeling (a relationship obfuscated by the 'disenchantment of culture' thesis) but also upon the relationship between the psyche and the racialised body, a relationship that is obfuscated by the necessity of making the particular body of the modern subject – the human – transparent. Lebow effectively reproduces this transparency when he uses an Aristotelian argument (or, better put, a neo-Aristotelian argument)

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21. See Malcolm Heath, 'Aristotle on Natural Slavery', *Phronesis: A Journal for Ancient Philosophy* 53, no. 3 (2008): 243–70.

22. See, for example, Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 1; John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), 8.

23. See Ashley Doane, ed., *White out: The Continuing Significance of Racism* (New York: Routledge, 2003).



to circumscribe his investigation of the angered spirit and of pacifying reason primarily within the affections emanating out of a particular body, a non-colonised elite. Alternatively, in what follows I shall interpret Fanon's work as an attempt to cultivate an affective praxis of modernity sensitive to the racialised nature of the modern human subject.

Before turning to Fanon, I should note that he is by no means alone in considering that subjectivity, including even its modern interpolation, has a somatic dimension.<sup>24</sup> For example, this consideration prompted Marcel Mauss to develop his notion of habitus, a notion picked up by Pierre Bourdieu.<sup>25</sup> And the importance of the (self-)governance of the body in modernity was argued by Michel Foucault through his (now increasingly popular) notion of biopolitics.<sup>26</sup> These approaches speak to the governing of the subject through the regulation of the body. Feminist scholarship has, of course, been a key driver in these intellectual pursuits, and of special interest are the attempts by Judith Butler to draw attention to the non-discursive but intersubjective production of sex as implicated paradoxically in the discourse of gender.<sup>27</sup> Such work is also indebted to the phenomenological movement and its exploration of the co-constitutive relationship between the body, the mind and subjectivity.<sup>28</sup>

24. For an overview see Brenda Farnell and Charles R. Varela, 'The Second Somatic Revolution', *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 38, no. 3 (2008): 215–40.

25. Marcel Mauss, 'Body Techniques', in *Sociology and Psychology: Essays* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), 101; Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 87–9; see also Bryan S. Turner, *The Body and Society: Explorations in Social Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984).

26. Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–76*, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), Ch. 11. The colonial modernity position sketched out above shares much with current work that critically assesses the violence of categorization immanent to modern biopolitics. For an excellent statement on this position see Michael Dillon and Luis Lobo-Guerrero, 'The Biopolitical Imaginary of Species-being', *Theory, Culture and Society* 26, no. 1 (2009): 1–23. However, Foucault is decidedly *not* the first to expose the discourse of species life as the referent object of politics (*ibid.*, 8), nor is his telescopic notion of race entirely adequate for this purpose. Such assumptions effectively silence the immense vernacular and elite discursive contestations over the racialised human that accompanied hundreds of years of Atlantic slavery.

27. Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (New York: Routledge, 1993); see also Christine Delphy, 'Rethinking Sex and Gender', *Women's Studies International Forum* 16, no. 1 (1993): 1–9; Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

28. For a commentary see Monika Langer, *Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception: A Guide and Commentary* (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1989); but see especially Sue Rechter, 'The Originating Breaks Up: Merleau-Ponty, Ontology, and Culture', *Thesis Eleven* 90, no. 1 (August 2007): 27–43.



Fanon, a Martiniquan who studied clinical psychology in France after the Second World War, was, unsurprisingly, influenced by the phenomenological movement and especially by Sartre and Merleau-Ponty.<sup>29</sup> Yet Fanon was no derivative thinker of the French phenomenologists, but primarily an intellectual of the Francophone Caribbean tradition concerned with finding a meaningful sense of self in the face of (post-) colonial racism.<sup>30</sup> Below I interpret Fanon's work within its Francophile-Caribbean context, but I also follow the lead of a body of scholarly work that combines Fanon with other strands of somatic enquiry (some from the list immediately above) in order to mount broader investigations into the racially embodied nature of modern subjectivity.<sup>31</sup>

