

(p. 246); “six characteristics at a minimum” (p. 114) that will enable the “partial convergence” of global governance, along with “five refinements” (p. 180) reflected in the case of SWIFT; “five characteristics . . . at the heart of engineering and economics of the cloud market” (p. 129); fourteen “enabling and regulatory policies for the cloud” (p. 136); “three classes of problems for defense” (p. 169) that are shaped by “four classic incentive problems”; “five conditions that economists acknowledge can distort market performance” (p. 196) that affect privacy policy and that require a quite different set of “five basic building blocks” (p. 198) containing fifteen constituent principles (pp. 227–229); and so on.

It is thus with some irony that the authors note, “Laundry lists of initiatives are ubiquitous in governments because everyone wants a piece of an important policy game” (p. 235). In a further irony at one point the authors quote Buffalo Springfield lyrics: “There’s something happening here. What it is ain’t exactly clear” (p. 26). The net result is a somewhat impressionistic argument that is undoubtedly correct in broad brushstrokes but elusive in its detail. The authors conclude appropriately with some humility, “Our plan will certainly be wrong in the details, but our goal is to set governance on the right vector for reform” (p. 58). Yet the very complexity of the ongoing evolution of the information revolution, together with the heterogeneity and ambiguity of the solutions that have evolved along

the way, somewhat undermines the urgency of any proposed governance reforms. Muddling through will probably continue as the de facto approach to information technology governance whether it becomes quasi-converged official policy or not.

This is an optimistic book. Cowhey and Aronson are hopeful that expert negotiators and well-meaning advisors can create shared norms for economic efficiency and democratic accountability in the face of persistently turbulent but generally welfare-enhancing technological innovation. But to quote another anthem from the 1960s, “The times they are a-changin’.” A book with a 2017 copyright can give only brief mention to the election of U.S. president Donald J. Trump, who rides a wave of nationalist and protectionist sentiment, and the collapse of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which was just the sort of trading club that might have advanced the FACE agenda. The intensifying trade war between the United States and China, fraying relationships with key U.S. allies, popular backlash against immigration, trade, and information openness, and ominous Russian cyber espionage and influence campaigns have all further stressed the global liberal order (GLO). Cowhey and Aronson may indeed offer the only feasible approach to restoring the GLO in a world where American leadership can no longer be taken for granted. A more pessimistic possibility is that the normative principles they advocate may contain the seeds of an explanation for why the GLO is even dimmer than it appears.

POLITICAL THEORY

Colonial Capitalism and the Dilemmas of Liberalism. By Onur Ulas Ince. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. 232p. \$74.00 cloth.
doi:10.1017/S1537592718002566

— Samuel Moyn, *Yale University*

From his grave, C.B. Macpherson is having a moment of pleasant revenge. For years, scholars heaped routine opprobrium on Macpherson for his outrageous claims that the political theory of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, and later Edmund Burke, tracked the emergence of capitalism. In its classic Cold War form, Macpherson’s approach tagged the canon for its complicity in the coming of industrial labor and consumerist hedonism—a perspective that converged unexpectedly with Leo Strauss’s equally famous indictment of Locke as the theorist of a “joyless quest for joy.” Then, the story goes, the Cambridge school came and overthrew such traditions, with John Dunn’s showing of Locke’s religiosity and Quentin Skinner’s near-simultaneous broadside against the misreadings of Macpherson and Strauss alike in the name of a form of historicist probity that rejected the term “liberal” to describe Hobbes, Locke, and others, and

identified intellectual argumentation locally, rather than socioeconomic forces there or anywhere, as the relevant “context.”

Onur Ulas Ince’s excellent *Colonial Capitalism and the Dilemmas of Liberalism* reconfigures the canon in a familiar Marxist spirit but also in the name of a novel optic “beyond possessive individualism,” as Ince explicitly explains (p. 69). If it can indeed be read as part of an increasing wave of neo-Macphersonite scholarship, this book reflects not so much the concerns of Cold War industrialism as the globalizing neoliberal capitalism of our own times. After important clarificatory work, the book dwells on Locke and Burke in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, before turning to the less-known Edward Gibbon Wakefield in the nineteenth, to show that socioeconomic context matters after all and that, in particular, the realities of what Karl Marx called “primitive accumulation” are the key to the work that modern political theory did to abet capitalism. Theoretical fictions of contractual freedom and juridical equality were, Ince argues, indispensable to the “co-constitution” of violent processes of global expropriation that have allowed capital to exert its hold down to the present (p. 30).

