

2-2-2022

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Anthony Walsh

Boise State University, twalsh@boisestate.edu

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Recommended Citation

Walsh, Anthony (2022) "Ideology and Intolerance: The Case of Colonialism," *Journal of Ideology*. Vol. 41: No. 1, Article 5.

Available at: <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ji/vol41/iss1/5>

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Ideology and Intolerance: The Case of Colonialism

Abstract

Ideology has a stranglehold on academia as much as anywhere else. Numerous authors have noted that liberal/progressives dominate the discourse in our universities and are loathe to tolerate any position that does not toe the ideological line. We are fortunate to have a journal that is explicitly devoted to positions that run counter to conventional wisdom. I look at Bruce Gilley's work on colonialism as exemplifying something that both runs against the usual narrative and typifies academia's lack of tolerance for such works. Gilley sees much to commend in colonialism, particularly British colonialism, although he examined the colonialism of other European countries. Because of this, both he and the editor of the journal that published his article received threats of violence and were attacked personally and professionally, and the article was retracted (but republished in another journal). This article examines the academic response to Gilley, the literature on colonialism other than Gilley's. I find that most of it supports Gilley's viewpoint in terms of the objective benefits received by nations colonized by the British in terms of economic, health, civil rights, and democratic advances. Space constraints make it necessary to limit the analysis to British colonies.

Key Words: Colonialism, Academic Intolerance, Bruce Gilley, British Empire

Intolerance in Academia

Herbert Marcuse, the major intellectual guru of the left in the 1960s, had a very narrow view of tolerance: “Liberating tolerance, then, would mean intolerance against movements from the Right and toleration of movements from the Left. As to the scope of this tolerance and intolerance: ... it would extend to the stage of action as well as of discussion and propaganda, of deed as well as of word” (2007, p. 50). Although Marcuse was a refugee from Nazi Germany, his many works showed that he despised almost everything about Western culture. He wanted a socialist society which “is to be ruled *despotically* by an enlightened group whose chief title to do so is that its members will have realized in themselves the unity of Logos and Eros, and thrown off the vexatious authority of logic, mathematics, and the empirical sciences” (in Kolakowski, 1981, p. 416). This ideological position is not at all what we are led to expect from academics, particularly one that advocates throwing off the “vexatious authority of logic, mathematics, and the empirical sciences.” Followers of Marcuse seem temperamentally compelled to attack with evangelical zeal everything positive about Western societies in the name of an abstract unrealizable society. Some things, of course, should be condemned, but whatever these things may be, they have existed in all societies, and doubtless more cruelly, in non-Western societies.

How prevalent is Marcuse-like intolerance of non-leftist thought in academia today? The issue was addressed in a large target article in the prestigious journal *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* (Duarte, et al, 2015), and summarized by Lee Jussim (2015, np), one of its authors. Jussim was addressing social psychologists, but his point is applicable to social science in general:

You advocate for diversity and yet you are a political monoculture. Vanishingly few of your members identify with any ideological perspective to the right of American liberal or European social democrats (conservative, libertarian, moderate). You have created a hostile environment for nonliberals. Many of you endorse and justify discriminating against conservatives. ... Too much of your science is riddled with confirmation biases and distortions that create the appearance, but not the reality, of “scientific support” for the moral and intellectual superiority of liberals, and for liberal values and narratives. It is time that you took proactive steps to make your field less hostile and more inviting to nonliberals, and to upgrade the quality of your science in order to limit the role of political biases in distorting your conclusions.

Likewise, Clark and Winegard’s survey of the literature points out that modern liberal scholarship avoids anything that paints favorable pictures of white males and Christianity, even to the point of supporting the censorship of articles that may do so, regardless of any truths they may contain. On the other hand, it embraces articles that favor non-Christian religions, and that shine favorable lights on women and African Americans, regardless of any falsehoods they contain:

liberals were more supportive of various “censorship” policies (e.g., removing books from university libraries) for books that contained passages that appeared to present disadvantaged groups unfavorably (e.g., men evolved to be better leaders than women; whites have higher IQs than blacks; Islam is violent and incites terrorism) than identical passages that appeared to present advantaged groups unfavorably (e.g., women evolved to

be better leaders than men; blacks have higher IQs than whites; Christianity is violent and incites terrorism (2020, p. 32).

Inbar and Lammers' (2012) survey of 800 psychologists found that one-third of them admitted that they would discriminate against conservatives in faculty hiring and in evaluating grant applications and invitations to symposiums. The more liberal respondents were the more they were willing to discriminate, and these are the honest ones. Richard Redding (2012) supplies further evidence from similar studies that a single voice dominates the ideological marketplace in the social sciences and makes it clear that this kind of tribal groupthink eschews intellectual honesty and diversity. Academia's love of diversity stops at race, gender, and sexual orientation, and hits a solid brick wall when it comes to diversity of thought. The evidence is unambiguous; social science departments have become echo chambers in which the liberal agenda is amplified and reinforced and into which no alternative voice can penetrate. Like drivers in London, everyone in academia must drive on the left lest they collide with the thought police.

