**Notes for Lecture on Imperialism, Marxism, Anti-Colonialism (2020).**

**Introduction**

This lecture is intended to provide an overview of an extremely vast array of topics, and of the relations among them. Each of the three terms included for the lecture on the course guide – imperialism, Marxism, anti-colonialism – could easily constitute the subject of a course in their own right, indeed, of a lifetime’s worth of study. The topic is thus truly immense. To render it somewhat more manageable, I will focus the bulk of my efforts here on the task of recovering a history and tradition which, in the words of Robert J.C. Young, has been, at least in Europe and North America, “wilfully effaced” (p.427): namely, the tradition of anti-colonial liberation theory and praxis. The exploration of the contours and content of this tradition will be organised so as to address two basic questions, in relation to a host of core readings included in the course guide. The questions are:

1. What is the relevance of the recuperation of “liberation theory” in relation to postcolonial (and/or decolonial) critiques of Marxism? and
2. How should we evaluate the claim that Marxism constitutes “the fundamental framework of postcolonial thinking”?

The lecture will center the arguments advanced in an exemplary, indeed, canonical text, from the anti-colonial “liberationist” tradition: namely, Aimé Césaire’s *Discourse on Colonialism*, first published in 1950. It will situate and help render intelligible these arguments by relating them to other core readings, including chapters from Robert Young’s monumental book from 2000, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*; as well as Benita Parry’s chapter on “Liberation Theory: Variations on Themes of Marxism and Modernity,” in Crystal Bartolovitch and Neil Lazarus’s important 2011 volume on *Marxism, Modernity and Postcolonial Studies*; and the article by Subir Sinha and Rashmi Varma’s introduction to a 2017 special issue of *Critical Sociology* dedicated to the question of “Marxism and Postcolonialism: What’s Left of the Debate?”

**From Anti-Colonialism to Postcolonialism**

The task of recovering the tradition of anti-colonial “liberation” theory and praxis, of taking lessons from this “wilfully effaced” tradition, necessarily requires us to navigate and engage with a rather contentious terrain of somewhat more familiar, contemporary intellectual debate: namely, the debate about the relationship between Marxism and ***post***colonialism. If ***anti-***colonialism eventually gave way to ***post***colonialism, it is ***post***colonialism that we are much closer to, and thus most likely more familiar with, since it has a substantial presence in the contemporary Western academy, perhaps especially in cultural studies and literature departments, even if, as an orientation or intellectual tradition, it has remained somewhat marginalised within the discipline of sociology, at least up until very recently.

The recent emergence of calls to “decolonize” the discipline of sociology, as part of a broader agenda and movement, both activist and scholarly, to “decolonize the University,” can be interpreted as a logical extension of the claims and epistemic standpoint of postcolonial theory.

So let us begin by situating ***post***colonial theory, and then working our way back to the tradition and lessons of ***anti***-colonial liberation theory and praxis. Robert Young’s book, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, proves quite useful in this regard. Young begins the book by interpreting the birth of postcolonial theory as “the mark of a new phase within many Western societies in which immigrants from the global South had begun to emerge as influential cultural voices challenging the basis of the manner in which European and North American societies represented themselves and their own histories” (p.IX). Though he also mentions arguments to the effect that so-called “postcolonial critiques were [somehow] preparing the way for the transformation of society that was being produced by the demands of globalization” (p.IX).

Young’s book attempts nothing short of a “genealogy of postcolonial theory in terms of its relations to earlier political and intellectual movements resisting imperialism and the cultural dominance of the West.” In it, he manages to trace the origins of postcolonial theory “in the struggles against colonialism in the past,” that is, in what we (following Benita Parry), have already referred to as the tradition of anti-colonial liberation theory and praxis. According to Young, “[c]ontemporary postcolonial theory was ***grounded in*** the inspiration of the work of earlier activists such as Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, CLR James, Albert Memmi, or even in those who were viewed more critically, such as Léopold Sédar Senghor or Marcus Garvey” (p.X).

And yet, Parry herself has lamented, in contrast to Young, what she interprets as a “tendency among postcolonial critics to disown liberation discourses and practices, and indeed all forms of anticolonialist rhetoric and organization” (p.125).

So we can already begin to see that the depiction of postcolonial theory – in particular, of its continuities and/or discontinuities with anti-colonial liberation theory and praxis – is a source of considerable contention among contemporary scholars. This is a point to which we shall return.

**Liberation Theory as ‘Disjunctive’ Marxism**

But first, let us try to get a feel for what anti-colonial liberation theory and praxis was all about. One of the great virtues of Young’s book is the extent to which, in it, he manages “to convey … the excitement of the intellectual productivity of the time, the sense of its radical potential and its dynamic political aspirations for transformation,” and in the process of recovering such excitement, such sense of possibility, to make the case that the anti-colonial tradition can even “continue to offer political inspiration into the future” (p.X).

On this point, Parry would most certainly agree. “Memories of the Future,” she suggests, might indeed provide “an epithet appropriate” for capturing the legacy of “liberation theory” (p.148).

However, to understand this legacy requires taking into account, first and foremost, fundamentally, that anti-colonial liberation theory and praxis constitutes a variant of the Marxist tradition. Indeed, as Young rightly emphasizes in his book, “the Bolshevik Revolution … functioned as a fulcrum for the development of anticolonial politics. After 1917, most activists, with the notable exception of Gandhi, turned to a secular Marxism for inspiration and strength,” even if, he is also careful to add, they did not “treat it as reverentially as the functionaries of the Comintern expected and required” (pp. XI-XII).

Young further explains: “For much of the twentieth century, it was Marxism alone which emphasized the effects of the imperialist system and the dominating power structure involved, and in sketching out blueprints for a future free from domination and exploitation most twentieth-century anti-colonial writing was inspired by the possibilities of socialism.” The contribution of whom Young refers to as “***tricontinental*** theorists was to mediate the translatability of Marxist revolutionary theory with the untranslatable features of specific non-European historical and cultural contexts.” Indeed, Young even goes so far as to insist that “Marxism, which represents both a form of revolutionary politics and one of the richest and most complex theoretical and philosophical movements in human history, has always been in some sense anti-western, since it was developed by Marx as a critique of western social and economic practices and the values which they embodied.” To this end, he reminds us that “[t]he Bolsheviks themselves always identified their revolution as ‘Eastern’” (p.6).

And yet, as Parry denounces at the outset of her brilliant, if admittedly polemical, article on “Liberation Theory,” “few of the major Marxist metatheorists in Europe [have undertaken] to examine the roads taken by Marxism on colonial terrains” (p.125). Such systematic omissions, such shrill silences, on the part of Western Marxists, she diagnoses as part and parcel of “the wider and longstanding exclusion of non-western knowledge from the canons compiled by metropolitan scholars” (p.125). A point on which Parry again converges with Young, in whose judgment: “Western Marxists have preferred to marginalize what took place in the non-European world, despite the fact that that is exactly where Marxism successfully developed its practical revolutionary dynamics and achieved political power” (p.172).