Ince opens his account with some compelling reservations about the culturalist tendencies of the debate on

liberalism and empire in recent political theory. Sankar Muthu, Jennifer Pitts, and others, Ince persuasively diagnoses, have framed the debate as one about universalism and difference: how far canonical thinkers were willing to see others around the world as equals, rather than as uncivilized subordinates fit solely for eternal rule or indefinitely long improvement. In reading the texts of liberal thought, however, he contends that it is far less important to attend to “who the colonized *are*” than “what the colonizers *do*” (p. 4). With its bias for “the linguistic over the material,” furthermore, the established literature neglects the formative context and the contributing functions of discourse to what Ince dubs “colonial capitalism,” before going on to privilege primitive accumulation as its signature (p. 3).

The chapter on Locke is least novel in outline, since allegations of his colonial entanglements and especially with respect to native expropriation (as well as Carolinian slavery) are so well known after recent debates. Even here, however, Ince innovates by foregrounding how Locke’s theory of the introduction of money in the natural history of society functions to allow a defense of accumulation beyond the limits of “spoilage” that concerned Locke as a moral constraint. Money was safe from expiration and thus immune from any prohibition on indefinite accumulation.

Ince sides against Uday Singh Mehta (*Liberalism and Empire*, 1999), as well as Muthu and Pitts, in contending that Edmund Burke was no anti-imperialist merely because he voiced respect for the immemorial customary domination of India’s “aristocracy” and complained of the corruption and disorder that the East India Company brought. Ince sides less with Daniel O’Neill (*Edmund Burke and the Conservative Logic of Empire*, 2016) than with Andrew Sartori (*Liberalism in Empire*, 2014) in arguing that Burke should be understood as a defender of empire rightly conceived, specifically by focusing precisely on his endorsement of a brand of commercial liberalism. Like other ideologues of colonial capitalism, Burke emerges on this account as a thinker who both constitutes and prettifies the ongoing practices of primitive accumulation (rather than merely idealizing India’s hereditary aristocracy). In his flights of sentimental rhetoric, Burke was trying to “induce sympathy with another commercial society” (p. 108). Well before the later writings, on which Corey Robin has offered a more authentic neo-Macphersonite argument for a Marxian reading of this figure, the prime of Burke’s career illustrates a far more long-standing nexus of capital and empire.

On the less-known early Victorian figure of Edward Gibbon Wakefield, Ince is even more pioneering, if only by dint of exposing the texts themselves in critical discussion. As Ince shows, Wakefield saw himself facing and solving a twofold labor problem, as labor militancy produced by metropolitan capitalism was met by

proposals aimed at “shoveling out paupers” to settler colonies where they could pick up the slack of labor shortages (cited on p. 114). Wakefield’s critique of forms of unfree labor, Ince says, buttressed the actual project of capitalist exploitation both at home and abroad.

That in the course of his intrepid and penetrating study Ince both decisively renovates and effectively supersedes the Macphersonite scheme is thrilling, but a couple of remaining dilemmas are worth stressing. For one thing, to the extent that political theory is doing ideological work in the Marxist sense, the question of one’s precise theory of capitalism surges in importance. It was unclear to me why Ince so privileged Marx’s doctrine of primitive accumulation within a larger depiction of “colonial capitalism.” In *Capital*, Marx explicitly invokes primitive accumulation in order to solve the problem of infinite regress that would otherwise result without some theory of the origin of capitalism. But the main chapters of Ince’s book seem to be much more about the extraction of surplus value than they are about primitive accumulation, technically speaking. And one would not want an unmasking of how liberalism abetted or reflected global marketization that merely reduced canonical theory to the initiation of a phenomenon that, as much of the book shows, required constant ideological management of its multiple forms. (*Capital’s* account of primitive accumulation regarding how “freedmen became sellers of themselves” superficially matches Wakefield’s emphasis on labor oversupply, but Marx stressed how what freedmen lost was essential to launching capital, while Wakefield emphasized their troublemaking at home and their uses in dealing with the oversupply of land abroad already seized from indigenous populations.)

Then there is the question of why to study political theory in the first place, to the extent that it turns out to force an understanding of bigger “material” forces. Ince offers some truly interesting remarks about how ideology functioned not to deny the realities of force and fraud that were endemic to colonialism, but to “disavow” these features as less central than they in fact were. Liberals, that is, were in the business of convincing themselves and their audiences to “misrecognize” the inherent unfreedom and inequality of colonial capitalism. In what sense, then, is Ince able to say that political theory “co-constituted” the result? It seems that it did so not by contributing to material realities so much as by fooling enough people to believe in their ethical necessity and propriety. But one might well demand a justification for the continuing study of ideology or theory that gives it an even greater role in constituting or “co-constituting” outcomes. Even if not, it would seem necessary to prove how influential in fact Locke, Burke, and Wakefield were. Without such a showing, the risk is that Ince undermines the significance of a familiar or expanded canon when its figures turn out to tell a truth to which many others are potentially superior witnesses.

Regardless of how Ince might respond, it is only fair to credit him with having so altered the Macphersonite paradigm for interpreting several centuries' worth of political thought as to have come close to replacing it altogether. We are entering an interesting time theoretically. Beyond an age of idealism and textualism, the writings of canonical figures will find themselves once again sites of ferocious argument about how to develop a sophisticated enough version of Marxism—as well as alternatives to it.

