A brief guide to postcolonialism and decolonizing

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Summary
This paper summarizes some important background aspects of postcolonialism and decolonization, including clarifying some of the terminology for those who haven't yet had the opportunity to study this large and complex field. It is of course a small selection and does not claim to include everything. It may be considered as a sampler.

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Introduction

Many Waldorf schools are considering the question of decolonizing or recontextualizing their curriculum and I have published several papers about this (Rawson, 2020, 2021, 2023 a,b). The literature on postcolonialism is very important and interesting but many teachers will not have the time to start studying this field if they have not already done so. There are of course good books on the subject (e.g. Young, 2020). This paper can serve as orientation and a clarification of terminology.

Colonialism, post-colonialism, decolonization, re-colonization: an unholy declination

Colonialism means subjugating other people, exploiting them and their land and destroying their culture, suppressing their languages and traditions, and leaving people in a dependent,

subaltern and marginalized position. Let us recall that in 1914 "Europe held a grand total of roughly 85% of the earth as colonies, protectorates, dependencies, dominions and commonwealths" (Said, 2003, p.6).

There are many ways to do this, but they all have dire consequences and the awareness of this is called *postcolonialism* (Loomba, 2015). One of the consequences of postcolonialism is the duty not only *not* to forget all this, but also to try to understand and, above all, to be careful that we do not continue the process in any way. This is called *decolonizing.*

When it suited them, colonial powers suddenly abandoned their now fragmented and exploited colonies, or through the ebb and flow of colonial rivalry, colonies passed to another colonial power, or after protracted wars of liberation (eg. In Mexico, Algeria, Indonesia, Vietnam, Laos, Congo, Kenya, Angola, Afghanistan several times, 1st and 2nd Gulf War, etc.), and later proxy wars (e.g., Honduras, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Syria, Sudan, Ethiopia, Yemen, etc.) that cost untold victims, they were forced to leave. The Europeans who settlered in the colonies that later became independent nations (e.g. Brazil, USA, Australia, South Africa) developed a hybrid worldview that we can nevertheless call Western and this often involved continued internal colonization.

Neocolonizing occurs through economic imperialism of transnational organizations and multinational corporations, the selective use of so-called development aid to enforce certain policies advantageous to the major powers. Neocolonial nations often use covert military support to undermine legitimate and democratic governments in developing countries if these resist neoliberal policies or lean towards the left wind policies. These leads to depencies and loss of control over their own resources by developing countries, spiralling debt, landgrabbing, loss of ownership of the local economy. It includes the protectionism of the G7 countries and the EU, that ruins the economies of developing countries (e.g through agricultural dumping policies of the US or the EU) and leads to mass migration from South to North. These phenomena and their consequences have been well documented by Joseph Stiglitz, Armartya Sen and Noam Chomsky

The West -and all European countries have benefited directly or indirectly through colonization - insisted, of course, that the colonized and later the post-colonized shape and run their politics, civil society, institutions, education, and economy according to Western values and forms (which has not always succeeded). In the case of Afghanistan, the original issue was not so much the exploitation of wealth as the potential threat that this poor country posed to a number of empires, from the British to the Russians to the Americans and their NATO allies after the 9/11 attacks. Now China, Russia, Turkey and Qatar want to use their influence for their own purposes, since the underdeveloped country has huge reserves of valuable resources, such as copper and rare earth metals, necessary for chip processor production.

As Young (2020) points out, the prefix post in postcolonialism refers not only to the historical period after the withdrawal of colonial power, but also to the continuing effects of historical events in the present, and especially to the consciousness of having been colonized.

This temporal structure of "un passé qui ne passe pas" (a past that does not pass)-is particularly vexing and threatening to the bourgeois West when the marginalized, excluded, and forgotten suddenly appear in the midst of the present, like the sudden emergence of a virulent virus, and must likewise be combated by all means rather than looking for causes in our own. Many postcolonial effects have migrated from the remote former colonies into the middle of the "motherland" in the banlieues and hotspot neighborhoods of our metropolises. The effects of postcolonialism also belong to the present. The past is by no means past, only our narrow-minded gaze and our desire to get on with our lives now without interference makes it seem so. This is why the appearance of migrants and refugees at the border gets on the nerves of the public and the mainstream media. From there, the term postcolonialism includes the migrant experience and all those who have been and are being forced to leave their homes and culture. It includes the critical examination of the legacy of all forms of oppression, discrimination, marginalization, exploitation and neglect of people's rights. Decolonizing is an attitude, a mindset, a consciousness, and not just coming to terms with history.

