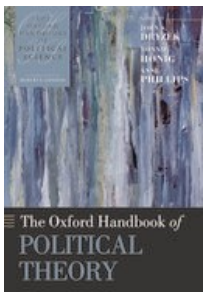

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CHAPTER

36 Multiculturalism and Post-colonial Theory

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Abstract

This article looks at the relation between post-colonial theory and multiculturalism. It explains that post-colonial theory is built upon debates over the legitimacy of colonial power that stretch through the morality of European expansion and the consequent ethical and political problems associated with colonial administration. Multiculturalism, like post-colonialism, is often seen as a coded way of speaking about race and about the dangerous processes through which race becomes a matter of culture. Some of the most important and influential strains of political commentary on multiculturalism have arisen from negotiation with indigenous populations in various national states. Those debates have been focused on problems of recognition, reparation, and sovereignty.

Keywords: post-colonial theory, multiculturalism, colonial power, race, culture, indigenous population, recognition, reparation, sovereignty

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Most commentators on the political genealogy of post-colonialism have emphasized that there is no single unified body of post-colonial theory (Young 2003). The political and intellectual enterprises that combined to create a platform for contemporary post-colonial critique are extremely diverse. They involve a far longer history than scholastic memory can usually appreciate and their impact has not, as much recent theorizing might suggest, been confined to the analysis of literature, art, and culture. The critical commentary they articulate has been both explicitly political and theoretical. It turns out to be as long and as varied as Europe's colonial expansion which was contested and debated even in its earliest manifestations (Todorov 1984; Pagden 1982).

Post-colonial theory is built upon debates over the legitimacy of colonial power that stretch back through complex theological and anthropological arguments about the morality of European expansion and the consequent ethical and political problems raised by conquest, violent administration, and ↳ native revolt as well as more obvious issues like trade and cultural variation. Looking at the evolution of post-colonial theory

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from this angle means that the progressive unfolding of critical commentary on European expansion might be understood best as part of an expanded counter-history of colonialism.

Even when practical or administrative issues were to the fore, discussion of what we can broadly call colonial government encompassed disputes over universality, sovereignty, freedom, democracy, property, and justice. The earliest debates around these problems attended the opening phases of Europe's colonial expansion. They soon spread out from the churches to fuel a wider shift in political thinking that ended a divinely-instituted, locally-bound, social life centred on notions of a unified humankind that had been seen without difficulty as children of God.

The drawing of global lines in the 1494 treaty of Tordesillas and the ritual reading of the *Requirimento* from the prows of Spanish warships anchored safely off the shores of the New World were important symptoms of this large change in political and ethical rules which, although it may not have been triggered only by proceedings in the colonial contact zones, transformed the way that government could be practiced there.[1] Long before anthropology was constituted as a specialized variety of knowledge, it would become possible and necessary, as part of new kinds of legal and moral argument, to distinguish barbarous or naturally-slavish, indigenous peoples from their civilized betters. These modern debates were increasingly marked by anxiety and ambivalence about the child-like and innocent condition of savages and primitives whose plight would be thought to necessitate care and uplift as well as rationally applied coercion.

Arguments of this type recurred in Enlightenment debates over human particularity, rationality, progress, and universal value (Hulme 1990; Todorov 1994; Vyverberg 1989). They shaped the contours of secular rationality and stimulated the formation of new varieties of scientific thinking aimed at explaining human difference and making it a stable, calculable component in the rational ordering of an expanding world, populated by new political and social actors: movements, classes, corporate powers, armies, national states, and contractual governments. In time, similar conflicts would become integral to bitter arguments over the value and character of the race idea and the scientific, historical, and aesthetic discourses that it generated.
p. 658 Susan ↳ Buck-Morss (2000, 821–66) and others have shown how plantation slavery in the New World became fundamental to these discussions. European political theorists debated the revolution in Haiti. Their interpretations of politics, justice, and, indeed, philosophy itself were altered as a result.

The transnational anti-slavery movement, the later campaigns to protect aboriginal and indigenous peoples, and the uneven struggles to render the dubious civilizing missions of colonial government just and accountable, were some of the other political fruits of this protracted conflict. Those initiatives wanted not only to win recognition for slaves and natives as human beings of equal value, endowed with moral personality and in need of salvation, but also to amend European self-understanding in profound ways. The latter task could be accomplished by emphasizing the issues that arose from seeing European life and settlement in relation to the habits and practices of other groups (Dussel 1995).