This article looks at just one of the issues where the intolerance for ideas that do not embrace the leftist cannon has been amply demonstrated. The *Journal of Ideology* prides itself in encouraging minority views in debates, and "essays that promote innovations of ideology that run counter to conventional theory and premises across the social sciences." The journal's mandate runs "counter to conventional theory," and that's a good thing, for as Ben Franklin is reported to have said: "If everyone is thinking alike, then no one is thinking" (in Allen & Hall, 2021, p. 601). We thus offer this essay in the spirit of intellectual diversity (and tolerance) using the example of Bruce Gilley's work on colonialism.

Cultural Relativism

Before we look into Gilley's unorthodox take on colonialism, it is necessary that we first look at the concept of cultural relativism because cultural relativism has been a stick used to chastise colonialism since colonialist powers often had the temerity to ban native cultural practices that offended their Western culture's moral sensibilities. Cultural relativism is a core concept of cultural anthropology maintaining that all cultures are worthy and are of equal value. Conflicting moral beliefs are not to be considered judgmentally as right or wrong or good and bad but viewed from a purely neutral perspective. To judge another culture by one's own cultural standards is considered bad form, or in anthropological jargon—ethnocentric. This does not mean that because some practice is condoned in one culture that cultural relativism grants permission for it to be practiced in another. It only means that practices can be considered justly good practiced in one culture (e.g., child marriage) and justly bad if practiced in another.

Although cultural relativism and postmodernism are frequent bedmates, the former has been around a lot longer than the latter. American cultural anthropology and cultural relativism grew up together under the mentorship of Franz Boas. Under Boas' influence, cultural anthropology "has long been dominated by the theory that cultural practices are limitless and essentially arbitrary in nature" (Alcock, 2001, p. 131). It was the authoritative sway of Boas that moved many social scientists to view culture as a denaturalized autonomous causal agent constituted by a set of largely arbitrarily chosen practices and values from a grab-bag of possibilities. Intellectuals who dream of

perfect societies and perfect people find this most useful because it implies a blank slate view of human nature and that any mode of human existence is possible.

Boas' claims of arbitrariness and relativism were admittedly more political than scientific, but the ideas of founders are often taken beyond their reasonable boundaries by their followers. Cultural relativism is attractive to these folks because their tolerance of other cultures masks their intolerance of their own. Tolerance has been taken to extremes to claim that we cannot condemn horrible practices of another culture because cultural relativism recognizes no universal standards by which to do so. Richard Rorty's statement that he cannot appeal to any "fact of the matter" to distinguish between Nazism and Western democracy is a notorious example of what Fettner (2002, p. 196) calls "an extreme, self-refuting, and irrational [variety] of relativism."

Rorty finds an ally in Seunbae Park, who insists that: "moral truths do not exist because moral properties do not inhabit the universe. Since moral truths do not exist, no culture can be better than another" (2014, p. 51). Park draws on a philosophical position called nominalism to support his relativism. Nominalism argues that that for something to exist it must have form and occupy space. Moral truths are abstractions without form and thus cannot exist for Park, but for the realist, moral truths exist because they have observable consequences when they are either respected or violated. No one has ever seen abstractions such as intelligence, empathy, altruism, goodness, or evil, but we see them instantiated in humans every day, and the degree to which we have them can have an enormous impact on our lives, as can universal moral truths. This realization is the basis for the United Nation's 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

However, Park is not too enamored of universal rights and tells us that: "Relativism asserts that cultural approval is what makes an action right. ...I insist that the relativist belief stands that we are right about the morality of a certain action as we appeal to the culture which commends it" (2014, p. 46). Such thinking leads to an unqualified tolerance of all cultural practices and no meaningful way to morally judge them. What extreme relativists fail to realize is that while cultural relativism can be a useful tool for cross-cultural comparison and understanding, adopting that stance does not mean that one has to adopt a moral relativist stance to deny universal standards of human decency. To do so implies that some humans are less entitled to human rights simply because of where they live, but in agreement with United Nation's Declaration, I insist that a structure of moral absolutism universally applied is warranted in the face of cultural barbarity. If there are no standards for deciding among conflicting moral beliefs, discussions of morality are relegated to descriptive and non-normative discourse, which amounts to intellectual laziness hiding behind the mask of tolerance.

Many centuries ago, the Greek philosopher Herodotus noted that peoples of all cultures were "convinced that their own usages far surpass those of all others." Rightly or wrongly, this is the way that most people view the world. Slavery, the burning of witches, cruel physical punishments, and many other things were once considered normal acceptable "usages" in Western countries, but the people of those countries eventually determined that those things were morally wrong, regardless of what their ancestors thought. Unfortunately, many cultures in the world remain centuries behind in their thinking about human rights. For instance, the British embassy in Saudi

Arabia issued a pamphlet in 2010 to British nationals arrested there that tells a chilling story of Saudi “justice.” These words are not comforting to read in one’s jail cell:

Criminal law punishments in Saudi Arabia include public beheading, stoning, amputation and lashing. The Saudi courts impose a number of severe physical punishments. The death penalty can be imposed for a wide range of offences including murder, rape, armed robbery, repeated drug use, apostasy, adultery, witchcraft and sorcery and can be carried out by beheading with a sword, stoning or firing squad, followed by crucifixion (in Hatch, & Walsh, 2016, p. 318).