Re-colonization means, for example, subjecting whole nations to the monopoly of certain transnational corporations and Big Data companies of USA or China. In many developing countries as well as emerging countries like India, Brazil or Mexico, Facebook is the internet and for 95% of the population Whatsapp is the first source of news and information. Recolonization is a controversial goal of China's Belt and Road project, as it creates significant dependencies through debt and forms of land grabbing. Other forms of re-colonization include the creation of new islands in the South China Sea, significantly expanding China's territorial waters. Similarly, Russia's "re-conquest" of Crimea, expansion into Ukraine or Georgia, or China's takeover of Hong Kong and systematic destruction of all forms of democracy there can be portrayed by patriots and propaganda as liberation or defense. Whatever justifications are given for all these actions, and many of them have to do with long-term responses to colonialism in the past, the reality is that some people are being colonized (again or anew) by others, and the balance of power is correspondingly asymmetrical.

The ideas of postcolonialism

It is difficult to address decolonization without considering postcolonial theory, which builds on feminism and postmodern deconstruction, and in particular Michel Foucault's ideas on power and knowledge and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's ideas about territorialization,

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deterritorialization and reterritorialization, which have both metaphorical but also very concrete meanings since colonizing involves taking land, disinheriting its indigenous inhabitants and enforced and often violent economic, cultural, social and spiritual transformation of indigenous people. Territory is taken, conquered, occupied, cleared of its original ecology and people, settled by colonizers, exploited, and sold as real estate or left as wasteland. This is both metaphorical and literal. I will briefly outline the core ideas below.

Frantz Fanon (1925-1961)

One of the first theorists of postcolonial studies, the psychiatrist and philosopher Frantz Fanon (*The Wretched of the Earth*, 1961), identified the primary gesture of colonialism as the imposition of a subjugating colonial identity on colonised people, leading to a subservient, dehumanising mentality. "Because it is a systematic negation of the other person and a furious determination to deny the other person all attributes of humanity, colonialism forces the people it dominates to ask themselves the question constantly; "In reality, who am I?" (Fanon, 1961). Fanon also linked colonialism to capitalism and not only in classical colonial situations.

Edward Said (1935-2003)

In his classic work *Orientalism*, the cultural and literary historian Edward Said (1979/2003) showed how dominant cultures (as a Palestinian, he was referring primarily to the Eurocentrism of the European and American West) represent and thereby constitute other cultures, and how a certain kind of Orientalism enabled the West to justify colonization of the Middle East in particular. The notion of "othering" people that he coined is thus an important concept for postmodern thought. Once one has been othered, one becomes an object with no identity, or rather identity becomes mutable. As Said ironically described the plight of his people;

> How rich our mutability, how easily we change (and are changed) from one thing to another, how unstable our place- and all because of the missing foundation of our existence, the lost ground of our origin, the broken link with our land and our past. There are no Palestinians. Who are the Palestinians? "The inhabitants of Judea and Samaria'. Non-Jews. Terrorists. Troublemakers. DPs. Refugees. Names on a card. Numbers on a list. Praised in speeches- *el pueblo palestino*, *il populo palestino*, *le peuple palestin*- but treated as interruptions, intermittent presences (Said, 1986, 26).

Ideas of the Orient reflected changing European values and concerns, mixing esoteric, unorthodox views with a desire for romantic otherness, even sublimity. The character of this early Orientalism can be seen in Mozart's *Magic Flute* with its mixture of Masonic codes and sympathetic longings for a redemptive Orient. We also find it in Romantic and Gothic

literature and art, which often depicted the Orient as a clichéd exotic mix of barbaric glory, mysticism and homoeroticism. Orientalism fused several cultural histories into a single narrative, which the ruling local elites also often internalised as romanticised Arab culture. Orientals were also often portrayed as irrational, violent, despotic and in need of civilisation. Orientalism also signifies the infantilisation and paternalism of subjugated people, suggesting they need paternalistic leadership on the assumption that they are incapable of self-development.