### Fanon's 'Sociogeny' of Colonial Modernity

'If there is a truly Fanonian emotion', claims Fanon's biographer, David Macey, 'it is anger. His anger was a response to his experience of a black man in a world defined as white.'<sup>32</sup> This affective response of the black man to colonial modernity, a response that Lebow effectively silences through his neo-Aristotelian delineation of affect, is diagnosed by Fanon in his famous book *Black Skin, White Masks*. The text speaks to the very specific post-colonial relation between Martinique as an overseas Department of France and the French metropolis.<sup>33</sup> Fanon's thinking on affect is rooted in a relationalism of the intensity of racialised bodies' feeling towards their immediate social context *and* their inter-societal/geo-cultural

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29. See, respectively, Sonia Kruks, 'Fanon, Sartre, and Identity Politics', in *Fanon: A Critical Reader*, ed. L.R. Gordon, T.D. Sharpley-Whiting and R.T. White (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 122–33; Gayle Salamon, "'The Place Where Life Hides Away': Merleau-Ponty, Fanon, and the Location of Bodily Being', *Differences* 17, no. 2 (2006): 96–112.

30. Lewis R. Gordon, *Existential Africa: Understanding African Existential Thought* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 9–10.

31. As such, I am inspired here by the following works: Sylvia Wynter, 'Towards the Sociogenic Principle: Fanon, Identity, the Puzzle of Conscious Experience, and What it is Like to Be "Black"', in *National Identities and Sociopolitical Changes in Latin America*, ed. Mercedes F. Durán-Cogan and Antonio Gómez-Moriana (New York: Routledge, 2001), 30–66; Derek Hook, "'Pre-Discursive" Racism', *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 16, no. 3 (2006): 207–32; Lewis R. Gordon, *Fanon and the Crisis of European Man: An Essay on Philosophy and the Human Sciences* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Salamon, 'The Place Where Life Hides Away'.

32. David Macey, *Frantz Fanon: A Biography* (New York: Picador USA, 2001), 28.

33. See Gary Wilder, 'Race, Reason, Impasse: Césaire, Fanon, and the Legacy of Emancipation', *Radical History Review* 90 (2004): 31–61.

context.<sup>34</sup> As I shall argue, this relationalism is a crucial analytical requisite for the widening and deepening of Lebow's affective praxis of modernity; it is also, as I shall conclude, the most challenging of intellectual and political pursuits, even for Fanon.

Fanon begins with a stark statement that echoes the above discussion on humanism and colonial modernity: 'the black is not a man', and where the 'man' should be there instead lies 'a zone of non-being'.<sup>35</sup> This non-being is tied up, for Fanon, in a dual and destructive narcissism wherein the white man and the black man are sealed in their own Manichean peculiarities – the former enslaved by his superiority, the later enslaved by his inferiority.<sup>36</sup> Fanon believes that these complexes, if primarily economically structured, are at the same time not just internalised within the disembodied psyche but also *epidermalised*.<sup>37</sup> The white is indicative of beauty and virtue; the black is the incarnation of a complete fusion with the world and, more importantly, an abandonment of the ego.<sup>38</sup> To become (human), the black man must actually try to become white.

We can therefore make the case that Fanon posits the epidermalisation of difference as the prime status hierarchy within French (post-)colonial culture.<sup>39</sup> The affective repercussions of this hierarchy were for Fanon tied into the 'basic importance' of language.<sup>40</sup> Specifically, the closer one is to the French language, that is to say, the more one speaks like a Parisian instead of in Martiniquan Creole 'dialect', the whiter – or perhaps more

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34. As Brian Massumi argues, one must be careful not to conflate emotion with affect. Similarly, in this article I use the concept of affect to indicate the non-linear continuum of feeling that ranges from the non-subjective non-discursive intensity of bodily reactions to the subjective articulation of this intensity in the immanently discursive form of emotions. See Brian Massumi, 'The Autonomy of Affect', in *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*, ed. P. Patton (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 217–39. I would argue that this conceptualisation exists already in Fanon's notion of 'sociogeny', as should hopefully become clear.

35. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto Press, 1986), 10. In what follows I use Fanon's gendered language intentionally because I shall turn to this as a problem in the conclusion.

36. *Ibid.*, 44–5, 60.

37. *Ibid.*, 13.