Primary concern with religious and cultural divisions among Europeans gave way to new conceptions of difference that could produce and explain the more substantive divisions being discovered between Europeans and other kinds of barbarous and savage people. These inquiries did not always or immediately generate an explicit or simple hierarchy of racial groups. That emerged later from attempts to place European colonial authority on the novel footing of rationality once the revolutionary idea of essential human equality was in play (Frederickson 2003). After those shifts, differences would be contained by notions of culture, character, place, and climate or conceptualized on a temporal scale in which human groups were thought to be at various stages on a common journey towards the same ultimate destination. Once again, the idea of race was central to this process. Criticism of its institutionalization as a political, economic, historical, and philosophical concept provided much of the eventual impetus for the anti-colonial projects that eventually lent their energy and insight to post-colonial analysis.

Another strand of what would become post-colonial theorizing descends from Michel de Montaigne's unsettling ethnographic encounter with the insightful, perplexed Cannibals that he met, not on the far-flung shores of the New World, but much closer to home, in Rouen (Montaigne 1991, 228–41). This pattern of reflection unfolded inside a Europe that was violently divided along religious lines. As a result, different questions were being asked about the character and significance of visible, bodily difference and the cultural
p. 659 variations that made it seem potent. Intra-European conflicts were ↳ instrumental in complicating the issue of barbarism so that it could not remain wholly external to Christendom.

As the historic unity of Christendom was fractured, this painful conversation about human variation became not just relational but more systematically comparative. Gulliver and Crusoe, whose informal anthropological procedures started to settle into a coherent precursor of comparative method, were two of its early geo-poetic icons. Some of the same spirit underpinned Montesquieu's principled exposure of unsettled European singularity to the test of infinite cultural diversity. On its way into the present, this plural view of social life touched the humanism of Vico and the culturalism of Herder as well as the cosmopolitanism of Kant before emerging, through the mazes of Hegel, Marx, and Nietzsche, into the desolate, inhospitable landscape of the twentieth century where a disenchanted and fearful Freud—observing both Zionism and the rise of Nazi antisemitism—became its most notable custodian.

Each of those thinkers bequeathed a complex body of theory that was addressed to problems discovered in colonial contact zones. All of them can benefit by being read in relation to the emergent forms of imperial geopolitics, the concerns with racial conflict, hierarchy, and degeneration that accompanied it, and other nascent anthropological preoccupations. The meanings of human variation and the value to be placed upon both natural differences and social divisions were subjected to protracted consideration. The frightening and disgusting figures of the Jew, the Muslim, and the Negro were only the most notorious alien characters that recurred inside this strand of commentary on the boundaries between civilization and barbarity which were being redrawn during the nineteenth century as a consequence of European settlement in colonial territories that had previously been considered inhospitable. This variety of debate and reflection should be distinguished because it was not focused on the alien and savage as they were featured within the remote spaces where they could be thought to be at home. Instead, they were observed with a special intensity when they appeared elsewhere, as strangers at large in Europe's modern, metropolitan core. "How can one be Persian?" the famous question voiced by one of Montesquieu's baffled, fashionable Parisians in the face of fascinating and exotic otherness, subsequently found many parallel expressions: how can one be an Arab? a Jew? an African? Or most recently, how can one wear a hijab?[2]

p. 660 Numerous problems of religious tolerance, and civil and political rights, were compressed into the formulaic "Jewish Question." They were articulated as part of enlightened Europe's exploration of rational political culture and the position of aliens within it. This discussion also contributed indirectly to what would become post-colonial theory. European thinkers examined toleration from a variety of standpoints, not all of which prized it as a virtue even where it could be associated with the establishment of peace and prosperity. In some cases, the award of political rights was imagined to require conversion or some other form of moral purification that would foster recognition as human while simultaneously disposing of the less socially desirable aspects of Judaism. Several historians have challenged the assumption that the writers who supplied many of the conceptual pillars of official liberalism were united by a philosemitic disposition (Rose 1990; Poliakov 1974; Mosse 1978).