Said's account of Orientalism not only established the postcolonial discourse in literary studies but also, with a delay, in the field of human geography. The Orient is a constructed space also in a geographical sense, and geographical terms have become metaphors, such the Global South.

Orientalism has clearly taken a new turn since 9/11. In 2003, Said pointed out in a new preface that Arabs (and people from the Near East in general) are now seen in the West as potential terrorists, Salafists who want to destroy the Christian West. The racist attitudes still generally applied to the Orient are now diffusely distributed among a wide range of migrants from former colonies, refugees and even Arab billionaires (as well as Russian oligarchs, Indian and Chinese investors) whose wealth is welcome if they buy famous football clubs but whose religion and culture are not treated with the same respect.

Said's chapter on the transition from the almost exclusively hostile Orientalist ideas of the Renaissance to the ambivalence of the 18th century is particularly interesting for Waldorf education because it includes German Idealism. In particular, Said points to the notion of historicism (articulated by Herder, Vico and Hamann, for example), which is interesting from an anthroposophical perspective. Historicism states that,

> all cultures were organically and internally coherent, bound together by a spirit, genius, Klima, or national idea which an outsider could penetrate only by an act of historical sympathy. Thus Herder's *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (1784-91), was a panoramic display of various cultures, each permeated by an inimical creative spirit, each accessible only to an observer who sacrificed his prejudices to Einfühlung (Said, 2003, 118).

Herder's understanding of culture involved a progressive categorisation of stages of culture, from 'uneducated' and 'uncultivated' savages in their 'natural state', gradually rising to higher forms through cultivation and civilisation towards an increasing humanisation of the human being. Something similar is found in Wilhelm von Humboldt's *Plan for a Comparative Anthropology* (1795), with its teleology towards an ideal of humanity based on a method of comparative studies of peoples (analogous to comparative anatomy).

This idea, in which Steiner's understanding of culture is anchored, and which is expressed in terms such as *cultural epoch* and *folk soul*, clearly needs to be questioned in a de-colonising

perspective. This is a particular challenge for the dissemination of Steiner's ideas through translation. The problem is twofold: not only is there no clear equivalent to *Volkseele* (usually translated as "folk soul") in English, but the idea behind it is embedded in a cultural perspective that is simply no longer appropriate in the light of today's cultural or human sciences. In relation to Steiner's sequence of what he calls post-Atlantean cultural epochs and his characterisation of them, it is difficult to find an appropriate alignment with the known facts of early cultures. After the history of the 20th century and the Holocaust, and the widespread use of the idea of the *Völkisch* (referring to the notion of an original and racially pure people/tribe/race at the heart of national identity) in far-right ideology, the notion of the folk soul is deeply problematic. What Said's Orientalism highlights is not just the imposition of images of the Middle East by Western intellectuals, but the categorisation of other people altogether, including earlier, historical societies, and especially when this is part of a value system from lower, primitive to higher civilised.

Steiner was by no means alone in suggesting a teleological development from barbaric, savage and primitive to a supposed higher stage of development. Postcolonial perspectives on civilization are perhaps represented by Fernández-Armesto, who rejects the notion of civilization when it is used,

> to denote a supposed stage or phase which the history of societies commonly go through or which they achieve at their climax. I find this usage repugnant a fortiori because it implies a pattern of development, whereas I disbelieve in patterns and am skeptical about development. Societies change all the time but in different ways. They do not develop, evolve or progress, though in some measurable respects they may get better or worse , according to different criteria, at different times. They conform to no model, work towards no telos (Fernández-Armesto, 2000, 4).