38. *Ibid.*, 45. In the text Fanon is critically alluding to Negritude's embrace of 'blackness'.

39. Both descriptors are required here because in Fanon's time some of France's old colonies (e.g. in the Caribbean islands) were now Departments, while others, especially Algeria, were still colonies.

40. *Ibid.*, 17.

human – one becomes.<sup>41</sup> Fanon notes that for the black man the act of speaking and of being heard as a human is essentially affective:

To speak pidgin to a Negro makes him angry, because he himself is a pidgin-nigger-talker. But, I will be told, there is no wish, no intention to anger him. I grant this; but it is just this absence of wish, this lack of interest, this indifference, this automatic manner of classifying him, imprisoning him, primitivizing him, decivilizing him, that makes him angry.<sup>42</sup>

Yet crucially for Fanon, the affective dimension of living as a black man in the French (post-)colonial status hierarchy is not encapsulated solely in discourse. Indeed, when he claims that the black man must try to become white, Fanon is not being carelessly metaphorical or literal, and neither is he simply claiming that the black man must adopt body techniques that emulate the habitus of the white man. The claim, instead, is also a genetic one that is in the first instance translated into sexual relations and, to use an old ugly phrase, the act of miscegenation. In Chapters 2 and 3 Fanon proceeds to chart how sexual/romantic relations between 'women of color' and white men, and 'men of color' and white women, are predicated upon and reproduce the psychological complexes associated with the epidermalisation of difference in the sense that both men and women of colour pursue these relations in order to become more existentially white, hence compounding their self-alienation. Contextualised thus, Fanon explains the anger arising from the Manichean and racialised status hierarchy of human/subhuman as an *embodied affect* rather than as a drive of the disembodied psyche.

The famous Chapter 5 of *Black Skin, White Masks* is badly translated into English with a Negritude inflection as 'the fact of blackness'; it is more accurately translated with a phenomenological inflection as 'the lived experience of the black man'.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, the text as a whole is effectively 'situated' within Fanon's lived experience as a Martiniquan studying in France. The chapter starts with a child staring at Fanon during a train journey in France and exclaiming to his mother, 'Look, a Negro!' Upon hearing this, Fanon's existing 'corporeal schema' crumbles, its place taken by a 'racial epidermal schema'.<sup>44</sup>

These phrases require some unpacking. Fanon is alluding to the phenomenological (and to some extent Lacanian)<sup>45</sup> notion of the body image that is designed to disturb the commonly made distinction between the body as a natural object and the mind as sole repository of subjectivity.

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41. Ibid., 18.

42. Ibid., 32.

43. Macey, *Frantz Fanon*, 26.

44. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 112.

45. See Hub Zwart, 'Medicine, Symbolization and the "Real" Body: Lacan's Understanding of Medical Science', *Medicine, Health Care and Philosophy* 1, no. 2 (May 1998): 107–17.

For Merleau-Ponty, the body is a project located and working in the juncture between the psychic and the physiological. This project produces self-images that extend the sense of the body far beyond its material objectivity (the famous example is the phantom limb).<sup>46</sup> In short, if the body is a project, then there can only be an *embodied* subjectivity.<sup>47</sup> And this implies that the subject is not only discursively but also at the same time *non-discursively* constructed.<sup>48</sup>

In Fanon's account, great importance is placed on how this body, as a project, is worked upon intersubjectively. The stare of the white child amplified by the exclamation of 'Negro!' divides Fanon's body image into a 'triple person': himself as a physical occupier of space, himself intersubjectively 'moving towards the other', and then, finding himself there as an object, the subhuman 'Negro'.<sup>49</sup> This object, however, wields great authority over his body image, which is given back to him 'sprawled out, distorted, recolored'. And Fanon feels a Sartrean nausea as his body is 'thingified'.<sup>50</sup> The puzzle is that although Fanon recognises himself as a Negro, he does not project a subhuman image of his body. *And yet*, the boy's objectification of his body as a subhuman Negro still affects Fanon intimately, non-discursively, in that it produces a feeling of nausea. How? To answer, we need to focus upon the fundamental social and inter-societal relationalism that Fanon ascribes to the psychical complexes arising out of colonial modernity.