Some extreme relativists go so far as to actually praise barbaric practices as long as the culture practicing them is not Western, in which case they would rightly condemn them. Arch cultural relativist, cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz, donned his tolerant hat to describe the burning alive of widows in the Hindu practice of suttee as a “spectacle of awesome beauty” (in Duchesne, 2011, p. 32). A Danish missionary who witnessed 47 widows thrown into a flaming pit provides us with a description of Geertz’s “awesome beauty:” “When in the midst of the flames: there they shrieked hideously, tumbled one over another, striving to reach the edge of the pit and get out of it; but they were kept in by throwing heaps of billets and faggots upon them, as well to knock them on the head as to increase the fire” (Gomme, 1885, p. 286).

Others have excused cultural barbarism for equally hideous reasons. At a “teach-in” at UC Berkley, gender feminist Judith Butler praised the terrorist groups Hamas and Hezbollah as fellow leftists fighting against what she calls Israeli and American imperialism: “Understanding Hamas/Hezbollah as social movements that are progressive, that are on the left, that are part of a global left, is extremely important.” She is critical of their violent tactics, however, and wonders “whether there are other options besides violence” (in Totten, 2012, np). The goal of these terrorist groups is nothing short of the destruction of Israel, making us wonder how Butler thinks the destruction of a nation can be accomplished peacefully. Similarly, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri consider Islamic fundamentalist radicalism a “postmodern project” fighting Western hegemony: “The postmodernity of fundamentalism has to be recognized primarily in its refusal of modernity as a weapon of Euro-American hegemony—and in this regard Islamic fundamentalism is indeed the paradigmatic case” (2000, p. 149) Hardt and Negri were not offering yet another parody of postmodernism; they were actually praising this destructive “postmodern project.”

To excuse all cultural practices in the name of cultural relativism may be consistent with Friedrich Nietzsche’s “campaign against morality,” but it is not consistent with any standards derived from natural law. By this, we mean that certain practices are inherently evil because they are opposed to human nature. The litmus test for deciding if a practice is inherently evil is to ask if any sane person would want to be victimized by such a practice. The “equality of all cultures” slogan is destroyed by the millions of people knocking on the doors of Western cultures to get in. We don’t see traffic going the other way either because the common person, unencumbered by the “trained incapacity” of the intelligentsia, knows that all cultures are not equal.¹ Richardo Duchesne writes of the uniqueness of Western civilization in its respect for intellectual inquiry and natural and human rights, its acceptance of self-criticism and tolerance for dissent: “The West is the only civilization in which its most cherished ideas about the self, freedom, and reason, have progressed

over the course of history" (2001, p. 302). How cultural relativists can turn a blind eye to what others plainly see every day boggles the mind.

Bruce Gilley's "Case for Colonialism"

In 2017, Bruce Gilley published an article in *Third World Quarterly* titled "The Case for Colonialism." The article went through double-blind peer review prior to publication, but its reception was anything but polite, with petitions circulated and signed by hundreds of academics demanding its retraction. It was also demanded that *Third World Quarterly* issue an apology and that its editor be dismissed. In response, the publisher (Taylor & Francis) issued a detailed explanation of its peer review process and attempted to counter slanderous claims about Gilley's scholarship and character. The article was retracted by *Third World Quarterly* but republished in the journal *Academic Questions*. In a note preceding Gilley's article, the editor of *Academic Questions* noted that: "But serious threats of violence against the editor led the journal [*Third World Quarterly*] to withdraw the article, both in print and online. Gilley was also personally and professionally attacked and received death threats" (2018, p. 167). An example of an *ad hominem* attack on Gilley was that of Hamid Dabashi (2017, np), who said that he should be "treated with utter disgust, with unsurpassed revulsion. He must be ostracized, publicly shamed and humiliated."

Personal attacks and death threats for voicing a contrary position, and calls for apologies and censorship, sounds more like an incident associated with the current adolescent "cancel culture" movement than a reasoned scholarly response. To say the very least, it is a travesty of the academic mandate when articles are retracted as a method of dealing with controversy. What a dark hole of ignorance we would be in today if the scientific curmudgeons of the past had been thus silenced. On the positive side, the *Academic Questions* editor also noted that: "many supported the general argument of the article" (2018, p. 167).

Gilley opens his article by citing a Tweet by a South African politician who—presaging his own treatment—was vilified, disciplined, and investigated by South Africa's human rights commission. The politician's terrible crime was to Tweet that much of Singapore's economic success lay in its ability to "build on valuable aspects of colonial heritage" (p.168). Never mind that Singaporeans have claimed as much themselves, this was a heretical statement against the prevailing orthodoxy because it suggested that colonialism may actually have some benefits for the colonized. This is Gilley's thesis, which may be summed up in just four sentences in which he makes clear that he believed the net effect of colonial rule on the countries colonized was beneficial:

The notion that colonialism is always and everywhere a bad thing needs to be rethought in light of the grave human toll of a century of anti-colonial regimes and policies. The case for Western colonialism is about rethinking the past as well as improving the future. It involves reaffirming the primacy of human lives, universal values, and shared responsibilities—the civilizing mission without scare quotes—that led to improvements in living conditions for most Third World peoples during most episodes of Western colonialism. It also involves learning how to unlock those benefits again. Western and non-Western countries should reclaim the colonial toolkit and language as part of their commitment to effective governance and international order (2018, p. 168).