His book *Civilizations* defines these as a type of relationship: " a relationship to the natural environment, recrafted, by the civilizing impulse, to meet human demands"(ibid. 5). Civilization is historical ecology, he argues, a process in which societies optimize their well-being whilst enhancing or at least maintaining nature. Sustainable and thus civilized human societies not only do not destroy their environment but they practice respect of other beings including other human beings, and even fruitfully borrow from each other's cultures.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1942-)

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is a feminist, Marxist, and deconstructionist literary critic who has brought the central concept of subalternity to postcolonial studies. One of her main concerns is pedagogy, particularly at the university level (Spivak, 2012). She emphasizes the need to "unlearn" what has been taught or not taught in institutions, for example, " the failure to consider colonialism and imperialism in the treatment of nineteenth-century history, typical of universities in the West, is sharply criticized. For them, this is renewed evidence of

the postcolonial continuation of epistemic violence" (Castro Varela & Dhawan, 2020, 185). Although heavily influenced by Marxist thought, she also criticized Marx for his Eurocentric assumption of historical progress and his critique of Asia as primitive and despotic, though she praised him for anticipating the importance of female labour.

Spivak (1996) gave new meaning to the term subaltern, originally coined by Antonio Gramsci, to refer to people excluded from the cultural hierarchy, especially by imperial structures. The term has been used to frame history from the perspective of the oppressed and colonized. Stuart Hall has pointed out that the dominant European cultural discourse, which consists of European ideas about culture, language, and society, creates social practice and thus positions people within this framework, preventing subaltern people from creating their own discourse.

Spivak takes this idea further, saying that merely belonging to the oppressed does not qualify a person as subaltern if they merely feel excluded but would like to be a part of what the dominant culture has. Spivak argues that it is not enough to talk about being discriminated against, as this implies that people are excluded from belonging to the dominant discourse, rather than being allowed to have their own culture and way of life. Subalternity means being included on the terms of the dominant. For this reason, she argued that academics should not interpret subaltern or indigenous people, but allow them to speak for themselves and hear their own explanation of their situation. She says that listening to and retelling another's story, however empathetically, can also be a form of colonization. It is important to give subaltern groups their own voice. This view has led to many new areas of ethnography and social geography.

According to Spivak, one of the tools that Western epistemology uses to negate indigenous ways of thinking-what she calls epistemic violence-is to force representatives to present their ideas in inappropriate formats. She cites the example of a representative of Bangladeshi farmers at an international conference on water management who was given 20 minutes to present highly complex ideas based on the very different ways of thinking of the people he represented. Another example is the habit of speaking of people in general and sweeping terms such as "Indian" or "indigenous" rather than accepting each as an individual.

Homi Bhabha (1909-1966)

Homi Bhabha (1990, 1994) argues that cultures are always in a state of hybridity, neither hermetically sealed off from other cultures by clear boundaries nor immutable by cultural reproduction, but maintaining their identity by constantly reconstructing themselves by trying to recreate imaginary conditions of the past. Cultures are never pure, and cultural interaction is never simply the clash of two entities. Indeed, cultures become most evident at the border and at the point of encounter with other cultures. At such borders, a third space opens up in

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which a new culture develops. Crucial to this process in the colonial context is that conflict arises when the dominant culture characterizes and portrays the other culture in terms of the dominant culture (e.g., primitive, tribal, emotional). Cultural differences are then the result of discriminatory practices and cultural identities are the result of the dominant culture's attempt to stabilize and consolidate its identity. The consequence of this thinking is that, "To avoid the culturalization of cultures, liberal majority cultures of the West must view themselves from the postcolonial perspective" (Castro Varela & Dhawan, 2020, 259).

Stuart Hall (1932-2014)

Stuart Hall was born in Jamaica and moved the UK and became an influential sociologist, pioneer of media studies, co-founder of the discipline of British Cultural Studies and activist. He one of the most important theorists of culture and cultural identity. One of the most difficult ideas of postcolonialism is that culture is not something given, does not exist in an essential form, but is always enacted. He has redefined cultural identity as what people do, say, and think and how they are positioned by the dominant culture. Cultures do not exist as such, as static, unchanging entities, but are constantly in the process of becoming and transforming. Cultural identities are the result of the process of identification and this activity takes place at the intersection of discourses. From there, cultural identities are performative.