Young classifies the kind of Marxism articulated and advanced in the anti-colonial liberation tradition as a “disjunctive” Marxism (p.XII), indeed, even as a “transculturat[ed] Marxism” (p.169). What does he mean by such characterizations? Put simply, he means that it was a particular kind of Marxism. In his words: “If the bulk of anti-colonialist activism and activist writing in the twentieth century has operated from a Marxist perspective, for the most part it is a Marxism which has been aware of the significance of subjective conditions for the creation of a revolutionary situation, and therefore a Marxism which has been pragmatically modified to suit non-western conditions and which does not, as a result, altogether coincide with that of the classical mainstream.” As such, he contends, anti-colonial, or ***tricontinental*,**Marxism “does not necessarily come in recognizable universal western forms. Though he is quick to add that, “in being a flexible Marxism, able to transform itself continually in response to specific historical conditions, without ever becoming dogmatically fixed, it remains close to the spirit of Marx and, particularly, Lenin.” To this end, he highlights that “Lenin’s ‘orientation toward Asia and Africa’ after the Bolshevik revolution, as the great Trinidadian socialist George Padmore observed, ‘was a violent departure from orthodox Marxist strategy’.” What we have, then, according to Young, is “a Marxism developed outside, and generally neglected in the west; a flexible Marxism responsive to local conditions in the three continents” (pp.6-7).

Which is, in turn, reminiscent of Fanon’s famous claim in the first chapter, “Concerning Violence,” of *The Wretched of the Earth*, that “Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched every time we have to do with the colonial problem,” indeed, that “[e]verything up to and including the very nature of pre-capitalist society, so well explained by Marx, must here be thought out again” (p.31).

But let us return to the point about the Bolsheviks and their revolution. Young is certainly right to insist that “the Bolshevik revolution that emerged from the deprivation and destruction of the First World War changed the whole dynamic not only of European class politics, but also of imperial and colonial relations.” Most momentously, as he notes, “for the first time, a government of a powerful state was explicitly opposed to western imperialism in principle and practice.” And, indeed, “[i]t was Lenin’s Comintern that in 1920 offered the first systematic programme for global decolonization in its ‘Theses on the National and Colonial Questions’” (p.10).

Nevertheless, if it is the case, as Young contends, that “Marxism was central to the thinking and practice of probably a majority of the national liberation movements in the three continents after 1917” (p.168), that, “[w]ith some exceptions, Marxism historically provided the theoretical inspiration and most effective political practice for twentieth-century anti-colonial resistance,” it is worth further specifying “[i]ts great strength” as “instrument through which anti-colonial struggle could be translated from one colonial arena to another.” In a word, according to Young: “Marxism supplied a translatable politics and political language through which activists in very different situations could communicate with each other; it offered a ***universal*** medium through which specificities could be discussed in a common forum of anti-colonialism” (p.169).

The anti-colonial Marxism that thus emerged was “a hybrid of east and west.” In this regard, Young cites the cultural theorist David Forgacs, who has contended that “Marxist thinking, however rigorous in itself, tends to have a hybrid character.” Indeed, Forgacs argues that “Marxism has taken shape by scrutinizing and sharpening itself not only on the real world and not only on its own texts but also against non-Marxist thinking.” Marx himself, Forgacs notes, developed his own thought “in a critical dialogue with that of thinkers like Hegel, Ricardo and Proudhon,” that is, as a hybrid, forged in both deep familiarity and ruthless critique of the traditions of German philosophy, of British political economy, and French libertarian socialism (Forgacs 1982: 134) (quoted on p.167).

Hybridization, then, has always been “a characteristic of Marxism, which, throughout the twentieth century, as a philosophy and as a political practice has always interacted productively with other disciplines, geographies, cultures, and political contexts.” Anti-colonial Marxism was no different in this respect. “In the colonial or tricontinental arena, Marxism developed according to the demands of different social and cultural contexts in ways that remained often unrecognized in the west” (pp.167-168).

Anti-colonial Marxism thus amounted to “a reformulation, a translation, and a transformation” of Marxism. It constituted a “critical dynamic tradition within Marxism,” even if “Marxists in Europe or orthodox Marxists elsewhere have generally only taken limited account of, and barely acknowledged, the importance of the non-European forms of Marxism” (p.168).

**Marx and Marxism on Empire**

Anti-colonial Marxism constitutes a reformulation of a body of thought, of a tradition, which has sometimes been accused, from post-colonial corners, of harbouring Eurocentric bias. Such accusations are not bereft of merit. They find their textual basis, most emblematically, in Marx’s own “writings on colonialism,” which Young points out, are “notoriously problematic, particularly with respect to India” (p.102).

For useful overviews of the debate about Marx and Eurocentrism, especially in relation to his writings on India, see the first chapter of Kevin B. Anderson’s magisterial 2010 book, *Marx at the Margins. On Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Non-Western Societies*; as well as the chapter on “Rescuing Internationalism” in Erica Brenner’s 1995 book, *Really Existing Nationalisms*. Both Anderson and Brenner attempt at least a partial defence of Marx against this charge of Eurocentrism, a charge perhaps most famously levelled by Edward Said in the chapter on “Oriental Residence and Scholarship: The Requirements of Lexicography and Imagination,” in his classic 1978 book on *Orientalism*. Though a perhaps more damning and profound assault on Marxist universalism as inherently Eurocentric can be found in the article “Universalism and Belonging in the Logic of Capital,” originally included as a chapter in Dipesh Chakrabarty’s widely-touted 2000 book, *Provincializing Europe*.

There is no doubt that Marx’s own views on Imperialism and/or colonialism were decidedly more ambivalent and ambiguous than those of Lenin, much less those of Mao or Fanon. And in striking contrast to such later Marxists, Marx himself nowhere offers any “emancipatory programme specifically for colonial revolution” (p.102).

It is, nevertheless, also the case that, for Marx (and for Engels), colonial expansion constituted a necessary precondition for the subsequent rise of industrial capitalism. In Young’s words: “it was colonial expansion which enabled the bourgeoisie to accumulate enough capital to revolutionize the whole economic and social system on a global scale – an observation which would later be developed into world-system theory” (p.102).

As Marx put the point most eloquently in Volume 1 of *Capital*, first published in 1867, towards the very end, in Chapter XXXI on the “Genesis of the Industrial Capitalist: “The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins, signalised the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production. These idyllic proceedings are the chief moments of primitive accumulation.”

