

**COLONIAL CAPITALISM AND THE DILEMMAS OF LIBERALISM:  
LOCKE, BURKE, WAKEFIELD AND THE BRITISH EMPIRE**

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**Colonial Capitalism and the Dilemmas of Liberalism:  
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Cornell University 2013

This dissertation offers a historical investigation of liberalism as a unified yet internally variegated intellectual field that has developed in relation to “colonial capitalism.” I examine the impact of colonial economic relations on the historical formation of liberalism, which is often overlooked in the scholarship on the history of political thought. Focusing on the British Empire between the late-seventeenth and early-nineteenth centuries, I analyze three historical cases in which the liberal self-image of capitalism in Britain was contradicted by the manifestly illiberal processes of displacement and coercion in its imperial possessions. I situate this contradiction within the debates on property claims in American colonies, the trade relation between Britain and its Indian dominions, and the labor problem during the colonial settlement of Australia and New Zealand. Corresponding to the three nodal questions of “property,” “exchange,” and “labor,” I analyze the works of John Locke, Edmund Burke, and Edward Gibbon Wakefield as three prominent political theorists who attempted to reconcile the liberal image of Britain as a commercial and pacific society with the illiberal processes of conquest, expropriation, and extraction of British colonialism. Highlighting the global and colonial as opposed to the national or European terrain on which modern economic relations and their political theorization have emerged, I emphasize the need to situate the history of political thought in a global context. I conclude that the historical evolution of liberalism cannot be properly grasped without an account of the colonial origins of global capitalism and of the problems of legitimacy these colonial origins posed for political theory.

## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

Onur Ulas Ince completed his undergraduate studies in Political Science and International Relations and in Sociology at Bogazici University in 2004. He received his M.A. degree in Sociology from the University of British Columbia in 2006 and his Ph.D. degree in Government from Cornell University in 2013. Ince's research is grounded in the history of political thought, history of capitalism, theories of empire, and modern social theory. His articles have appeared in *Polity* and *The Review of Politics*.

*Annem Hülya İnce ve Babam Nedim İnce'ye.*

*Desteyinizi hiçbir zaman esirgemediğiniz için sonsuz teşekkürler.*

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## INTRODUCTION

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, “empire” and “imperialism” once again appeared on the scholarly agenda. “Empire” found renewed lease on life in the American invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, and perhaps more importantly, in the intellectual defense of the Anglo-American imperialism as the historical promoter of a distinctly liberal political and economic global order. Part of this defense was an extension of the globalization debates of the 1990s and emblemized by Michael Ignatieff’s *Empire Lite*.<sup>1</sup> The more avowed and controversial advocacy of empire entered circulation with Niall Ferguson’s books *Empire* and *Colossus*, which eulogized the British Empire and advised the American empire to derive some lessons from its predecessor.<sup>2</sup>

Around the same time Ferguson published his imperial apologetics, the field of political theory witnessed a growing interest in the intersection of imperial histories and modes of political reflection, which ran counter to Ferguson’s conclusions.<sup>3</sup> The main thrust of this scholarship has been to denounce the liberal portrayals of the British Empire by unearthing the philosophies of exclusion and practices of subordination that typified its history.<sup>4</sup> Curiously, however, there has been a striking incongruity between Ferguson’s liberal depiction of the British Empire and the scholarly critiques that lambast it on the grounds of its illiberality.

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Ignatieff, *Empire Lite: Nation-Building in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan* (Toronto: Penguin, 2003). Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s influential *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000) can also be considered as an extension of the “globalization talk” of the 1990s. See Giovanni Arrighi, “Hegemony Unravelling,” *New Left Review* 32 (2005): 23-80.

<sup>2</sup> Niall Ferguson, *Colossus: The Price of America’s Empire* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2004), and *Empire: The Rise and the Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2003).

<sup>3</sup> For an excellent overview of the recent scholarship on political theory and empire, see Jennifer Pitts, “Theories of Empire and Imperialism,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 13 (2010): 211-35. Also see the collected essays in Craig Calhoun, Frederick Cooper, and Kevin Moore (eds), *Lessons of Empire: Imperial Histories and American Power* (New York: New Press, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> This interpretive trope is perhaps best captured by the title of a recent collection of essays edited by Jack P. Greene, *The Exclusionary Empire: British Liberty Overseas, 1600-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

Whereas Ferguson's praise for Anglophone imperialism centered on the latter's role in globalizing liberal economic institutions such as private property and free trade, the overwhelming majority of critical studies in political theory have revolved around ideologies of universalism and cultural difference cast in the register of politics of representation. Simply put, it has been argued that British imperialism was afflicted with a persistent gap between, on the one hand, universal liberal values that the empire purported to represent and on the other, the historical fact of colonial difference that such universal claims failed, or could not but fail, to accommodate.<sup>5</sup> It was this gap, it has been held, that authorized and justified the exclusion, oppression, and violence that the British Empire visited upon its colonial possessions, which marred its history with illiberality.

The major problem I see with these critiques is that their culturalist focus fails to counter Ferguson's institutional-economic endorsement of the British Empire. For Ferguson does not deny the politics of exclusion and subjugation in the history of the British Empire but exonerates the latter by casting it as the protagonist of economic globalization. Deplorable violence and human costs in British imperial history are first conceded with a disarming frankness and then emplotted as unfortunate and incidental to empire's liberal mission. The liberality of empire is ultimately vindicated, not only by the dissemination of private property, free trade, and the rule of law across the globe, but also by the Anglo-American capacity to lament the violence that

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<sup>5</sup> Originally, this theme has its roots in postcolonial theory, as exemplified by Partha Chatterjee's idea of the "rule of colonial difference" and Dipesh Chakrabarty's notion of "history 2." See Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), and *The Black Hole of Empire: History of a Global Practice of Power* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012); Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000). A powerful iteration of this theme in political theory can be found in Uday Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

inevitably attends all empires.<sup>6</sup> The bad conscience about the violent past of the empire reconfirms that the British imperialists were liberal at heart. Against such presentist and economic “balance sheet” arguments for liberal empire, culturalist indictments of liberalism’s inability to accommodate colonial difference command little traction.

The historical study presented here shows that, first, the liberal intellectuals of the British Empire were actually much less comfortable with imperial politics than Ferguson himself, and secondly, *pace* the culturalist interpreters of “liberalism and empire,” the source of discomfort for liberal thinkers was not so much the cultural alterity of the colonized peoples but the coercive economic transformations that the British undertook in their imperial possessions. As I explicate below, amongst the European colonial empires, the British were peculiarly situated in perceiving their commercial capitalist economy as an essentially liberal formation that defined the British national character. This liberal conception of commercial capitalism, however, came into frequent contradiction with the illiberal processes of conquest, extraction, and exploitation that pervaded and undergirded the British imperial economy as a whole. The ensuing tensions between the liberal self-image of capitalism and its illiberal colonial operations in the early-modern British Empire constitute the principal object of inquiry in this study.

My main objective is to demonstrate that three fundamental notions of liberalism, namely, private property, market exchange, and free labor could not be theorized as self-identical and universally valid ideas, not because the universal validity of these ideas were contested by other cultures encountered during Britain’s colonial expansion, but because the material processes that gave rise to the objective referents of these ideas were underwritten by political coercion. I maintain that private property, market exchange, and free labor could be imagined as

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<sup>6</sup> For a trenchant critique of this mode of imperial emplotment, see Jeanne Morefield, “Empire, Tragedy, and the Liberal State in the Writings of Niall Ferguson and Michael Ignatieff,” *Theory and Event* 11 (2008).

progressive, emancipatory, and thereby normatively universal only to the extent that the constitutive violence inscribed in their genealogy was disavowed, that is, kept out of sight, explained away, or incidentalized. By shifting the focus from cultural representation to political economy, I relocate the source of colonial difference that British liberal thought had to negotiate from who the colonized *are* to what the colonizers *do*. This is not so much to abandon the politics of universalism that preoccupies the extant studies of liberalism and empire as to demonstrate its mediation by the coercive practices of production and exchange, conquest and displacement, extraction and exploitation that belong to the global history of capitalism. Nor does political economy comprise “just another” dimension of the connection between liberalism and empire. If the study presented here were simply to “add economy and stir” to the politics of universalism, it would remain an external critique of empire in the sense that it would posit the British Empire as a given and simply augment its record of cultural exclusionism with a list of its economic injuries to the colonized. Instead, I approach political economy as intimately constitutive of the British imperial structure, the *internal* contradictions of which were a source of doubt, anxiety, and endogenous critique that the liberal intellectuals of empire, like John Locke, Edmund Burke, and Edward Gibbon Wakefield, had to confront.

I maintain that without giving attention to imperial political economy and liberal thinkers’ accounts of it, these specific internal contradictions remain out of sight, and one is left with a blanket politics of universalism that hinges on the exogenous binary between the cultures of the colonizer and the colonized. Such blanket conceptions run into difficulties in explaining why certain historically specific social relations and not others were deemed to be universal, or why certain cultural differences were translated into deficits and braided into civilizational hierarchies while others were deemed to be irrelevant for purposes of colonial rule, exploitation,

and expropriation. Nor are the culturalist interpretations successful in providing a systematic account of how and why the perceptions of social alterity varied across different historical contexts and encompassed the colonizers as well as the colonized. I contend that a theory of the contradictory mutual constitution of capitalism and liberalism, which I elaborate in Chapter 1, could supply a more powerful analytic frame for dissecting the interplay of liberal universals and colonial difference than can be offered by culturalist approaches.

A major reason why the centrality of political economy has eluded the existing analyses in political theory and empire is the justified allergy to the twentieth-century Marxist critiques of imperialism that reduced, if not completely ignored, the operationality of racial difference and civilizational hierarchies in colonial violence, oppression, and exploitation.<sup>7</sup> What has subsequently replaced Marxist reductionism, however, is a debilitating intra-textual mode of inquiry, in which accounts of liberalism and empire consist mainly in extrapolating liberal texts in imperial contexts without *theorizing* the imperial contexts in question.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, I argue that situating the history of liberal thought in relation to what I call “colonial capitalism” can generate a more accurate account of how liberal universals and cultural particularisms were parsed out in the early-modern British Empire. As I sketch briefly below and demonstrate fully in Chapter 4, a colonial-capitalist analytic reveals that discourses of civilization and colonial difference interacted with the dynamics of global capital in ways that traversed the ostensible divisions of race and class and folded the colonizers themselves into the civilizational categories of savagery and barbarism.

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<sup>7</sup> For a recent critical reconsideration of postcolonial misgivings about Marxism, see Vivek Chibber, *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital* (London: Verso, 2013).

<sup>8</sup> In an exemplary formulation, Uday Mehta writes, “with regard to the issue of exclusion in Locke, one needs no such extra-textual supplementing.” Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire*, p. 57.

“Bringing the economy back in,” then, is necessary for highlighting a dimension of the colonial empire that is indispensable for a global history of liberal thought. The notion of colonial capitalism that I develop in Chapter 1 works towards a heterodox Marxian theory of the imperial context that remains cognizant of the postcolonial critique of reductionism and diffusionism leveled at Marxian approaches. My account of colonial capitalism is based on a colonial retooling of central concepts of Marxist political economy, such as primitive accumulation, capital-relation, and real and formal subsumption, which I believe can furnish us with crucial theoretical resources for reconstructing the historically specific contradictions that liberal thought grappled with in the early modern period. Viewing the history of liberalism through critical political economy brings into focus the coercive economic transformations that underpinned the global emergence of capitalism and strained the efforts to imagine capitalism as a market system based on juridical equality and contractual freedom. In the case of the British Empire, the extra-legal appropriation of land in the Americas, forcible unequal exchange in India, and elaborate strategies of bonded labor in Australia and New Zealand each represents a vital moment in the development of global capital networks *and* a challenge to narrate this development as the triumph of private property, market exchange, and free labor as universally valid liberal values. The writings of the liberal intellectuals of the British Empire supply us with an inventory of the tensions between the liberal imaginings of the global capitalist economy and the constitutive violence in and through which the latter came into existence. A detailed investigation of these tensions in the works of John Locke, Edmund Burke, and Edward Gibbon Wakefield is elaborated in Chapters 2, 3, and 4 of this study.

In what follows, I offer a brief overview of colonial capitalism as an analytic framework for theorizing the imperial context of liberal thought. I then discuss the methodological reasons

for focusing on the British Empire between the late-seventeenth and early-nineteenth centuries in substantiating this inquiry as well as for identifying Locke, Burke, and Wakefield as exemplary liberal intellectuals of the empire. I conclude with a sketch of the interventions that this study stages in the fields of political theory, the history of political thought, and political economy.

### ***Colonialism, Capitalism, and Liberalism***

The pivotal notion in the analysis presented here is “colonial capitalism.” I have chosen this term to signify the historically genetic relationship between capitalism and colonialism rather than denote the *post hoc* colonial instantiations of capitalism as a self-contained economic system. The fundamental premise that informs this notion is that capitalism has historically emerged within the politico-legal framework of the “colonial empire” rather than the “nation-state.” This perspectival revision entails several theoretical correlates. First, it involves abandoning the idea of capitalism as a socially homogenous system that remakes the world in its own image and, instead, grasps capitalism as a heterogeneous and contradictory global social formation composed of diverse relations of production and exchange.<sup>9</sup> This move cuts against the grain of many “diffusionist” accounts, liberal and Marxist alike, which locate the birth of full-fledged capitalism in Britain and envision its outward surge to the rest of the world through colonialism and imperialism.<sup>10</sup> In contrast to such narratives of “capitalist globalization,” the analysis offered here invokes the “global inceptions of capital,” where capitalist relations do not precede colonialism but develop in and through colonial networks of people, commodities, and

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<sup>9</sup> This position builds upon the works of world-system theorists yet departs from them by foregrounding the notions of real and formal subsumption as the key to unravel the contradictory heterogeneity of global capital. I expound on this point in length in Chapter 1.

<sup>10</sup> A seminal, if somewhat oversimplified, critique of diffusionism is offered by James Blaut, *The Colonizer's Model of the World: Geographical Diffusionism and Eurocentric History* (New York: Guilford Press, 1993). For a full discussion of diffusionism and its critique amongst Marxist scholars like Robert Brenner, Ellen Meiksins Wood, Immanuel Wallerstein, Giovanni Arrighi, and Samir Amin, see Chapter 1.

ideas. The imagery adequate to this conceptualization is not the tidal wave of capitalism sweeping the world and reducing all relations of production to the exploitation of wage-labor freely contracted on the market. Instead, it resembles the discontinuous weaving and coagulation of a global web, a planetary network of value chains that harness together an archipelago of local sites of production and consumption. Within this picture, such phenomena as colonial land grabs, plantation slavery, and forced deindustrialization of imperial dependencies configure as crucial moments in the global formation of capitalism, rather than being atavistic residues of feudalism or pre-capitalist social forms awaiting to be abolished by capitalism proper.<sup>11</sup>

The place attributed to colonialism in my analysis goes beyond the narrow economic calculi of the benefits derived from the colonies in terms of labor, raw materials, and markets.<sup>12</sup> While this economic dimension is certainly significant, more important is the status of the colonies as spaces of imagination of and experimentation with new forms of productive organization, exchange, and labor control that were geared towards the maximization of profit. A survey of imperial economies, from the Atlantic to the Asian subcontinent, reveals that the expropriatory and exploitative practices established in such colonial sites were too brutal to conceive, let alone realize, in Europe. The relevant variable here is the position of the colonies beyond the purview of the European custom and conventions, which gave the colonial entrepreneurs such as planters, slave traders, merchants, and chartered company men a much freer hand in their dealings with the colonial populations in reshaping systems of production and exchange.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> For an insightful and provocative set of essays that substantiate this methodological approach to global capital, see Jairus Banaji, *Theory as History: Essays on Modes of Production and Exploitation* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

<sup>12</sup> Exemplary of the economic dismissal of empire is Lance E. Davis and Robert A. Huttenback, *Mammon and the Pursuit of Empire: The Political Economy of British Imperialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

<sup>13</sup> The key work behind the insight that the status of the colonies beyond the European law and custom enabled more brutal forms of violence (both amongst Europeans and between Europeans and non-Europeans) is Carl Schmitt, *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum* (New York: Telos Press, 2003).