Gilley looked at British, French, German, Belgian, Dutch, and Portuguese colonies, but we will limit our discussion to British colonialism because Britain had by far the largest empire. In common with The United States, Britain is often condemned for the sins of its ancestors and has its accomplishments ignored or belittled. Michael West recounts how schools in the United Kingdom do not emphasize the rich traditions of British culture, rather they celebrate non-indigenous cultures, and celebration which is often accompanied by the: “simultaneously belittlement of British culture. History in schools concentrates not on the UK’s role as a pioneer of parliamentary democracy, how it was one of the first countries to abolish slavery, how it has been a place of refuge for minorities fleeing persecution... Rather, we are told to hold our heads in shame” (2005: 5). West goes on to echo the self-loathing theme: “The failure of the socialist projects of the twentieth century led many on the left to give up any hope.... we have become self-hating, deeming Western man as an agent merely of war, racism, slavery” (2005: 6).

Slavery and the West

Slavery is perhaps the most loathsome evil practice ever perpetrated by humankind, and colonialism had a lot to do with it. The United States and The United Kingdom engaged in the odious practice of slavery, but it is often conveniently forgotten that slaves were bought from their fellow Africans, that slavery existed millennia before those countries even existed and that the sacrifice of these two countries did much to end it. Two famous slavery cases—*Somerset v. Stewart* (1772) and *Joseph Knight v. Wedderburn* (1778), heard in England and Scotland, respectively—were the “the starting point for the falling dominos that led to the abolishment of slavery” (Donnelly, 2006, p. 40). The *Somerset* case involved a slave named James Somerset who was taken to England by his Virginian master, Charles Stewart. Somerset escaped, was later captured again and held aboard ship for transport to Jamaica. Lord Chief Justice Mansfield issued a writ of habeas corpus preventing Somerset's departure from England and requiring Stewart to present him to the court. The legal issue before Mansfield was whether or not a slave can be considered free because of his sojourn on free soil. Justice Mansfield declared that he could, and in doing so, he berated slavery as so odious that “whatever inconveniences, therefore, may follow from the decision, I cannot say this case is allowed or approved by the law of England; and therefore the black must be discharged” (in Klingberg, 1968, p. 39). Mansfield's decision applied only to England, Wales, and Ireland, but it set the precedent for *Knight*, decided in 1778. *Knight* had the effect of outlawing slavery from every part of the British Isles and by extension, many jurists of the time believed, throughout the British Empire.

But the slave trade persisted in the British Empire for another 29 years until finally outlawed by Parliament in 1807. Charles Darwin was among those who rebuked both the US and UK for their role in slavery, but he also realized that they sacrificed far more than other countries to end it: “It makes one’s blood boil, yet heart tremble, to think that Englishmen and our American descendants, with their boastful cry of liberty, have been and are so guilty: but it is a consolation to reflect that we have made a greater sacrifice than ever made by any nation to expiate our sin” (in Richerson & Boyd, 2010, p. 565). This was written shortly after Great Britain freed all slaves in the Empire in 1834 at a cost of £20 million, which was 37% of the British government’s revenue. To put this in perspective, 37% of the United States revenue in 2020 is \$1.265 trillion. Add to this the costly

wars fought against African and Arabic slave states to end the slave trade after 1807, and the cost in lives and revenue of the Royal Navy's West Africa Fleet's 50-year-long patrol that captured 1,600 slave ships and freed 150,000 human beings destined for slavery in the Americas (Sherwood, 2007). A quarter of a century later, the United States would also put an end to American slavery at the cost of over 600,000 lives in the Civil War. I am aware that the Civil War was fought to preserve the Union and not to free the slaves. The fact remains, however, that the slavery issue precipitated the War, and that the Emancipation Proclamation and the Thirteenth Amendment, both necessitated by the War, drove a stake through slavery's heart. One of Gilley's strongest critics even noted that ending slavery was one of the things Gilley got right: "For example African nationalists often did not have massive support, colonial rule ended the slave trade, and Africans participated in colonial rule" (Klein 2018: 39).

British efforts to end slavery in areas of Africa and the Middle East under their control appear to be willfully ignored, or as Gilley (2021, p.20) put it: "anti-colonial critics faced with this fact squirm and fidget...because it puts the greatest strain on their 'colonialism bad' perspective" Also ignored are many other horrendous practices British colonial rule ended or curtailed, such as widespread female genital mutilation (clitoridectomies) and other barbaric procedures in Muslim territories they controlled (Mcube, 2014). In terms of women's rights, historians Chitnis and Wright (2007: 1324) note that: "The British wanted to bring Western enlightenment to the native Indian family by abolishing child marriages, sati [another spelling of suttee], the prohibition of the remarriage of widows, purdah [complete covering of the body to avoid "inflaming male passions"], and similar patriarchal customs that oppressed women." Many Indians protested these abolition efforts as an unwarranted interference with centuries-old cultural practices. Responding to one such protest involving suttee, General Charles Napier offered the following wry invitation to the protesters: "The burning of widows is your custom; prepare the funeral pile. But my nation also has a custom. When men burn women alive we hang them, and confiscate all their property. My carpenters will therefore erect gibbets on which to hang all concerned. Let us act according to our national customs" (in Farwell, 1988, pp. 93-94).