As such, Marx saw capitalism and imperialism to be intimately intertwined. At the root of his ambivalence was his whole-hearted commitment to socialist revolution, coupled with his conviction that the path to socialism had necessarily to pass through the transition to industrial capitalism first. To the extent that colonial conquest could be viewed as clearing the way for the subsequent development of capitalism, in other words, to the extent that colonialism could be seen as “a necessary instrument for the introduction of modernity” (p.105), for Marx, colonialism could be considered as part of a dialectical unfolding. This despite the despicable brutality involved, which Marx was always careful to document in meticulous detail.

As Marx would infamously argue in an 1853 article written for the *New York Daily Tribune*, on “The British Rule in India”: “England, it is true, in causing a social revolution in Hindostan, was actuated only by the vilest interests, and was stupid in her manner of enforcing them. But that is not the question. The question is, can mankind fulfil its destiny without a fundamental revolution in the social state of Asia? If not, whatever may have been the crimes of England she was the unconscious tool of history in bringing about that revolution.”

As Young puts the point: “Colonialism therefore, for Marx, was fiercely dialectical: both a ruthless system of economic exploitation and a significant positive move towards a Utopian future” (p.109).

It is perhaps worth noting, in this regard, that there is considerable evidence that, towards the end of his life, Marx had begun to contemplate the possibility that there could be multiple paths towards socialism, indeed, that in some circumstances, it might be possible to arrive at socialism without having to make the painful transition to industrial capitalism first. To this end, Kevin Anderson has emphasized that, “[i]n his correspondence with the Russian exile Vera Zasulich and elsewhere, Marx began to suggest that agrarian Russia’s communal villages could be a starting point for a socialist transformation, one that might avoid the brutal process of the primitive accumulation of capital” (p.196). The consequences for his earlier ambivalence towards colonialism would seem clear – the notion of “dialectical necessity” need no longer be countenanced, much less maintained.

And yet, Marx’s correspondence late in life with Vera Zasulich would remain much less well known, much less influential, than the more mechanistic, developmentalist, and teleological line of argument that he and Engels had sketched in their early work, most emblematically, in the 1848 *Communist Manifesto*. And so, the ambivalent chord that they struck towards colonialism would become an important part of the inheritance of the Marxist tradition, destined to be “fought out in the extended discussions of the Second International and left unresolved.”

It would be left unto Lenin to “inaugurate a major shift of emphasis” (p.110), to unequivocally condemn the course of imperialist aggression, and to decisively embrace the revolutionary repercussions of anti-colonial revolt.

By all means, as Young emphasizes, “[i]t was the international perspective of the early socialists that enabled the first critiques of imperialism and the colonial system in general as part of the global system of capitalism.” They did much to propagate and promote “[t]he sense of a common experience of oppression between the working classes in Europe and colonial peoples elsewhere, and increasing awareness of colonial outrages …” (pp.115-116). They were also responsible for the first systematic theories of the relationship between capitalism and imperialism.

There is, of course, an abundant literature on Marxist theories of imperialism. One of the more useful overviews remains V.G. Kiernan’s chapter on “The Marxist Theory of Imperialism and its Historical Formation,” in his 1974 book, *Marxism and Imperialism*, which also includes a fairly comprehensive chapter on the subject of “Marx and India.” There is also Anthony Brewer’s important contribution from 1980, *Marxist Theories of Imperialism*, which surveys a wide variety of Marxist-inspired theories in a relatively systematic way. More recently, in 2017, Murray Noonan published a more up to date survey of the terrain, in a book similarly titled, *Marxist Theories of Imperialism: A History*. Finally, there is the noteworthy effort to reconstruct Marx’s own views on the subject taken up by Lucia Pradella, for example, in her 2013 article, “Imperialism and Capitalist Development in Marx’s *Capital*,” which you can find among the supplementary readings on the course guide.

Needless to say, there are many Marxist theories of imperialism, way too many to review in the short time we have here. Young succinctly simplifies and summarizes these theories as “broadly speaking shar[ing] the assumption that imperialism was a product of finance capitalism and the circulation of commodities, driven by the tendency of the rate of profit to fall and the consequent need to incorporate more and more markets, involving unequal power relations and interaction of countries with very different dominant modes of production” (p.110).

Young further provides a relatively cogent heuristic by dividing Marxist theories of imperialism up “between ***classical*** and ***dependency or world-system*** kinds. This split,” he claims, “was really initiated by the differences between Lenin and Kautsky,” (p.110), who clashed on many things, though Young also insists that these two main varieties of Marxist theories are in no “substantial way contradictory.” According to Young: “The first, Leninist theory sees imperialism as a particular stage of capitalism, marked by intense rivalry ***between centres of capital***, particularly after they have run out of space for geographical expansion.” By contrast, Young continues: “[t]he second general theory of imperialism in Marxist theory, following Kautsky and [later elaborated by the so-called dependency theorist André Gunder] Frank, sees imperialism as the relation of domination and exploitation, characterized by a world system of ***developed and underdeveloped economies***, in which the latter, far from being developing, are essentially static, or even forced into decline.” Young goes on to note that this latter version of the Marxist “view of imperialism as an unequal dialectic of centre and periphery has been widely accepted by postcolonial critics, who tend to use the term ‘imperialism’ not in Lenin’s historical sense, but in the more everyday use of ‘international relations of dominance and exploitation’” (p.111).

For the world-system version of Marxist theory, an “agonistic antagonism” is posited between “advanced” and “underdeveloped” regions of the world, between so-called “centre” and “periphery,” that is, between the “torn halves of imperialism.” Young proceeds to point out, most insightfully, that “[i]f we consider the historical role of Marxism itself, the story of a similar structural relation emerges – one in which if the centre changes the periphery, then the periphery also transforms the centre.” Indeed, for Young, “[w]hile Marxist theory is designed to cash out at the level of political intervention, a distinction must be made between Marxist analyses of colonialism and imperialism at a theoretical level, and the historical role of anticolonial struggle.” What’s more, he continues: “From a Marxist perspective, anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism have always formed part of the more general struggle against the system of global capitalism.” By contrast, he notes: “[f]rom an anti-colonial perspective, however, Marxism formed part of the particular struggle against colonialism and could be combined with and adapted to other resources, in particular nationalism.” And finally, Young further emphasizes that “[a]lthough this came to prominence in the liberation struggles of the 1950s and 1960s, the relation of Marxism to nationalism had been central to Marxist positions on colonialism from the first” (pp.111-112).