Significant difficulties arise because many of the most valuable and insightful contributions to European political thought appear compromised by what are, at the very least, ambiguous statements about Jews and the possibility of accommodating them within the workings of a healthy national state. Their character and history supplied political and philosophical thought with an evolving case study of how difficult it was to manage a stubbornly alien presence within a civilized polity.

Conventional understanding of the components of contemporary post-colonial theory usually emphasizes the ways in which it has been based upon insights adapted from the decolonization and national-liberation movements that first contained and then undid European expansion. Those radical initiatives were twentieth-century phenomena organized from what is now called the global South. Often they arose from national states which opted not to be aligned with either capitalism or communism. These governments were committed, not only to the redress of rationally-determined political and economic wrongs that had arisen during the colonial period, but also to explore alternative conceptions of politics that would mark their distance from Europe's tainted conventions by being incompatible with the colour- and culture-coded hierarchies which had guided the practical terrors of colonial rule and the Darwinian imperatives of imperial administration. Traditional or pre-conquest conceptions of kinship, property, authority, and space might, for example, be allowed to determine the direction and priorities of the political community (Nkrumah 1965).

Richard Wright, the African-American novelist and intellectual living in Parisian exile during the 1950s,
p. 661 traveled to the famous meeting of non-aligned ↳ countries in Bandung, Indonesia. His book, *The Colour Curtain*, discusses the political direction that would arise "beyond left and right" once the residual constraints of colonial domination were surpassed. Wright's excited stance, avowedly against both communism and capitalism, voiced a desire for new varieties of politics that could only be apprehended once racial and colonial hierarchies had been overthrown (Wright 1956).

Strong reactions against racialized ways of understanding and ordering the world as well as the manifold injustices and exploitation involved in colonial rule had led many thinkers to seek new forms of political expression. They could be deduced from pre-colonial cultures and traditions, and discovered in the religious outlooks of colonized people. They were important, not just because they valued those despised resources, but because they encouraged an approach to Europe's political recipes which saw them not as universal, but rather as ethno-historical accomplishments limited to the specific settings in which they had first appeared.

Mahatma Gandhi (born 1869) and W. E. B. DuBois (born 1868) were two of the best-known political advocates and interpreters of this anti-colonial tide. Their legacies remain fundamental to the project of post-colonial theory and help to organize it as a field of inquiry. Both asserted that neither history nor humanity could be the exclusive property of Europe and its imperial offshoots. Both saw also that there were significant cultural resources in the pre-conquest traditions and hidden everyday life of subaltern groups which could be used to channel their dissent and to bolster resistance as well as the pursuit of long-denied human recognition, citizenship, and thwarted independence.

Gandhi had witnessed the power of racial divisions and the special brutality of colonial warfare during his time in South Africa. He extracted political lessons from the national struggles of the Irish and Welsh, revered Tolstoy and Thoreau, and argued, in effect, for a form of cultural nationalism which combined Hindu values and morality with radical elements of European thinking about nationality, autonomy, and change. DuBois, whose itinerancy, like Gandhi's, seems to have fed his indictments of injustice, understood the significance of black America's desire for citizenship in Hegelian terms. Adapting notions of world history and world citizenship from German sources, he created a dialectical theory of African-American political identity that concealed his cosmopolitan inspiration by enveloping it in a folkish poetic idiom. The warring selves—one Negro, the other American—that characterized the plight of US blacks under
p. 662 segregated "Jim Crow" rules, would eventually be reconciled in a higher, better unity which offered to an ↳ eager world new conceptions of political freedom. These innovations were derived expressly from the overcoming of racism and racial hierarchy wherever they were located.

DuBois' magisterial volume, *Black Reconstruction in America 1860–1880* (1935), articulated these aspirations in a challenging historical narrative. He reformulated the significance of the period immediately after slavery so that it could be understood as part of a conflict over the character and quality of US democracy.

African-Americans were repositioned among those with whom DuBois felt they shared a common world-historic destiny: "That dark and vast sea of human labor in China and India, the South Seas and all of Africa; in the West Indies and Central America and in the United States—that great majority of mankind, on whose bent and broken backs rest today the founding stones of modern industry"(DuBois 1973, 15).

