Content of the lecture

Part I: General Criticism of Postcolonialism
- The meaning of postcolonialism in the context of the Age of Rights and the violation of rights
- The legacy of colonialism
- The Doctrine of human rights
- Postcolonial criticism of human rights

Part II: Specific Critiques of Postcolonialism and Decoloniality
- Post colonial thinkers
- Decoloniality
- Lessons

Importance of postcolonial reflections

- Complexity
- Complacency
- Lessons
- Reimagining
What is Postcolonialism

• No agreed definition
• The legacy of colonialism: What happens since 1492 when Columbus arrived in America
• Studies resistance and power relationship between the west/imperialism and its Others.
• “Post-colonial theory examines the silenced expressions and subordinated practices that occur on the margins of power and brings them to the centre of analysis” (Madison 2005:49).
• It challenges Eurocentric knowledge and imperial domination

The legacy of Colonialism

• Etymology: farm, settlement, design, cultivate
• 3 G’s: God, Glory, Gold
• “By the 1930s, colonies and ex-colonies covered 84.6 per cent of the land surface of the globe” (Loomba 2005, p. 20).
• To transform non-European areas into European constructs
• Colonising structure
  • Managing the land
  • Domesticating the mind
  • Integrating the economy

Postcolonialism studies the effects of colonialism

• Cultural effects: politicisation of identity, race, tribe, creolisation, consumption
• Economic effects: Dependency, integration, adjustment
• Political effects: State formation, Regime change, political parties
• Effects of knowledge: western education, destruction of Indigenous knowledge, patent

How does human rights respond to the effects of colonialism?
The Age of Rights

- The End of WWII and creation of UN
  "[P]romoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion" (UN Charter Art. 1 para.3).
- The UDHR 1948
  "A common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations" "Universal and effective recognition and observance" (Preamble of UDHR)
- The rise of international human rights institutions and instruments
  ICCPR, ICESCR, CEDAW, CRC, CAT etc.
- The rise of International GOs and NGOs,
  AI, ICJ, HRW, charities
- The end of direct colonisation and beginning of development
  "We must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas." (Truman’s Inaugural Address, 20 January 1949.)

Human Rights and the postcolonial and decolonial critique
Part II
Human Rights Theory and Philosophy - Week 5 -

The Paradox of the Age of Rights

- The Cold War: interstate war
- Post Cold war: Intrastate war
- Failed/fragile states
- Violence: “The twentieth century is the century of massacre, genocide, ethnic cleansing, the age of the Holocaust.” (Douzinas 2002, p. 445)
- The politics of invisibility and super-visibility
- Growth and Poverty
- Climate change

Postcolonialism goes beyond showing the violation of human rights in postcolonial societies. It challenges the very foundation of human rights.
The Doctrine of Human Rights

- Natural (apriori) rights
- Inalienable
- Individual rights
- Equal rights
- Universal rights
- Indivisible

Human rights is based on western theory of excluding ‘others’

- Drawing human nature from ‘state of nature’
- The Self-Other dichotomy
- The ‘Human’ in human rights?
- Universalism
- Individualism
- Equality
- Rationalism/modernity

*Postcolonialism compares the objective theory in human rights with the subjective experiences of people in the postcolony

Major thinkers

- Discourse on Colonialism (1950), by Aimé Césaire
  Colonialism was the “thing-fication” of natives
  Colonial violence dechristised the civiliser
  Equality in law is not the same as equality in fact.
- Black Skin, white masks (1952), by Frantz Fanon
- The wretched of the earth (1961), by Frantz Fanon
- The colonizer and the colonized (1965), by Albert Memmi
- Orientalism (1978), by Edward Said
- Decolonising the mind Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o
- The intimate enemy Ashis Nandy
- The Location of culture (Homi Bhabha)
- Can the subaltern speak ? (Gayatri Spivak)
- A critique of postcolonial reason (Gayatri Spivak)
Franz Fanon: Black Skin White Mask

**The Question of Recognition**

- “Man is a yes that vibrates to cosmic harmonies.” ... “I came to the world imbued with the will to find a meaning in things... I found that I was an object in the midst of other objects” (1952, p.82).
- “I shouted a greeting to the world and the world slashed away my joy. I was told to stay within bounds, to go back where I belonged” (1952, p. 86).
- “Since the other hesitated to recognise me, there remained only one solution: to make myself known” (1952, p. 87).

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Franz Fanon: The Wretched of the Earth

**Decolonization**

As Being: It is a sui generis force or energy, it exists, works, cleanses

Instrumental: violent action can be countered only by violent reaction, helps to achieve political power,

**Politics**

Colonial: inserts violence into the world, mechanisms of exploitation, physical violence

New political elite: alienated from the people, accept the desire of colonialists to ‘settlement’, they do not see anticolonial violence is to the interest of the people.

Virtuous politics of the people: ethical use of violence is possible, through political organization, education,

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Edward Said: Orientalism

- How do we know about people we haven’t met
- Western Knowledge/literature objectified places such as Middle East, North Africa, and Asia portrayed them as primitive, sensual, irrational, mystical, barbaric, undemocratic states.
- This fictitious division was supported by practices that brought the ‘orient’ closer to its imagined characteristics.
- “Orientalism can be discussed and analysed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it; authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, setting it, ruling over it; in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (Said 1977, p.3).

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Decoloniality

- Boaventura de Sousa Santos
- Anibal Quijano
- Enrique Dussel
- Walter Mignolo
- Ramon Grosfoguel
- Coloniality is the darker side of modernity
- The colonial matrix of power
- Transmodernity: Hosting the Otherness of the Other
- Pluversality

Postcolonial critique

- Who is speaking in the name of human rights?
- Why should we start from theory? How about history (many were still colonised)?
- Are these rights legitimate across cultures and religions?
- Do these rights concern with justice and dignity as much as they seem concerned with the individual enjoyment of rights such as individual freedom and the right to property?
- Do these rights account for historical trauma?
- Do these rights allow differences to exist and be valued equally?
- Are these rights enforceable in all contexts?
- Could this rights stop epistemicide/cultural genocide

Selected references

Selected references