Which brings us to a crucial question for Marxism, indeed, for Young, perhaps “***the*** question for Marxism – which,” he claims, “remains in a sense its question even up to the present day” – namely, “whether to ally itself to nationalist movements or work separately from them … In terms of political strategy and practice,” Young concludes, “the difficult question for Marxism has always been how far it should ally itself to individual nationalist struggles” – struggles “which it regards,” at the end of the day, as fundamentally “bourgeois” (pp.119-120).

One of the central theses – indeed, arguably ***the*** central thesis – of anti-colonial liberation theory, or tricontinental Marxism – was to identify exploited nations as ***proletarian*** peoples. Such identification would be “most forcibly embodied in Mao’s and [Che] Guevara’s global campaign against imperialism,” even if Guevara, in particular, “spoke not in the name of a particular nation or people, but like Fanon, internationally, in the name of the wretched of the earth” (p.175).

The centrality of the figure of Mao on the contours and content of anti-colonial liberation theory can hardly be overestimated. As Young cogently summarizes: “The success of the communists in China in 1949 had a similar kind of effect in colonial countries that the Bolshevik revolution had had in Europe. For the first time, a non-white, formerly semi-colonized country achieved an independent communist government through a military campaign: national liberation and socialist revolution had been brought together. The success of Mao Zedong, after many years of struggle against both the nationalists and the Japanese, put new energy and resources into anti-colonial struggles in Indochina, particularly in Vietnam” (p.181).

Furthermore, Young continues by emphasizing: “The development of Mao’s form of Chinese communism, rooted in the revolutionary potential of the peasantry rather than the urban proletariat, was to have a profound effect on tricontinental ***nationalism*** on the left. For the first time, here was a Marxism in power that had been reconstructed in response to the realities of tricontinental societies. No longer would communists only have one ‘official’ model, which had to be applied in contexts to which it bore little relation” (p.181).

And so we come to the curious convergence of Marxism and nationalism in the anti-colonial liberation tradition.

**Aimé Césaire and the *Discourse on Colonialism***

Which brings us to the figure of Aimé Césaire – “the great Martiniquan writer, activist, and statesman,” (p.2), one of the key organic intellectuals “of African origin from the Caribbean,” identified by Cedric Robinson as “particularly influential in developing what [would] bec[o]me the distinctive … black Marxist tradition” (p.225).

As Robin Kelley has eloquently put the point, in his brilliant, albeit problematic, introduction to the text, “Aimé Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism* might be best described as a declaration of war” (p.7). Kelley goes on to set the scene in a most vivid – indeed, gripping – style, worthy of quoting at some length: “*Discourse* speaks in revolutionary cadences, capturing the spirit of its age just as Marx and Engels did 102 years earlier in their little manifesto. First published in 1950 as *Discours sur Ie colonialisme*, it appeared just as the old empires were on the verge of collapse, thanks in part to a world war against fascism that left Europe in material, spiritual, and philosophical shambles. It was the age of decolonization and revolt in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Five years earlier, in 1945, black people from around the globe gathered in Manchester, England, for the Fifth Pan-African Congress to discuss the freedom and future of Africa. Five years later, in 1955, representatives from the Non-Aligned Nations gathered in Bandung, Indonesia, to discuss the freedom and future of the third world. Mao's revolution in China was a year old, while the Mau Mau in Kenya were just gearing up for an uprising against their colonial masters. The French encountered insurrections in Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Cameroon, and Madagascar, and suffered a humiliating defeat by the Viet Minh at Dien Bien Phu. Revolt was in the air. India, the Philippines, Guyana, Egypt, Guatemala, South Africa, Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, Harlem, you name it. Revolt! Malcolm X once described this extraordinary moment, this long decade from the end of the Second World War to the late 1950s, as a ‘tidal wave of color’” (pp.7-8).

Kelly continues: “*Discourse on Colonialism* is indisputably one of the key texts inthis ‘tidal wave’ of anticolonial literature produced during thepostwar period – works that include W.E.B. Du Bois's *Color and Democrary* (1945) and *The World and Africa* (1947), Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Mask* ( 1952), George Padmore's *Pan-Africanism or Communism?: The Coming Struggle for Africa* ( 1956), Albert Memmi's *The Colonizer and the Colonized* ( 1957), Richard Wright's *White Man Listen!* ( 1957), Jean-Paul Sartre's essay, ‘Black Orpheus’ (1948), and journals such as *Présence Africaine* and *African Revolution*” (pp.7-8).

The *Discourse* begins with an eloquent denunciation of Europe as nothing short of ***indefensible***, in which he centers as the two major unresolved problems of European civilization – the problem of the proletariat and the colonial problem**.**  In Césaire’s words: “A civilization that proves incapable of solving the problems it creates is a decadent civilization. A civilization that chooses to close its eyes to its most crucial problems is a stricken civilization. A civilization that uses its principles for trickery and deceit is a dying civilization. The fact is that the so-called European civilization – ‘Western’ civilization – as it has been shaped by two centuries of bourgeois rule, is incapable of solving the two major problems to which its existence has given rise: the problem of the proletariat and the colonial problem; that Europe is unable to justify itself either before the bar of ‘reason’ or before the bar of ‘conscience’; and that, increasingly, it takes refuge in a hypocrisy which is all the more odious because it is less and less likely to deceive. *Europe is indefensible*” (pp.31-32).

In his introduction, Kelley seeks to downplay the importance of the European proletariat in the *Discourse*, by noting that, throughout the text, it remains “practically invisible” (p.8). Nevertheless, the spectre of the proletariat haunts the text, its messianic potential to deliver the ‘time of the now’, as Benjamin might put it, by fulfilling its promised role as revolutionary subject, is not only ***not*** discarded, but is in fact explicitly appealed to in the text’s famous final passage, where its spectre re-emerges in the body of the text. This is a point to which we shall return below, but is worth taking preliminary note of here, among other reasons, because it distinguishes the prophetic message of Césaire’s *Discourse* from the clarion call issued by his most distinguished disciple, Frantz Fanon, who in the concluding passages of *The Wretched of the Earth* would urge his to “[l]eave this Europe where they are never done talking of Man, yet murder men everywhere they find them, at the corner of every own of their own streets, in all the corners of the globe” (p.251).

Even so, Kelley is certainly right to emphasize, in his introduction, that, by elevating the so-called colonial problem to the status of co-foundational, alongside the problem of the proletariat, for European “civilization,” Césaire “was attempting to revise Marx, along the lines of … predecessors such as [the African-American] W.E.B. Du Bois and [the Indian] Manabendra Nath Roy” (p.10). Though Kelley overstates the point by claiming that Césaire is “suggesting that the anticolonial struggle supersedes the proletarian revolution as the fundamental historical movement of the period.” To the contrary, Césaire holds on to the hope that the revolt of the colonies and the revolution of the European proletariat were bound dialectically, destined to be detonated together, intimately and intrinsically, indeed, inevitably, causally connected. Such was his lingering faith in the classic Marxist-Leninist prophecy of the imminent arrival of World Revolution.