Many of the intellectual leaders of what was becoming a global opposition to imperial rule had benefited from elite colonial education. They had entered fully into the theoretical and philosophical idioms of Europe and were steeped in those traditions of thought which were actively redeployed against imperial rule. This group wanted to show, first, how distinctive theories of political agency might be devised; second, where the acquisition of independent national states could supply a means of historic reparation; and third, how civilization and democracy could be produced in more inclusive and internally-differentiated forms.

Marcus Garvey, the peripatetic Jamaican leader of the century's great trans-national, Ethiopianist (Post 1970) movement of black people, the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), attended London's Birkbeck College. His more philosophical reflections can be used to typify what we can call a reparationist political tendency. His sometimes militaristic organization drew its philosophical inspiration from ancient and modern sources (Moses 1978). A Platonic notion of the ideal state was folded easily into some of the more authoritarian conceptions of social life that Garvey derived from reading Aristotle (Hill 1987).

The reparationist impulses that inspired his mass movement had to contend with another less militaristic approach to political struggle. This shared Garvey's emphases on nation-building and the reversal of Africa's diaspora but placed the issue of redress in the background. Priority was given instead to the problem of vindication. The suitability of ex-slaves and colonial peoples for the burdens of democratic citizenship and modern self-possession could be demonstrated on the basis of their evident educational, creative, and ↳ moral progress. A great deal of the social and political writing by nineteenth-century African-American thinkers underscored this second tendency's debts to Victorian conceptions of nationality, kinship, and uplift in which race and family were melded into a single dynamic entity.

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One particularly powerful illustration of this second conception of political community and nation-building resides in a collectively authored 1893 pamphlet which explored the exclusion of African-Americans from the four-hundredth anniversary celebrations of Colombus' discovery of the Americas. The document was dedicated "to the seeker after truth" and contains a preface which was printed in three languages, suggesting both an outward gaze and the authors' anticipation of a global audience. Ida B. Wells and her radical collaborators specified their distinctive political outlook in the matrix of several interrelated social problems all of which were intensified and augmented by the centripetal force of US racial inequality. These issues included the repudiation of legal inequality, in particular the operation of an unjust prison system which had slyly reinstated aspects of the slave past, and a resolute opposition to the ritual terrors of lynching as a means of political administration. All of these difficulties were offset against the American Negro's impressive record of educational achievement which made them not only fit for citizenship but also recognizable to their rulers as human beings (Rydell 1991). The larger battle for freedom from the yoke of colonialism was a constant point of reference and inspiration.

It is essential to correct any impression that these influential interventions by African-Americans were remote or disconnected from the thinking of colonial and anti-colonial theorists and activists in other parts of the world. Garvey conceived his "Zionist" scheme for the eventual repatriation of New World blacks to Africa, on a hemispheric scale. UNIA publications, distributed covertly by seafarers, made their way across the elaborate networks of imperial trade. The organization's transnational activities soon aroused the anxiety of colonial administrators fearful that a blending of his ideology with Bolshevism would be destabilizing. In a 1922 cable to the Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, Garvey set out his political project in these alarming and seditious words: "We are for the freedom of India and the complete liberation of the

African colonies, including the Nigerias, Sierra Leone, Gold Coast and Southwest and East Africa. We wish your nation all that is good, but not at the expense of the darker and weaker peoples of the earth."[3]

p. 664 Inside the French Empire, the Senegalese statesman, poet, and philosopher Leopold Sédar Senghor was an early and important proponent of Négritude, another culturally-oriented, philosophical, and aesthetic theory of black resistance and rebirth which did not defer to national boundaries. Senghor's many theoretical and poetic contributions reveal where the anglophone and francophone worlds of anti-colonial activism touched and influenced each other. He described his own interest in the work of African-American thinkers thus: "During the 1930s, when we launched our Négritude movement from Paris, we drew our inspiration especially—and paradoxically from 'Negro Americans' in the general sense of the word: from the Harlem Renaissance movement, but also from the 'indigenist' movement in Haiti. It is true that in those years black thinkers and writers from the United States stood out brilliantly, for the first time gaining international renown" (Senghor 1976).

This oppositional history underlines that the bulk of what is now considered to be post-colonial theory is an emphatically twentieth-century affair. All of these itinerant, world-historic personalities combined political activity in several locations with extensive writing for an unusually wide range of readerships. Their various critical projects were developed through challenging encounters with nationalism, socialism, and communism. At the same time, they also opposed the liberal standpoints which had tamely dissented from Europe's crimes but nonetheless counterpointed the desire of the colonized to be free to determine their own political and economic destinies.

