

## *Colonial Capitalism and the Dilemmas of Liberalism*

Onur Ulas Ince

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Onur Ulas Ince's *Colonial Capitalism and the Dilemmas of Liberalism* (2018) succeeds in demonstrating the importance of political economy for political theory's imperial turn, preoccupied as it has been with a discursive approach to cultural difference. Through a synthesis of exogenous approaches to the history of capitalism along with contextual readings of John Locke, Edmund Burke and Edward Gibbon Wakefield, Ince shows the contradictory and co-constitutive relationship between liberalism, colonialism and capitalism and how a political economy approach can explain why certain differences matter at different moments and in different regions for metropolitan liberal thinkers. In doing so, Ince continues his and others' efforts to bring political economy to bear on the concerns of political theory while also offering a definitive defense for one of three third-generation approaches to the study of political theory and empire, the other two being the return to the settler colonial context best represented by Duncan Bell (2016) and the turn to the theoretical in(ter)ventions of subaltern actors best exemplified by Adom Getachew (2016; see also Ciccariello-Maher, 2017; Singh, 2016; Wilder, 2014).

There are two key methodological contributions offered. The first is his demonstration of how political economy can explain what has come to be understood as peculiar aspects of liberalism's history, such as why some cultural differences are more relevant than others or why some liberal thinkers are inclusionary at one moment or for one group and exclusionary at/for others. For example, it was not a contingently limited support for cultural difference (107) that explains Burke's defense of India and acceptance of African slavery and Indigenous dispossession but rather a "correspondence between the level of social development and the form of political power constituted a standard for ascertaining the justice of political rule" (109). This standard was "Burke's universal moral law," but it was a universal "informed by civilizational categories... keyed to categories of political economy" which subsequently explains his approach to India, African slavery and Indigenous dispossession (108–09, 111). The benefits of this method is that it challenges attempts to recover liberalism by virtue of these selective moments of anti-imperialism, while allowing Ince to bring different types of colonies, imperialisms and their respective justifications into one frame, and explain why certain Europeans in certain colonial contexts, in certain moments, were also constructed as savage or barbarous (156).

The second methodological contribution is the way in which Ince navigates a long-standing debate between contextualism and social theory (17–18, 32–33), while demonstrating how it is possible to get beyond the impasses in his treatment of his thinkers. Ince attends to the specific debates of Locke, Burke and Wakefield but insists that each is writing in periods of "flux" and are therefore responding to contemporaries and "advanc[ing] their claims in expressly universal terms with an indication to speak beyond their immediate context and communicate enduring verities to imagined future audiences" (34).

By way of conclusion, I want to indulge in a few suggestions and criticisms even if they arrive too late. One defense of his approach against the cultural difference framework is that it is able to provide teeth to a critique of the continuity of colonial capitalism and imperialism in the present (16). I'm sympathetic to the assertion but I thought an

additional chapter, especially given his concise presentation, might have been included that demonstrated this. Has the approach of Tully or Mehta, for example, prevented them from furnishing a strong enough critique of imperialism? Second, in the treatment of Locke, Ince might have benefitted from contrasting his account with that of Barbara Arneil's, given the attention paid to the socio-economic context of Locke's argument (1996: ch. 4). The upshot would be its illumination of the advantages of his particular blend of socio-economic context and a Benjaminian "stereoscopic view of history" (34–37). Third, while I was glad to see attention paid to the importance of the sexual division of labour in Wakefield (139)—the other secret of primitive accumulation revealed by Wakefield and unacknowledged by him *and* Marx—it could have been better foregrounded. Put critically, just as Ince nicely draws out the limits of an endogenous and Eurocentric approach to capitalism, he risks minimizing the productivity of gender to/for/in colonial capitalism. If Wakefield is important in part for his "ruminations" on free labor, surely the sexual division of labour deserves more than a paragraph of commentary.

Fourth, I am not convinced of the claim that Wakefield was unconcerned with questions of Indigenous dispossession (116–17). In 1837, Wakefield was debating the effects of systematic colonization for Indigenous peoples against Dandeson Coates of the Christian Missionary Society. Here Wakefield, unlike Locke, defended the idea of treaty. Ince's framework may help thinking about this distinction as well as contemporary debates about treaty. This context also raises a question about how Wakefield's settler contract of dispossession relates to his defense of treaty. Finally, while Ince succeeds at showing how civilizational differences were porous in history because keyed to political economy, I thought his account might have benefited from an explanation of the hardening of these categories and the colonial difference in history. For example, how does Ince reconcile the ability of civilizational categories to traverse the colonial divide in the theories of Wakefield given its limitation to *white* settler colonies? That said, none of these suggestions detract from the importance of Ince's method and its demonstrated insights; they all register a desire for Ince to say more.

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