Hall has highlighted this point in his discussions of the production of cultural identities in migrant groups such as the Caribbean population in the United Kingdom. Against the backdrop of the positioning of black immigrants in British society through the media, police behavior, generational memories of the past, and aspirational notions of blackness, Hall argued that cultural identities are produced through the process of identification. Firstly, he rejects the notion of an essentialist identity, replacing it with a positional one;

> the concept of identity does not signal that stable core of the self, unfolding from beginning to end through all the vicissitudes of history without change…Nor, - if we translate this essentializing conception to the stage of cultural identity – is it that 'collective or true self hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves' which a people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common, and which can stabilize, fix or guarantee all the other superficial differences: it accepts that identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions…Though they seem to invoke an origin in a historical past with which they continue to correspond, actually identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not 'who we are' , 'where we come from', so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves. Identities are therefore constituted within, not outside representation. They relate as much to the invention of

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tradition as much as to tradition itself…They arise from the narrativization of the self, but the necessarily fictional nature of this process in no way undermines its discursive, material or political effectivity…Precisely because identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices…This entails the radically disturbing recognition that it is only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what is not, to precisely what it lacks…(Hall, 1996, 4)

Hall further points out that cultural identities often emerge in the play and modalities of power, as products of difference and exclusion, and always in relation to the Other (2017). Identities both exclude and include. Every cultural identity, he says, has a "surplus" at its edge, something more, because its formation is a process of closure and often a process of binaries, male/female, black/white. Identities also tell us what someone is not. Identities are not entities, but constructs of politics and power. Hall thus speaks of cultural identity as the meeting point, the point of suture, between, on the one hand, the discourses and practices that place us in a particular position and make us subjects of particular discourses, and, on the other, the psychological processes "which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects who can be 'spoken'. Identities are thus points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us" (Hall, 1996, 6).

This definition may apply to people in transition from one culture to another dominant culture, but does it also apply to long-established cultures? What about populations that have been in one place for a long time and are relatively homogenous racially and perhaps also in terms of religion?

Achille Mbembe (1957-)

The Cameroonian-South African philosopher Achille Mbembe argues that blackness is the template for all forms of exclusion and traces the convoluted genealogy of racism and blackness through history. In his own words , he explains how this works.

> In fact, race does not exist as a physical, anthropological, or genetic fact. But it is not just a useful fiction, a phantasmagoric construction, or an ideological projection whose function is to draw attention away from conflicts judged to be more real - as the struggle between classes or genders, for example (2017, 11).

> In fact, the noun "Black" has served three functions in modernity: those of summoning, internalization, and reversal. It first designated not a particular kind of human being *like all others* but rather *a distinct* humanity-one whose humanity was (and still is) in question. It designated a particular kind of people: those who, because

of their physical appearance, their habits and customs, and their ways of being in the world, seemed to represent *difference in its raw manifestation* - somatic, affective, aesthetic, imaginary. The so-called Blacks then appeared as individuals who, because of their ontological difference, represented a caricature of the *principle of exteriority* (as opposed to the principle of inclusion). It therefore became very difficult to imagine that they were once like us, that they were once of us. And precisely because they were neither like us, nor of us, the only link that could unite us is -paradoxically - the *link of separation*.Constituting a world *apart*, the *part apart*, Blacks cannot become full subjects in the life of our community.Placed *apart*, put to the side, piece by piece: this is how Black people have come to signify, in their essence and before all speech, the injunction of segregation. (2017, 46, original italics).

Mbembe situates the philosophy of blackness-or rather, its multiple perspectives that emerged in resistance to centuries of slavery and oppression-within the broader context of postmodern thought and its relationship to the entire modern Enlightenment project. We can learn from the history of racism and colonialism what prevents us from being liberated, and also what liberation entails. It points to fruitful ways of thinking that can redeem the notion of emancipation for a humanity that cannot be reduced to race, gender, social class, ethnicity, or religion. To achieve this goal, however, we must ensure that we do not replace one set of physical and conceptual chains with another.

