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What is decolonial theory?

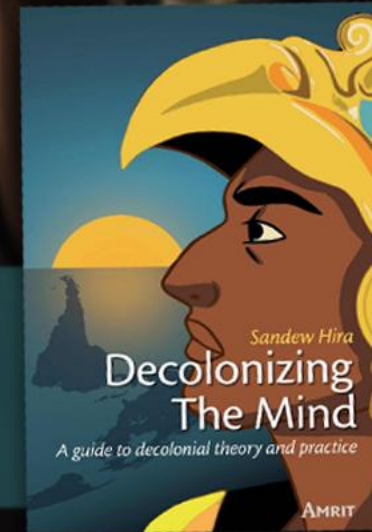
The background, nature, strength and weaknesses of decolonial theory and practice



A response to Marxist critique of decolonial theory from Vijay Prashad c.s.



Decolonizing The Mind,
the final frontier of colonialism
with Sandew Hira



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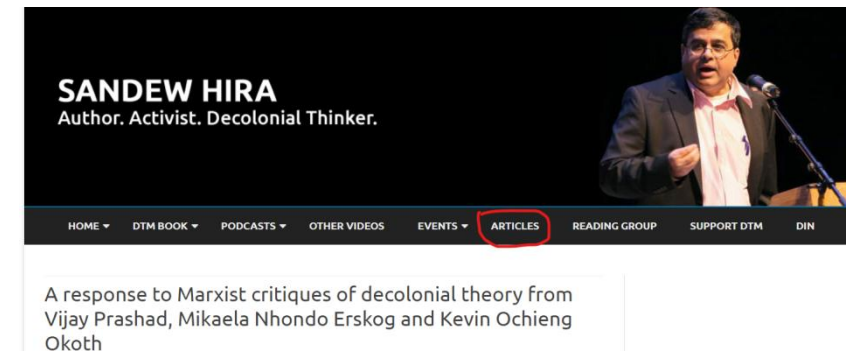
01-07-2024

Marxist critique of decolonial theory

1. Vijay Prashad
2. Mikaela Nhondo Erskog
3. Kevin Ochieng Okoth

4. My article:

<https://www.sandewhira.com/index.php/2024/06/29/a-response-to-marxist-critiques-of-decolonial-theory-from-vijay-prashad-mikaela-nhondo-erskog-and-kevin-ochieng-okoth/>



Vijay Prashad

- July 10, 2022: <https://mronline.org/2022/07/16/on-marxism-and-decolonisation/>
- September 2022: <https://thetricontinental.org/dossier-ten-theses-on-marxism-and-decolonisation/>
- October 2023 my response: <https://www.sandewhira.com/index.php/2023/10/09/a-decolonial-critique-of-ten-theses-on-marxism-and-decolonisation-by-vijay-prashad/>
- June 13, 2024 *Decolonization via a Marxist Lens!*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4eL5Q2Zf5QQ>

Vijay Prashad and Mikaela Nhondo Erskog

- June 1, 2024: <https://monthlyreview.org/2024/06/01/the-actuality-of-red-africa/>
- Review the work of Kevin Ochieng Okoth on Marxism and decoloniality

Kevin Ochieng Okoth

- September 22, 2021 *Salvage*, a bi-annual journal of revolutionary arts and letters:
<https://salvage.zone/decolonisation-and-its-discontents-rethinking-the-cycle-of-national-liberation/>
- Okoth, K.O. (2023): *Red Africa. Reclaiming Revolutionary Black Politics*. Verso. London.

Summary of their critique

1. Decolonial theory neglects the conditions of social production and the political economy that structures everyday life and behavior.
2. Decolonial theory is embedded in European philosophy, despite its claim to be a critique of Eurocentrism.
3. Decolonial theory does not acknowledge the importance of class and class struggle.
4. Decolonial theory is not about changing the world. It is just a critique and not a practical philosophy.
5. Socialism should be the end goal of the struggle of humankind and Marxism is the best alternative for African experiments with socialism.
6. Decolonial theory regards Marxism as a Eurocentric theoretical framework, which is incorrect.

The problem of sources

- ❑ If I offer a decolonial critique of Marxism, I take the writings of Marx and Engels as the sources of my critique. What are the decolonial sources that Marxists criticize?
- ❑ Okoth: *"What do we mean when we speak about decolonisation? Despite an endless stream of op eds, essays, features, panels and books on the subject, there seems to be little agreement on what exactly we want to achieve by 'decolonising' something. Confusion about the term is constitutive of contemporary conversations."*

A DTM critique of decoloniality - 1

- ❑ <https://www.sandewhira.com/index.php/2024/03/06/what-is-the-future-of-the-decolonial-movement/>
- ❑ It is not comprehensive. There is no decolonial economic or political theory. Prashad c.s. are right when they point to this weakness.
- ❑ It is not coherent. The many different contributions can contradict each other. You will find reactionary element with some decolonial authors, as Okoth points out.