This multinational body of writing shows that the complex formation of a cosmopolitan critique of colonial power can only be reconstructed from a number of different angles. If we are to understand the global history of post-colonial thought, we need to be sensitive to the breadth and diversity of components that were both religious and profane, narrowly nationalist and expansively cosmopolitical. Until recently, it has been difficult to see these constituent parts as forming a single inclusive narrative. The pursuit of civil and political rights is, for example, like the struggle for nationhood before it, usually explained exclusively in national or regional terms. An implicit geopolitics gives automatic privilege to the national or regional settings from which the critique was offered. That parochialism obscures the commonalities and correspondences which marked the evolution of post-colonial politics. If we are, for example, to grasp how the language of rights acquires such a powerful political resonance during the twentieth century and how,
p. 665 as a result, the idea of Human Rights becomes so attractive and so widely ↳ translated, we must pay attention to Gandhi no less than the liberal traditions he engaged and bent to new purposes.

The lives of Gandhi and DuBois were connected in a more practical way by their attendance at the 1911 Universal Races Congress held in London. This humanitarian gathering was aimed at a "reunion of east and west" and its optimistic spirit would be wrecked by the eruption of the World War a few years later. Nonetheless, the event remains an important early staging-post in the development of the distinctive, post-colonial perspective Robert J. C. Young has dubbed tricontinentalism.[4]

The political imagination that underpinned this formation hoped that local struggles in Asia, Africa, and Latin America could be combined into a movement capable of remaking and improving the world, purging it of the unwholesome fruits of colonialism. H. G. Wells, Ernst Haekl, J. A. Hobson, and Georg Simmel were just a few of the others who joined Gandhi and DuBois for visionary discussions. The prospect of this dangerous fusion of political horizons would be of growing concern to the imperial powers during the interwar period. Their anxieties were boosted further by the desire of many colonial peoples to export Woodrow Wilson's postwar principles beyond the small space in which he had imagined they would apply and by the alarming political alliance created in opposition to the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1936. The great powers were also apprehensive lest the effects of the Russian Revolution seeped into their colonial territories. This possibility

had been underlined by the growth of the UNIA, which was said to result from the Bolshevik ability to use colonial discontent as an instrument with which to undermine both capitalism and imperial authority.

A number of anti-colonial and New World black thinkers did turn towards Marxism. They hoped to find in it a set of conceptual resources which could unlock the causal logic of racial oppression and the agency of its victims to resist and overthrow colonial rule. Cedric Robinson has shown in detail that in almost every case, the ready-made versions of Marxist theory that were on offer were judged to be insufficient. They were too economistic, insensitive to the political significance of culture, and often unhelpfully Europe-centered. These problems had long been evident in discussions of the Asiatic mode of production or in a view of the struggle for existence among nations that divided them into the authentically historic and the abjectly non-
p. 666 historic. ↳ However, these quarrels with Marxism, conducted by C. L. R. James, W. E. B. DuBois, Frantz Fanon, and many others, are also a significant and neglected part of the formation of post-colonial theory. They too can help us to understand the theoretical approaches to political agency that were specific to post-colonial conditions, to introduce a periodization of the broad anti-colonial movement in the twentieth century, and to track the development of post- and anti-colonial theory through the cold war and beyond.

Fanon spoke for many of his peers when he concluded that "Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched every time we have to do with the colonial problem"(Fanon 1965, 31). Among the most accessible and important writings that assist in assessing the impact of Marxism in this area are notable contributions by the Trinidadian leftists C. L. R. James and George Padmore. James, as is well-known, wrote a path-breaking study of the Haitian revolution which had, as a subtext, a great deal to say about the functioning of revolutionary organizations and the character of insurrectionary leadership. Padmore is less celebrated and had a longer and deeper, although certainly critical, association with the Soviet Union. Like many of their political generation, both men invested a great deal of hope in the opportunities for change that commenced with the establishment of an independent Ghana under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah (Hooker 1967).