What is brought into sharp relief by the ruthless and violent methods of colonial reorganization of exploitation is the originary role of extra-economic and extra-legal coercion in the emergence of capitalist relations on a planetary scale.<sup>14</sup> The term I employ to capture the process of forcible and uneven integration of colonial sites to global capitalist networks is “primitive accumulation,” originally coined by Karl Marx and expanded by Rosa Luxemburg.<sup>15</sup> I take issue with the historicist confines of this term as used by Marx and Luxemburg, who cast primitive accumulation as a process of homogenization that obliterates all non-capitalist social forms and institutes in their place relations of wage labor characteristic of nineteenth-century British industrial capitalism. In contrast, “primitive accumulation” refers in this study to the subordinate articulation as well as the assimilation of non-capitalist relations of social reproduction to the logic of capital, whereby ostensibly non-capitalist social forms become endogenous moments in capital’s global reproduction. Conceived thus, primitive accumulation, always present but especially blatant in its colonial variant, marks the element of *political* power constitutive of the capital-relation, exercised by the imperial core or by colonial agents who assumed or usurped it.

This is not to imply that the imperial metropolises were exempt from the violence of primitive accumulation. On the contrary, various forms of dispossession and bondage dotted the European landscape in the early modern period. However, first, metropolitan forms of expropriation and exploitation were not as ruthless as their colonial counterparts. For instance, African chattel slavery was decisively an Atlantic creature, and even white indentured labor, which was quite widespread in England, turned into virtual slavery once transported to

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<sup>14</sup> Geoff Eley, “Historicizing the Global, Politicizing Capital: Giving the Present a Name,” *History Workshop Journal* 63 (2007): 154-188.

<sup>15</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1: *Critique of Political Economy* (London: Penguin, 1976), section 8; Rosa Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital*, (London: Routledge, 2003), part III.

Caribbean plantations. Secondly, such expropriation and exploitation could be contested as well as justified by variously invoking and interpreting the laws and customs of the land, which on the one hand, reined in the extremities of primitive accumulation, and on the other, offered a politico-legal medium of struggle, reversal, and above all, explanation. The colonial primitive accumulation was otherwise. The lack of a common political, legal, or customary framework foreclosed the possibility of a similar recourse to contestation and negotiation. As a result, the violence of capitalist transformation at the colonial frontier not only played out more brutally but also called for different ideological frameworks for its justifications. At this point, the imperial framework of analysis advocated here proves especially fruitful as it allows a direct engagement with forms of force and violence that escape the grasp of methodological-nationalist accounts of capitalism in Westphalian and Weberian trappings.

If a theory of colonial capitalism comprises one half of the framework of analysis, the other half is an account of liberalism. I treat liberalism as an intellectual and discursive field unified by the principles of juridical equality and contractual freedom, yet internally variegated by the negotiation of these principles against the specific context of colonial capitalism. Contractual freedom and juridical equality, or “primal norms of liberalism” as I label them, are less explicitly stated postulates than fundamental dispositions, which display striking historical persistence, relative geographical indifference, and a certain modularity that renders them compatible with as dissimilar political philosophical strands as natural jurisprudence, ancient constitutionalism, and utilitarian positive legalism.<sup>16</sup> Whether expressed in the image of the state of nature, peaceful commerce, or market transaction, these primal norms gesture at a vision of free exchange as the model of human interrelations. Perhaps not surprisingly, the field of political economy, as it has evolved since its seventeenth-century origins, harbors the most

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<sup>16</sup> For a similar point, see Jennifer Pitts, “Free for All,” *Times Literary Supplement*, September 23, 2011.

explicit and coherent attempts to elaborate and codify the main tenets of this liberal vision. The enshrinement of liberalism in political economy is crucial for the purposes of this analysis, insofar as political economy has developed in tandem with global capitalism and asserted itself as the appropriate language for apprehending and explaining its dynamics.<sup>17</sup>

As sketched above, however, the global emergence of capitalism was anything but a story of consensual exchange between juridical equals. The rift between, on the one hand, the political coercion driving the formation of global capital circuits, and on the other, the essentially liberal conception of this emergent social formation brings us to a problematic that is at the heart of this study. This is a historical contradiction between the liberal self-image of capitalism and the illiberal process in and through which it has come into being. The tension in question is not a simply a confrontation between liberalism and capitalism as two exogenous phenomena, but marks a torsional relationship of “contradictory mutual constitution” between liberalism and capitalism. Put briefly, the historical process of primitive accumulation creates the concrete social relationships, such as alienable private property, market exchange of commodities, and legally free individual labor, around which liberal values of contractual freedom and juridical equality can crystallize and solidify. At the same time, the extra-economic and extra-legal coercion inherent in primitive accumulation encumbers the genealogy of liberalism with a heteronomous element of violence that cuts against the grain of liberal sensibility.

On the other side of this dynamic, the imagination of capitalism as an essentially liberal phenomenon underwrites the renewed authorization of and the continued acquiescence in the expropriation and exploitation integral to the colonial capitalist enterprise. The nature of this ideological connection is akin to the “necessary misrecognition” of capitalism as a liberal market system, as opposed to a cynical interpretation of liberalism as a hapless public relations figure

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<sup>17</sup> Andrew Sartori, “British Empire and Its Liberal Mission,” *The Journal of Modern History* 78 (2006): 623-42.

that covers up the social displacement and exploitation entailed by capitalism.<sup>18</sup> Ideology understood as necessary misrecognition commands greater explanatory rigor for the question under study, because those invested and active in the colonial capitalist enterprise had to justify their actions above all to themselves and to their peers, and only then, if at all, to the victims of colonial primitive accumulation. Liberalism, and liberal political economy in particular, therefore stands as a historical and practical force in establishing and securing capitalist relations.

### ***The British Empire and Middle-Class Intellectuals***

The contradictory unity of liberalism and capitalism does not arise in a historical vacuum, nor does the liberal misrecognition of capitalism take place automatically – which brings us to the British Empire and its middle-class intellectuals. The reason for embedding this inquiry in the history of the British Empire between the late-seventeenth and early-nineteenth centuries is twofold. First, the British Empire, especially after the Seven Years’ War, represented the largest self-avowed empire that spanned the globe and was arguably more operative than other European colonial empires in the formation of global webs of capital.<sup>19</sup> The second reason is the particular imagination of the British Empire, both by the Britons and by other Europeans, as the “empire of liberty,” that is, an imperial polity that embodied and disseminated liberal principles, which set it apart from the agrarian absolutism of France or the rapacious imperialism of Spain.<sup>20</sup> Thus, even though the British Empire had in common with its French and Spanish counterparts the same element of colonial violence, conquest, and enslavement, it was the peculiarity of the

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<sup>18</sup> I borrow the term “necessary misrecognition” from Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” in *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays* (London: New Left Books, 1971).

<sup>19</sup> See, for instance, Nuala Zahedieh, *Capital and the Colonies: London and the Atlantic Economy, 1660-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>20</sup> Anthony Pagden, *Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France, c. 1500-c. 1800* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1995).

Britons to conceive of themselves as a “maritime, commercial, Protestant, and free” people.<sup>21</sup> The Spanish theological debates revolved around whether the conquered indigenous peoples of America were subhuman and therefore could be rightfully enslaved, while the main question for the French was how to justifiably exclude the French Empire’s non-European subjects from the republican principles of equality enshrined in the Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen. In contrast to the theological medium of the Spanish and the republican idiom of the French debates, controversies about the British imperial enterprise were couched in the language of political economy as a mode of ethico-political reflection constitutional argumentation. In other words, while all European empires had to confront the problem of colonial violence, only in the case of Britain, where a commercial-capitalist economy was integral to the self-definition of the national character, did this problem take the form of a contradiction between capitalism and liberalism. This is the main reason why the British Empire is particularly well suited for examining the challenge of colonial capitalism.

For investigating this problem, I have focused on three critical conjunctures in the history of the British Empire, in which the tensions between the liberal self-image of capitalism in Britain and its illiberal colonial operations came to a head. The first of these is the status of the property claims during the colonization of America in the seventeenth century. The second case concerns the changing nature of the Anglo-Indian trade after the conquest of Bengal in the eighteenth-century. The third and final case centers on the problem of colonial labor supply that prompted British migration to Australia and New Zealand in the nineteenth century. In addition to presenting significant concrete problems of imperial economy and administration, these conjunctures also spurred momentous theoretical debates in which the very moral foundations of the British colonial capitalist enterprise were at stake. It is in the crucible of these debates that

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<sup>21</sup> David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

the liberal contours of the ideas of “property,” “exchange,” and “labor” were hammered out, yet in ways that marked them with scars of colonial violence in and through which their concrete referents came into being.

Property, exchange, and labor provide crucial conceptual handles for our investigation in their capacity as hinges that connect, on the one hand, capitalism and liberalism, and on the other, political economy and political theory. In the first case, the history of global capitalism is one of a planetary reorientation and reconfiguration of property structures, exchange relations, and regimes of labor in a historically determinate social organization of human beings’ metabolic relation to the non-human world. At the same time, property, exchange, and labor constitute the three pillars of the liberal triumphalist narratives that celebrate human liberation and progress in the image of private property, free exchange, and free labor. Secondly, property, exchange, and labor comprise the building blocks of the field of political economy. The irreducibly ethico-political content of these notions challenge the conventional portrayals of political economy as a precursor to the technical-administrative discipline of economics. Questions of freedom, equality, justice, and the good life, and visions of purposeful human existence that have shaped the conceptual histories of property, exchange, and labor squarely locate political economy in the domain of political theory.

It is therefore in the register of political economy as a species of political theory that this study excavates and reconstructs the contradictory unity of liberalism and capitalism. In the case of the British Empire, this inquiry assumes the form of the following question: how could the Britons maintain a liberal image of their commercial-capitalist economy in face of the systematic displacement, expropriation, and exploitation that underpinned it in the colonies? My answer to this question centers on middle-class intellectuals, and specifically John Locke, Edmund Burke,

and Edward Gibbon Wakefield, who made influential attempts to explain and navigate the misfit between the liberal principles propounded in the British metropole and the violation of the same principles by British colonial capitalism. I examine the intellectual efforts of these figures in two overlapping registers. On one level, the works of Locke, Burke, and Wakefield staged a practical intervention in particular problems raised by colonial capitalism in their respective historical conjunctures. In the writings of these figures, the British political elite and colonial entrepreneurs found the theoretical resources with which to imagine the imperial endeavor in the semblance of a liberal project. On another level, these intellectuals' direct engagement with the imperial conundrums of their time turn their works into textual surfaces on which we can trace the historically specific contradictions between the liberal self-image of capitalism and its illiberal colonial realities. The methodological consideration behind selecting Locke, Burke, and Wakefield – and not, for instance, Adam Smith or David Ricardo – is their multiple and conflicting commitments to British colonial capitalism *and* to liberal principles rooted in metropolitan political economy. The theoretical attempts to reconcile these competing allegiances, I argue, provide us with an index to the historical vagaries of liberalism and capitalism. The rigor of this indexicality (the acuity with which Locke, Burke, and Wakefield apprehended, articulated, and addressed the problematics of property, exchange, and labor) undergirds the canonicity of the first two thinkers and calls for more closely studying the third.

I designate the efforts to cast colonial capitalism in a liberal mold as strategies of “disavowal.” Such strategies involved an array of theoretical maneuvers, myths, narratives, and fictions, which operated less by occluding the contradiction in question than by demonstrating that the contradiction did not exist in the first place.<sup>22</sup> Native Americans, who were expropriated

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<sup>22</sup> For the notion of disavowal, I draw upon Sybille Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

under English colonialism, turned out to have indirectly consented to the status of their lands as natural commons open to free appropriation; the plunder of India by the British East India Company represented the corruption of the British commercial principles rather than their logical conclusion; and the reduction of British settlers in New Zealand to agricultural proletarians followed from a settler contract by which the settlers voluntarily opted for their own dispossession. In short, extra-economic and extra-legal violence that drove capitalist transformation throughout the imperial economy was declared contingent, incidental, and individual; above all, it did not reflect the essence of capitalism, which allegedly remained liberal to the core.

### ***Liberalism, Empire, and Beyond***

The most immediate intervention of this study is in the recent “imperial turn” in the field of political theory.<sup>23</sup> A growing spate of scholarship has squarely established the indispensability of a global, imperial interpretive lens for reappraising the history of Western political thought, which has developed in the context of “state empires.”<sup>24</sup> However, as mentioned above, these reappraisals are limited by their framing of the subject matter in terms of the interplay between the liberal universals espoused by European thinkers and the cultural alterity embodied in Europe’s colonized other. A question rarely posed is the specific markers of the universality that attaches to the claims of liberalism or the specific nature of cultural particularities that confront them. I believe the sweeping invocation of the “particularity of the European experience usurping the place of the universal” often falls short of addressing this question. Why, for instance, did John Locke deem monotheism irrelevant yet monetarization crucial in deciding

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<sup>23</sup> See Pitts, “Theories of Empire and Imperialism.”

<sup>24</sup> James Tully, *Public Philosophy in a New Key*, Vol. 2: *Imperialism and Civic Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

whether land in America stood as natural common and therefore open to free English appropriation? On what basis did Edmund Burke differentiate between Indian, African, American peoples, championing the first against British oppression while prescribing a despotic discipline for the second and envisioning the total extermination of the third? More broadly, how to explain that enclosing and improving settlers who embodied the civilizing mission of the British Empire in the seventeenth century were scorned as degenerate and uncivilized in metropolitan discourse when we arrive at the nineteenth century? Whence do the historically specific parsing out of the particulars derive, and more importantly, can we devise an analytic framework, however provisional, that can piece together these discrete historical instances into a meaningful, if discontinuous and incomplete, picture?

The study presented here suggests some answers to such questions by pointing to the history of global capital as at once a material condition for *and* a challenge to liberal universals. Capital, as a social force with a conceptually universal and spatially global horizon, represents the conditions for articulating catholic visions of human progress in the image of private property, world market, and free labor. At the same time, the distinctly illiberal processes of coercive transformation in and through which capitalist relations arise on a global scale disrupt the self-identity of liberalism and obstruct its universal realization. The paradoxical relationship between liberalism and capitalism can be expressed more adequately as an endogenous dynamic of “competing universals” than as challenges posed by cultural difference to the universal moral claims of the West. Viewed through this lens, the economic exploits of the colonizers themselves, what the colonizers *do* instead of who the colonized *are*, enter the field of vision as a source of colonial alterity that needs to be judged by the bar of liberal values enshrined in metropolitan political economy. The colonial entrepreneurs who are operative in the formation of

global networks of capital, and who thereby lay the conduits through which liberalism can extend its claims beyond the confines of Britain, ironically find themselves denigrated in the very same terms imputed to colonial peoples, namely, as “despotic” planters, “savage” settlers, and “barbaric” chartered company men. It is in the colonies that the friction between the universal horizon of capital and the universal aspirations of liberalism sets off the brightest sparks.

I believe the systemic tension outlined above can shed light on historical moments in which liberal thought colluded with other political discourses so as to navigate the challenges of colonial capitalism. Recent scholarship on liberalism and empire has generated an impressive inventory of historical instances in which liberal notions, when confronted by problems of colonial rule, are shown to lock arms with narratives of inexorable universal human progress, cosmopolitan pluralism, and insurmountable cultural difference.<sup>25</sup> To my knowledge, there has been no direct attempt to tackle this puzzling promiscuity with which liberal discourse mobilized diverse and even conflictual social and political philosophies. I hazard some reflections in response to this puzzle, mainly in Chapter 1 and the Conclusion. My guiding conjecture is that one major reason liberal thought had to enlist other political discourses was to suture the rift opened up in its universal moral claims by the manifest unfreedom and inequality that accompanied the historical development of capitalism. The heterogeneous, economically uneven, and politically asymmetric networks of imperial political economy, and the different modalities of colonial primitive accumulation through which they materialized, can serve as a useful heuristic for thinking together the various cross-pollinations between liberalism and other political discourses.

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<sup>25</sup> See, respectively, Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*; Sankar Muthu, *Enlightenment Against Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Karuna Mantena, *Alibis of Empire: Henry Maine and the Ends of Liberal Imperialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

Furthermore, the colonial genealogy of capitalism holds implications of potential interest to those students of political economy who are skeptical towards the ubiquitous conflation of capitalism and the market, and the subsumption of both under the rubric of the economy. The idea that the market is a natural and spontaneous institution has long been discarded in favor of the distinctly political and legal interventions required to establish market relations. Yet, what largely persists is a notion of the economy, still treated as roughly coextensive with the domain of the market, as separate from if dependent on the sphere of politics. For example, Douglass C. North distinguishes exogenous “institutions” from the economic sphere which they circumscribe, structure, and make possible.<sup>26</sup> Even a most astute critic of capitalism like Karl Polanyi speaks of the capitalization of social reproduction as “marketization” and as the disembedding of the “economy” from “society.”<sup>27</sup> In contrast, going over the history of capitalism with the comb of colonial primitive accumulation reveals that distinctly non-market and politically coerced forms of production and exchange were crucial moments in the emergence of “liberal political economy.” For example, bringing within the conceptual ambit of capital such productive forms as the slave-plantation complex or the peasant household under debt-peonage explodes the Marxian and liberal definitions of labor under capitalism as a species of private property freely contracted on the market.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Douglass C. North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>27</sup> Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001).