Colonial rule ended behavior the U.N. *Declaration of Universal Human Rights* called the "disregard and contempt for human rights that have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind" (2015, p. 1). If feminists are outraged by these "ethnocentric" colonial efforts to put an end to these barbaric misogynistic practices, they are not the defenders of women they claim to be. If cultural relativists are likewise outraged, they betray their preference for an anthropological philosophical position over human worth, dignity, and life. Women and girls are the specific individuals who suffer these barbarities; they are not simply cultural objects. Human rights should prevail over misplaced respect for harmful cultural practices that are only "right" because; well, because it's their culture and cultural relativism must be respected.

Gilley's Reclaiming Colonialism

Gilley argues that colonial rule has been, to a substantial degree, both objectively beneficial and subjectively legitimate to the native populations of colonized territories. To the extent that this is acknowledged as correct, he counsels a reclaiming of colonialism for nations who are in dire economic and political straits. He is not advocating that the colonial nations should march in their

armies and reimpose their rule. Rather, he says: “Colonialism can return (either as a governance style or as an extension of Western authority) only with the consent of the colonized” (2018, p. 168). Is this an inexcusably illiberal position, or is there something to it? Perhaps, because Amardo Rodriguez charged Gilley’s critics with not answering the abundant data Gilley brought to bear, and with “giv[ing] no account of the polls that show that *many people in many third world nations would support a return to colonial rule*” (2018, p. 255; emphasis added). Witness the abundance of British flags flying in recent protests in Hong Kong against the Chinese government’s efforts to make the former colony toe the authoritarian communist line in violation of its agreement with the British. Witness also the 54 sovereign nations that belong to the British Commonwealth of Nations, comprising one-third of the world’s population, that, excluding Britain itself, were former British colonies. This speaks volumes of the legacy bequeathed to them; sovereign nations do not seek association with former masters if they hated them and did them harm.

A notable example of one who would welcome colonial rule back is George Obama, the estranged half-brother of Barack Obama. George Obama, who lives in poverty in a Kenya slum, praised colonialism and voiced his wish for its return in Dinesh D’Souza’s documentary, *2016: Obama’s America*. George claims that Kenya would be enjoying a higher level of development today had British colonial rule lasted longer: “They would have developed us more. Instead, we were fighting, fighting, fighting over nothing.” George is backed up by a World Bank (1996, p. 5) report which noted: “Almost every African country has witnessed a systematic regression of capacity in the last 30 years; the majority had better capacity at independence than they now possess. ... Many countries have lost professionals with valuable skills to more prosperous neighbors or to the developed world because of poor motivational practices, poor governance, internal conflicts, and civil wars.”

Yet another example is that of Dinesh D’Souza, who grew up in India, the “jewel of the British Empire.” He notes that people often ask him what the British have done for India, and replies: “Apart from roads, railways, ports, schools, a parliamentary system of government, rights, separation of powers, checks and balances, the rule of law, and the English language... nothing!” (In Crocker, 2011, back cover). D’Souza also notes how the British, in addition to abolishing suttee and the other practices previously noted, criticized cultural customs such as the Indian caste system and untouchability, which eventually led to their demise, and introduced a common language to the subcontinent that made unification and independence easier. Of course, the separation of the Muslim north and the Hindu south led to horrific bloodshed in 1947 when *Pax Britannica* was no more. D’Souza goes on to write about what colonialism meant to him personally:

My life would have been much worse had the British never ruled India. ... Virtually everything that I am, what I do, and my deepest beliefs, all are the product of a world view that was brought to India by colonialism. ... So also my beliefs in freedom of expression, in self-government, in equality of rights under the law and in the universal principle of human dignity—they are all the product of Western civilization (2002, np).

It is worth noting parenthetically that history does repeat itself. Similar initial benefits followed by adverse circumstances were visited on the ancient Britons themselves following the end of Roman rule in Britain early in the third century AD. Rome had brought social and political stability to the

island, along with many civilizing cultural practices and technological innovations. When the last Roman legionnaires departed, ancient Britain slid into chaos. Roads fell into disrepair, towns became deserted, technology rusted, politics became tribal and wars were fought between them, and the island was invaded by a series of European tribes. Emissaries were even sent to Rome in an unsuccessful attempt to beg for Rome's return (Salway, 2015).

What did the British Empire do for its Colonies?

Nineteenth-century Prime Minister Lord Palmerston once said that the British Empire was created in a fit of absent-mindedness and that it placed a heavy burden on the nation. The British Empire was acquired only minimally by military force, for how could a small nation (a population of under 46 million people in 1921 at the height of the Empire) control a quarter of the world's population by force? Economist Richard Hammond (1966) notes that colonialism was undertaken for largely non-economic reasons, and coined the phrase “uneconomic imperialism” to describe the cost it imposed. Of course, commerce was one of the three “Cs” of colonialism; the other two were civilization and Christianity. Historians tell us that the merchant traders came first, the missionaries came next, and finally the soldiers to protect them from native forces that did not welcome their liberalism. The work of Christian missionaries bringing messages of hope, schools, literacy, and medicine that largely won the hearts and minds of many natives (Woodberry, 2012). In fact, Woodberry's empirical work, controlling for 51 other variables, showed that missionaries in British colonies were a “crucial catalyst initiating the development and spread of religious liberty, mass education, mass printing, newspapers, voluntary organizations, and colonial reforms, thereby creating the conditions that made stable democracy more likely” (2012, p. 244).