That newly independent state would constitute the institutional hub of a Pan-African movement which could provide a political alternative not just to the polarized options of the cold war period, but to the oversimple opposition between tradition and modernity. Padmore's *Pan-Africanism or Communism* (1956) began with an epigraph from Rabindranath Tagore and concluded thus: "In our struggle for national freedom, human dignity and social redemption, Pan-Africanism offers an ideological alternative to Communism on one side and Tribalism on the other. It rejects both white racialism and black chauvinism. It stands for racial co-existence on the basis of absolute equality and respect for human personality" (Padmore 1956, 379).

The humanistic tone, evident there, represents more than just an echo from the influential rhetoric of the United Nations' declaration on human rights. It is also an effect of the commitment to struggle explicitly against racism, race-thinking, and racialized hierarchy. Similar universalistic language is common to the writings of many others. It links Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor, and Frantz Fanon to the work of Amilcar Cabral and a host of more ephemeral anti-colonial sources. Their sometimes lofty, sometimes
p. 667 eschatological, but always doggedly non-racial humanisms are ↳ extremely significant, although they have proved to be an embarrassment to the more abstract, sophisticated, and scholastic contemporary versions of post-colonial theory. Those humanistic speculations bear a precise, negative imprint of racial systems of thought and power. The specific commitment to overthrow racism and ethnic absolutism endows in them a distinctive quality which is not shared by anti-racist universalism of the UNESCO variety, even when the respective rhetorics seem to overlap. The same tone is also audible in the more recent post-colonial writings of figures like Nelson Mandela, Edward Said, Albert Memmi, and Eqbal Ahmed. Their contributions to the emancipation of former colonies from imperial rule and the consolidation of independent political life were bolstered by a common desire. They wanted to elevate the struggles of colonized people to a universal level while simultaneously holding on to the historical and cultural specificity of the particular groups involved—an approach pioneered, as far as political theory is concerned, by Senghor (1964, 84–6).

This difficult commitment was elaborated in the work of numerous colonial intellectuals and anti-colonial strategists. It was especially pronounced among those who served in the European armies and resistance movements during the struggle against fascism and who tried, as a result, to adapt the ethical and political analyses of evil, racism, and democracy found there to the different cause represented by decolonization.

The insights left by this group of thinkers, particularly by Jean-Paul Sartre, Fanon, and Senghor, were decisive in generating a distinctive voice for post-colonial theory after the creation of the United Nations. Sartre built upon Richard Wright's view of the Negro as "America's Metaphor" and Simone de Beauvoir's parallel sense of woman as a social rather than a natural entity, to create a more general and historical theory of racial ontologies. For all of them, the infrahuman objects of racial hatred were generated by the dominant group. The dominated were, as Fanon would show, victims of racial hierarchy. Unable to enjoy the more authentic modes of being in the world that could develop an account of racial differences with reference to the future, they were condemned to live out an "amputated" humanity within the restricted categories of epidermalization (Fanon 1986, 112).

For these thinkers, there were strong historical and political connections between the genocidal racism of the Nazis and the racisms securing colonial rule in Algeria and Indochina. Aimé Césaire confronted these issues in his 1955 (1972) *Discourse On Colonialism*. He was one of the first theorists of post-colonial social and political order to argue for an interpretation of the ↳ industrial killing of Europe's Jews and other minorities as an amplified instance of the routine brutality of colonial government. It had, he suggested, looped back into the core of European civilization. As a result, Césaire argued, for the European bourgeois class, Hitler's unforgivable crime was not a crime against man as such but rather "the crime against 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 blacks of Africa"(Césaire 1972).

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There are now many versions of this proposition. It has received support from historians of the concentration camp—a political technology that emerged from colonial wars—and from some of the survivors of the Third Reich. Today, post-colonial theory mobilizes all these seemingly discrepant historical and ethical resources and places them in dialogue. Primo Levi wrote about the components of the racialized terror he knew in ways that were not prescriptive and invited thoughtful comparison across historical and cultural distances without being drawn into a competition over the relative dimensions of different histories of suffering. Most notably, in his theoretically rich discussion of the experience of being an intellectual in Auschwitz, Levi's fellow inmate, Jean Améry, identified Fanon's work on violence as one place where he had been able to find an analysis that could help restore physical and metaphysical dignity to the damaged being of the tortured prisoner (Améry 1980, 91).