A DTM critique of decoloniality - 2

- ❑ Decoloniality is not integral. It is not clear what the foundational category for decolonial theory is from which to reconstruct a whole new (decolonial) knowledge system. In Liberalism it is individualism. In Marxism it is class. What is it in decoloniality? The critique of Prashad c.s. that the lack of class as a basis of analysis holds in so far that decoloniality does not offer an alternative basic concept of theoretical analysis.
- ❑ Decoloniality is mostly a critique, but in order to survive it needs to move to the stage in which it provides practical answers to practical problems. The lack of practical solutions for current world problems is a big defect of decoloniality. This point is rightly made by Prashad c.s..

A DTM critique of decoloniality - 3

- ❑ Decoloniality does not provide organizational concepts for social struggle. How do we organize for social struggle? Marxism proscribes building political parties to lead socialist revolutions. What does decoloniality suggest? This is a valid critique that is also voiced by Prashad c.s..

What is DTM?

- ❑ A critique of Eurocentric knowledge production.
- ❑ The development of an alternative comprehensive, coherent and integral knowledge production.
- ❑ The translation of this new knowledge into viable and practical policies to build a new pluriversal world civilization.
- ❑ An alternative philosophy of liberation, different from Marxism

First critique: neglect of the conditions of social production

- ❑ Prashad: decoloniality is looking only at culture, and neglecting *"the political economy that structures everyday life and behavior"*
- ❑ In DTM we look at civilization as a collection of economic, political, social and cultural institutions. We analyze these institutions as an interconnected whole. It is not only about culture.

Second critique: decolonial theory is embedded in European philosophy

- ❑ A curious critique from a school of thought that is embedded in the European Enlightenment
- ❑ DTM is a critique of the European Enlightenment, and questions its basic proposition from experiences of civilizations from the global south. Our critique of the European Enlightenment is based on knowledge that civilizations in the Global South have produced in various disciplines, from philosophy and economic theory to mathematics and the natural sciences.

Third critique: the importance of class and class struggle is not acknowledged

- ❑ In DTM we argue that the Marxist concept of class is insufficient to understand social relations.
- ❑ The demand that social theory should be based on class and class struggle only holds when you are a Marxist. It cannot be imposed on those theories of liberation that are not Marxist.

Fourth critique: decolonial theory is not about changing the world

- That does not hold for DTM. DTM formulates a vision for the future: the transition from the current colonial world civilization towards a new pluriversal world civilization.

Fifth critique: socialism should be the end goal of the struggle of humankind

- If you are not a Marxist, then obviously this critique does not hold. In other philosophies of liberation other models of civilizations and societies are as valid as socialism.

Sixth critique: it is incorrect to view Marxist as a Eurocentric theoretical framework

- ❑ Marxism originated from the European Enlightenment, so obviously it has Eurocentric roots. The only way to claim that it is not Eurocentric is to assert that it is universal. Well, that is exactly an important characteristic of Eurocentrism: the claim of universality of knowledge that originated in Europe.
- ❑ From a DTM perspective the Marxist critique of decolonial theory of Prashad c.s. is invalid.

A DTM evaluation of Marxist theory

DTM is not just a critique of the European Enlightenment, Marxism included. It also an alternative philosophy of liberation. Prashad c.s. acknowledge only one valid philosophy of liberation: Marxism. The DTM evaluation of Enlightenment theories covers a broad spectrum of topics: philosophy, world history, economic theory, social theory, political theory, cultural theory, mathematics, biology, physics, linguistics.

A DTM evaluation of Marxist practice

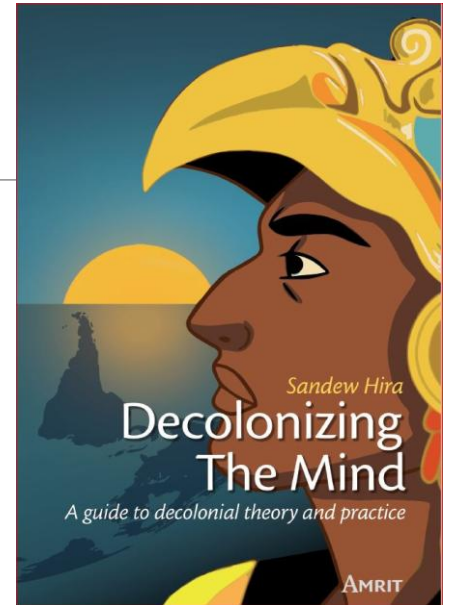
- Economics: do you want all means of production in the hand of the state and the institution of central planning?
- Should Venezuela ultimately abolish parliamentary democracy and institute one-party rule
- Should Iran dismantle the Islamic republic and institute a secular system in a community with a 1400 years history of Islam?

The relationship between DTM and Marxism

- ❑ My purpose: start a dialogue with activists and theoreticians from different backgrounds, but with the same drive for social justice, on how to build a new and better world.
- ❑ Many socialists and progressive people are taking an interest in how the multipolar world is developing. That includes an interest in the political and social systems of the countries who are in the lead: China, Russia and Iran. YouTube has many videos of Mohammad Marandi, who engages with progressive activists in the global north.
- ❑ I hope that Prashad c.s. can be convinced to join this dialogue on building a new world civilization and the role that Marxists can play in this regard.

Source in the DTM book

- Look in the index
- Download the PDF of the PowerPoint on www.sandewhira.com



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SANDEW HIRA
Author. Activist. Decolonial Thinker.

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