<sup>28</sup> Jairus Banaji, “The Fictions of Free Labour: Contract, Coercion, and the So-Called Unfree Labour,” *Historical Materialism* 11 (2003): 69-95. Of course, the great divide between the liberal and the Marxian positions on wage labor is that the former valorizes it as the sign and seal of freedom while the latter critiques it as a new form of bondage (“wage slavery”) in which one is free to choose one’s own master or to starve to death. The relevant I emphasize here is not principally about the differential construals of legally free wage labor, but concerns the status of legally *unfree* labor as a modern capitalist social form rather than a pre- or non-capitalist relation of subordination. Pioneering in this line of theorization are Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944); C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L’Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York: Vintage, 1963).

The same critique can be leveled at the neoliberal theories of the “economy” as a putatively self-identical sphere of production, exchange, and consumption, the internal dynamics of which can be indirectly managed but cannot be altered by political processes. This conviction, while almost doxic in our time, has early modern roots, as Chapters 2, 3, and 4 demonstrate. It can be traced back to the seventeenth century, when John Locke located the birth of both landed and moneyed property prior to the birth of political societies (a staple axiom of contemporary libertarian philosophy); it can be observed in Edmund Burke’s argument that statesmen can give “direction” but not “law” to the workings of the commercial society (prefiguring Friedrich Hayek’s distinction between *taxiis* and *logos*); it prevails in Wakefield’s stark equation of capitalist social relations with civilization *per se*. The same chapters also demonstrate, however, that the projection of an image of the modern economy as an apolitical domain of human existence depended on the constant disavowal and incidentalization of the originary violence behind capitalist relations through various metaphysical fictions and myths. Private property, market exchange, and free labor could be extolled as liberal only to the extent that their ideational boundaries were vigilantly watched and their coercive and illiberal underpinnings were systematically disavowed. By the same token, contemporary neoliberal discourses can draw upon and claim to vindicate these early-modern articulations of the economy as a distinct sphere only through a second act of disavowal. The apolitical semblance of the economy and its alleged continuity from the time of Adam Smith to the days of Milton Friedman is upheld by jumping over (ignoring, incidentalizing, or dismissing) a century-and-a-half of intense class conflict, Marxian critique, and socialist experimentation in its Soviet and Third World variants – in other words, weaving a fiction of the “invisible hand” bringing about the “end of history.” In contrast, while not denying that practical efficacy of the “economy” as a potent discursive construct, I

conclude that “political economy” is the adequate conceptual umbrella under which to analyze capitalism as a social formation.

By extension, the prism of primitive accumulation also brings into focus the role of sovereign-legal-disciplinary apparatuses in producing and reproducing subjects that are woven into the capitalist social formation through work and enterprise. This offers an important complement to Foucauldian analyses of “governmentality” understood as a liberal rationality of rule under capitalism, or as the new institutionalist economics would label it, a mode of managing the economy by shaping incentive structures.<sup>29</sup> A view of the legal, executive, and administrative measures propelling the socioeconomic transformations of the early modern period suggests a markedly illiberal history behind the liberal strategies of government. Parliamentary Enclosures, vagrancy laws, workhouses, impressment, transportation, preemptive crown rights, states of emergency, and internal colonization schemes, just to name a few, alert us to the omnipresence of extra-economic force in the fashioning of productive and governable subjects, subjects instilled with “correct” incentives, subjects that belong to and define the domain of the economy. In the history of colonial capitalism we can glimpse into the “prehistory of liberalism,” that is, the transformation of ungovernable “peoples” into governmentalized “populations.” Equally importantly, the imperial perspective can enlarge our focus beyond Europe and bring into view empire-building projects as sites of political experimentation. This theoretical move can open the way to analyzing the emergence of modern state institutions and rationales of rule as part of the broader terrain of “imperial governmentality.”

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<sup>29</sup> See Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College de France, 1977-1978*, ed. Michael Senellart (New York: Picador, 2007), and *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College de France, 1978-1979*, ed. Michael Senellart (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008).

Another important implication of the conceptual revisions suggested in this study is to rethink “capital” as a political as opposed to an economic category.<sup>30</sup> The idea that capital is inherently political, or the “political immanence of capital,” concerns the field of political theory perhaps more immediately than it does political economy. Questions of capitalism and political economy are palpably marginal in the dominant political theory debates today, as a cursory look at the chief political theory journals or the political theory divisions of major conferences would attest. Perhaps the most telling instantiation of the neglect is the growing interest in the political thought of Hannah Arendt, which has visibly pervaded the field in the last decade. I find the widespread fascination with Arendt’s philosophy suggestive mainly because of her persistent effort to purge from the domain of politics everything pertaining to social reproduction, or in her famous coinage, the “social question.”<sup>31</sup> It is with a kindred orientation, I believe, that many contemporary theorists speak of “the political” overwhelmingly in terms of action, language, *agon*, and aesthetics. I am afraid there is reason to suspect that the elisions and difficulties that traverse Arendt’s effort to cordon off the political from the social (and the economic relations that structure the social) also reflect on the field of political theory. Arendt wrote with remarkable worry and acumen about the “rise of the social” and the “society of the laborers” as the retreat of politics before administration.<sup>32</sup> Yet she left the historical origins of capitalist modernity, which she traced back to the “expropriation of the poor” (that is, primitive accumulation), largely unexamined. In contrast, if we construe primitive accumulation, which gives birth to the society of laborers in the first place, as a decisively *political* as opposed to economic process, then we inscribe a political element at the heart of the “social question” that

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<sup>30</sup> For a recent effort in this direction, see Jonathan Nitzan and Shimshon Bichler, *Capital as Power: A Study of Order and Creorder* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

<sup>31</sup> Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Viking Press, 1962).

<sup>32</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1958).

Arendt tries in her theory to sequester from the realm of politics. Conversely, we expand the conceptual domain of political theory to encompass questions of dispossession, expropriation, exploitation, and – yes – class. Political theory would neglect these questions to its own detriment in the present conjuncture, where political claims are staked in the register of social justice against the reign of austerity in the Global North, Chinese style “authoritarian capitalism” is driving a wedge between liberal democracy and capitalism, and the competition for natural resources in the Global South is raising the specters of “neocolonialism.”

Finally, by approaching contemporary global capitalism as the enduring legacy of imperial configurations of economic, legal, and social forms, which have outlived formal decolonization, this project draws attention to the colonial provenance of contemporary visions of progress *qua* “development.” Despite repeated acknowledgments of its failure, the idea of development has shown remarkable resilience in its mutation through manifold institutional-discursive forms, ranging from colonial dual mandates to national industrialization schemes to basic needs approaches to entrepreneurship models.<sup>33</sup> Under the bewildering variety of the semantic content of development, one can discern a persistent politics of universality keyed to the indispensability of economic growth, itself predicated on a fuller marketization and capitalization of social reproduction.<sup>34</sup> A closer inspection of the tropes and rationales forwarded to justify such social reconstructions reveals uncanny resemblances with some of the arguments mobilized for the transformation and integration of the colonies to global capital networks in the early modern period. For instance, advocacy for microcredit schemes in India in the name of “empowerment through market” carries the echoes of the seventeenth-century emphases on

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<sup>33</sup> Kalyan Sanyal, *Rethinking Capitalist Development: Primitive Accumulation, Governmentality and Post-Colonial Capitalism* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>34</sup> Sundhya Pahuja, *Decolonising International Law: Development, Economic Growth, and the Politics of Universality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

commercialization as the mark of social advancement, which set England apart and over America and Ireland. Likewise, programs for instituting alienable property rights in urban shantytowns in Peru or common lands in Nigeria draw on the conviction that there can be no prosperity without private property, a conviction that came to its own in the eighteenth-century debates over why precolonial India was economically stagnant and why it needed a “Permanent Settlement” of property. The recent push for establishing agro-business plantations in Africa and turning small-scale subsistence farmers into commercial entrepreneurs or agricultural laborers not only revitalizes colonial narratives of *terra nullius*, but also taps into the nineteenth-century premise that smallholder agriculture and peasantry are inherently stationary and outside the purview of modernity as we know it.

Highlighting these institutional and ideological continuities is not to imply that our present moment is simply a re-enactment of the early-modern drama of primitive accumulation, for doing so would fall prey to the methodological-nationalist historicism that this project confronts. The point is not to cast the “new enclosures” in the image of the English Enclosures *redux* (capitalism “finally” arriving in the Global South). Rather, it is to discover what is “new” in the irreducibly global history of the manifold, continuous, and interlocking cycles of primitive accumulation, through which today’s Global South has always already been incorporated, violently and unevenly, into the global inceptions of capital. The global perspective on capitalism as proposed here does not so much alert us to the resurgence of a colonial past as remind us of our enduring colonial present.

## CHAPTER I

### COLONIAL CAPITALISM AND THE DILEMMAS OF LIBERALISM

#### Introduction

In the past two decades, the field of political theory has witnessed an efflorescence of scholarly work on “empire.” No doubt accelerated by the growing general interest in empire and imperialism in the light of post-9/11 American foreign policy,<sup>35</sup> a significant adjustment of scholarly lenses has been underway since the early 1990s for detecting the broader inflections of Western political theory by the enduring colonial legacies of European empires. This timely, even belated, “imperial turn” has generated a growing corpus of research that explores the manifold forms and multiple trajectories in which the history of European colonialism and the formation of Western political thought intersected and influenced each other. Subjected to the imperial litmus test are not only decorated names in the pantheon of political thought, such as John Locke, Immanuel Kant, and Alexis de Tocqueville, but concepts that constitute the very furniture of thought in contemporary political theory, including state, nation, citizenship, social contract, constitutionalism, republicanism, liberalism, conservatism, cosmopolitanism, and modernity.<sup>36</sup> What traverses this diverse and even conflictual scholarly landscape is a concurrence on the irreducible imprint of colonialism on Western political theory, and more specifically, the challenge posed by colonial difference for the universal aspirations of Enlightened European philosophy.

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<sup>35</sup> The emblematic figure in the active promotion of the imperial ideal is, of course, Niall Ferguson, the author of the books *Empire* and *Colossus*. For a left response to Ferguson’s eulogy to empire, see Collin Mooers (ed.), *The New Imperialists: Ideologies of Empire* (Oxford: One World, 2006).

<sup>36</sup> For an excellent overview of this literature organized along thematic and disciplinary lines, see Pitts, “Theories of Empire.” The appearance of such an article in the *Annual Review of Political Science* indicates that “empire” has gained sufficient prominence and heft as an object of inquiry in the field of political science.

A particularly prolific line of inquiry in this scholarship has focused on “liberalism and empire,” with Britain providing the most popular cases of study because of its purported status as the *locus classicus* of liberal thought and the largest self-avowed empire that has walked the earth. In a seminal work on the “mutual constitution” of liberalism and empire, David Armitage famously quipped that roughly from the late-seventeenth century onwards the Britons imagined themselves to be a “maritime, commercial, Protestant, and free” people.<sup>37</sup> The dilemmas of professing liberalism and possessing an empire have since then become a staple object of inquiry, primarily along two analytic axes. The first axis regards the problem of domination and freedom, and asks a question that relates to republican as well as liberal sensibilities: how could a people championing political freedom justify subjugating other peoples?<sup>38</sup> The second axis concerns issues of universalism and difference, and critically interrogates the responses of universalistic dispositions when confronted by social diversity. These two axes intersect on Britain’s problematic position as a polity averring universal liberal values yet ruling over a multiplicity of culturally different peoples. Set against this problematic, British liberal thought’s dealings with cultural alterity in an imperial world is taken to expose the outer boundaries of its inclusionary claims.<sup>39</sup>

What remains profoundly underexplored in this scholarship is the political economic dimension of the British Empire, which tends to reproduce the familiar rift between intellectual and material history by relegating the latter to the province of economic historians. This neglect is most unfortunate, not least because the political economic considerations were a major driving

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<sup>37</sup> Armitage, *Ideological Origins*, p. 173.

<sup>38</sup> A pace-setting article that places this problematic in historical frame is P. J. Marshall’s “A Free Thought Conquering People: Britain and Asia in the Eighteenth Century,” in *A Free Thought Conquering People*, ed. P. J. Marshall (Ashgate: Variorum, 2003). Marshall’s focus is on eighteenth-century liberal conceptions of freedom. For a civic humanist perspective on *republican* liberties and their troubled relationship to empire, see Armitage, *Ideological Origins*.

<sup>39</sup> This argument is widely used as a structuring trope in the postcolonial literature and the “new imperial history.” Its exemplary formulation can be found in Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire*.

force behind the construction of empire and its direct impingement on the lives of the colonized. But perhaps more importantly for the kinds of questions pursued in this scholarship, the economic policies and practices enacted in the colonies by private and public agents themselves posed a species of colonial alterity that British liberal thought had to grapple with. The pervasive emphasis on political domination over the culturally alien “colonial other” obscures as much as it reveals, insofar as it overlooks the profound gap between the liberal self-image of capitalism in British metropolitan thought and the coercive economic exploits that British capitalist enterprise encompassed in the colonies. For when one surveys the British imperial formation in the “long eighteenth century,”<sup>40</sup> which frames the study presented here, one is struck by the twin trajectories of steady imperial expansion and economic reconstruction spanning a geography from North America to New Zealand,<sup>41</sup> and the formation of a corpus of liberal political economy in Britain stretching from John Locke to David Ricardo.<sup>42</sup> As British settlers, chartered companies, and colonial governors were deploying armed force for appropriating land in North America, for establishing plantations in the Caribbean and procuring slaves from the African west coast (themselves to replace white bonded laborers), and for turning the terms of the East Indian trade in their favor, enlightened names in Britain were theorizing the sanctity of private property, moral and economic virtues of free labor, and the equity and utility of free trade.

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<sup>40</sup> This historical marker roughly encompasses the period the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the great Reform Act of 1832. For a historical overview of British social history in this period, see Frank Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political and Social History, 1688-1832* (London: Arnold, 1997). For a literary approach to this historical context, see Paul Baines, *The Long Eighteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>41</sup> See John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), Chris Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780-1830* (London: Longman, 1989), Anthony Pagden (ed) *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, Vol. 1: *The Origins of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). For the earlier waves of English colonial expansion, see Kenneth Andrews, Nicholas Canny, Paul Hair, and David Quinn, *The Westward Enterprise: English Activities in Ireland, the Atlantic, and America, 1480-1650* (Detroit: Wayne University Press, 1979). A broader overview of European colonial expansion can be found in John Weaver, *The Great Land Rush and the Making of the Modern World, 1650-1900* (Montreal, McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003).

<sup>42</sup> For an overview, see Phyllis Deane, *Evolution of Economic Ideas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

Certainly, some of the proponents of these principles figured amongst the most illustrious critics of empire.<sup>43</sup> However, many chose the path of theoretical experimentation with reconciling the liberal image of British commercial economy and its illiberal colonial anchors and supports.<sup>44</sup>

The study presented here addresses the lacuna in the existing literature on liberalism and empire by highlighting the theoretical attempts to navigate the contradiction between the liberal self-image of capitalism in Britain and the illiberal processes that underpinned the emergence of capitalist relations in the colonies. Wherever they conquered and colonized, the British integrated indigenous societies and ecologies to their commercial-capitalist networks by significantly altering the relations of social reproduction on which these societies rested. Economic integration often took extractive and exploitative forms and involved considerable deployment of political and military might. The processes of forcible and unequal economic integration into a global and heterogeneous network of capitalist production and exchange, which I label here “colonial capitalism,” represented an anomaly, and at times an anathema, to the liberal market conceptions of capitalism with which the British metropole identified. Such colonial violence often had to be judged at the liberal bar of metropolitan political economic thought.

For triangulating this problematic, this study examines three momentous historical conjunctures in the history of the British Empire, in which the contradiction between the liberal self-image of capitalism and its illiberal colonial manifestation condensed around the problems

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<sup>43</sup> Liberal critiques of empire have been most elaborately reconstructed in Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Liberal Imperialism in Britain and France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Pitts, “Empire, Progress, and the Savage Mind,” in *Colonialism and Its Legacies*, ed. Jacob T. Levy and Iris Marion Young (New York: Lexington, 2011); Muthu, *Enlightenment Against Empire*; Muthu, “Adam Smith’s Critique of International Trading Companies. Theorizing Globalization in the Age of Enlightenment,” *Political Theory* 36 (2008): 185-212; and Muthu, “Diderot’s Theory of Global (and Imperial) Commerce: An Enlightenment Account of “Globalization,”” in *Colonialism and Its Legacies*, ed. Levy and Young.