Fanon remembers that a thousand different tales have been told in colonial and colonised societies of 'tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects, slave-ships, and above all else, above all, *Y a bon banania*'.<sup>51</sup> The English translation of the end of this passage is 'Sho' good eatin''; however, this is a crude Americanisation of a powerful French-colonial stereotype wherein a grinning Senegalese native soldier – Banania man – appears on the front of a popular breakfast cereal consumed daily by both Martiniquan and Parisian children.<sup>52</sup> In fine, in Martiniquan society others bear the load of being the archetypal African subhuman,

46. Langer, *Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception*, 39–40; see also Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 110–11.

47. See especially Salamon, 'The Place Where Life Hides Away', 98.

48. On non-discursive subjectivity see Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 7; Hook, "'Pre-Discursive" Racism'; and on the crucial importance of non- rather than pre-discursivity, when related to the figure of the 'primitive', see Celia Brickman, *Aboriginal Populations in the Mind: Race and Primitivity in Psychoanalysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 117–27, and Shannon Winnubst, 'Is the Mirror Racist? Interrogating the Space of Whiteness', *Philosophy Social Criticism* 30, no. 1 (January 2004): 25–50.

49. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 112; see also the insightful commentary in Wynter, 'Towards the Sociogenic Principle', 40–2.

50. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 112, 113.

51. *Ibid.*, 112.

52. On Fanon's own childhood see Macey, *Frantz Fanon*, 62.

such as the mythically ferocious native colonial troops (that can still grin disarmingly childishly on cereal boxes), the *Tirailleurs Senegalais*. Nevertheless, all these colonial narratives, symbols and images are imbued into the post-colonial subjects of the French Republic from an extremely young age such that they cast for the Martiniquan Negro a shadow of the subhuman behind their body image.

With these points Fanon argues that while both white and black are caught in the narcissism of epidermal difference, the white man can protectively withdraw his ego from the world because his body's epidermal layer is transparently human.<sup>53</sup> Not so for the black man to whom this narcissism is of a directly *comparative* nature between a human and *white* body and a subhuman *black* body, along with their attendant geo-spatial signifiers. Thus Antillean society, notes Fanon, 'is a neurotic society, a society of "comparison"'.<sup>54</sup> The Martiniquan in Martinique has somewhat of a defence against this relentless neurotic comparison in that he can consider himself both a *Negro* and a *Frenchman*. However, in his train encounter in the (post-)colonial metropolis, Fanon finds that he now takes the place of the Senegalese, and the subhuman Negro no longer shadows him but possesses him. Hence, for Fanon, the black man's body image is caught within a social comparison – e.g. the shadow subhuman made flesh by the boy's stare. Fanon's encounter produces shame of his resulting self-contempt, anger and indignation, all of which take the form of a particular kind of affective disorder that plagues he who cannot withdraw his ego back into his own body project: an *affective erethism*, meaning an excessive sensibility to stimuli.<sup>55</sup>

It is instructive at this point to compare Fanon's approach to the cultural character of affect with that of Lebow. For Lebow, the psyche is his 'irreducible' starting point of investigation into subjectivity, even if there are feedback loops between it and the cultural world(s) it inhabits and helps to construct.<sup>56</sup> However, Fanon rules out an investigation of affective drives that methodologically (and perhaps ontologically) starts with the individual psyche. Fanon, instead, claims that the ontology of embodied subjectivity is necessarily relational, i.e. constructed as an epidermalisation of difference that governs the global colonial status hierarchy. In short, for Fanon, it is the phenomenology of the colonial relation that must be the irreducible starting point of investigation and not the individual psyche. This claim of relationality forms the foundation of Fanon's affective praxis, which he describes as a 'sociogenic' approach.<sup>57</sup>

53. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 51.

54. *Ibid.*, 213.

55. *Ibid.*, 60.

56. Lebow, *A Cultural Theory of International Relations*, 114.

57. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 13. See also Wynter, 'Towards the Sociogenic Principle', 46.