So no, Kelley misleads when he argues that, for Césaire, “the coming revolution was not posed in terms of capitalism versus socialism, but in terms of the complete and total overthrow of a racist, colonialist system that would open the way to imagine a whole new world” (p.10). To the contrary, for Césaire, each side of this equation presupposes, helps instigate, and necessarily requires the unfolding of the other.

Césaire’s vision of a dialectical intertwining of developments in Europe with those in the colonies is first treated in the form of his sketch of “how colonialism works to ‘decivilize’ the colonizer” (p.8), in the course of which he would repeatedly invert and subvert the binary terms, “civilization” and “savagery.” “[B]etween *colonization* and *civilization*,” Césaire would insist, “there is an infinite distance” (p.34). More precisely, he would contend: “[c]olonization works to decivilize the colonizer, to brutalize him in the true sense of the word, to degrade him, to awaken him to buried instincts, to covetousness, violence, race hatred, and moral relativism” (p.35). And thus, he would conclude, “the continent proceeds toward *savagery*” (p.36). He here echoes the disjuncture first identified by the great revolutionary internationalist martyr Rosa Luxemburg, who a generation earlier, just before the dawn of fascism, in her important 1916 “Junius Pamphlet,” penned from prison, had so incisively posed and juxtaposed the alternative paths, from the crossroads that was the calamity of the so-called Great War, to be “socialism or barbarism.”

Barbarism it was. A barbarism that was overdetermined, that was bound to arrive, in the form of a boomerang, Césaire would add. In his most emphatic articulation, filled with *pathos*: “And then one fine day the bourgeoisie is awakened by a terrific **boomerang effect**: the gestapos are busy, the prisons fill up, the torturers standing around the racks invent, refine, discuss. People are surprised, they become indignant. They say: ‘How strange! But never mind-it's Nazism, it will pass!’ And they wait, and they hope; and they hide the truth from themselves, that it is barbarism, the supreme barbarism, the crowning barbarism that sums up all the daily barbarisms; that it is Nazism, yes, but that before they were its victims, they were its accomplices; that they tolerated that Nazism before it was inflicted on them, that they absolved it, shut their eyes to it, legitimized it, because, until then, it had been applied only to non-European peoples; that they have cultivated that Nazism, that they are responsible for it, and that before engulfing the whole edifice of Western, Christian civilization in its reddened waters, it oozes, seeps, and trickles from every crack” (p.36).

Indeed, Césaire would go on to accuse: “what he cannot forgive Hitler for is not the crime in itself, the crime against a *man*, it is not *the humiliation of man as such*, it is the crime against the white man, the humiliation of the white man, and the fact that he applied to Europe colonialist procedures which until then had been reserved exclusively for the Arabs of Algeria, the ‘coolies’ of India, and the ‘n…’ of Africa” (p.36).

In sum, according to Césaire: “colonization … dehumanizes even the most civilized man; colonial activity, colonial enterprise, colonial conquest, which is based on contempt for the native and justified by that contempt, inevitably tends to change him who undertakes it; the colonizer, who in order to ease his conscience gets into the habit of seeing the other man as an animal accustoms himself to treating him like an animal, and tends objectively to transform himself into an animal. It is this result, this **boomerang effect** of colonization that I wanted to point out” (p.41).

As Malcolm X might put the point, the chickens had come home to roost. Phrased in Young’s more academic formulation, “fascism was [but] a form of colonialism brought home to Europe” (p.2). Césaire thus “draw[s] a direct link between the logic of colonialism and the rise of fascism.” In this respect, Kelley quite cogently contends, it is worth situating Césaire’s argument “within a larger context of radical black intellectuals who had come to the same conclusions before the publication of *Discourse*.” Indeed, as Cedric Robinson has argued, “a group of radical black intellectuals, including W.E.B. Du Bois, C.L.R James, George Padmore, and Oliver Cox, understood fascism not as some aberration from the march of progress, an unexpected right-wing turn, but a logical development of Western Civilization itself. They viewed fascism as a blood relative of slavery and imperialism, global systems rooted not only in capitalist political economy but racist ideologies that were already in place at the dawn of modernity” (p.20). Or perhaps more precisely, they viewed racist ideology, and racialized subjugation, as a constitutive feature of the capitalist world system.

Indeed, as Kelley aptly elaborates: “As early as 1936, Ralph Bunche, then a radical political science professor at Howard University, suggested that imperialism gave birth to fascism. ‘The doctrine of Fascism’, wrote Bunche, ‘with its extreme jingoism, its exaggerated exaltation of the state and its comic-opera glorification of race, has given a new and greater impetus to the policy of world imperialism which had conquered and subjected to systematic and ruthless exploitation virtually all of the darker populations of the earth’. Du Bois made some of the clearest statements to this effect: ‘I knew that Hitler and Mussolini were fighting communism, and using race prejudice to make some white people rich and all colored people poor. But it was not until later that I realized that the colonialism of Great Britain and France had exactly the same object and methods as the fascists and the Nazis were trying clearly to use’. Later, in *The World and Africa* (1947), he writes: ‘There was no Nazi atrocity-concentration camps, wholesale maiming and murder, defilement of women or ghastly blasphemy of childhood which Christian civilization or Europe had not long been practicing against colored folk in all parts of the world in the name of and for the defense of a Superior Race born to rule the world’” (pp.20-21).

And with this we come to the heart of the matter: the lie that there is such a thing as a superior race. A lie to which the colonizers were so interested in propagating, so committed to producing and reproducing. For indeed, “the colonizers' sense of superiority, their sense of mission as the world's civilizers, depend[ed] on turning the Other into a barbarian … The colonial encounter, in other words, require[d] a reinvention of the colonized – what Césaire calls ‘thingification’” (p.9).

A dehumanization simultaneously affected, institutionalized, at both the ideological and the material levels. In Césaire’s pithy words, once again: “Between colonizer and colonized there is room only for forced labor, intimidation, pressure, the police, taxation, theft, rape, compulsory crops, contempt, mistrust, arrogance, self-complacency, swinishness, brainless elites, degraded masses. No human contact, but relations of domination and submission which turn the colonizing man into a classroom monitor, an army sergeant, a prison guard, a slave driver, and the indigenous man into an instrument of production. My turn to state an equation: **colonization = thingification**” (p.42).