<sup>44</sup> While such controversies raged in Europe more generally, the contradictions that triggered them were felt more sharply and registered more clearly in the British debates. For an excellent treatment of the European debates on global commerce and empire, see Emma Rothschild, “Global Commerce and the Question of Sovereignty in the Eighteenth Century Provinces,” *Modern Intellectual History* 1 (2004): 3-26.

of “property,” “exchange,” and “labor.” I situate these problems respectively in the colonial contexts of seventeenth-century America, eighteenth-century India, and nineteenth-century Australia and New Zealand. If the liberal self-image of the British colonial capitalist enterprise were to be upheld, and therefore its legitimacy and longevity secured, English settlers’ land-appropriations in American colonies, the nature of Britain’s trade with its Indian dominions, and the status of migrant labor in the Antipodes had to be clarified, and the political coercion shaping these contexts explained. I focus on John Locke, Edmund Burke, and Edward Gibbon Wakefield as three middle-class intellectuals who, being theoretically invested in the pacific commercial conception of British capitalism and politically invested in the British imperial structure, grappled with the challenges and aporias arising from accommodating colonial capitalism within the cast of liberal political economy.

Property, exchange, and labor provide us with crucial handles for unraveling these aporias by virtue of their centrality to both capitalism and liberalism. On the one hand, the reorientation of property relations, exchange systems, and labor organization in the colonies towards the profit principle has been essential to the formation of global networks of capital accumulation. Imperial force, directly or indirectly, played a crucial role in this process. On the other hand, these three notions have also featured as core values in narratives of liberal triumphalism that herald the advent of private property, free trade, and free labor as marks of human progress. As I hope to demonstrate, private property, free trade, and free labor could be imagined as emancipatory and extolled as progressive only to the extent that the forcible expropriation, unequal exchange, and dispossession that went on in the colonies were kept out of sight, disavowed, or otherwise navigated in discourse. Colonial capitalism as an analytic frame for interrogating liberalism thus reveals the ideological boundary-work that permeates the latter’s

genealogy, as it brings into view the formative impact of intellectual efforts to broker between, on the one hand, the core liberal principles of contractual freedom and juridical equality, and on the other, capitalist economic relations that have emerged through colonial violence. When their liberal self-image traveled with Britons to other shores, it crashed against colonial capitalism and revealed its fragility. It fell upon liberal intellectuals like Locke, Burke, and Wakefield to brace the hull.

### **I. Empire Strikes Back: An Overview**

History, literature, and anthropology have been grappling for the past four decades with the colonial genealogy of the forms of knowledge they deal in.<sup>45</sup> Political theory joined this self-reflective effort quite late. Scattered attempts made in the 1980s to extend interpretive horizons to Europe's colonies remained for the most part neglected.<sup>46</sup> The publication of James Tully's *An Approach to Political Philosophy* in 1993 marked the beginning of the "imperial turn" in political theory, which has since transformed the field primarily by problematizing the authenticity of modern political concepts previously understood as reflecting exclusively European historical experience.<sup>47</sup> The new attention to the metropole-colony nexus has attuned many scholars to the instances where theories they studied were "addressed to the problems discovered in the colonial contact zones." Paul Gilroy summarizes this new perceptivity when he writes, "[e]ven when practical and administrative issues were to the fore, the discussion of what

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<sup>45</sup> Anthropology has been at the forefront of critical self-reflection about the discipline's colonial origins and complicities. For a seminal work in this vein, see Diane Lewis, "Anthropology and Colonialism," *Current Anthropology* 14 (1973): 581-602.

<sup>46</sup> For example, see Celia McGuiness, "The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina as a Tool for Lockean Scholarship," *Interpretation* 17 (1989): 127-43; Herman Lebovics, "The Uses of America in Locke's Second Treatise of Government," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 47 (1986): 567-81; Eileen Sullivan, "Liberalism and Imperialism: J. S. Mill's Defense of the British Empire," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 44 (1983): 599-617.

<sup>47</sup> James Tully, *An Approach to Political Philosophy: Locke in Contexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

we can broadly call colonial government encompassed disputes over universality, sovereignty, freedom, democracy, property, and justice.”<sup>48</sup> In a certain sense, this was the discovery of the obvious. The proliferation in Europe of a distinct set of political discourses that we retrospectively systematize under the rubric of modern political theory historically coincided with the world-historical formation of colonial empires. “European constitutional states, as state empires, developed within global systems of imperial and colonial law from the beginning,” which means that the problems of government that these states faced could not have been simply domestic.<sup>49</sup> For the thinkers enshrined in the canon of political theory, meditating on the problem of government from the sixteenth century onwards ineluctably entailed meditating about the problem of colonial government. “It is now widely understood that a full understating of these thinkers’ ideas, as well as the broader traditions they have contributed, requires attention to imperial and global contexts and concerns.”<sup>50</sup> Thus opened to colonial investigation have been traditions of liberalism,<sup>51</sup> republicanism,<sup>52</sup> conservatism,<sup>53</sup> the Enlightenment,<sup>54</sup> and their essential notions such as contract,<sup>55</sup> sovereignty,<sup>56</sup> law,<sup>57</sup> and constitutionalism.<sup>58</sup> Significant

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<sup>48</sup> Paul Gilroy, “Multiculturalism and Postcolonial Theory,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Theory*, ed. John Dryzek and Bonnie Honig (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 657.

<sup>49</sup> Tully, *Public Philosophy*, Vol. 2, p. 200.

<sup>50</sup> Pitts, “Political Theory,” p. 215.

<sup>51</sup> Tully, *Approach to Political Philosophy*; Barbara Arneil, “Trade, Plantations, and Property: John Locke and the Economic Defense of Colonialism,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 55 (1994): 591-609; Arneil, *John Locke and America: The Defence of English Colonialism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); Uday Mehta, *The Anxiety of Freedom: Imagination and Individuality in Locke’s Political Thought* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992); Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire*; Duncan Ivison, *Postcolonial Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Ivison, “Locke, Liberalism, and Empire,” in *The Philosophy of John Locke: New Perspectives*, ed. Peter Anstey (New York: Routledge, 2003).

<sup>52</sup> Armitage, *Ideological Origins*; Aziz Rana, *The Two Faces of American Freedom* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

<sup>53</sup> Iain Hampsher-Monk, “Introduction” in *The Political Philosophy of Edmund Burke*, ed. Ian Hampsher-Monk (New York: Rowman, 1987); Hampsher-Monk, “Edmund Burke and Empire,” in *Lineages of Empire: The Historical Roots of British Imperial Thought*, ed. Duncan Kelly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Daniel I. O’Neill, “Rethinking Burke and India,” *History of Political Thought* 30 (2009): 492-523.

<sup>54</sup> Muthu, *Enlightenment Against Empire*; Pitts, *A Turn to Empire*.

<sup>55</sup> Carol Pateman, “The Settler Contract,” in Carol Pateman and Charles W. Mills, *Contract and Domination* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007).

debts have been incurred in the process to scholars of postcolonial theory who had been on the frontlines of interrogating the established European modes of knowledge and thought from a colonial perspective.<sup>59</sup> Consequently, writing on the history of European political thought without acknowledging its imperial entanglements is now vulnerable to charges of a myopic disciplinary, if not normative, Eurocentrism.

Liberal thought has received the most intense and sustained attention in the imperial turn. “Liberalism and empire” has come to capture a host of contradictions and ambiguities pertaining to the relationship between, on the one hand, the principles of subjective rights, rule of law, limited and representative government, and toleration of ethical pluralism, and on the other, imperial practices of domination and foreign rule, unaccountable and untrammelled power, and disenfranchisement and exclusion. Tully set the pace for the initial spate of scholarship by compellingly implicating John Locke’s political theory in the justification of the dispossession of Amerindians by English settlers, and later unearthing similar imperial complicities in other

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<sup>56</sup> Richard Tuck, *Rights of War and Peace: Political Thought and International Order from Grotius to Kant* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Anthony Pagden (ed), *Languages of Political Theory in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Pagden, *European Encounters with the New World from Renaissance to Romanticism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); Pagden, *Lords of All the World*; Pagden, “Dispossessing the Barbarian: The Language of Spanish Thomism and the Debate over the Property Rights of the American Indians,” in *Theories of Empire, 1450-1800*, ed. David Armitage (Ashgate: Variorum, 1998); Ann Laura Stoler “On Degrees of Imperial Sovereignty,” *Public Culture* 18 (2006): 125-46; Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); Ann Laura Stoler, Carole McGranahan, and Peter C. Perdue (eds), *Imperial Formations* (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2007); Antony Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty, and the Making of International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>57</sup> Lauren Benton, *Law and Colonial Cultures: Legal Regimes in World History, 1400-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>58</sup> James Tully, *Strange Multiplicity: Constitutionalism in an Age of Diversity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Vicki Hsueh, “Giving Orders: Theory and Practice in the Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 63 (2002): 425-46; Hsueh, “Unsettling Colonies: Locke, ‘Atlantis,’ and the New World Knowledges,” *History of Political Thought* 29 (2010): 295-319.

<sup>59</sup> The postcolonial literature is by now a continent of thought onto itself, punctuated by such towering figures as Edward Said, Ranajit Guha, Gayatri Spivak, Partha Chatterjee, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Gyan Prakash, and Bhikhu Parekh.

members of the liberal pantheon, including Emeric de Vattel and Immanuel Kant.<sup>60</sup> Barbara Arneil and James Farr deepened the study of Locke's colonial involvements, while Uday Mehta's interpretation of Locke, James Mill, and James Stuart Mill in *Liberalism and Empire* represented the zenith of indicting liberalism as an inherently imperialist political philosophy.<sup>61</sup>

After Mehta's catholic critique, scholarship on liberalism and empire bifurcated, as new works emphasizing liberalism's *ambivalence* vis-à-vis empire appeared alongside the established, though increasingly nuanced, accounts of liberal-imperial liaisons. Vicki Hsueh underscored the hesitations that permeate Locke's colonial writings.<sup>62</sup> Emma Rothschild explored the epistemological ambiguities and political dilemmas surrounding colonial joint-stock companies in eighteenth-century debates in political economy,<sup>63</sup> while Sankar Muthu and Jennifer Pitts plumbed the late eighteenth-century Enlightenment thought for committed *criticisms* of European empires. Muthu's reconstruction of an anti-imperial stance from the works of Adam Smith, Dennis Diderot, Immanuel Kant, and Johann G. Herder drew attention to an anomaly in a period of growing imperial confidence.<sup>64</sup> Pitts, while consigning Nicolas de Condorcet and Alexis de Tocqueville to the "turn to empire" in France, defended the Scottish Enlightenment against Christopher Berry's imputations of imperial complicity, and even redeemed Jeremy Bentham who had been perceived as the imperial legislator *par excellence*.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Tully, *Approach to Political Philosophy*, and *Strange Multiplicity*.

<sup>61</sup> Arneil, *John Locke*; James Farr, "So Vile and Miserable an Estate: The Problem of Slavery in Locke's Political Thought," *Political Theory* 14 (1986): 263-89; Farr, "Locke, Natural Law, and New World Slavery," *Political Theory* 36 (2008): 495-522; Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire*.

<sup>62</sup> Hsueh, "Giving Orders," "Unsettling Colonies," and Hsueh, "Cultivating and Challenging the Common: Lockean Property, Indigenous Traditionalisms, and the Problem of Exclusion," *Contemporary Political Theory* 5 (2006): 193-214.

<sup>63</sup> Rothschild, "Global Commerce."

<sup>64</sup> Muthu, *Enlightenment Against Empire*, "Adam Smith's Critique," and "Diderot's Theory."

<sup>65</sup> Christopher Berry, *Social Theory of the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997); Pitts, *A Turn to Empire*, and "Empire, Progress." Another excellent treatment of the Scottish Enlightenment in relation to the imperial world is Frederick Whelan's collection of essays in *Enlightenment Thought and Non-Western Societies: Sultans and Savages* (New York: Routledge, 2009). The original depiction of Bentham as an

Despite significant disagreement over interpretive frames, this scholarship has evinced remarkable consistency in attributing anti-imperialist dispositions to Edmund Burke and convicting James and John Stuart Mill as irredeemable theorists of the British Empire. The rejoinder came from Margaret Kohn and Daniel O'Neill, who disclosed the civilizational hierarchies in Burke's thought that rendered it compatible with imperial agendas, and complicated John Stuart Mill's take on empire in a gesture that echoed Lynn Zastoupil's take on Mill.<sup>66</sup> Yvonne Chiu, and Robert Taylor further mined Mill's works to argue that his was not a blunt support for civilizing imperialism but a systematic and catholic theory of historical development.<sup>67</sup> The perceived tension between the abstract universals of liberal thought and the cultural pluralism that it had to confront in the colonies was cast into doubt by Karuna Mantena's brilliant study of Henry Maine, in which she showed liberalism to be quite compatible with essentialist discourses of cultural difference when "indirect colonial rule" was the strategy of the day.<sup>68</sup>

What strikes one in this scholarship is the preponderance of, first, the cultural and representational focus of analysis, and second, the position of the culturally alien "colonial other" as the pivot of liberalism's troubled relationship to empire.<sup>69</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, for instance, defines "colonial studies" as "a field devoted to the nature of European empires, their

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indirect yet influential figure colonial legislation in India (an interpretation that colors Mehta's account) belongs to Eric Stokes's *English Utilitarians and India* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959).

<sup>66</sup> Margaret Kohn and Daniel I. O'Neill, "A Tale of Two Indias: Burke and Mill on Empire and Slavery in the West Indies and America," *Political Theory* 34 (2006): 192-228; O'Neil, "Rethinking Burke"; Lynn Zastoupil, *John Stuart Mill and India* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994). An earlier attempt to piece together Burke's ambivalences on empire is Frederick Whelan's *Edmund Burke and India: Political Morality and Empire* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996).

<sup>67</sup> Robert Taylor and Yvonne Chiu, "The Self-Extinguishing Despot: Millian Democratization," *The Journal of Politics* 73 (2011): 1-12.

<sup>68</sup> Mantena, *Alibis of Empire*.

<sup>69</sup> For an excellent overview of some of the prominent works in this field, see Sartori, "British Empire."

rationales and representations of rule.”<sup>70</sup> For Mehta, concrete historical instances of political exclusion under liberal imperialism are “elaborations” of the exclusionary principles at the heart of liberalism as an abstract philosophy.<sup>71</sup> Pitts declares the “central concern” of her book to be “how the thinkers under study analyzed and judged unfamiliar societies.”<sup>72</sup> In her contribution to the postcolonial project of “dismantling the deep assumption that only white people are fully human,” Catherine Hall’s emphasis falls on the position of the colony as the “representational constitutive outside” of the metropole.<sup>73</sup> Likewise, Mantena restricts the object of her study to “conceptualizations of universalism and cultural diversity” as they evolve “in response to a changing set of imperial dilemmas,” and considers how “philosophical claims about human unity and diversity were negotiated, contested, and reconstituted on the practical terrain of imperial politics.”<sup>74</sup> Finally, in a full-blown expression of the post-colonial and post-modern moorings of the “new imperial history,” Kathleen Wilson centers on “the importance of *difference*” in the unstable constitution of a multiplicity of raced and gendered subject-positions in the “interconnected and interdependent sites” of the British Empire.<sup>75</sup>

One could argue, certainly with some simplification, that most of the arguments on liberalism and empire share a basic grammatical structure in which representational order always takes precedence in the analytic sequence. Liberalism as a political philosophy stakes its claims in inclusive terms, precisely because its language is abstract and applies indiscriminately to a

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<sup>70</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, “Imperial Formations and Opacities of Rule,” in *Lessons of Empire*, ed. Calhoun et al., p. 48

<sup>71</sup> Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire*, pp. 108, 127.

<sup>72</sup> Pitts, *A Turn to Empire*, p. 6. Accordingly, the root cause of British injustice in India is the Britons’ disdain for the “barbarous” Indians,” which denies the latter universal (yet especially British) principles of the rule of law and basic rights and freedoms – and which Edmund Burke tries to counter through strategies of “familiarization” and “sympathy.” Ibid, pp. 68-72.

<sup>73</sup> Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 7, 9-10

<sup>74</sup> Mantena, *Alibis of Empire*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>75</sup> Kathleen Wilson, “Introduction,” in *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity, and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660-1840* ed. Kathleen Wilson (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2004), p. 3.