The U.N. *Declaration of Human Rights* notes that: “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and that of his family, including food, clothing, housing, and medical care” (2015 p. 52). Western charitable efforts went a long way to make this dream a reality, both by direct provision of resources and by preparing natives to be able to provide for themselves. In fact, the rationale (or justification) of colonialism was stated in these terms. Rudyard Kipling's famous (or infamous; depending on your view) poem, *The White Man's Burden*, exclaims as much: “Take up the White Man's burden, The savage wars of peace—Fill full the mouth of Famine and bid the sickness cease.” This is quaint, and even offensive language to some, but the fact remains that by 1910, American and British missionaries had established 86 universities, 576 hospitals, and 111 medical schools in Africa, these and over 1,000 dispensaries, provided jobs and training for native populations and dramatically improved their health, longevity, and prosperity (Stark, 2014). Rodney Stark also points out that it has been repeatedly shown that while some European merchants made immense fortunes exploiting the colonies: “European nations as a whole *lost* money on their colonies” (2014: 369).

Although not all colonized people welcomed their masters, many did look favorably on them. For instance, during World War II, the British governor of the Gold Coast (present-day Ghana), noted that “had the people of the Gold Coast wished to push us into the sea there was little to prevent them. But this was the time when the people came forward in their thousands, not with empty protestations of loyalty but with men to serve in the army ... and with liberal gifts to war funds and war charities. This was curious conduct for people tired of British rule” (In Gilley, 2018, p.

273). The people of the Gold Coast were not alone in their sentiments for British rule; Sierra Leon is another. Sierra Leon was long an embarkment point for captured slaves, but after the abolition of the slave trade, it became a base for the Royal Navy's slave patrol ships. British ships delivered thousands of former slaves to Freetown, Sierra Leon, after liberating them from captured slave ships. Krogstad (2014, p. 115) notes that: "There has always been a soft spot for the British among Sierra Leoneans. That feeling has now come into full play, with public demands for the Brits to stay for as long as necessary, because of the helpless condition of the country."

Even ardent anti-colonialist Chinua Achebe, an eminent Nigerian intellectual educated in a British-built university, had a soft spot for the British. After Nigeria gained independence from Britain in 1960, it embarked on civil war, followed by a series of military dictatorships. Achebe notes how much of Nigeria's infrastructure fell into disrepair and social and health services declined after the departure of the British. In his later writings, Achebe revealed something of nostalgia, if not for British rule, for British methods of ruling:

The British governed their colony of Nigeria with considerable care. There was a very highly competent cadre of government officials imbued with a high level of knowledge of how to run a country. This was not something that the British achieved only in Nigeria; they were able to manage this on a bigger scale in India and Australia. The British had the experience of governing and doing it competently. I am not justifying colonialism. But it is important to face the fact that British colonies were, more or less, expertly run (2012, p. 43).

All British colonies could have easily turned on the British with willing help from Germany and its allies during both World Wars but none did; people who are oppressed and exploited do not act this way. Indian nationalist Subhas Chandra Bose did raise a pro-Nazi Indian Legion from soldiers captured by the Axis powers, but it was plagued by desertion, and Loyal British Army Indians "took a special pleasure in gunning them down" (Crocker, 2011, p. 150). By way of contrast, another Indian nationalist, Mahatma Gandhi, who favored a peaceful path to independence, wrote: "I have discovered the British Empire had certain ideals with which I have fallen in love, and one of these ideals is that every subject of the British Empire has the freest scope for his energies and honour, and whatever he thinks is due to his conscience. ...I have more than once said that the Government is best that governs least; and I have found that it is possible to be governed least by the British Empire" (in Andrews, 2008, p. 219).

Then we have the appraisal of American historians Will and Ariel Durant: "In the long run...the rule of half the world by the British navy—the comparatively humane and urbane maintenance of order amid ever-threatening chaos—was a blessing rather than a bane to mankind" (1967: 59). According to another American historian, Harry Crocker, British colonialism "did more to advance the cause of human progress and human rights in the world than any other force in history" (2011: 22). The British political tradition of freedom and self-governance still has potent influences on the world. Some of the world's most successful countries: The United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand are studious pupils of this tradition, even though no longer ruled from London.

Colonialism and Democratic and Economic Development

It is not just English-speaking countries that are heir to this tradition. In a statistical study of 143 former colonial countries, economist Ola Olsson (2009) offers a “national origins-hypothesis” for economic development, arguing that differences in colonial policy are accounted for by the different legal traditions and national ideologies of the colonizing countries. In particular, between common law and civil law traditions. The common law is more conducive to constraints against executive power than civil law in that its intent is more to limit state power rather than to strengthen it. He notes that “the different ideologies of the Spanish and the British colonists and argues that British colonial institutions – typically featuring freedom from expropriation and a preference for free trade – have been central for economic development” (2009, p. 535). Olsson’s primary concern was the development of democratic institutions rather than economic development and finds that the longer a country was colonized, the more likely it would remain under democratic control after independence: “In a broad analysis of the colonial determinants of democracy, it is shown that whereas there appears to be a general positive relationship between colonial duration and current levels of democracy, the positive effect is mainly driven by British former colonies and by countries colonized after 1850” (2009, p. 545).