In turn, such “thingification” also required and entailed “the deliberate destruction of the [African] past” (p.9). Which “is why elements of *Discourse* also drew on [the Negritude movement’s counter-hegemonic] impulse to recover the history of Africa's accomplishments” (p.21). Thus the references in the text to such artefacts of monumental history as the Sudanese empires, to the bronzes of Benin, to Shango sculpture, and the like (p.52). Though Césaire is also careful to emphasize a more critical historical legacy as well, by claiming that pre-colonial African societies “were not only ante-capitalist, but also anti-capitalist,” that “[t]hey were democratic societies, always,” that “[t]hey were cooperative societies, fraternal societies,” at least, before they were “destroyed by imperialism” (p.44). In this respect, as Kelley points out, the *Discourse* “anticipated romantic claims advanced by African nationalist leaders such as Julius Nyerere, Kenneth Kaunda, [not to mention Léopold Sédar] Senghor, that modern Africa [could] establish socialism on the basis of pre-colonial village life” (p.21).

Césaire is of course emphatic in denouncing the violence and brutality, the deracination, involved in the destruction of Africa’s autochthonous traditions, brought about by the onset of empire. He speaks of: “societies drained of their essence, cultures trampled underfoot, institutions undermined, lands confiscated, religions smashed, magnificent artistic creations destroyed, extraordinary possibilities wiped out.” He speaks of: “millions of men torn from their gods, their land, their habits, their life – from life, from the dance, from wisdom.” He speaks of: “millions of men in whom fear has been cunningly instilled, who have been taught to have an inferiority complex, to tremble, kneel, despair, and behave like flunkeys.” He speaks of: “natural economies that have been disrupted, harmonious and viable economies adapted to the indigenous population – [of] food crops destroyed, malnutrition permanently introduced, agricultural development oriented solely toward the benefit of the metropolitan countries; the looting of products, the looting of raw materials” (p.43). A veritable tidal wave of death and destruction, no doubt.

And yet, Césaire is careful to stress, his call is not for the return to an allegedly glorious but now forever lost past. To the contrary, he insists: “We are not men for whom it is a question of ‘either-or’. For us, the problem is not to make a utopian and sterile attempt to repeat the past, but to go beyond. It is not a dead society that we want to revive. We leave that to those who go in for exoticism. Nor is it the present colonial society that we wish to prolong, the most putrid carrion that ever rotted under the sun. It is a new society that we must create, with the help of all our brother slaves, a society rich with all the productive power of modern times, warm with all the fraternity of olden days” (pp.51-52).

Most tellingly, perhaps surprisingly, he would add: “**For some examples showing that this is possible, we can look to the Soviet Union**” (p.52). This in 1950, at the dusk of the Stalinist era, close to fifteen years after the height of the purges.

Césaire would end the *Discourse* with an extended excoriation of the sins of the European bourgeoisie, followed by a proposal for an alternative order, one in principle compatible with the basic confines and contours of capitalist social-property relations, an appeal for a policy of *nationalities*. But in the very last passage, Césaire would make it clear, that for such an alternative, humane order to prevail, bourgeois class rule would have to be eliminated; which is to say, the European proletariat would have to at last rise up to its historic task, it would have to at ***long*** last assume its destiny, as a ***universal class*,** by bringing about “the Revolution,” with a capital R.

According to Césaire’s poetic and prophetic vision, in his own (albeit translated) cadence and words: “unless, in Africa, in the South Sea Islands, in Madagascar (that is, at the gates of South Africa), in the West Indies (that is, at the gates of America), Western Europe undertakes on its own initiative a policy of *nationalities*, a new policy founded on respect for peoples and cultures – nay, more – unless Europe galvanizes the dying cultures or raises up new ones, unless it becomes the awakener of countries and civilizations … Europe will have deprived itself of its last *chance* and, with its own hands, drawn up over itself the pall of mortal darkness. Which comes down to saying that the salvation of Europe is not a matter of a revolution in methods. It is a matter of the Revolution – the one which, until such time as there is a classless society will substitute for the narrow tyranny of a dehumanized bourgeoisie the preponderance of the only class that still has a universal mission, because it suffers in its flesh from all the wrongs of history, from all the universal wrongs: **the proletariat**” (pp.77-78).

And so we see that, despite his damning indictment of Europe, Césaire would not give up on his faith in the revolutionary potential of the European proletariat. For Césaire, the European proletariat remained a universal class, whose long overdue revolt was foreseen as bound to arrive, imminently. He believed it would yet still prove capable of overthrowing the existing order, that it could operate in tandem, indeed, in dialectical synchrony, with “the admirable resistance of the colonial peoples primarily symbolized at present by Vietnam, but also by the Africa of the *Rassemblement Demócratique Africain*” (p.77), to whom Césaire also nods.

A decade later, Césaire’s disciple, Frantz Fanon, would beg to differ. In the concluding chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon would, like Césaire, recognize that the European workers had been “called to shatter this [European] narcissism and to break with this unreality.” Nevertheless, unlike Césaire, by now, at least for Fanon, it had become apparent that the European workers had proven themselves incapable of fulfilling such a historic task. “[I]n general,” Fanon would contend, “the workers of Europe have not replied to these calls; for the workers believe, too, that they are part of the prodigious adventure of the European spirit” (p.253). Thus, the dialectic had been suspended, in the metropole, at least. Indeed, in Fanon’s judgment, in the last weeks of his life, by the end of 1961: “Today, we are present at the stasis of Europe.” Self-determination, in the form of independence, was thus the only remaining option, the only way forward. “Comrades,” Fanon would exhort, “let us flee from this motionless movement where gradually dialectic is changing into the logic of equilibrium.” And since the dialectic had died down in the metropole, the dialectic between colonizer and colonized was now destined to come to the fore, to the vanguard, so to speak. “Come, brothers,” Fanon would conclude, “we have far too much work to do for us to play the game of rear-guard” (p.253).

In between Césaire’s profession of lingering faith in the European proletariat and Fanon’s call to “leave this Europe” behind, in 1956, the same year as the Soviet Union’s invasion of Hungary, Césaire would resign from the French Communist party, even though he would never give up his communist convictions. As Kelley aptly summarizes the letter’s content: “Besides its stinging rebuke of Stalinism, the heart of the letter dealt with the colonial question – not just the Party’s policies toward the colonies but the colonial relationship between the metropolitan and the Martinican Communist Parties. Arguing that people of color need to exercise self-determination, he warned against treating the ‘colonial question ... as a subsidiary part of some more important global matter’” (p.25). In such a vein, Césaire would insist that, if following the Communist Party “pillages our most vivifying friendships, breaks the bond that weds us to other West Indian islands, severs the tie that makes us Africa’s child, then I say communism has served us ill in having us trade a living brotherhood for what seems to be the coldest of all chill abstractions” (p.25). This was, for Césaire, not a matter of revindicating any “narrow particularism,” but rather, a matter of embracing a truer, more concretely-situated, less abstract and less Euro-centric universalism. In his words: “I’m not going to confine myself to some narrow particularism. But I don't intend either to become lost in a disembodied universalism ... I have a different idea of a universal. It is a universal rich with all that is particular, rich with all the particulars there are, the deepening of each particular, the coexistence of them all” (pp.25-26).