“universal constituency.”<sup>76</sup> However, these universal claims, such as the moral equality of all individuals and their right to define and pursue their own ethical conceptions, are predicated on culturally specific and tacit qualifications, which are forced into daylight when confronted by alien cultures on colonial shores. From this confrontation ensues a range of epistemic perplexities and anxieties, including the crumbling of pre-colonial cosmologies, the ever-present sense of precariousness that accompanies the secular belief in European superiority, and the guilty recognition of “self-deception in every act of domination.”<sup>77</sup> Colonizers respond to the challenge of colonial difference with a range of discursive strategies for mitigating the dissonance between the alleged universality of liberal claims and their practical denial to the colonized. These include qualifying the requisite faculties for exercising these universal rights<sup>78</sup> or allocating differential levels of “reasonableness” to colonized peoples and attenuating their license for independent historical development.<sup>79</sup> Mapping colonial difference onto historicist timelines of stadial evolution, whereby the “rule of colonial difference” always tells the colonized that the time for self-rule is “not yet” there,<sup>80</sup> is compounded by differentiated rationales of colonial government based on presumed civilizational hierarchies,<sup>81</sup> or by turning cultural difference itself into a hinge of paternalist discourse and colonial rule.<sup>82</sup> In its extreme versions, empire is confined to the “single dimension of the pedagogical project of modernization or civilization.”<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Uday Mehta, “Liberal Strategies of Exclusion,” *Politics and Society* 18 (1990): 427-54.

<sup>77</sup> Wilson, “Introduction”; Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*; David Bromwich, “Introduction,” in *On Empire, Liberty and Reform: Speeches and Letters*, ed. David Bromwich (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

<sup>78</sup> Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire*.

<sup>79</sup> Pitts, *A Turn to Empire*, and “Empire, Progress.”

<sup>80</sup> Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*; Chatterje, *Nation and Its Fragments*.

<sup>81</sup> O’Neill, “Rethinking Burke.”

<sup>82</sup> Hall, *Civilising Subjects*; Mantena, *Alibis of Empire*.

<sup>83</sup> Sartori, “British Empire,” p. 634.

The issue I would like to raise is less with the particular works mentioned above than with the overall tendency endemic to the scholarship on liberalism and empire to overlook the dimension of political economy. In an recent edited volume on empire, Jomo K. S. writes, “[i]t must be a sign of the times we live in that a contemporary conference on the ‘Lessons of Empire’ has so little consideration of recent economic theories of modern capitalist imperialism.”<sup>84</sup> In Jomo’s view, contemporary imperialism is still in need of a critique that could match in perspicacity the notable early-twentieth century analyses of modern imperialism elaborated by Rudolf Hilferding, Vladimir. I. Lenin, and John A. Hobson, and Rosa Luxemburg. The reductive and teleological grammar that structured such Marxian theories of imperialism and “displaced [colonialism] into the inexorable logics of modernization and world capitalism”<sup>85</sup> is certainly to blame for their fall from grace, but itself not an adequate explanation.<sup>86</sup> One could also attribute the discomfort and neglect with economic arguments about empire to the path-dependent influence of the “cultural” and “linguistic” turns on the imperial turn.<sup>87</sup> There are grounds to worry that these theoretical interventions have thrown the baby out with the bathwater when their critique of crude economism, present in Marxian and structural-functionalist explanations alike,

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<sup>84</sup> Jomo K. S., “Imperialism Is Alive and Well: Globalization and East Asia after September 11,” in *Lessons of Empire*, ed. Calhoun et al., p. 253.

<sup>85</sup> Nicholas B. Dirks, “Introduction,” in *Colonialism and Culture*, ed. Nicholas Dirks (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), p. 3.

<sup>86</sup> For a representative and important exchange on this matter, see Gyan Prakash, “Writing Post-Orientalist Histories of the Third World: Perspectives from Indian Historiography,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 32 (1990): 383-408, and Rosalind O’Hanlon and David Washbrook, “After Orientalism: Culture, Criticism, and Politics in the Third World,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 34 (1992): 141-67.

<sup>87</sup> The wide if uncoordinated shift in research agendas, conceptual frames, and interpretive methods, with which the cultural and linguistic turns are affiliated, has been scrutinized under the rubric of “postmodernism” from sociological and political economic perspectives. A pioneering work in this strand is Frederic Jameson’s *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991). Another, historically more immediate contextual source of discredit for such theories is identified by Charles Meier: “What remains remarkable from the viewpoint of intellectual history was the general unwillingness to admit that markets might have a connection with empire. During the long period of Marxist challenge and cold war, attributing any underlying socioeconomic causation gave most intellectuals in the West great discomfort, and those who offered such theories were dismissed as fundamentally unsound. Better to affirm the obvious point that imperialism and empire are phenomena too complex to reduce to a uniform underlying causality. Multicausality became and remains the last refuge of historians.” Charles Maier, *Among Empires: American Ascendancy and Its Predecessors* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 55.

tipped over into jettisoning all serious engagement with capitalism. Geoff Eley's observation is on the mark:

So far, interestingly, much of the 'Black Atlantic' argument has tended to be formulated around questions of citizenship and personhood focused by the impact of the French Revolution, most classically with respect to the Haitian Revolution and the wider insurrectionary radicalisms and aspirations to freedom in the Caribbean, rather than around the *modernity of capitalism* as such. There's perhaps a way in which the big turning away from social history to cultural history has occluded our ability to see this primary form of 'the social' very confidently any more or even to write at all about the origins of capitalism in the earlier manner of the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>88</sup>

One major problem with this disposition is that it ends up presupposing the material presence of empire as little more than a given for the liberal intellectuals under study. Economic motivations and political considerations that animated dynamic processes of imperial construction and reconstruction are for the most part bracketed, apart from some fleeting remarks to a vague notion of "commercial greed" that is supposed to explain imperial expansion.<sup>89</sup> To put it succinctly, while most accounts of liberalism and empire engage in a contextual explication of *liberal texts*, they rarely relate such explications to a conscious theory of the *imperial context*.<sup>90</sup>

Andrew Sartori captures this problem well when he writes, "the key to unraveling the shifting ambiguities of liberal attitudes toward empire might lie in a more rigorous attempt to embed the conceptual structure of liberal thought in the sociohistorical contexts of its articulation."<sup>91</sup> As I elaborate in the next section, there are important theoretical and interpretive insights to be derived from returning to a heterodox, non-teleological, and globally oriented Marxian political economic analysis of empire as the context for interrogating liberal thought. This is not to glibly assert that "economy matters," but rather to call attention to the structural dynamics that propelled, shaped, and delimited the courses of imperial expansion, and generated

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<sup>88</sup> Eley, "Historicizing the Global," pp. 164-5.

<sup>89</sup> See, for instance, Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire*, p. 163.

<sup>90</sup> For a rigorous discussion of methodological problems that attend textual analysis and contextual approach, see J. G. A. Pocock, "Theory in History: Problems of Context and Narrative," in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Science*, ed. Robert Goodin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>91</sup> Sartori, "British Empire," p. 624.

a whole new gamut of contradictions that called for political theorization.<sup>92</sup> I maintain that these contradictory dynamics belonged to the historical formation of global capitalism, which essentially proceeded through colonial processes of economic integration and restructuration, exploitation and extraction, reform and destruction.

Suspicion towards economic analyses of empire is in part a suspicion towards Marxian conceptions of capitalism as an autonomous and totalizing economic force. Overcoming such aversion necessitates clearly outlining its sources in Marxist analyses of imperialism and demonstrating that Marxian thought harbors the resources for devising a materialist approach to the position of empire in the history of global capital. In orthodox Marxian narratives, colonialism and imperialism erupt as the violent effects of the expansionary thrust of capitalism. Capitalism is born in Europe but cannot be contained there; it thereby spills over into the rest of the world to remake it, as Marx wrote, “in its own image,” or as Lenin argued, to postpone its crises.<sup>93</sup> Ironically, Whiggish or Schumpeterian accounts of capitalism are shaped by the same diffusionist spatiotemporal grammar. Capitalism originates in Europe, and its commercial and cosmopolitan nature logically presupposes the gradual economic integration of the world. This natural and pacific tendency, however, is disrupted and distorted by the atavistic imperialism of the European states. Whether capitalism is wedded to imperialism or pitted against it, it is assigned national or European origins and imagined to diffuse, for better or for worse, to the rest of the planet.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> For a gesture in this direction, see Richard Halpern and Martin Daunton, “Introduction,” in Michael Daunton and Richard Halpern (eds) *Empire and Others: British Encounters with Indigenous Peoples, 1600-1850* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999).

<sup>93</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (New York: International Publishers, 1997).

<sup>94</sup> Despite disagreement over when capitalism arose and how to define its quintessence, historicist interpretations are marked by the consensus that it arose in northwestern Europe and then disseminated to the rest of the world through colonial empires in search for raw materials and markets. For example, Neal Wood, Ellen Meiksins Wood, and David McNally join Robert Brenner in locating the origins of capitalism in seventeenth-century English countryside, whereas Eric Hobsbawm moves it by about two centuries to the British industrial factory. See Neal Wood, *John*

I contend that instead of such “capitalist globalization” narratives, we should think about the “global inceptions of capital.” A move in this direction would be to conceptualize capitalism as a historical formation that has emerged in and through colonial networks, themselves soaked with the political power of empires and various actors therein, including metropolitan and colonial governments, chartered companies, and settlers. These agents’ colonial activities were operative in the proliferation and consolidation of planetary webs of production and exchange that constituted the infrastructure of global capitalism, even though bringing about global capitalism did not rank among their meditated priorities. Imperial centers, colonial governors, planters, settlers, merchants, and missionaries held very diverse and even conflicting social and economic aspirations which were often frustrated; colonial extraction and exploitation did not always pay off; economic considerations always had to be negotiated against local ecology and indigenous societal structures; plans to restructure production and exchange to maximize profit ran into frequent resistance; in short, the formation of global networks of capital conformed less to an image of smooth outward “expansion” from Europe than to a jagged genealogy local of struggles and strategies interconnected by imperial flows of people, commodities, and ideas.

The essential theoretical point I would like to propose is that these processes compel us to supplant the nation-state with the “colonial empire” as the space in which to situate the world-

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*Locke and Agrarian Capitalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View* (London: Verso, 2002); David McNally, *Political Economy and the Rise of Capitalism: A Reinterpretation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Eric J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital, 1848-1875* (New York: Scribner, 1975). The incidental role assigned to the colonies in the rise of capitalism is compounded by their construal as the passive recipient of the socioeconomic developments taking place in Europe. In a bold work, James Blaut criticizes such narratives of capitalist globalization for being extruded through “the colonizer’s model of the world,” and specifies the meta-theory that structures this model as “diffusionism.” Blaut argues that diffusionism operates as a “truth regime” by regulating the legitimacy of knowledge and plausibility of narratives of capitalist modernity, in which Europe figures “as the perpetual fountainhead of history.” Blaut, *Colonizer’s Model*, pp. 7-17. Blaut’s observation that diffusionism is a deeply ingrained grammar of thought rather than an explicit discourse is vindicated by the controversies triggered by Martin Bernal and Susan Buck-Morss’s apostate attempts to de-center and displace European civilization and philosophy beyond Europe. See Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987); Susan Buck-Morss, “Hegel and Haiti,” *Critical Inquiry* 26 (2000): 821-65.

historical development of capitalism. A crucial corollary of the colonial perspective on capitalism is a special emphasis on the role of political power, exercised by the imperial core or by colonial agents who assumed or usurped it, in effectuating the “authoritative political ordering of space”<sup>95</sup> in which capitalism as a historically specific “mediation of exploitation and accumulation” germinated.<sup>96</sup> In other words, the notion of capitalism I deploy here denotes an *inherently political and historically colonial formation*.

Once positioned in relation to capitalism as an inherently political and historically colonial formation, the conundrums of liberal thought appear in a new light. The cultural difference of the colonial other becomes compounded and mediated by the political economic agendas of the imperial actors. What these actors *do* to the colonized, and not just who the colonized *are*, emerges as a central issue to be confronted by liberal thought. If capitalism is as much a *political* category, which encompasses the deployment of non-market coercion and extra-legal political violence for (re)organizing production, distribution, and exchange in the colonies, then it unsettles the liberal understandings of capitalism as a fundamentally market phenomenon resting on the contractual freedom and juridical equality of individuals. Adjusting our lenses to imperial political economy therefore necessitates that we look beyond “the unfamiliar” embodied in the colonized<sup>97</sup> and consider the economic exploits in the colonies as a source of strain on liberal universals. Frederick Cooper neatly encapsulates the broader problem:

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<sup>95</sup> George Steinmetz, “Imperialism or Colonialism? From Windhoek to Washington, by Way of Basra,” in *Lessons of Empire*, ed. Calhoun et al. p. 147

<sup>96</sup> Enrique Dussel, “The “World System”: Europe as “Center” and Its “Periphery,”” in *Colonialism and Its Legacies*, ed. Levy and Young, p. 109. A comprehensive theorization of capital as a historically determinate form of mediation of exploitation is provided by Moishe Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx’s Critical Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). Similarly, Massimo de Angelis differentiates between capitalist and non-capitalist class societies, which otherwise share the common trait of exploitation and extraction of surplus, on the basis of the limits to the extraction of surplus value – that is, whether extraction of surplus is limited by the concrete needs of the dominant classes or unhinged by the drive to accumulate value. De Angelis, *The Beginning of History: Value Struggles and Global Capital* (London: Pluto, 2007), p. 45.

<sup>97</sup> Mehta, “Liberal Strategies,” and *Liberalism and Empire*.

That certain issue networks in France and Britain saw the space of empire in moral terms and argued that enslavement or abuse of subject populations violated imperial integrity did not prevent imperial governments and settlers from being brutal and exploitative, but it did ensure that scandals would be a periodic feature of imperial governance in democratic states: over slavery, massacres, colonial wars, forced labor and poverty.<sup>98</sup>

Recast in the register of political economy, we need to highlight as a source of colonial alterity the colonial breach of the metropolitan principles undergirding the colonizers' liberal self-perception. This is what I call the challenge of colonial capitalism to liberal thought.

## **II. Colonial Capitalism as an Analytic Frame**

The notion of “colonial capitalism” that I adopt here as the theoretical linchpin of my argument needs careful explication, not least because “capitalism” itself is notorious for its protean character, the ambiguity of its referent, and the wildly different analytic uses and political causes to which it has been enlisted. The term “capitalism” operative in the analysis I present here denotes a heterogeneous and contradictory global social formation composed of diverse relations of production and exchange that are sutured by the principles of (1) mediation of access to the conditions of work and subsistence by the imperative to generate value, or the capital-relation, itself monetarily expressed in the profit principle,<sup>99</sup> (2) overall orientation of the productive enterprise to the constant accumulation and expansion of value *via* reinvestment of profits,<sup>100</sup> (3) omnipresence of compulsion and coercion (open or tacit) in the creation and reproduction of the capital-relation. These abstract principles belong to what Chakrabarty, extrapolating from Marx, labels the “universal logic” or “being” of capital, which makes possible one to delineate the historical “becoming” of capital, or what I call here the “global genealogy”

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<sup>98</sup> Frederick Cooper, “Modernizing Colonialism and the Limits of Empire,” in *Lessons of Empire*, ed. Calhoun et al., p. 66.

<sup>99</sup> Here I broadly follow Marx’s labor theory of value. See David Harvey, *The Limits to Capital* (London: Verso, 2006), especially chapters 1-4; Postone, *Time, Labor*.

<sup>100</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

of capitalism.<sup>101</sup> An attention to the global genealogy of capitalism, I argue, calls for a conceptual reappraisal of capitalism as “colonial capitalism.”

A good starting point for unpacking “colonial capitalism” is Subrahmanyam’s fundamentally socioeconomic notion of the “colonial empire,” which he defines as “a particular type of empire that is fundamentally characterized by the exploitative economic relations between an imperial core and a subject periphery.”<sup>102</sup> Economic exploitation of colonial peripheries by capitalist core countries is hardly a novel observation; however, a lot hinges on where one situates colonial exploitation in the history of capitalism. Appending colonial exploitation to the frills of the capitalist mode of production amounts to excluding it from any meaningful *theory* of capital by locating capital’s genesis in Europe and its *post factum* repercussions in the colonies. In this case, one does not need to know about colonialism to understand the inner composition and dynamics of capital, since there is no necessary relationship between colonialism and capitalism. In contrast, if we designate colonialism to be coeval and intertwined with the *origins* of capitalism, then we not only expand the terrain of social relations that we ought to analyze for understanding capitalism, but we also displace Europe as the putative cradle of capitalist modernity.