Fanon elucidates the specificity of this sociogenic approach by critiquing psychoanalysis. For Fanon, the narcissism of epidermal difference arises from the particularities of the relationship between colony and metropolis, rather than the relationship between child and father.<sup>58</sup> He drives the point home with a critique of the psychoanalytical explanation of the dependent relationship between the colonised and the coloniser proffered by his contemporary Octave Mannoni, who places the root of this relationship in the almost natural propensity for the psyche of peoples indigenous to colonised territories to develop Adlerian inferiority complexes.<sup>59</sup> Fanon argues that these complexes do not antedate but are the product of the colonial relation: 'The rifle of the Senegalese soldier is not a penis but a genuine rifle, model Lebel 1916.'<sup>60</sup> For these reasons Fanon explicitly avoids arguments based upon nature (phylogeny) and nurture (ontogeny) because understanding the formation of the psyche in either of these terms is a luxury that only subjects embodied in modernity as transparently human can enjoy.

In sum, then, Fanon's affective praxis is a *sociogeny* that explicates the global status hierarchy associated with colonial modernity in terms of a project that epidermally embodies subjects in fundamentally relational terms as human in distinction to subhuman objects, an embodiment that produces different but relational affective behaviour. Having laid out the analytics of Fanon's affective praxis, and having suggested how they differ from those of Lebow, I now move on to explore the prescriptions for dynamic cultural change suggested by Fanon's analytics and how they might differ from those suggested by Lebow.

## Anti-Colonial Violence and the New Human

There exists a tendency to separate the 'post-colonial' tenor of *Black Skin, White Masks* from the texts on Algeria that seem to portray a naïve 'third worldism'. However, I contend that the sociogenic approach arising out of *Black Skin, White Masks* provides the basis for Fanon's later practising of clinical psychology in Algeria, including his prescriptions for the construction of a 'new human' through violent means. However, it would be unfair not to note Fanon's qualification of the universality of his sociogenic approach developed in *Black Skin, White Masks*. Fanon situates his project as a 'quest for disalienation by a doctor of medicine born in Guadeloupe', and this quest is of 'an almost intellectual character' insofar as it is

58. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 141–5. While the metropolis might function symbolically as a father figure, Fanon is not making this critique simply at the level of symbolism.

59. *Ibid.*, Ch. 4.

60. *Ibid.*, 106.

European *culture* that is the means of alienation for the Martiniquan intellectual. Alternatively, for 'the Negro-laborer building the port facilities in Abidjan', this alienation is directly exploitative; therefore, for them there is 'only one solution: to fight'. Yet in the end Fanon is convinced 'that without even knowing it [the Abidjan Negro-laborers] share my views, accustomed as they are to speaking and thinking in terms of the present'.<sup>61</sup> Ultimately, Fanon believes that his affective praxis is applicable for post-colonial Martiniquan intellectuals and colonised Algerian masses, and I shall return to this assumption in the conclusion.

Fanon describes the colonial status hierarchy in Algeria in familiar terms as a Manichean relation between the subhuman colonised native and the human European coloniser. Nevertheless, in the colonial situation Fanon claims that the colonised can only become human in a concrete struggle for political independence.<sup>62</sup> This is because the internal political economy of the colony is spatially divided between zones of humanity and subhumanity, and in the latter sphere the very ties of collective being that are necessary for existence are the cause of shame and destitution.<sup>63</sup> In short, colonialism is 'violence in its natural state'. Moreover, Fanon implies that the native, unlike the Martiniquan, has no pretence of being *also* 'French' and thus human. Hence the native possesses a revolutionary clarity of thought on the Manichean status hierarchy of colonialism: 'he knows he is not an animal; and it is precisely at the moment he realises his humanity that he begins to sharpen the weapons with which he will secure its victory'.<sup>64</sup>

It is important to contextualise Fanon's focused and qualified support for violence as a means of emancipation within his post-colonial sociogenic approach. Fanon's initial and primary interface with colonial Algerian society was as a practising clinical psychiatrist, and he makes the same criticism of the 'Algerian type' prevalent among French doctors that he had previously made of Mannoni's 'primitive type'. The psychological disorders of the native do not arise from the inherited ethnic make up of dwellers of the Maghreb but are produced in the colonial occupation of the area.<sup>65</sup> Fanon even recognises the colonial variant of 'affective erethism' in his Algerian clinic: his native clients would suffer from a

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61. *Ibid.*, 223–4.

62. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1965), 36.

63. *Ibid.*, 38–9. On these points see also Ann V. Murphy, 'Violence and the Denigration of Community: Between Transcendental and Revolutionary Violence in Fanon', *Philosophy Today* 47 (2003): 159; Stefan Kipfer, 'Fanon and Space: Colonization, Urbanization, and Liberation from the Colonial to the Global City', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 25, no. 4 (2007): 701–26.

64. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 43.

65. See Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), Ch. 4.



muscular contraction, the sociogenic explanation of which Fanon attributes to a death reflex in the face of colonial authority.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, for Fanon, freedom from the colonial complex is a project that requires violent means to break the Manichean segregation of human/subhuman so that the colonised actually *re-embody* themselves as human beings.

Take, for example, Fanon's famous chapter in *A Dying Colonialism*, translated as 'Algeria Unveiled' (as if the colonised was an object) but more accurately translated as 'Algeria Unveils Herself',<sup>67</sup> a phrase that speaks to the project of re-embodying the colonised, by the colonised, as human beings. Fanon claims that the colonists perceive the Algerian woman to be a dehumanised object so long as they are under the domination of Algerian men. Yet if the colonists wish to win over the native woman for the colonial cause by 'Europeanising' them, this desire is nevertheless driven by a sexual need to possess the exotic. Everywhere she is treated as an object. But when tactics require the resistance to use the Algerian woman to carry weapons and documents through enemy lines she must unveil herself so as to pass through colonist enclaves as a 'European' (or as 'Europeanised'). This undertaking has transformative effects that exceed the expectations of both colonised and coloniser:

She has the anxious feeling that something is unfinished, and along with this a frightful sensation of disintegrating ... She must overcome all timidity, all awkwardness (for she must pass for a European), and at the same time be careful not to overdo it, not to attract notice to herself. The Algerian woman who walks stark naked into the European city relearns her body, re-establishes it in a totally revolutionary fashion.<sup>68</sup>

Thus, the purpose of violently destroying this humanism is to create a 'new humanity' wherein the global colonial status hierarchy disintegrates altogether.<sup>69</sup> By this reasoning Fanon claims that *one* pole of the Manichean structure of colonialism (the subhuman colonised pitted against the coloniser) can be transformative of the relationship as a whole, whereas the other pole (the coloniser defending his exceptional humanity against the native) has to reproduce the structure.<sup>70</sup> And because Fanon understands this to be a sociogenic transformation, the post-colonial human must be crafted both non-discursively through, for example, the act of violence and, at the same time and in relation to this, discursively through the formation of a national culture.

66. Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, 54–7; Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 291; see also his resignation comments, 'Letter to the Resident Minister 1956', in *Toward the African Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), 62–4.

67. Macey, *Frantz Fanon*, 402.

68. Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, 59.

69. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 246.

70. *Ibid.*, 93–4.

At this point it is interesting to recall Lebow's claim that the spirit, in modernity, expresses itself vicariously – and self-destructively – through affective ties to national identity. However, Fanon's affective praxis of *colonial* modernity provides a different analytical and prescriptive reading of national identity, which gives it – counter-intuitively – a relational ontology. The use of the 'nation' in Francophile Caribbean thought – and by Martiniquan intellectuals especially – is specifically directed towards the issue of post-colonial departmentalisation, that is to say, the granting of freedom to peoples in the absence of the cultivation of an emancipating form of social solidarity. Similarly, Fanon argues that colonialism only allows individual bodies to find social cohesion through the dehumanising proxy of the removed culture of the colonised. The building of a national culture is therefore a project of constructing social bonds that directly support and affirm the re-embodiment of the once 'native' subject as human. Fanon is clear: the dynamic cultivation of a national consciousness is *not* synonymous with parochial nationalism.<sup>71</sup>