The question of the relation between the universal and the particular thus arises, in connection with the pursuit of the goal of human emancipation. In an exchange with René Depestre that would take place a decade after his resignation from the French Communist party, significantly, at the 1967 Cultural Congress in Havana, Césaire would emphasize: “Marx is all right, but we need to complete Marx … [T]he emancipation of the Negro consist[s] of more than just a political emancipation” (pp.85-86). Instead, he implies, it constitutes an indispensable component of the universal goal of human emancipation.

The critic, scholar, and filmmaker Manthia Diawara likewise captures this often-overlooked universalizing aspect of the Negritude movement, with which Césaire was so intimately associated, when she recounts, retrospectively: “The idea that Negritude was bigger even than Africa, that we were part of an international moment which held the promise of universal emancipation, that our destiny coincided with the universal freedom of workers and colonized people worldwide – all this gave us a bigger and more important identity than the ones previously available to us through kinship, ethnicity, and race. . . . The awareness of our new historical mission freed us from what we regarded in those days as the archaic identities of our fathers and their religious entrapments; it freed us from race and banished our fear of the whiteness of French identity. To be labeled the saviors of humanity, when only recently we had been colonized and despised by the world, gave us a feeling of righteousness, which bred contempt for capitalism, racialism of all origins, and tribalism” (p.27).

Or again, in Césaire’s own words, the Negritude movement was an expression of “[u]niversalizing, living values that had not been exhausted. The field was not dried up: it could still bear fruit if we made the effort to irrigate it with our sweat and plant new seeds. So this was the situation: there were things to tell the world. We were not dazzled by European civilization. We bore the imprint of European civilization but we thought that Africa could make a contribution to Europe” (p.92).

In this respect, there would be no significant discrepancy between Césaire and Fanon. For indeed, despite his call to leave Europe, Fanon would make it abundantly clear in the concluding chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth* that his was a call for a new approximation of the universal, for a new humanism. To this end, Fanon would insist that: “It is a question of the Third World starting a new history of Man, a history which will have regard to the sometimes prodigious theses which Europe has put forward, but which will also not forget its crimes” (p.254).

Or as C.L.R. James would put the point, explicitly appealing to and borrowing from Césaire’s vocabulary: “Negritude is what one race brings to the common rendezvous where all will strive for the new world of the poet’s vision.” Such “a sentiment,” James would contend, amounts to a “rearticulat[ion]” of Marx’s famous judgment and phrase that only after the abolition of capitalism, with the advent of socialism, will “[t]he real history of humanity … begin” (p.134).

**The End of Emancipation?**

Césaire’s version of anticolonial liberation theory and praxis is in many ways emblematic and exemplary, indeed, even canonical, within what Benita Parry has characterised as a Third World or tricontinental tradition committed to historical materialism, “grounded in a Marxist humanism, seeking to install an ethical universality and a universal ethic, inspired by communism’s grand narrative of emancipation and signposting utopia on their map of the world” (p.134). Though the fact that Césaire never conceived of the call for self-determination in the terms of independent nation-statehood would distinguish his version of anti-colonialism from the program, tactics and strategies embraced by so many of his heirs. A point to which we shall return in the next lecture, in relation to Gary Wilder’s important 2015 book, *Freedom Time. Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World*.

As I have already mentioned, and as Parry also notes, the influence of Marxism “in the intellectual cultures of the colonized worlds is ubiquitous and longstanding, having begun just before and during the 1920s” (p.134). But the structural conditions in the colonial world were vastly different from those prevalent in the metropoles in which the Marxist tradition had originally been born and first taken root. Among the “complex structural disjunctures” that characterized the colonies and dependencies, Parry highlights the following: “racial domination as an intrinsic although not exclusive component of colonial capitalism; cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity in territories joined by the colonizers for administrative purposes; peripheral economies undergoing a volatile but uneven and incomplete process of modernization; simultaneous but different historical modes of production; the persistence of premodern practices and archaic social forms, discontinuous but coexistent with mechanization, industrialization, and urbanization; class formations distinguished by a vast and unpoliticized peasantry, still influential traditional authorities, a weak native bourgeoisie unable to carry out the revolutionary role performed by that class in Europe, the scarcity of intellectuals and the dearth of a revolutionary intelligentsia and a sizeable proletariat” (p.136).

Given these features, it is not surprising that “Gramsci’s theses on the pursuit of communism in predominantly agrarian societies” were destined to exercise “a powerful influence” (p.135), in addition to the obvious impact of Lenin and Trotsky, who “had recognized the particular and enormous contradictions within societies undergoing partial conscription into capitalism’s world system, and [who brought] to their analysis of these worlds the theory of permanent revolution … [T]hese perspectives [would come to] inform the programs of liberation movements” (p.136) across the colonized world.

Indeed, the Leninist and Trotskyite notion of the necessity of ***permanent revolution*** would be a theme taken up by many of the liberationist leaders, among them Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana, not to mention Thomas Sankara of Burkina Faso. After being deposed via coup in 1966, Parry tells us, Nkrumah would pen “a case study of the dire consequences of the arrest of permanent revolution.” Nkrumah’s study would feature prominently a form of materialist class analysis. According to Nkrumah: “the African bourgeoisie, the class which thrived under colonialism, is the same class which is benefiting under the post-independence, neo-colonial period. Its basic interest lies in preserving capitalist social and economic structures . . . It is only peasantry and proletariat working together who are able to subscribe to policies of all-out socialism . . . It is the task of the African urban proletariat to win the peasantry to revolution by taking the revolution to the countryside’” (pp.136-137).

If recognition of the need for permanent revolution would be one important feature of anticolonial liberation theory and praxis, belief in “the necessity of vanguard parties” for the purpose of “pursu[ing] revolutionary goals” (p.137) would be another core characteristic inherited from Lenin. In this vein, Parry informs us, Mozambique’s first president Samora Machel would “urge to establish ‘the hegemony of a new class distinct from the broad spectrum of nationalists’,” due to an alleged “impossibility of reconciling ‘our interests with those of the enemy through any purported ‘autonomy’ or ‘independence’ safeguarding the colonial capitalist State’,” and a recognition that ‘the conflict between us and the enemy is so antagonistic that only war can resolve it’” (pp.137-138).