Since my reappraisal is susceptible to a certain misunderstanding, I would like to emphasize at the outset that adopting a colonial perspective on the origins of capitalism does not

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<sup>101</sup> Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, pp. 63-6. This universal logic and the historical institutional formations from which it is abstracted also clarify the distinction between “capital” and “capitalism.” Chakrabarty captures this distinction elegantly when he writes, “[t]he logical presuppositions of capital can only be worked out by someone with a grasp of the logic of capital. In that sense, an intellectual comprehension of capital is the precondition of this historical knowledge.” “No historical form of capital, however how global its reach, can ever be a universal ... This does not mean that one gives away the universals enshrined in post post-Enlightenment rationalism or humanism. Marx’s immanent critique of capital was enabled precisely by the universal characteristics he read into the category ‘capital’ itself. Without that reading, there can only be particular critiques of capital. But a particular critique cannot by definition be a critique of ‘capital.’ ... Grasping the category ‘capital’ entails grasping its universal constitution.” *Ibid.*, pp. 63, 70. In contrast to Chakrabarty’s effort to retain both notions, Michel Foucault suggests dropping the term “Capital” altogether in favor of “capitalism.” Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics*.

<sup>102</sup>Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Imperial and Colonial Encounters: Some Comparative Reflections,” in *Lessons of Empire*, ed. Calhoun et al., p. 220.

amount to denying the revolutionary reorganization of social reproduction that boosted the productivity of social labor in Europe. Nor does it imply that the place of colonialism in the history of capitalism consisted exclusively in the inaugural plunder of resources. Capitalism is not simply the hoarding of what eighteenth-century political economists called “stock,” but an epochally specific constellation of social relations. While the colonial mobilization of raw materials *was* essential for the vision and materialization of global capitalist structures,<sup>103</sup> the significance of colonialism in the history of capitalism goes beyond simply providing material supplies. More importantly, colonial loci and networks were central in their capacity as social spaces for providing the concrete conditions for imagining and experimenting with new ways of organizing social production for profit, which would be difficult to conceive and even harder to attempt in Europe.<sup>104</sup> Finally, these two elements are compounded by the fresh fields of investment, expanded markets (themselves spurred by colonial settlement and investment), and novel forms of economic enterprise called forth by colonial ventures.<sup>105</sup> Together, these planes of possibility comprised a global social topography, in which new historical modes of imagining, planning, and practicing humans’ relationship to one another and to the nonhuman world became

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<sup>103</sup> This point is masterfully demonstrated Kenneth Pomeranz’s comparative economic history of capitalism, *The Great Divergence: Europe, China, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

<sup>104</sup> Most importantly, the Atlantic slave plantation, far from being a precapitalist formation or an anomaly in an essentially wage labor-driven economic system, has produced the “first modern proletariat of large-scale, highly organized, and integrated capitalist production.” Eley, “Historicizing the Global,” p. 165. Robin Blackburn and Sydney Mintz’s path-breaking works compel us to consider the plantation, which hinged strictly on global commodity chains and on a mode of labor control too brutal to be viable in Europe, as the forerunner of capitalist agriculture as well as the factory system in Britain. James Blaut maintains that capitalist social relations first set up in the plantations “could then be centralized, imported to Europe. Stated differently, the earliest phase of the Industrial Revolution was so crude, undeveloped, and indeed barbaric that free labor could not be used, if the output was to be profitable.” Blaut, *Colonizer’s Model*, p. 204. Also see Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492-1800* (London: Verso, 1997); Sidney Mintz, *Caribbean Transformations* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984); Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Viking, 1985); Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*.

<sup>105</sup> Prime amongst these entrepreneurial forms was, of course, the colonial joint stock company, a very original treatment of which can be found in John D. Kelly, “Who Counts? Imperial and corporate Structures of Governance, Decolonization, and Imperial Liability,” in *Lessons of Empire*, ed. Calhoun et al.

possible. These novel modes of imagination and practice coalesced into the global constellation of social relations, the historically determinate cosmography of power and property, that we call capitalism.<sup>106</sup> This is not so much to argue that the “industrial revolution” of the early nineteenth century did not take place in Britain as to maintain that its historical conditions of possibility lay well beyond the islands.

Karl Marx and Rosa Luxemburg’s theories of “primitive accumulation” represent early and invaluable attempts to posit the history of colonialism as originary and integral to the history of capitalism. In the last section of *Capital*, volume 1, Marx defines “primitive accumulation” (*ursprüngliche Akkumulation*) as the “process that creates the capital-relation ... the process which divorces the worker from the ownership of the conditions of his own labor,” thereby turning social means of subsistence and production into capital, and immediate producers into “free” wage-laborers whose subsistence would then be conditional upon their producing surplus-value for capitalist employers.<sup>107</sup> Primitive accumulation encompasses the expropriation of direct producers through the deployment of “extra-economic force” by state- or non-state actors, and thus constitutes the political crucible in which the capital-relation is forged.

One can discern a peculiar (and as I show below, productive) tension in Marx’s account of primitive accumulation. On the one hand, his rigorous formal definition of the term (the separation of direct producers from the social means of subsistence and production) seems to dovetail with, if not exclusively abstracted from, the period of English Enclosures and Highland Clearances, which were essential to the consolidation of “agrarian capitalism” in Britain.<sup>108</sup> On the other hand, his deployment of the same term seems to overflow this narrow formalism when

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<sup>106</sup> I borrow the term “cosmography of power” from Hugh Raffles, *In Amazonia: A Natural History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

<sup>107</sup> Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, p. 874

<sup>108</sup> Wood, *John Locke*; McNally, *Classical Political Economy*.

he includes the colonies in the history of primitive accumulation, that is, the history that has made the capitalist mode of production of possible:

The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement, and entombment in mines of the indigenous population of that continent, the beginnings of the conquest and plunder of India, and the conversion of Africa into a preserve for the commercial hunting of blackskins, are all things that characterize the dawn of the era of capitalist production. These idyllic proceedings are the chief moments of primitive accumulation.<sup>109</sup>

Direct appropriation of natural resources, forced labor, and unequal exchange in the colonies, along with the organized armed coercion that made them possible, are openly deemed to be moments of “primitive accumulation” despite their obvious misfit with Marx’s explicit definition of the concept. Marx, to his great credit, braids metropolitan and colonial histories around the axis of primitive accumulation, whereby the colonies figure as prominently as the metropole in the “prehistory of capital.”<sup>110</sup> However, Marx’s revolutionary reformulation of capital’s origins comes embroiled in a contradiction with his historicist disposition to imagine modern history as the homogenization of social relations across the planet under the universalizing onslaught of capital. All that solid melts into the air, social and historical particularities are eradicated in the polarization between the owners of capitals and wage-laborers, and the internal contradictions of capital are universally consummated.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, p. 915

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 875.

<sup>111</sup> Marx’s social theory and his account of the historical development of capitalism harbors unmistakable elements of historicism that have made him a target of sustained attack, especially from postcolonial scholars. In one respect, these criticisms are entirely justified. For Marx, England presented the historical model of development to which not only the rest of Europe (and most importantly Germany) but the world would eventually approximate. *The Communist Manifesto* proclaims that European capitalism “draws all, even the most barbarian, nations into civilization” and “creates a world after its own image.” The preface to *Capital* likewise asserts, “the country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future.” In short, first in England, then in Europe, then elsewhere. Combine these historicist remarks with Marx’s disdain for peasant forms of agriculture (“sack of potatoes” in the *Eighteenth Brumaire*, and “universal mediocrity” in *Capital*) and his celebration of the British colonization of India (*British Rule in India*) for clearing the way for capitalism, and one has compelling grounds for Edward Said’s dismissal of Marx as yet another Eurocentric thinker. However, recent discoveries of Marx’s ethnographic notebooks reveal a growing awareness in Marx’s thought about the untenability of an iron-clad historicism, and an affirmation of the non-capitalist forms of social organization, such as the Russian *mir* (peasant commune), as a potential basis for social revolution that would not necessarily be mediated by the ravages of primitive accumulation. For an insightful perspective on the “universalizing” role of primitive

A similar tension also marks Luxemburg's brilliant study of the constitutive role of political violence in extending capital's reach, penetrating and transforming non-capitalist social forms like subsistence farming, petty commodity production, and feudal agrarianism.<sup>112</sup> Luxemburg's acute theorization and careful historical reconstruction of "colonial policy as primitive accumulation" remains indispensable for an understanding of colonial capitalism. Similarly, her crucial insight that capital structurally depends on the exploitation of non-capitalist social domains remains a guiding beacon for analyses of classical and contemporary forms of imperialist exploitation.<sup>113</sup> Unfortunately, Luxemburg's horizon, like Marx's, is circumscribed by a teleology of homogenization in that she proleptically posits the end of capitalist world system the moment it realizes itself fully, that is, overruns the last bastion of non-capitalist social relations.<sup>114</sup>

I think the incommensurability between the formal theorization and the historical description of primitive accumulation in Marx and Luxemburg offers a useful wedge for cracking open the historicist narratives of capitalism and reconstructing from their fragments a notion of capitalism as a political and colonial formation. We need to reappraise Marx and Luxemburg's insights into the dynamics of capitalism, primitive accumulation, and colonialism by relocating them to a theoretical register where the notion of "capital" functions as "not so

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accumulation, see Robbie Shilliam, 'Hegemony and the Unfashionable Problematic of Primitive Accumulation,' *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 33 (2004): 59-88. For Marx's key writings and correspondence on non-capitalist forms as springboards for socialist revolution, see Teodor Shanin (ed), *Late Marx and the Russian Road: Marx and the "Peripheries of Capitalism": A Case* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983). For a very good recent treatment of these writings, see Kevin Anderson, *Marx at the Margins: On Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Non-Western Societies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), especially chapters 5 and 6.

<sup>112</sup> Luxemburg, *Accumulation of Capital*.

<sup>113</sup> See, for instance, Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, 1968), part II; David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), chapter 4.

<sup>114</sup> Luxemburg, *Accumulation of Capital*, especially chapters 31 and 32.

much [...] a teleology of history as [...] a perspectival point from which to read the archives.”<sup>115</sup>

While retaining the conceptually universal and spatially global horizon of capital,<sup>116</sup> this theoretical move compels us to rethink capitalism along three definitive axes, whereby we move towards a workable notion of “colonial capitalism.” These three axes are (1) the global and colonial inceptions of capitalism, (2) the multiplicity and heterogeneity of interdependent and contradictory social forms which it comprises as a world-system, and (3) the originary, that is, both foundational-historical and structural-quotidian, element of extra-economic coercion and political force that directly and indirectly (re)produces it.

The first of these reconceptualizations takes issue with the internalist schemas of “methodological nationalism” which hypostatizes the nation-state as the ultimate politico-legal context for explaining the emergence of capitalist relations. This position is best exemplified by the idea of autochthonous capitalism that structures histories of “British capitalism” and the “British working class,”<sup>117</sup> but it also persists in political economic analyses of imperialism that

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<sup>115</sup> Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, p. 63. My specific reconstruction of the history of colonial capitalism is methodologically indebted to Chakrabarty’s postcolonial reading of Marx.

<sup>116</sup> As diverse perspectives on Marx’s theory of capital as postcolonialism and autonomism concur on the universal socio-spatial horizon of capital. Partha Chatterjee, for instance, defines capital as “global in its territorial reach and universal in its conceptual domain.” Chatterjee, *Nation and Its Fragments*, p. 235. Massimo de Angelis’s conceptualization of capital “a social force whose own *telos* and *conatus* demands the dismantlement and colonization of anything outside itself” strikes a similar tone. De Angelis, *Beginning of History*, p. 33. Also see note 93 above.

<sup>117</sup> I am referring here to the competing Marxist histories of capitalism during the “transition debates” of the 1960s and 1970s. Robert Brenner indicted Paul Sweezy and Immanuel Wallerstein for being “neo-Smithian Marxists” who underscored the European dominance of long-distance trade as a crucial factor in the formation of capitalism in Europe. His counter explanation, which settled into the “Brenner thesis,” turned on the changing class relations in the English countryside that inadvertently culminated in the capitalist triad of landlord-tenant-wage laborer. See, T. H. Aston and C. H. E. Philpin (eds), *The Brenner Debate: Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). The corollary notion of “English working class” is most influentially articulated in E. P. Thompson’s *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Pantheon, 1964). A challenge to such methodological-nationalist histories of capitalism has come from two students of Thompson’s, Marcus Rediker and Peter Linebaugh. Their most important book, *The Many Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000) chronicles the discontinuous history of the polyglot *global* working class.

ask whether empire was profitable for Britain.<sup>118</sup> A more compelling position, on which I build here, considers capitalism as emerging *in and through* hierarchical, uneven, and discontinuous colonial networks, rather than arising prior to and later instrumentalizing these networks. In this “non-diffusionist” approach, capital accumulation structurally occurs on a “world scale.” Imperial metropolises are less autonomous national centers than privileged hubs or epicenters in rhizomatic networks of capital accumulation, hubs that exert a preponderant influence in organizing value chains and claim a disproportionate share of the surplus produced globally.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> This line of criticism is forwarded most notably in Anthony Brewer, *Marxist Theories of Imperialism: A Critical Survey* (London: Routledge, 1980). Also see Davis and Huttenback, *Mammon and the Pursuit of Empire*. Invoking purely “economic” considerations and great balance sheets of cost-benefit in assessing the “rationality” of imperial expansion and its contribution to capitalism is a myopic viewpoint. First, it misses that colonialism, especially in its British variant, had its most dynamic and expansionary thrust in private enterprise (certainly backed and secured, though often resented, by public authorities), which followed the *perceived* material interests in pressing forth into colonial ventures. And the historical horizons that bounded these perceived interests rendered the “uneconomic” deployment of force the natural and necessary condition of pursuing colonial economic ventures. As Patrick O’Brien reminds us, “very few critics of mercantilism and Imperialism writing between 1688 and 1815 developed an alternative blueprint for national development. ... Nearly everyone at the time perceived that economic progress, national security, and the integration of the kingdom might well come from sustained levels of investment in global commerce, naval power, and, whenever necessary, the acquisition of bases and territories overseas.” Sharpening the critical edge of O’Brien’s observation, Kenneth Morgan remarks that “early cliometric exercises appear to be informed by unreal or counterfactual assumptions ... Britain could not rely upon the deployment of full economic resources at home ... the colonies were vital for Britain’s prosperity, strength, and future prospects ... Counterfactual notions of an alternative world in Georgian Britain in which resources were fully employed and the colonies could be viewed as expendable are very much in the realm of “virtual” history. Whether an abandonment of the colonies would have harmed Britain’s economic growth is a moot point.” Patrick K. O’Brien, “Inseparable connections: Trade, Economy, Fiscal State, and the Expansion of Empire, 1688-1815” in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, Vol. 2, ed. P. J. Marshall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 76. Kenneth Morgan, “Mercantilism and the British Empire, 1688-1815,” in *The Political Economy of the British Historical Experience 1688-1914*, ed. Donald Winch and Patrick O’Brien (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). Secondly, and more importantly, the methodological-nationalist approach to empire remains stuck with an understanding of capital as “stock,” rather than viewing it as a complex social relationship, the structural conditions of which are non-economic and hence cannot be reduced to profit-loss calculus. With such reductive presuppositions, this perspective drives its stakes in the wrong question, “was empire profitable?” More apposite questions would be “would capitalism as a world system be possible without colonialism? How has the entwinement of colonial and capitalist genealogies molded the history of the present? What are the social relations it has created (and destroyed), networks and flows of human beings, resources, and ideas it has fostered (and curtailed), global and local norms it has promoted (and demoted), and the enduring hierarchies and inequalities it has generated?”

<sup>119</sup> Some of the touchstones of this “non-diffusionist” conceptualization of the global and colonial inceptions of capitalism include the following. For the Atlantic, see Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*; James, *Black Jacobins*. For Asia, see, Janet Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250-1350* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); K. N. Chaudhuri, *Asia Before Europe: Economy and Civilisation of the Indian Ocean from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990); Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia,” *Modern Asian Studies* 31 (1997): 163-74. For integrative global accounts, see Blaut, *Colonizer’s Model*; Samir Amin, *Accumulation on a World Scale: A Critique of the Theory of Underdevelopment* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974); Amin, *Imperialism and Unequal*

Put obversely, colonial networks that span the globe from Americas to the antipodes constitute the *conditions of possibility* of capitalism, rather than auxiliary conduits through which autochthonous metropolitan capital flows to the rest of the world.