As long as whoever we think we are, whoever we identify as, we are only seeking justice for our own kind, our own emancipation and freedom to be who we want to be, we are perpetuating the problem. We have to realize that,

There is no relationship to self that does not involve the Other. The Other is both difference and similarity, united. What we need to imagine is a politics of humanity that is fundamentally a politics of similarity, but in a context where what we all share from the beginning is difference. It is our differences that we paradoxically have to share. And all of this depends on reparation, on expanding our notion of justice and responsibility (2017, 178).

A universal community based on what we all share is desirable, but can only emerge if we attend to how we inhabit the open. Rather than enclosing ourselves in a community of kin in differences, Mbembe says we need to skin ourselves. Because a significant portion of humanity was denied participation at a crucial time in history caused by colonialism, we may need to proclaim our difference, but that is only an intermediate stage on the way to a "world freed from the burden of race, from resentment, and from the desire for revenge that racism engenders" (2017, 183).

What Mbembe does philosophically, Kwame Anthony Appiah (2019) does sociologically (though he is also a philosopher) in his theory of cosmopolitanism (2006)and in his profound

analysis of the Lies that Bind, the fictional narratives of "creed, country, color, class and culture" that sustain it.

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1938-)

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o is a literary critic, playwright, poet, and activist who advocates for the use of vernacular languages against the dominance of colonial languages (in his case, English in Kenya) and publishes only in Gikuyu. One of his core ideas is that the marginalization and starvation of a language kills the memory of a people. In his book Globalectics (2012) , he develops a new metaphor for a universal discourse to replace colonial discourse:

> Globalectics, derived from the shape of the globe, is the mutual enclosure of being here and being there in time and space, where time and space are also in each other. It is a Blakean vision of a world in a grain of sand and an eternity in an hour.
>
> Reading Globalectically is a way of approaching any text, in any time and place, to allow its content and themes to flow into a free conversation with other texts of one's own time and place, to reach its maximum for the human. It means allowing it to speak to our own cultural present, even as we speak to it from our own cultural present. It is to read a text through the eyes of the world; it is to see the world through the eyes of the text. Such a reading should bring the local and the global, the here and the there, the national and the world into mutual impact and understanding. (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 2012, 60)

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o draws inspiration from Goethe and from Goethe's idea of translation into a world literature (Goethe, 2010, see also Huang, 2014). Goethe believed that there should be no such thing as a national literature and considered German a suitable language for a transnational discourse. During Goethe's lifetime, German was not the language of a state, but the language of a common culture that spanned many principalities, a nation in the cultural rather than the nationalistic sense.

Since French, English and Russian were national languages in his time, today we would say postcolonial, imperial languages, Goethe preferred German. What language it was, however, was not his main concern, but rather that there should be a kind of translation, which he himself tried to exemplify in his West-Eastern Divan. He developed a theory of translation, set forth in his Notes on the Divan, that envisioned several stages of translation: a word-for-word translation (practically like Google Translator today); second, a translation that strictly follows the form of the original; and third, a free translation in which the translator immerses herself in the culture and literature, understands the core ideas, and then creates a new text, expanding her own language when necessary to make it vivid enough to express the thoughts of the original language.

The philosopher Walter Benjamin (took Goethe's idea further and posited translation in this sense as a model for all understanding; we must return to the pre-linguistic source to understand something, and then clothe it in words that others can understand. He called this realm 'pure language', the source of all universal concepts. Benjamin, like Goethe, believed that a good translation can have the same literary value as the original (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o himself was nominated for the 2009 Booker International Prize in two categories, for his novel and his own translation into English).

Benjamin's is a hermeneutic approach that Hans-Georg Gadamer (2013) and others have built on to create a process of formation, because when we read a text in this way (and images and artifacts can also be read as text), we become more experienced to the extent that we can connect the specific experience to something more general, and this process of formation therefore changes the way we read the text, or indeed other texts. Translation in this sense is not only the transmission of ideas from one language to another, but also the formation or even a transformation of those who translate. Incidentally, this is the method I recommend to my teacher seminar students when they study Steiner (Rawson, 2021c). In doing so, we open ourselves to the Other, and are willing to be transformed by the encounter, which includes the quintessence of postcolonialism as overcoming the colonial.