Olsson is not alone in his assessment of the role of colonialism in the development of democracy. Jacob Hariri’s study of 111 countries outside of Europe documents that the historical consequence of early development of statehood has been autocracy, not democracy. This occurred because existing state institutions constrained European colonial efforts and thus limited the diffusion of democratic ideas from Europe. Hariri notes that in countries that were strong enough to resist colonization (e.g., North African and Middle Eastern states) or had enough precolonial state infrastructure (e.g., Nigeria) that the colonial powers could largely rule only through existing institutions, they retained their traditional autocratic mode of rule post-colonialism. On the other hand, in countries with less state development prior to colonization: “the indigenous state was not an obstacle to European settlement and institutional transplantation. These countries were more likely therefore to embark on a democratic regime trajectory. ...countries that did not experience massive European settlement or were colonized with indirect rule are significantly less democratic today” (2012, p. 471).

Chlouba, Smith, and Wagner show how rulers were able to maintain their autocratic rule: “Rulers expended considerable resources and energy to socialize the people they ruled into myths of divine authority and unquestioning obedience. In many contexts, colonial doctrines of indirect rule further encouraged the despotic instincts of autocratic rulers” (2021, p. 2). Moreover, they show that many subjects of rulers in Africa today prefer direct autocratic rule to democracy, so their rulers’ socialization efforts bore fruit. Because of this, post-colonial politics produced the murderous dictatorship of Idi Amin in Uganda after independence from Britain, and independence from France led to the maniacal regime of Jean-Bédél Bokassa in the Central African Republic.

In terms of economic development, Frankema and Waijenburg (2012, p. 921) note that workers’ wages in colonized countries sometimes outpaced unskilled workers in Britain: “Real wages increased during the colonial era in all of the countries we studied” and these growth rates “were in line and sometimes even outpaced the growth rate of real wages of unskilled workers in London during the nineteenth century.” This appraisal is augmented by Cappelli and Baten (2016), who

showed that from 1730 to 1970 the British approach to education in their colonies had a significant positive effect on human capital.

Gains in health were also substantial under colonialism, as Tom Young, one of Gilley's critics, notes:

In the inter-war period a growing concern in Britain itself with infant and maternal mortality carried over into the empire. As a result, in at least some urban areas, maternal health showed rapid improvement. In the Lagos region, infant mortality rates dropped steadily from 296.3 deaths per thousand live births in 1919 to 134.1 in 1929, 127 in 1939, and 104 by 1949. Maternal health services were much in demand by Africans themselves, and by the time of independence, Nigeria had an impressive network of maternal health centres (2019, p. 332; internal references omitted).

Young goes on to note that "While 130,000 Kenyans were treated in what were called 'native hospitals' in 1920, the number of patients had increased to 500,000 in 1936 and to one million by 1948. One recent study suggests that, in Kenya, 'progress in health care was substantial in the 1920–1970 period' (Young, 2019, p. 332; internal references omitted).

Counterfactuals

Most of us like to amuse ourselves with "what if things had been different" musings about historical events. In terms of colonialism, we might ask ourselves what if colonialism never occurred, how would those colonized nations have turned out? Of course, counterfactual thinking cannot reveal much unless we can locate "natural experiments" wherein one nation was exposed to colonialism and another, with similar initial conditions, can be compared and contrasted post-experiment. Ethiopia is often taken as the "control group" to be contrasted with countries exposed to the "treatment variable"—colonization.

Heldring and Robinson (2012, p. 8) note that: "One of the main pieces of evidence for those who favor the conjecture that colonialism was good for development is that Africa was very poor in 1885 compared to the rest of the world. It had backward technology indicative of which was that writing, the wheel and plow were not used in Africa outside of Ethiopia." But Ethiopia is no anti-colonial success story, as Gilley (2021, p. 7) points out: "If colonial subjection caused poor performance, then today's Ethiopia would be the economic miracle of Africa. Instead, the only semi-successful African economy ever was South Africa until it was hastily "decolonized" and sent into a tailspin." Heldring and Robinson (2012, p. 7) also point out what happened after British rule ended in Uganda: "It could be, to consider Uganda, that the British brought stability by stopping long-running conflicts between the pre-colonial states of Buganda, Bunyoro, Ankole or Tooro and that they brought technology that the Africans would not otherwise have had. ...50 years [post-colonialism] of political instability, military dictatorships and civil war with the conflicts often, interestingly, mirroring the patterns of pre-colonial conflicts."