The second theoretical move follows from the first and takes us beyond the understanding of capital as a homogenizing historical force that obliterates non-capitalist, especially “traditional” or “indigenous,” relations of social reproduction. Instead of a tidal-wave image of capitalism surging outward from the imperial-capitalist cores and flattening all social difference that stands in its way, it draws our attention to the heterogeneous and interdependent multiplicity of local relations of production and exchange that configure into a world system of capital accumulation.<sup>120</sup> The historicist bias, shared by Marxian and mainstream theories of development, judges the extent of capitalist maturation by the degree to which wage-labor regulated by free markets becomes the predominant form of organizing production. This occludes a crucial historical fact and a structural feature of capitalism, namely, its capacity to “articulate”<sup>121</sup> a plurality of ostensibly non-capitalist social forms into the global configuration of

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*Development* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1977); Amin, *Eurocentrism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1989); Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System* (New York: Academic Press, 1975); Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism: With Capitalist Civilization* (London: Verso, 1995); Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism: 15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

<sup>120</sup> De Angelis offers a lucid formulation for tracing the structural heterogeneity of capitalism from its inceptions to its present moment: “the transatlantic trade circuit M-C-M’ [profit principle] is an early example of *global articulation of different conditions and activities* of production and reproduction, different socio-economic compositions of labour, different class compositions, different cultural languages of struggles, different subjectivities. From the perspective of capital and its reproduction, it is a global articulation of different techniques and strategies to make people work as efficiently as possible in the face of their resistance and struggles, so as to maximise the monetary profit of the owners of capital employing them and operating in the buying and selling of commodities in the trade circuits. M-C-M’ value practices, in other words, stated to pervade production and reproduction and increasingly turn life practices into ‘work.’” De Angelis, *Beginning of History*, p. 49.

<sup>121</sup> The notion of articulation as used here refers to the interlocking and mutual configuration of a multifarious array of legal and political forms of labor control and surplus extraction, whereby local social structures that do not figure as immediately governed by the logic of capital-relation nonetheless become a moment in the broader circuits of its circulation and realization. For the insight that capitalism as a system of production rests as much on the articulation as on the assimilation of ostensibly non-capitalist social relations, I am indebted very much to the studies of Marxist anthropologists like Sidney Mintz and labor historians like Gyan Prakash, Jairus Banaji, Rakesh Bhandari. See Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*; Gyan Prakash, *Bonded Histories: Genealogies of Servitude in Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Rakesh Bhandari, “The Disguises of Wage Labor: Juridical

accumulation. These include forms of unfree proletarian labor (be it actual as in plantation slavery or virtual as in sharecropping), free non-proletarian labor (such as family labor in cottage industries and commercialized peasant agriculture), neither free nor proletarian labor (for example, forms of debt peonage in petty commodity production). Jairus Banaji offers a very succinct formulation of this process:

In short, *historically*, capital accumulation has been characterised by considerable flexibility in the structuring of production and in the forms of labour and organisation of labour used in producing surplus-value. The liberal conception of capitalism which sees the sole basis of accumulation in the individual wage-earner conceived as a free labourer obliterates a great deal of capitalist history, erasing the contribution of both enslaved and collective (family) units of labour-power.<sup>122</sup>

Set in this topography of heterogeneous productive relations, wage labor figures as only one form extracting surplus value, which is relatively (and only relatively) salient in the imperial metropole.<sup>123</sup>

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Illusions, Unfree Conditions and Novel Extensions,” *Historical Materialism* 16 (2008): 71-99; Banaji, “Fictions of Free Labor.” For a collection of essays on this debate, see T. Brass and M. van der Linden (eds) *Free and Unfree Labour: The Debate Continues* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997). “Assimilation” and “articulation” as deployed here formally correspond to Marx’s notions of “real subsumption” and “formal subsumption” of labor under capital, formulated in the appendix to *Capital*, Vol. 1. The strategic constellation of real and formal subsumption in the historical formation of capitalism also registers an objection to Giovanni Arrighi’s identification of capitalism exclusively with “creative destruction.” See Arrighi, *Adam Smith in Beijing: Lineages of the Twenty-First Century* (London: Verso, 2007), chapter 3.

<sup>122</sup> Banaji, “Fictions of Free Labor,” pp. 85-6. Banaji uses the examples of antebellum slavery in Southern US, nineteenth-century Indian family labor recruited through the “advances system,” and labor tenancy in South Africa in order to substantiate the point that those labor relations that are *formally non-capitalist*, when articulated to the loops of capital accumulation, function as capitalist relations as they reproduce and augment the total social capital. Rakesh Bhandari builds on Banaji’s position to argue that formally free wage-labor “only normally takes that form within a hegemonic and fully developed capitalist mode of production.” Bhandari, “Disguises of Wage Labor,” p. 85. I would complement Bhandari’s observation by adding that formally free wage-labor can take place in the hegemonic mode of production precisely because its hegemonic position (in the colonial context, its metropolitan status) allows it to transfer surplus (in the form of colonial subsistence goods and raw material) from the colonies that render wage labor a profitable (not to mention morally exalted) mode of labor organization in the metropole. In other words, the mobility of labor afforded by free labor, which is indispensable to the revolutionary dynamism of capitalism and therefore its systemic reproduction, is intimately dependent on the existence of *immobile* and *unfree* forms of labor. In a fleeting passage, the asymmetric interdependence of diverse labor forms in the global inceptions of capitalism is incisively captured by Marx when he writes “[i]n fact the veiled slavery of the wage-labourers in Europe needed the unqualified slavery of the New World as its pedestal.” Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, p. 925.

<sup>123</sup> The restricted scope of wage labor is further qualified by Eley who adds to modern colonial slavery the “importance of domestic servitude for the overall labour markets and regimes of accumulation prevailing inside the eighteenth-century Anglo-Scottish national economy at home. ... In the most basic of social historical terms, for example, servants in their many guises formed one of the very largest and most essential working categories of the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (that is, precisely in the core period of industrialization), yet seldom figure anywhere in the established accounts of either the capitalist economy or working-class formation. So if we

Part of the socioeconomic heterogeneity that characterizes the capitalist system is accounted for by the plurality of social systems and ecological circumstances that colonial entrepreneurs encountered in the colonies. The other part owes to local and contingent struggles that opposed these entrepreneurs' attempts to redesign property relations, productive activities, and exchange systems according to the profit motive. Such resistance significantly delimited and shaped the social terrain to which profit-seeking groups had to adapt, forcing them to work within the circumstances that they could not alter.<sup>124</sup> Finally, colonial capitalist processes of restructuration and articulation themselves constitute a source of heterogeneity, for the strategies adopted for integrating non-capitalist social relations into global circuits of capital engendered novel productive practices and structures of social control, and in fact created and entrenched what appears from the teleological modernist viewpoint to be residues of precapitalist, "backward," "traditional," or "regressive" lifeworlds.<sup>125</sup>

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take seriously on board this centrality of non-industrial work and the fundamental importance of service, domestic labour, and everything that's accomplished in households, while adding it to the driving importance of enslaved mass production, then our conventional understanding of the histories of political economy and working-class formation will surely have to change. ... the claim of waged work to analytical precedence in the developmental histories of capitalism no longer seems secure." Eley, "Historicizing the Global," pp. 165-6.

<sup>124</sup> These struggles and the stumbling blocks they throw in the way of capitalist transformation visibly surfaced in the design and implementation of colonial indirect rule, when aspirations for reconstituting the socioeconomic fabric were curbed by the prospect of social upheaval that such transformations would entail. The British colonial administrators, Bernard Porter remarks, were "nervous of the sorts of liberal 'reforms' that the middle classes favoured, but which were likely to unsettle their 'natives' and consequently make them more difficult to control." Bernard Porter, *Empire and Superempire: Britain, America, and the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006). Steinmetz likewise notes that "[a]lthough the quest for markets and raw materials was certainly a leading motive in the *acquisition* of many colonies during the late nineteenth century, the problem of native regulation became paramount once these regimes were up and running, often overshadowing immediate economic considerations." Steinmetz, "Imperialism and Colonialism?" p. 144. David Washbrook offers a masterful analysis of colonial conundrums of social stability and economic transformation in British India in his "Law, State, and Agrarian Society in Colonial India," *Modern Asian Studies* 15 (1981): 649-721. Such conundrums were not restricted to vast colonial possessions ruled by leading imperial powers, like British India, as George Steinmetz's analysis of German colonialism attests. See Steinmetz, *The Devil's Handwriting: Precoloniality and the German Colonial State in Qingdao, Samoa, and Southwest Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007). Ominously, social stability and economic transformation coincided only under forms of settler capitalism, which thrived on the marginalization, if not total extirpation, of the indigenous populations.

<sup>125</sup> This point finds its seminal elaboration in theories of "development of underdevelopment" worked out by Samir Amin and Andre Gunder Frank. This is a crucial corrective to the modernist entrapments of neoclassical and Schumpeterian theories of capitalism, which can observe the social rupture and transformation wrought by capitalism only through the grid of "creative destruction," or what Marx called the revolutionizing of the means of

Therefore, while the term “colonial capitalism” is in one sense tautological given that the historical extension “capitalism” necessarily encompasses colonialism, retaining the adjective “colonialism” holds twofold value. First, it serves as a heuristic reminder of the colonial genealogy of capitalism, which often disappears in methodological-nationalist approaches that reproduce, in one form or another, transition narratives in Europe.<sup>126</sup> Second, and more importantly, it underscores the widely disparate social and political forms under which the colony and the metropole configure in global networks of capital, without sanctioning the economic relations in the metropole as “capitalism proper” and declaring those in the colony to be anomalies, distortions, or residues of precapitalist relations.

The third axis for rethinking capitalism targets the idea of capital as an economic category and the liberal conflation of the “economy” with the “market.” The economic conception of capital assigns it to a domain of production and exchange structured by the crystal of voluntary transaction between juridically equal persons. The political implication is that power asymmetries and relations of subordination that inhabit capitalism are unintended

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production. History of colonialism supplies us with the most reliable repository of such correctives. David Washbrook draws attention to the “de-industrialization and de-urbanization” of the vast Indian hinterland, and notes that if the British rule in India is approached from the angle of global political economy and uneven development, “its character begins to take on a very different appearance. The predominant effects which it had (both intended and unintended) were less to transport British civilization to the East than to construct there a society founded on the perpetuation of ‘Oriental’ difference as Edward Said has put it. India became a subordinate agricultural colony under the dominance of metropolitan, industrial Britain; its basic cultural institutions were disempowered and fixed in unchanging ‘traditional’ forms; its ‘civil society’ was subjected to the suzerainty of a military despotic state.” Washbrook, “India, 1818-1860: The Two Faces of Colonialism,” in *Oxford History of the British Empire*, Vol. 3: *The Nineteenth Century*, ed. Andrew Porter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 397, 399. For the economic “peripheralization” of India under British rule, also see Andrew Sartori, *Bengal in Global Concept History: Culturalism in the Age of Capital* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), p. 53-60. For the creation and perpetuation of “caste” in India as an instrument of colonial intelligibility and administration, rather than a “backward” Indian social structure, see Nicholas Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2001).

<sup>126</sup> For example, see Douglas C. North and Robert P. Thomas, *The Rise of the Western World: A New Economic History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973).

consequences incidental to the interplay of individual transactions.<sup>127</sup> In contrast, a focus on the colonial origins and imperial moorings of capitalism inscribes the element of political (that is, extra-economic and extra-legal) violence at the heart of the capital-relation. Luxemburg's quip, "[i]t is an illusion to hope that capitalism will ever be content with the means of production which it can acquire by way of commodity exchange" distills the essence of the imperial endeavors that established plantations in the Americas, dismantled the textile industry and commercialized agriculture in India, and "opened" up China to free trade.<sup>128</sup> The employment of "force as a permanent weapon" in the formation of these locales of surplus extraction and networks of accumulation stamps capitalism with a political imprint, "not only at its genesis, but further on down to the present day."<sup>129</sup> A perspective that treats political violence as *originary* (*ursprünglich*)<sup>130</sup> in the genealogy of capitalism, a system that compels most human beings to reproduce their lives on the condition that they produce surplus for the global value chains,

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<sup>127</sup> A modified version of this stance also colors certain Marxian analyses, which distinguish capitalism from previous systems of exploitation by the strictly economic (as opposed to political and coercive) modality of power that undergirds the extraction of surplus. See, Ellen M. Wood, *Empire of Capital* (London: Verso, 2003).

<sup>128</sup> Luxemburg, *Accumulation of Capital*, p. 350. The moments enumerated by Luxemburg belong to the colonial chapter of a planetary process of capitalization. The metropolitan aspects of the same process encompassed initially illicit and then legal enclosure of common lands, which created dispossessed laborers in Britain, who were forcibly inculcated with a work discipline under the heavy hand of vagrancy laws and maximum wage legislation.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid, p. 351. The integral status of political power in the constitution of capital in this respect could be construed as the theoretical expression of the enduring current of imperial power in the genealogy of capitalism as a history of the present. "As in earlier phases of Western imperialism, the lineage that underlies all the rest is the global military paramountcy of the leading imperial power. For the majority of the world's population would not acquiesce in the present dependency, exploitation, inequality, and 'low-intensity democracy' for a minute if it were not backed up by the overwhelming force of arms." Tully, *Public Philosophy*, Vol. 2, p. 28.

<sup>130</sup> Here I follow Walter Benjamin's differentiation of a philosophical notion of origin (*Ursprung*) from the historicist of idea of genesis (*Entstehung*): "The term origin is not intended to describe a process by which the existent came into being, but rather to describe that which emerges from the process of becoming and disappearance. ... That which is original needs to be recognized as a process of restoration and re-establishment, but, on the other hand, precisely because of this, it is something imperfect and incomplete. There takes a place in every original phenomenon a determination of the form in which an idea will constantly confront the historical world ... Origin is not, therefore, discovered by the examination of actual findings, but is related to their history and their subsequent development." Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (London: Verso, 1998), pp. 45-6. An originary conceptualization of primitive accumulation treats it not as a consummated "stage" in the history of capitalism but as a persistent undercurrent that cyclically intensifies and erupts at moments of crisis and restructuring of global capitalist relations. An excellent essay that drives this point home is Massimo de Angelis, "Separating the Doing and the Deed: Capital and the Continuous Character of Enclosures," *Historical Materialism* 12 (2004): 57-87. Also see his *Beginning of History*, chapters 10 and 11.

refuses to relegate it to a concluded chapter of history after which the pacific mutualism of the market, “Freedom, Equality, Property, and Bentham,” reigns supreme.<sup>131</sup> What Dipesh Chakrabarty contends for the “victory of the modern” also holds true for capitalism, that is, it has “always been dependent on the mobilization, on its behalf, of effective means of physical coercion ... “always” because this coercion is both originary/foundational (that is, historic) as well as pandemic and quotidian.”<sup>132</sup> The genetic relationship between capital and political force finds its most systematic expression in its identification with the state, or in Fernand Braudel’s words, “capitalism only triumphs only when it becomes identified with the state, when it is the state.”<sup>133</sup>

The multiplicity and variance of the colonial processes of expropriation and exploitation effectuated by political violence shatters the narrow confines of Marx’s formal definition of primitive accumulation and necessitates a more capacious redeployment of the concept.<sup>134</sup> I think one way of increasing the extension of “primitive accumulation” while maintaining it adequately rigorous is to define it as a (1) political process of forcible transformation whereby (2) non-capitalist relations of social reproduction are restructured through extra-economic coercion (3) in ways that articulate them to the global networks of capital accumulation. As James Tully puts it quite bluntly, primitive accumulation as a “historical invasion and restructuring of the non-European world,” has “dispossessed non-Europeans of political and legal control over their

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<sup>131</sup> Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, p. 280.

<sup>132</sup> Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, p. 44.

<sup>133</sup> Fernand Braudel, *Afterthoughts on Material Civilization and Capitalism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), p. 64. For more recent appraisals of the nexus between sovereignty and capital *via* primitive accumulation, see Tim di Muzio, “The ‘Art’ of Colonisation: Capitalising Sovereign Power and the Ongoing Nature of Primitive Accumulation,” *New Political Economy* 12 (2007): 517-39. For a more ambitious attempt to rethink capital *as* power, see Nitzan and Bichler, *Capital as Power*.