For Frantz Fanon the politics translation were centrally important, in two respects; firstly the colonized is translated by the colonizer and given an 'Other' identity, his language creolized , the migrants and refugees are displaced and translated across geographical and cultural boundaries and have to translate themselves. Though these processes are initially passive- the translation is done to the subject as an object. But they also have the potential of empowering self-translation. Fanon de-translated the psychiatric patients in the hospital at Blida-Joinville in Algeria "from passive, victimized objects into subject who began to recognize that they were in charge of their own destiny. From disempowerment to empowerment…"(Young, 2020, 144). For Fanon the translation means taking back agency, "Fanon was equally emphatic about the possibilities of auto-translation through a dynamic model of education, a pedagogy of the oppressed, so that the translated become themselves, translators, activist writers. The subjects, not objects of history" (ibid.146).

Translation is a rich metaphor for postcolonialism. In its original meaning to carry something over, we see the original colonial gesture, that of carrying a culture somewhere else and reconstructing a copy of the original (New England, New Amsterdam). Maps are translations of geography into symbols on paper and maps have played a vital role in colonization, not least in appropriately (Mississippi, Utah) or changing the place names and thus dispossessing and desacralizing the land.

Questions of individualism

One aspect of postcolonialism is questioning the notion of the individual at the heart of humanism, one of the central ideas of the Enlightenment. The philosopher Michaela Ott (2021) has questioned whether this concept needs to be revised, in view of Frantz Fanon's text *Peau noire masques blancs* (Black skin, white masks, 1952), which calls for a new humanism that does not require black people to 'whiten' themselves, in order to claim the right to their existence. In Fanon's view the European ideals of humanism were tainted by colonialism, and that white people have either forgotten or suppressed this insight. This perspective was adopted by Jean-Paul Sartre (e.g. in his Foreword to Fanon's book *Les damnés de la terre* (The wretched of the earth, 1961) and taken up by Michael Foucault, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. In particular Deleuze has coined the term *dividuation* to replace individuation and to give express to the fuzzy boundaries between individual and social collective that characterizes indigenous societies, and to highlight, as Arjun Appadurai has done, the fundamental relationality of people and the things they produce. Ott has shown how historically the origins of individuality as the basic unit of Enlightenment autonomy and self-determination builds on the theoretical notion of the smallest irreducible unit of measurement. The Enlightenment saw the emergence of individuality in the Renaissance as the archetype of genius, artist, inventor, discoverer that slipped effortlessly into a 'great man' version of history and conquest.

Shakespeare's Prospero- a great Renaissance magus (deposed for lacking sufficient Machiavellian statecraft) - uses his 'arts' to control the native forces and beings of the island (in the vicinity of the still-vex'd Bermoothes) he has 'discovered'. He tries to civilize Caliban by educating him together with his daughter Miranda, but according to them, he abuses this trust by sexually threatening the girl and now has to be controlled as a slave by the application of Prospero's magic powers. Caliban's susceptibility to evil spirits of alcohol, and his willingness to be conned by two lowlifes. Thus Caliban is the first literary figure to represent the trope of the native on whose nature nurture will never stick, though close reading of the text shows us that Caliban also has a life and culture beyond the Europeans who has taken over his island (an example of Shakespeare's inability to stick to the script-something always creeps in that offers other perspectives, perhaps from his readings of Montaigne, or conversations with travelers returned from the new world).

Robinson Crusoe is the prototype self-reliant, entrepreneur, colonist, whose discovery, acquisition, naming and civilizing of Man Friday. He saves the young man from cannibals and teaches him English, and never once considers asking him his actual name or indigenous knowledge of the land. Hans Hunfeld (1996) refers to this in his appeal for a hermeneutic approach to the normality of the strangeness or foreignness of others.