These connections were fostered because, after 1945, the evolution of post-colonial theory took place in a special atmosphere shaped by widespread condemnation of the Nazi Reich as a racist regime. The political analyses that followed can be triangulated by several interrelated political developments tied to the decomposition of the British empire. The cataclysm of 1948 saw the partition of India, the institution of Apartheid, and the reparative establishment of the state of Israel in Palestine.

The most prominent figures in the next phase of post-colonial reflection were people like Eqbal Ahmed, Edward Said, Stuart Hall, Ranajit Guha, Gayatri Spivak, and most recently, Mahmood Mamdani. These successors to the combatant generation can be distinguished by the fact that all of them had migrated from formerly imperial and colonial locations into the unsteady core of overdevelopment's metropolitan systems. Their views of both politics and culture had consequently been enriched by formative experiences of migration and exile, cultural plurality, and hierarchy as well as by the everyday complexities of social life under race-conscious, colonial rules.

p. 669 The immediate progenitors and earliest practitioners of self-consciously post-colonial thought are found among this intellectual stratum. They have, in different ways, promoted a refined sense of culture as a political and para-political field, creating broad critical enterprise that, at its best, has spanned academic and political concerns. The intellectual energy of this group was directed towards analyzing some especially difficult problems: the residual potency of colonial arrangements in constraining nominally independent states, the specific power of racism which tied colonial history to the lives of immigrants/settlers and deformed the polities of nations that had benefited from their colonial potency, the difficulties which the ex-colonies discovered in the process of forming new governmental arrangements undamaged by their histories of brutal rule, and so on.

Opposition, first to the wars in Algeria and Vietnam and then to South Africa's undeniably racialized government, dominated post-colonial theory during this period. In particular, South Africa became the object of an unprecedented international movement of resistance. The one country in which the political force of racial hierarchy could not be disputed, supplied a moral and methodological test to all would-be analysts of the distinctive patterns of statecraft found in post- and neo-colonial regimes (Fanon 1965, 29). The interventionist projects pioneered by this transitional group laid the foundations for their more scholastically inclined successors, many of whom were interested in understanding the post-colonial articulation of culture and politics through rapidly-expanding global circuitry.

Following the publication of Said's *Orientalism* in 1978, attention to the historical, cultural, and philosophical formations that had produced the Orient as an object of knowledge and power were combined with a very different sense of the politics of race and ethnicity. This additional element was supplied by the history of immigration by formerly colonial peoples and by their own interpretations of their political fate and duty in circumstances where having access to formal citizenship did not mean either that equality could be taken for granted or that complacent democracy would set aside its historic associations with racism. This was the stage in which post-colonial analysis began to be consciously undertaken.

The institutional take-off point for post-colonial theory was marked by an extensive encounter with feminist concerns. They were imported from activist sources and from the contributions of colonial historians and anthropologists. Writers such as Kenneth Ballhatchet, Vron Ware, and Anne Mclintock argued that gender
p. 670 hierarchies, sexuality, and unexpected forms of intimacy ↳ were intrinsic to the functioning of colonial societies and to their continuing impact on metropolitan life. In the colony, space for transgressive and intimate interaction did not conform to any tidy formal separation of public and private. Attention to gender dynamics demanded a revised account of personal, political, and cultural relationships that had been illuminated by feminist historical scholarship. If they could be considered together, relationally, the braided lives and experiences of colonized and colonizer women could reshape fundamental analytical categories: class, nation, family, household. It was only after this encounter with feminist critique that the intersection of post-colonial and multicultural theory assumed a stable academic shape.

Contemporary debates over multiculturalism suggest that there is no consensus over how the term should be defined politically or employed in the human sciences. That heterogeneity has awkward consequences for attempts to build a more conceptual and abstract discussion of its value and for comparative approaches to the range of phenomena to which the term can refer. Multiculturalism has acquired several different disciplinary inflections. It has also been coloured by a number of distinctive local histories. Various, incompatible claims have been made upon it from England to South Africa and North America where, for example, Canadian and US debates about the interpretative potential of the term have not converged.