For Fanon, this dynamic process is psychically driven by the native's affective erethism. And much of *The Wretched of the Earth* is taken up by a regulative ideal-typical narrative that charts the transformation of the release of the muscular tension of the colonised. In the colonial condition, the native finds release through feuds, tribal warfare, dance and possession. Accompanying this, the native claims a vicarious subjecthood through a belief in magic, a belief that substitutes the fates and the gods for the concrete colonial relations that impoverish him/her. When this release of tension is challenged into the anti-colonial struggle, the native then targets the substantive social structures of his impoverishment and alienation.<sup>72</sup> Nevertheless, Fanon also charts a number of dangers arising from this release of tension. On the one hand, if taken over by the colonial petty bourgeoisie, the intellectuals and administrative strata, an organisational fetish is introduced that might a) curtail the transformative element of the struggle such that it is personnel that change but not structures and b) constrain the development of national culture such that it lapses into a parochial neo-tribalism or regionalism.<sup>73</sup> On the other hand, if the native is not guided and educated by the intelligentsia, there is the danger that the violence of struggle will not transform the Manichean structure of colonialism, but simply reverse it.<sup>74</sup>

71. *Ibid.*, 247.

72. *Ibid.*, 54–9.

73. See especially the chapters 'Spontaneity: Its Strength and Weakness' and 'Pitfalls of National Consciousness' in Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*.

74. See, for example, Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 135–44, and Chapter 5 on Algeria's European minority in Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*. Here Fanon is at his closest to Marxism by arguing for the cultivation of a 'mass line'.

Therefore, for Fanon, post-colonial national culture must not be dependent upon any status hierarchy that breeds the narcissism of epidermal difference either in terms of parochialism or in terms of being defined solely in opposition to other bodies. Instead, the post-colonial subject must pursue a novel body project that constructs a human image that requires no subhuman body against which humanity must be categorised. Indeed, in his prognosis of the Algerian Revolution Fanon echoes the sentiments of *Black Skin, White Masks*, wherein the treatment of the epidermalisation of difference must recognise, against the culture of colonial modernity, that the (white) human and (black) subhuman are co-constituted and that their fate is co-determined.<sup>75</sup>

The new relations are not the result of one barbarism replacing another barbarism, of one crushing of man replacing another crushing of man. What we Algerians want is to discover the man behind the coloniser; this man who is both the organiser and victim of a system that has choked him and reduced him to silence.<sup>76</sup>

Hence Fanon cautiously approves of violence as a necessary means for liberation because the supposedly ethically superior alternative – pacific humanism – is in fact the ideology of colonial-modern violence. Hence, also, Fanon's anger at Sartre's humanistic but paternalistic sympathetic critique of the Negritude project. Fanon argues that Sartre is sympathetic to Negritude only insofar as it is a racial negation of racism that will, in the end, itself be negated to produce a non-racist humanism that Sartre has *already* defined.<sup>77</sup> Fanon insists that Sartre is confusing an already existing experience derived from a particular embodied subject (the European elite man) for the telos of human development per se. Alternatively, for Fanon, a post-epidermal body image cannot be copied from existing images of the human but is, rather, a project to be created in the dynamics of the decolonising process. The new human is a creative project that knows no noumenal and pacific blueprint but must be pursued through the phenomenal cultivation of post-colonial national cultures that are relational – and hence universalistic – in their ethico-political outlook.

In sum, if we use Fanon's ideal-typical narrative of the cultivation of post-colonial national cultures to sketch out the global status hierarchy associated with colonial modernity, then we must judge any sign of its immanent transformation far more intimately and extensively than Lebow seems to do. For Lebow's ideal-typical narrative attributes dynamic shifts in the current international status hierarchy to a gradual eschewing of warrior codes and a growing affection by elite policy makers for the pacific values of democratic status hierarchies found within

75. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 10–12.

76. Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, 32.

77. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 129–38.

some already-existing national cultures. Alternatively, at the end of his last book, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon writes: 'For Europe, for ourselves, and for humanity, comrades, we must turn over a new leaf, we must work out new concepts, and try to set afoot a new man.'<sup>78</sup> Robert Bernasconi points out that the English translation of 'turn over a new leaf' is inaccurate: "Il faut faire peau neuve" ... literally calls for a new skin, as when a snake casts its slough.'<sup>79</sup> As the clarion call of Fanon's affective praxis the phrase is not merely metaphorical.