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At any rate individualism has been co-opted by neoliberalism to promote self-determination, self-management and caring for the self, a process that began in the 17ᵗʰ Century with the notions of the self-reliant individual citizen of John Locke and Adam Smith's 18ᵗʰ Century neoliberal arguments for the fundamental equality of all (men) and the link between this right to self-determination and the right to own property and the right to pursue happiness. This idea inspired the Fathers of American Independence and the Constitution to build their republic on the absolute right to property (including slaves) and the right to defend this with weapons (a fact that goes a long way to explain the close connections between capitalism, guns and police whose primary task it is to protect property). Romantic perspectives on this produced the sense of the right to (and necessity for) self-formation. As Michaela Ott describes, early Romantic views of the individual were also bound up with notions of creative genius and innovation and in Friedrich Schiller's version, freedom as the progressive manifestation of spirit in human activity in a synthesis of natural law and heightened individuality. Ott writes that;

> And yet it was precisely the Romantics who demanded the levelling of social hierarchies, fluid transitions between society and art - symbolised in the 'infinite' novel as a literary genre that encompasses all other aesthetic genres. It is no coincidence that Romantic authors such as Friedrich Schlegel or Novalis already emphasised the processual and unfinished nature of human existence and put the 'individual' in a surprisingly contemporary shorthand with the 'divided one', the divided-part-having, "the real divided one is also the real individual" (das ächte Dividium ist Äich das ächte Individuum'(Novalis, *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, 211). (Ott, 2021, 25-6)

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels were critical of the notion of the idealistic notion of the individual, by emphasizing the embodied nature of the human being and her closeness to nature and that individuals bring each other forth in social co-dependence. Capitalism separates individual people both from the fruits of their own spirit and from their being embedded in a social whole and the interests of the community, thus bringing about estrangement between subject and the other and between subject and world. In colonialism this capitalistic process is taken to extremes.

The postmodern deconstruction of the individual as autonomous subject was necessary to remind us of our ecological and social co-dependencies. It also reminds us that concepts of the autonomous individual as developed in individualism are often at odds with non-European notions of persons, without in any way reducing the importance of agency. Gert Biesta's (Biesta and Tedder, 2007) notion of ecological agency is helpful here, though he was not thinking of a postcolonial situation. Ecological agency, like biographical learning has to do with recognizing the opportunities, for example in education, afforded by the given setting or social context and the person being able to act within those constraints and opportunities.

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Individual agency is always balanced by the needs and well-being of others and our impact on our environment. Within that framework, there is scope for initiative and creativity.

Summarizing what we can learn from postcolonial literature

So what can we learn from these postcolonial thinkers? let me summarize:

- As Frantz Fanon describes, bodies are colonized by violence and the threat of violence, and minds are colonized by permanent messages that signal that one's own culture is inferior and the colonial culture and language are superior.
- Edward Said has shown how the West constructs an image of the Orient that has more to do with European fantasies than actual cultures, and this is an example of how "othering" works through projection and patronizes others.
- Gayari Sivak insists that subaltern people should be given a voice and that the West must avoid imposing its views and knowledge on indigenous worldviews (epistemic violence). It is not enough to just reduce discrimination and expand inclusion if it means that inclusion takes place in "our world." Inclusion is not just adaptation, inclusion means that we all change.
- Homi Bhabha points out that intercultural encounters in colonial contexts are always asymmetrical, contested, and therefore unfruitful. However, since no cultures are homogeneous and pure, there is always fluctuation or slippage (slippage) in the coherence of cultural or national identities. Indeed, they must always be reconstructed by grand narratives and strengthened by staged rituals (or propaganda), including the perpetuation of myths of Leitkultur and Heimat and the demonization of migrants as destabilizers of the status quo. When cultures collide, however, a third space can open up in which new hybrid cultural constellations can emerge that retain links to existing ones but are nonetheless new and, in a sense, unencumbered.
- Many postcolonial writers consider the colonial and postcolonial experience as the dominant reality of the modern and postmodern world. Even the ecological crisis is a manifestation of slow colonial violence, because colonialism and capitalism go hand in hand. This is the central issue of our time.
- Writers like Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o see the possibility of an enlightened idea of understanding and peaceful coexistence only if the asymmetrical structures of colonial power are collapsed and decentered through a new openness, through new forms of literature and new forms of dialogue.

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