Plato as Critical Theorist. By Jonny Thakkar. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018. 392p. \$39.95 cloth.
doi:10.1017/S153759271800258X

— Rebecca LeMoine, *Florida Atlantic University*

For political scientists and theorists keen to address the many practical problems facing today's world, the exercise of imagining an ideal society may seem like a colossal waste of time or, worse, a dangerous distraction. It is precisely this attitude toward idealism that Jonny Thakkar seeks to rectify in *Plato as Critical Theorist*. Responding to critics of ideal theory, such as Amartya Sen and Raymond Geuss, Thakkar argues that citizens in liberal democracies would do well to take a cue from Plato's *Republic* by engaging in ideal-theoretic reflection.

Lest anyone, remembering the “beautiful city” or *kallipolis* that Plato's character Socrates and his interlocutors construct in speech throughout much of the dialogue, think that this turn to Plato entails advocating pie-in-the-sky utopianism, Thakkar makes clear that he views Plato's idealism as antiutopian. In fact, he presents Plato's idealism as working in the service of his “critical theory,” or his intention to influence Athenian life. In pursuing this argument, Thakkar builds on recent scholarship showing that Plato aimed through his writings to effect change in Athenian society. (See, e.g., Josiah Ober, *Political Dissent in Democratic Athens: Intellectual Critics of Popular Rule*, 1998; Danielle S. Allen, *Why Plato Wrote*, 2010; Melissa Lane, *Eco-Republic: What the Ancients Can Teach Us about Ethics, Virtue, and Sustainable Living*, 2012; and Sara Brill, “Plato's Critical Theory,” *Epoché* 17 (2), 2013.) Insightful and lucidly written, *Plato as Critical Theorist* contributes to this growing body of literature and aims to make its own intervention into contemporary politics by recovering from Plato the notion of “philosopher-citizens,” or democratic rulers who, like Plato's philosopher-kings, “work out an ideal of how their society might best be and orient themselves toward this ideal in their day-to-day labors” (p. 272).

It is important to emphasize that on Thakkar's account, “ideal theory” is not synonymous with utopianism. Rather, as stipulated in the introduction, an ideal must be possible, practically speaking; if it contradicts known laws of the universe or general human behaviors, or poses a possibility

so remote from achievability that it cannot effectively guide our action, then it is not ideal. At the same time, Thakkar maintains, an ideal is like a map: It “helps us achieve clarity about some part of the world by bracketing certain features of reality,” and thus “there is a sense in which ideals are always impossible to realize” (pp. 6–7).

Later, the author shows that the city in speech developed in Plato's *Republic* fits this conception of an ideal. However outlandish Kallipolis may seem, Plato's Socrates takes care to ensure that it proceeds from realistic premises about the nature and needs of human beings (pp. 104–12, 146–50). This practical grounding is essential, as the ultimate reasonableness of the ideal helps to incite a “shift of perspective” by which Athens is made to “appear alien and strange” (p. 198). Plato's *Republic* thus not only provides a model of ideal theory but also illuminates that such theorizing is beneficial because it “gives each of us a vantage point from which to critique the present situation” (p. 18).

To arrive at this conclusion, the first half of the book (Chapters 1–4) provides a close reading of the *Republic*. Thakkar begins by contesting the two-worlds interpretation of Platonism, offering substantial evidence that Platonic philosophizing involves perceiving two aspects of the *same* world. Simply put, uncovering something's true form involves “an investigation not into some separate object that transcends the concrete particular before us, but into that object itself,” albeit on a deeper level (p. 67). It involves, in other words, engaging in ideal theory. This understanding of Platonic philosophy better explains the compatibility between philosophy and ruling in the “cave.” Thakkar next defends the thesis that philosophers should rule by showing that, for Plato, ruling means engaging in soulcraft or individual education, an activity requiring one to philosophize. While best accomplished by exercising political power, ruling can also be undertaken through indirect means; as the cave allegory implies, even poets substantially influence one's orientation in the world. This suggests that ordinary citizens can also function to some degree as rulers.

In the second half of the book (Chapters 5–7), Thakkar explores how Plato's political theory can apply to today's world. His interpretation of Plato is traditional in the sense that he believes that Plato's political thought “is illiberal and antidemocratic, and to pretend otherwise is special pleading” (p. 224). Hence, for Plato to be relevant to Western societies deeply committed to liberal democracy, Thakkar acknowledges that he must adopt a “concessive strategy that will modify Plato's theory wherever it strongly conflicts with contemporary commitments” (p. 225). What remains is the notion that citizens and their political representatives should work out an ideal of liberal society and order their institutions and daily activities such that they help to “foster a culture that manifests and encourages liberal virtues such as tolerance