This situation becomes even more difficult once we appreciate that, like post-colonialism, multiculturalism is also often a coded way of speaking about race and about the dangerous processes through which race becomes a matter of culture. It was culture openly, and race tacitly, that provided the meeting ground for these two bodies of theoretical reflection and supplied the protocols that governed their interaction. Most

contemporary disputes over multiculturalism can be traced to a series of conflicts about the status of north American racial and ethnic relations and their place within the political processes unfolding in the other parts of the globe to which US racial and ethnic systems are now being exported.

We must note that for many political theorists, the term multiculturalism suggests what might be called a mosaic plurality. This is a highly specific conception of the relationship between diversity and unity. It derives from uniquely North American historical conditions. In this approach, fragments of culture—which is always already ethnic and racial—are mutually positioned by minimal civic cement and by the maximal
p. 671 force of market relations which host a richer and more dynamic public sphere than government has ↳ been able to manage or is interested in maintaining. However beautiful they may be when considered in isolation, these fragments are expected to remain unmodified and unchanged by their proximity to other similar components of a larger picture which, when seen from a distance, can look very attractive. This model promotes and sometimes seeks to legitimate a form of interpretation in which race and ethnicity are elevated and reified as absolutes and in which difference gets contained within symmetrical or at least similarly-configured social and cultural units that are arranged, in spite of any hierarchy they might be made to compose, so that they form a national unit.

This particular view of ethnic difference and cultural variation is not a fruitful way to think about the contemporary workings of multiculture. These ideas are haunted by an older conception of plural society which was rooted in colonial statecraft (Furnivall 1948; Smith 1961). It is evident in resistance to conceptualizing economic, social, cultural, and political differences in a hierarchical pattern and a preference for seeing the same differences organized laterally or combined like the slices of a circular cake that touch one another only at its center. By replaying the political habits, models, and styles that were once characteristic of colonial government, this approach to multiculture offers a repudiation of post-colonial theory which has insisted on the primal significance of cultural conflict and its relation to political processes.

It is easy to overlook that some of the most important and influential strains of political commentary on multiculturalism have arisen from negotiation with indigenous populations in various national states. Those debates have been focused on problems of recognition, reparation, and sovereignty but those are not the only ways that commentaries upon rights, culture, and difference can be accented. A different, although related, variety of discussion about citizenship, tolerance, and plurality—linguistic, religious, and cultural —has grown out of encounters between "hosts" and immigrants. The latter may be post-colonial peoples with citizenship claims or they may be drawn from refugees, asylum seekers, guest workers, and their locally-born descendants whose affiliations are contested on other grounds. The marginal positions occupied by all these groups have typically been associated with a more culturally-oriented kind of commentary on the problems and opportunities represented by assimilation, national identity, and belonging. A third variant of multiculturalism has emerged from a few explicit attempts to undo unjust racial orders. Reforms of this type have been instituted by independent post-colonial governments like
p. 672 South Africa. They also arose from attempts ↳ to reckon with the damage done to democracy by genocide, by segregation, and by importing the mentalities and techniques of colonial administration from the periphery into the metropolitan centre. This third form of multiculturalist discourse encompasses several historical cases. It acquired a global reach when, for example, the political legacies of the Third Reich, of the overthrow of Jim Crow, and of the formal destruction of Apartheid were deemed to have more than merely local significance.

Of course, any single political formation may include elements drawn from each and perhaps all of these approaches. They have overlapped and influenced each other, creating conceptual and ethical exchanges with the theories produced by movements aimed at decolonization. These histories of theoretical reflection and political conflict need now to be disentangled.

The desire to conceive of difference innocently, that is, without having to reckon with the hierarchy and conflict that distinguish imperial and colonial power, reappears periodically. However, faced with those revisionist impulses, there are specific gains involved in steering discussion back towards the histories of race-thinking and European colonial rule. A worthwhile understanding of modern government can be extracted from those timely investigations. It has implications not only for theories of law, state, and the administration of power but also, as post-colonial theory insists, for the concept of culture itself, for the embattled idea of multiculture, and thus for the politics and the ethics of multiculturalism.

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Notes

1 Seed (1995, 70). The term "contact zone" derives from Pratt (1991).
2 See Montesquieu (1973, 83, Letter 30).
3 Foreign Office 371/10632: copy of press release from the UNIA 13 March 1922.
4 Young (2003) adapts the term "tricontinental" from the 1966 Havana Conference of the Organisation of Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America which is popularly known by that name.