The shift from anticolonial liberation theory to the postcolonial perspective has entailed a progressive disenchantment with this ***vanguardist*** model – a model which, it must be noted, arguably traceable back to Marx, is much more clearly and directly a legacy of Lenin and the Bolshevik revolution. In fact, within the Marxist tradition, there exists also a more libertarian, explicitly anti-vanguardist strain, embodied perhaps most emblematically by the likes of Rosa Luxemburg, who had levelled withering criticisms of the Bolshevik organizational form, and more specifically of Lenin’s notion of “democratic centralism,” as early as 1904.

But be that as it may, as Parry notes, “[f]or liberation theorists, the [perception of the] necessity of vanguardism was dictated by the strength of the colonial apparatus and the unpropitious distribution of indigenous class forces” (p.139). Among the more sophisticated justifications for such vanguardism was the position espoused by Guinea-Bissau’s anticolonial leader Amílcar Cabral, who spoke of “a symbiosis of party and people,” advocating “a dialectical relationship between the political party and the spontaneous actions of the people” (p.138).

It is, however, worth noting that Fanon himself had registered a note of significant scepticism about the efficacy of so-called democratic centralism in his chapter on “The Pitfalls of National Consciousness” in *The Wretched of the Earth*. In the midst of a discussion about the importance of political education, conceived as a central component of the revolutionary process, Fanon would insist that “educat[ing] the masses politically does not mean, cannot mean making a political speech;” indeed, that “[w]hat it means is to try, relentlessly and passionately, to teach the masses that ***everything depends on them***;” in sum, that “in order to really incarnate the people … there must be ***decentralization*** in the extreme” (p.159). Unfortunately, perhaps, Fanon’s prophetic warning would not be heeded in this regard.

Having thus sketched some of the main features of anticolonial liberation theory and praxis, Parry goes on to pose the crucial question: How can we “account for the devastating retreats from the revolutions inaugurated by liberation struggles?” She suggests, all too summarily, that “[a]mong the more persuasive if still insufficient explanations for the reversals are the impossibility of building socialism in one country;” and she also points, even more enigmatically, to what she considers a “basic contradiction . . . between an economic strategy of modernisation and industrialisation, and a political strategy of popular mobilisation and democracy” (p.145). She appears therefore to suggest that there was ***too much*** democracy in the liberationist model, though it would seem much more probable to insist, to the contrary, that there was ***not enough***, perhaps especially given the argument so cogently made by Fanon in favour of decentralization.

Then, at last, Parry comes to blame the legacy of the colonial ***state***, in the process citing Neil Lazarus, who has emphasised: “what the newly independent nation-states inherited from the colonial powers ‘were states of a particular kind, scored and configured both ‘internally’ and ‘externally’ by their specific history as colonial dependencies in the capitalist world system . . . occup[ying] dependent and cruelly circumscribed positions as peripheral formations in the global economy’” (p.145).

So we come to the demise of the anticolonial liberationist tradition, and in its wake, the rise of the postcolonial perspective. How should we understand the relationship between these two traditions? As Lazarus and Rashmi Varma have argued, the rise of postcolonial studies in the 1980s and 1990s was “at least in part a function of its articulation of a complex intellectual response to the decisive defeat of liberationist and Left movements. On the one hand,” they point out, “as an initiative in tune with the spirit of the age, postcolonial studies breathed the air of the general anti-liberationism then rising to hegemony in the wider society.” Indeed, they insist, “[i]t has also always characteristically offered, in the scholarship that it has fostered and produced, something approximating a pragmatic adjustment to, if by no means uncomplicatedly a celebration of, the down-turn in the fortunes and influence of insurgent national-liberation movements and anticapitalist ideologies [since] the early 1970s. On the other hand,” they also stress, “as a self-consciously progressive or radical initiative, postcolonial studies was, and has remained, opposed to the dominant forms assumed by anti-liberationist policy and discourse. The intersections of postcolonial studies and multicultural politics,” they conclude, “provided a domain in which radicalism could be espoused within the constraints of a seemingly undefeatable global order” (p.548).

Even so, by all means, as Subir Sinha and Rashmi Varma contend, “[b]oth Marxism and postcolonial theory have a greater degree of heterogeneity of subjects of analysis than is revealed in the most polemical attacks of one position against the other” (p.546). For indeed, as they eloquently put the point: “Inevitably, Marxists make choices of the theme, period, theory and area focus of some selection of that oeuvre when they position themselves as ‘Marxist’, and this has consequences for their stand on postcolonial theory. Likewise, postcolonial theorists face and constantly make similar choices between different methods and indeed even ideological positions. How Marxists and postcolonialists regard each other, then, is further a function of what sources they draw on to establish their positions. Does one go with early or late Marx, the mechanistic or the romantic Marx, or indeed the canonical or the ‘Other’ Marx? Is one more partial to world systemic derivations from Marx, or to ‘political’ Marxism? Does one, conversely, follow the postcolonial theory that is inextricable from postmodern and poststructuralist formulations, or one that hitches itself to revolutionary anti-colonial thought? Does one concede that modernity arose in ‘Europe’ or ‘the West’, thereby underscoring the stability of these terms, or does one see modernity emerging as a single but uneven system? Do we take Quijano’s route that pairs modernity with coloniality, or explore further the co-production of modernity in the colonial encounter as Dussel suggests? Does one take the ‘normal’ understanding of capitalism as something that arrives as a result exclusively of the internal history of ‘Europe’, or as does it arise in the earlier moment of colonization? In the heat of the polemics, these differences ***within*** Marxism and postcolonial theory, which exist prior to the differences ***between*** them, are dissolved” (pp.550-551).

And so, in sum, I would suggest, in substantive agreement with Sinha and Varma, that perhaps the most prudent course of action when it comes to navigating the contemporary debates about the relationship between Marxism and postcolonialism is to seek what Rahul Rao has referred to as the “reparative possibilities immanent within the theoretical formations being criticized” (p.555).

**Conclusion**

Let us, therefore, conclude. In this lecture, we set out to recover the “wilfully effaced” history and tradition of anti-colonial liberation theory and praxis. We depicted this tradition as constituting “a reformulation, a translation, and a transformation” of Marxism, though one that, lamentably, has all too often been ignored by Marxists themselves in Europe and North America. This line of inquiry in turn led us to address the merits and demerits of the accusation that Marxism as a tradition is guilty of Eurocentric bias. We then proceeded to center and examine the main arguments advanced by one of the key thinkers and canonical texts in the anti-colonial liberationist tradition, namely, Aimé Césaire and his *Discourse on Colonialism*. After having done so, we ended by considering contemporary controversies about the relationship between Marxism and postcolonialism in the light of their joint relation to the anticolonial liberation tradition and its limits.

In next week’s lecture, we will turn to take up the related topic of the prospects and challenges faced by struggles for self-determination in the twenty-first century.