## Conclusion

With his new book Lebow radically challenges the assumption that feeling and doing are separate spheres of existence, and for this purpose he introduces the affective dimension of social behaviour into culturally sensitive theories of international relations. Lebow deserves much praise for helping to open up theoretical conduits in IR through which we might be better sensitised towards the all too human phenomena that we investigate. I have used the works of Fanon to sympathetically critique Lebow's effort and to argue that a re-narration of modernity through a colonial inflection deepens and broadens the challenge of constructing an affective praxis. By revealing the particularity of the lived experience of the supposedly universal modern subject, the human, I have suggested that Fanon challenges us to investigate not simply the affective relationship between the elite psyche and its cultural surroundings but, further, the irreducible ontological relationality of the psyches of the (post-)colonial masses to those of European elites as embodied within a global status hierarchy of epidermalised difference. Nevertheless, even Fanon fails to deliver an affective praxis adequate to address the ingrained exclusivist culture of colonial modernity. And, in conclusion, his failures are instructive for further work in IR on affective praxis.

It is remarkable that in *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon makes little effort to *even imagine* the lived experience of the black woman, infamously remarking instead: 'I know nothing about her.'<sup>80</sup> I would suggest that gaining no experiential knowledge of the women in *Black Skin, White Masks* subsequently leads Fanon to take an almost Satrean humanist understanding of the process whereby the Algerian woman unveils

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78. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 316.

79. Lewis R. Bernasconi, 'Casting the Slough: Fanon's New Humanism for a New Humanity', in *Fanon: A Critical Reader*, eds T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, Renée T. White and Lewis R. Gordon, 113.

80. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 179–80. See also Gwen Bergner, 'Who is That Masked Woman? Or, the Role of Gender in Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*', *PMLA* 110, no. 1 (January 1995): 75–88.

herself: i.e. she will come to be where we post-colonial men already know we will be standing. This causes Fanon to significantly misapprehend the sedimentation of women's subordination in colonial societies that, if loosened and disturbed in liberation struggles, often settled down again to form a gender substratum of new power relations in post-colonial societies.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, Fanon's application of his post-colonial Martiniquan sociogeny to the context of colonial Algeria obscures the differentiated nature of status hierarchies *within* the (post-)colonial world, where a) not all colonised people have considered themselves to be cultureless in the first place, and b) not all have actually imbibed the colonial relation in its purest Manichean structure of domination.<sup>82</sup> Distilling these critiques, we might say that Fanon, against his best intentions, cannot emancipate all colonial subjects with his affective praxis because he, too, at least partially substitutes a *particular* embodiment – dare it be said, the Martiniquan male intellectual? – for the universal post-colonial human becoming.

Although Lebow does not seek to prescribe anything as grand as a new humanism, he does carefully seek out, via his Weberian method, something similar to Fanon: a critical self-reflexivity on the conditions and possibilities of affective behaviour within a set of given cultural constraints. And yet Lebow claims with confidence:

My choice of cases reflects my knowledge of history and languages, but I do not doubt that my findings could be replicated in cases drawn from the international history of other parts of Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America.<sup>83</sup>

This claim curtails the vision and possibilities of his affective praxis, just as Sartre's did of Negritude and Fanon's did of the Algerian woman. I do not wish to indict Fanon or Lebow for failing to find a panoptical vista from which to authoritatively understand the modern condition. I am more concerned with promoting an orientation to theorising this condition that takes its task to be a journey of rediscovering the relationality of the situated self: the appreciation of one's starting geo-cultural context significantly influences the kind of knowledge produced along the journey; but extra to this, one's orientation to the practice of journeying into different but related societal and cultural contexts also significantly influences the kind of knowledge produced along the way. One should,

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81. See especially Aaronette M. White, 'All the Men Are Fighting for Freedom, All the Women Are Mourning Their Men, but Some of Us Carried Guns: A Raced-Gendered Analysis of Fanon's Psychological Perspectives on War', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 32, no. 4 (June 2007): 857–84.

82. See, for example, the complementary but different psychological investigations of Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (Delhi: OUP, 1983).

83. Lebow, *A Cultural Theory of International Relations*, 517–18.

in principle, expect to arrive not quite the same being that left. In short, a cultural theory of international relations should enculturate the reader into the international relationality of her/his own lived experience.

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