This paper proposes a philosophical investigation of the 'postcolonial' as problem - rather than theory or body of texts. In order to do so, it analyses two questions alongside one another: on the one hand, the opposition of universality and difference, as it has been repeatedly raised by the critics of postcolonial theory and, on the other, the dynamic of generalization, circulation of the term 'postcolonial' itself, its translatability through different contexts, conjunctures and languages in the broad sense. Mercier turns to the seminal polemic between Frantz Fanon and Jean-Paul Sartre in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), analyzing it through the prism of Etienne Balibar’s recent works on universality and concludes on the specificities of the postcolonial problem by relating it to the question of translation.

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