Similarly, Gann and Duignan contrasted Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) with never-colonized Ethiopia on economic and social development and found that the former far outperformed the latter on all indications. According to Baer (1969, pp. 169-170):

Gann and Duignan conclude that the benefits to Africans of colonial rule far outweighed the debits one can charge to the colonists. They draw a comparison between long-independent Ethiopia and formerly colonised Southern Rhodesia. Southern Rhodesia, with a sixth of the population of Ethiopia, in the 1960s had twice as many African children in its schools, twice as many miles of railroad, 12 times the electrical consumption, and three and a half times the number of workmen employed in industry. Europeans brought European ways to their colonies and did try to transform them along the lines of their own development, in its material, and to a lesser extent its social aspects. In so doing, it is indeed true that they extended the social opportunities to Africans.

But was Colonialism Unethical?

I am obliged to ask if, regardless of the net benefits that colonialism may have conferred on colonized peoples, could the whole colonial enterprise have been unethical? Balagangadhara, Bloch, and De Roover (2008, p. 3) address this question and ask “What is unethical about a project that, among other things, industrialised the colonies, established courts of Law, laid railroads, and introduced scientific education, modern medicine and parliamentary democracy there?” But we are asking if colonialism is unethical *regardless* of those objective benefits for the colonies. Brian Wong (2019, pp. 5-6) believes that it was, writing: “Whilst redistribution of money, goods, or opportunities might have compensated the colonised’s individual welfare, it did not rectify the imbalances that had previously persisted (and continued to persist) in spite of the economic advances and technological innovation introduced under colonial rule.” The main point Wong makes is that colonialism amounts to “relational injustice,” which is something that obtains when the colonized individuals are placed in a lower status in relation to colonial individuals. He concludes that: “Even if colonies had become more prosperous under colonisation, this offers no recourse for the errors of empires past” (2019, pp. 11-12).

It is undoubtedly true that colonized peoples were placed in subordinate positions relative to native populations. The idea of Britain’s White Man’s Burden, or France’s *Mission Civilisatrice*, sends a message of superiority/inferiority, even if the British and French saw their efforts as their Christian duty to help the less fortunate enter the modern age while saving their souls. We certainly would not welcome missionaries showing up uninvited at our doors along with a bunch of workmen to fix our houses up, even if they were shacks, and even if we were delighted with the finished product. They may have also arrived with physicians and educators who improved our health and longevity and prepared us to take care of ourselves, but we were still reduced to beggars by their endeavors. After all, it was outsiders arriving and telling us that our houses were not in order and that our cultures were not up to the task of putting them right. So, even if our benefits are objectively real and many members of our households see them as subjectively legitimate and would like our interlopers to return to fix things broken since they left us to our own devices, is what they did unethical? This, of course, is a question that only members of each former colony can answer.

We might attempt to answer the question more generally by analogizing colonialism with private charitable giving (money, blood donations, and volunteer work). If I give \$10 to a shivering beggar, donate blood after a devastating tornado, or volunteer in a soup kitchen, I am doing what

I can to aid the less fortunate. In a certain sense, I am placing recipients in an inferior position as recipients of my generosity, but I doubt that they would consider my actions unethical. I perceived a need and considered it my Christian duty to give what aid I could to alleviate that need. This is exactly the sentiment voiced in Kipling's colonial: "Fill full the mouth of Famine and bid the sickness cease" as Christian missionaries sallied forth on a far grander scale.

One reviewer of this article made the point that Nazi physicians conducted cruel medical experiments with concentration camp inmates to benefit others, and benefiting others hardly justifies the means by which these benefits were gained. I agree 100 percent, but the analogy is flawed. Any benefits derived from this barbarity, if there were any, benefitted third parties, not the poor souls subjected to them. Gilley's work shows that the colonial "experiment" plainly benefitted the first-party people subjected to it. No concentration camp inmate would yearn for the return of those Nazi doctors and their evil practices as many ex-colonial people yearn for their colonial past nor seek association with the Nazi party as many ex-colonial nations do with the British Commonwealth of Nations.

The impetus for this article is academic intolerance and not colonialism per se. Bruce Gilley's work on colonialism was simply chosen as a contemporary example of the depths to which this intolerance has sunk in modern academia. Even if many academics believe that colonialism was unethical, does that mean that attempts to silence and demonize those who believe otherwise are ever justified? It does not. The attitude of those who do reminds me of the wife of the Bishop of Worcester, who remarked after hearing about Darwinism: "My dear, let us hope that it is not true, but if it is, let us pray that it will not become generally known" (in Seegert, 2014, p. 139). In an intellectual monoculture, its denizens simply don't want anything that challenges the orthodoxy to "become generally known." Evidently, the clash of contending ideas is no longer valued in much of academia.

Should all academic articles be tolerated regardless of their argument? They certainly should if peer-reviewed and backed by adequate data, as was Gilley's. This is true whether you agree or disagree with the author's views. If you disagree, show where you think the author's message is wrong, but don't attack the messenger and wage ad hominem warfare on him or her. After all, Gilley is no amateur in his subject. His online vita shows that he has won many awards, has twelve books, and so many articles and book chapters to his name that I gave up counting. I do not anticipate a backlash against academic intolerance anytime soon given the vigor with which Marcuse's modern disciples guard their turf against intellectual diversity.

Footnote

1. On reading this sentence, one of the reviewers of this article wrote: "If this were one of my students, they would receive an F and be reported to the Dean." The reviewer was unaware that he or she was helping me to make my point: I must think and believe as he or she does or I will fail and be reported to the enforcer-in-chief of the thought police.

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