<sup>134</sup> Marx himself gestures at a capacious conceptual extension of the term when he alludes to mechanisms like the national debt, international credit system, and protectionism under the rubric of primitive accumulation, a point later taken up by Luxemburg and Harvey. Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, pp. 919-24; Luxemburg, *Accumulation of Capital*, chapters 30 and 31; Harvey, *New Imperialism*, chapter 4.

resources and economies, and modified, subordinated, or replaced their forms of organization with the institutional preconditions of western legal and political domination, economic exploitation, and military control.”<sup>135</sup> This process comprises not only the radical and traumatic overhaul of the relations of social reproduction (for example, the reconstruction of property systems or labor organization) but also the articulation of existing social forms (markets, commodity, and money) to the logic of capital by destroying them as *independent* social forms, whereby even the ostensibly non-capitalist or “feudal” social practices (peasant proprietorship, serfdom, slavery) become moments in the global reproduction of capital.<sup>136</sup> Expressed in comprehensive terms, primitive accumulation marks the historical process that introduces a fundamental reordering and reorientation of social reproduction towards the imperatives of capital accumulation – even if such reorientation is not experienced as capitalism *eo nomine*.<sup>137</sup> The magnitude and profundity of these historical transformations carries them beyond the bounds of the simply “economic,”<sup>138</sup> and renders primitive accumulation, in Partha Chatterjee’s

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<sup>135</sup> James Tully, “Lineages of Contemporary Imperialism,” in *Lineages of Empire*, ed. Duncan Kelly, p. 14.

<sup>136</sup> Capital encounters the “older forms” of commercial capital and interest-bearing capital “in the epoch of its formation and development. It encounters them as antecedents, but not as antecedents established by itself, not as forms of its own life-process. In the same way as [capital] originally finds the commodity already in existence, but not as its own product, and likewise finds money in circulation but not as an element in its own reproduction.” In the course of its development, capital “must therefore subjugate these forms and transform them into derived or special functions of itself” – or in other words, assimilate or articulate historically non-capitalist social forms as moments of its own reproduction. Karl Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value: Volume IV of Capital* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971), p. 468. Marx lays down the foundations of this theoretical discovery in his exploration of the interrelationship between money and capital as two distinct social phenomena. See Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* (London: Penguin, 1993), especially “The Chapter on Capital.”

<sup>137</sup> “First, people experience deprivation and oppression within a concrete setting, not as the end product of large and abstract processes ... Workers experience the factory, the speeding rhythm of the assembly line, the foremen, the spies, the guards, the owner and the pay check. *They do not experience monopoly capitalism.*” Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Poor People’s Movements: Why They Succeed?* (New York: Vintage, 1977), p. 20.

<sup>138</sup> For instance, Thomas Holt remarks, “life’s goals for most humans who have walked this earth are better described in terms of the relative absence of scarcity and peril than in the full achievement of satisfaction and security” – a point he demonstrates through an analysis of the paths chosen by the former slaves in the West Indies, who shunned wage labor even if it meant higher income, and opted for small proprietorship and petty commodity production organized in autonomous villages. Thomas Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), p. 5. Likewise, David Brion Davis, following Karl Polanyi, cautions against reducing the socioeconomic transformations wrought by Parliamentary Enclosures, above all the “dehumanization of labor,” to the question of “real wages,” instead

stark formulation, “nothing else but the destruction of the precapitalist community, which, in various forms, had regulated the social unity of laborers with their means of production.”<sup>139</sup>

### **III. Dilemmas of Liberalism**

The notion of colonial capitalism outlined above offers theoretical leverage on what Jennifer Pitts labels “the British Empire’s systematic injuries,” which include “massive resource extraction, establishment of catastrophic systems of bonded labor, deindustrialization, entrenchment of “traditional” structures of authority, and insertion of subsistence farmers into often wildly unstable global markets ... proletarianization, emiseration, chaos, and misrule.”<sup>140</sup> Pitts’s curious choice of distinctly liberal terminology (“injury”) to describe these processes is at once limiting and revealing. It is limiting insofar as it steers the critique of empire and its economic havoc towards questions of moral offense and eclipses the political economic status of these processes as colonial primitive accumulation. On the other hand, it is revealing precisely because the concept of “injury,” which presupposes a relationship of consensual interaction between moral equals, informed the standards of a commercial ideology whereby liberal thinkers in the British metropole judged the political economy of the empire. This pacific commercial ideology squarely rested on a political economic worldview that germinated in the mid-seventeenth century and gained the upper hand among the English intellectual and political circles with the Revolution of 1688. Embraced mainly by the Whigs, this worldview turned on

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emphasizing the laceration of the social fabric by the displacement from land. It is not coincidental that both authors focus on processes of primitive accumulation (enclosure and enslavement), which do not simply constitute the capital-relation, but in the process destroy or subordinate all those ways of life and forms of social reproduction that are inimical to the accumulative drive of capital. David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), pp. 402-3, 464-8.

<sup>139</sup> Chatterjee, *Nation and Its Fragments*: 235. “Capital that is global in its territorial reach and universal in its conceptual domain” is what turns the parochial conceptions of Western Europe, such as state and civil society, into the universals of modernity. *Ibid.* pp. 234-238.

<sup>140</sup> Pitts, “Political Theory,” p. 220.

the assumption that the basis of material prosperity was manufactures rather than land.<sup>141</sup> By disentangling wealth from land, a finite resource, and hitching it to labor, whose productive powers could be augmented by human artifice and improvement, Whig political economy reconceived commercial exchange as a positive-sum game and conquest as an impolitic and immoral economic strategy.<sup>142</sup> Perhaps the most famous expression of this position was to be found in Locke's *Second Treatise of Government*, in which he explained "why 'numbers of men are to be preferred to largeness of dominions,' why, in other words, countries with relatively weak natural resources were able to feed their populations without recourse to conquest."<sup>143</sup>

This political economic worldview offers a guiding thread for navigating another notoriously protean term central to this study, namely, liberalism.<sup>144</sup> Even when confined to its

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<sup>141</sup> Here I rely on Steven Pincus's reinterpretation of the political economy of the seventeenth century, which compellingly repudiates the civic humanist and the institutional-economic explanations alike. Steven Pincus, "Neither Machiavellian Moment nor Possessive Individualism: Commercial Society and the Defenders of the English Commonwealth," *American Historical Review* 103 (1998): 705-36; Pincus, *1688: The First Modern Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

<sup>142</sup> One should note, however, that while the idea of positive-sum game in commerce made a dent in mercantilist zero-sum assumptions, this by no means implied a laissez faire policy. Whig political economy advocated the state's presence in the economy as ardently as its Tory contender. See Pincus, "Neither Machiavellian Moment" and *1688*; O'Brien, "Inseparable Connections"; Morgan, "Mercantilism."

<sup>143</sup> Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff, "Needs and Justice in the *Wealth of Nations*: An Introductory Essay," in *Wealth and Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 41.

<sup>144</sup> Few questions in modern political philosophy have been as fraught with fierce disagreement as the place of liberalism in the early modern period, not least because the term "liberalism" as we understand it did not enter circulation until the early-nineteenth century. Civic humanists, most prominently J. G. A. Pocock, have rejected the possibility of tracing the roots of liberalism back to the seventeenth century and pilloried what they perceive to be the Marxist historians' effort to reconstruct a long and continuous genealogy for their nemesis. The response has come from Isaac Kramnick, who locates the origins of eighteenth-century "bourgeois radicalism" in early modern England. More broadly, a major interpretive fault line has run between, on the one hand, subscribing to civic humanism and natural jurisprudence as the hermeneutic key to understand seventeenth- and eighteenth-century thought, and on the other, scholars who are firm in their conviction that liberalism was launched in the seventeenth century, if not with Thomas Hobbes then certainly with John Locke. An orthogonal solution has been proposed by Duncan Ivison who coined the term "proto-liberalism" to signify the pre-nineteenth century philosophical premises which would coalesce into the more readily recognizable contours of liberalism. See J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975); C. B. Macpherson, *Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962); Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953); Ivison, "Locke, Liberalism, and Empire." Also see, Isaac Kramnick, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism: Political Ideology in Late-Eighteenth Century England and America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990). The political economic conception of liberalism I adopt here follows the path opened up by Pincus's "Neither Machiavellian Moment" and *1688*.

putative *locus classicus*, Britain, liberal intellectual landscape comprises a wild array of political philosophies, ranging from the “applied theology” of John Locke to the secular sociological analysis of the Scottish Enlightenment,<sup>145</sup> from the conservative Whiggism of Edmund Burke to the unabashed radicalism of Jeremy Bentham. Yet what persists with remarkable regularity across diverse strands associated with liberalism and turns it into a unified yet internally differentiated intellectual field is a fundamental adherence to the principles of contractual freedom and juridical equality underwritten by the rule of law. As I demonstrate in the subsequent chapters, contractual freedom and juridical equality constitute primal normative premises of liberalism in their regularity over centuries, the relative geographic indifference of their claims, and their accommodation in otherwise quite dissimilar philosophical strands, be it John Locke’s natural jurisprudential philosophy, Edmund Burke’s ancient constitutionalism, conjectural history of the Scottish Enlightenment, or scientific political economy of the Utilitarians. Contractual freedom and juridical equality therefore fit neatly within the contours of the universalist tendencies Pitts ascribes to liberal thinkers, “in the sense that they adhered to the principles that all human beings are naturally equal and that certain fundamental moral principles are universally valid.”<sup>146</sup> As two such fundamental principles, contractual freedom and juridical equality represent not so much clearly specified and coded rules of conduct as “a set of characteristic dispositions” or “inclinations” that have “always been articulated in universal terms and entertained universal ambitions,” yet always already inflected by “various circumstances.”<sup>147</sup> The pivotal term that condenses these dispositions and structures liberalism as

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<sup>145</sup> John Dunn, “From Applied Theology to Social Analysis: The Break between John Locke and the Scottish Enlightenment,” in *Wealth and Virtue* ed. Hont and Ignatieff.

<sup>146</sup> Pitts, *A Turn to Empire*, p. 3.

<sup>147</sup> Jennifer Pitts, “Free for All.” I denote contractual freedom and juridical equality as “primal norms” or *ur-tenets* because of their quasi-formless yet formative character. While these principles do not find a definitive phenomenological expression that can fully correspond to their abstract logic, they are clearly *recognizable* as animating principles behind a variety of discourses that we would subsume under liberalism. Not unlike

a political economic discourse is “commerce,” a term that is at once descriptive-particularistic and normative-universal. Commerce at once refers to the historically determinate set of relations of production and exchange obtaining in the seventeenth century *and* christens these relations with a cosmopolitan morality and civilizational superiority under the sign of “commercial society.”<sup>148</sup>

Understood as a species of moral economy rather than its antithesis,<sup>149</sup> political economy in early modern Britain served “not just as a technical language of administration but also, and perhaps more fundamentally, as a language of “political and constitutional argument” through which could be imagined a new form of polity.”<sup>150</sup> The increasingly popular self-conception of the British as a commercial people ensued from the imagination of the British Empire as an “empire of trade” that unified its metropolitan and colonial constituents by an ethos of material

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Chakrabarty’s theorization of the necessary yet discrepant relationship between the universal abstract logic of capital and its global historical forms, I maintain that contractual freedom and juridical equality constitute the abstract logic of liberalism that is definitively discernible in, yet not reducible to, its variegated historical development.

<sup>148</sup> The term “commercial society” is central to this project for three reasons. First, this term is roughly the early-modern cognate of what is understood to be a free market society today, which combines political liberalism and capitalist economic relations. Secondly, it is significant in its moral overtones, insofar as “commerce” denoted in this period not merely economic transaction but “sociability” in general, that is, all sorts of free, voluntary, peaceful social exchange between individuals and societies. Anthony Pagden remarks that commerce “was far more than the simple exchange of commodities” but signified a broader mode of communication bringing about “a deeper human awareness of the identity and singularity of others,” an expression of reciprocity that held individuals together as members of a single family. Third, the Scottish Enlightenment conception of “commercial society” as a socio-historical category referred to a multiplicity of social, political, economic, and moral dimensions, which placed its referent at the terminus of the known historical development of human communities, formalized in the four-stage stadial theory of the Scottish philosophers. Pagden, *Lords of All the World*, p. 180. The most comprehensive treatment of the Scottish stadial theory is J. G. A. Pocock’s magisterial *Barbarism and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>149</sup> For a critique of the argument that classical political economy “de-moralized” the domain of material production, circulation, and consumption, see Emma Rothschild, *Economic Sentiments: Adam Smith, Condorcet, and the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); Donald Winch, *Riches and Poverty: An Intellectual History of Political Economy in Britain, 1750-1834* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Idea of Poverty: England in the Early Industrial Age* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984).

<sup>150</sup> Armitage, *Ideological Origins*, p. 166; Sartori, “British Empire,” p. 628.

and moral improvement, bonds mutually beneficial exchange, and the “civilizing and humanizing power of commerce.”<sup>151</sup>

The liberal thrust of political economy in the fashioning of the British self-image was countered, however, by colonial conquest, extraction, and enslavement through which this empire of trade came into existence.

Above all, as we have seen, colonial administrations were concerned to retain or enhance control over land and labour. Superficially, this concern clashed with judicial and administrative philosophy of contemporary Britain which was imbued with ideas of freedom of contract, freedom of trade and free title to land. In fact, the regulation of civil society in the colonies was intended to create the conditions for ‘civilisation’ by constructing modern landed elites and industrious peasantries through the exercise of state power.<sup>152</sup>

The tension was obvious to the British intellectual and political elite; nonetheless, the chances that its recognition would effect policy change remained limited for two reasons. The first reason concerned the historical conjuncture of inter-state rivalry in which Britain found itself. The political, economic, and military competition with the United Provinces in the seventeenth century and with France in the eighteenth century imprinted on the minds of the contemporaries that empire, especially for an island country like Britain, secured the wealth and prosperity that was indispensable for domestic peace and national power.<sup>153</sup> The second reason had to do with the limits of the historical experience and the ideational horizon of economic policy that it circumscribed. As Patrick O’Brien reminds us,

very few critics of mercantilism and Imperialism writing between 1688 and 1815 developed an alternative blueprint for national development. ... Nearly everyone at the time perceived that economic progress, national security, and the integration of the kingdom might well come from sustained levels of investment

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<sup>151</sup> Anthony Pagden, *Peoples and Empires: A Short History of European Migration, Exploration, and Conquest from Greece to the Present* (New York: Modern Library, 2001), p. 86.

<sup>152</sup> Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, pp. 217-8.

<sup>153</sup> “The deepening commitment to empire by British government was driven above all by a sense of insecurity. Insecurity was rooted in fear of France ... Empire played a very important part in this long confrontation with France. The long-distance trades, predominantly carried on within a framework of imperial regulation, were thought to generate the maritime resources and a crucial part of the wealth that enabled Britain to hold her own.” Marshall, “Free Though Conquering People,” p. x.

in global commerce, naval power, and, whenever necessary, the acquisition of bases and territories overseas.<sup>154</sup>

In other words, mercantilism or the “old colonial system” that hinged on the deployment of the organized power of the British state represented less an aberrant political intervention in the field of global commerce. It provided the politico-legal framework within which “commerce” could emerge as a historical reality and an object of contemplation in the first place.<sup>155</sup>

The ideological challenge at this historical conjuncture therefore arose from straddling the simultaneous embrace of Britain’s commercial self-image and the imperial foundation of her power and prosperity. On the one hand, the British distinguished themselves in opposition to what they believed to be land-based despotism and expansionism of their Continental neighbors as well as of Asiatic kingdoms. The idea of a maritime and commercial people implied a belief in the fairness of the voluntary exchange of commodities and experiences between parties whose moral right to pursue their interests was respected, or succinctly put, a vision of “free exchange as the model of human interrelations.”<sup>156</sup> On the other hand, it was no a secret that the making of Britain’s overseas commercial ties, and consequently the seed-bed of the modern economy and material prosperity, followed an imperial course of colonial conquest, military extortion, and enslavement of one kind or another. Even the colonial settlers, who were hailed in the British imperial ideology as the offshoots of republican liberty planted in overseas “colonies,” in contradistinction to the military garrisons of conquered “dependencies,”<sup>157</sup> had an ambivalent

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<sup>154</sup> O’Brien, “Inseparable Connections,” p. 76. Also see Morgan, “Mercantilism.”

<sup>155</sup> See, Istvan Hont, “An Introduction,” in *The Jealousy of Trade: International Competition and the Nation-State in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005).

<sup>156</sup> Sartori, *Bengal in Global Concept*, p. 51.

<sup>157</sup> The distinction between the “first” and “second” British Empires is originally articulated by Vincent Harlow in his *The Founding of the Second British Empire, 1763-1793* (London: Longmans, 1952). For reappraisals and critiques of Harlow’s distinction, see P. J. Marshall, “The first and Second British Empires: A Question of Demarcation,” *History* 49 (1964): 13-23; Robert Travers, *Ideology and Empire in the Eighteenth-Century India: The British in Bengal* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Philip Stern, “A Politie of Civill & Military

position. They also frequently figured as “the bane of empire,” the “most avaricious, and in particular, the most careless of other peoples’ human and economic rights ... the most *racist* of imperialists; usually arising from their need (as they perceive it) for land and labor”<sup>158</sup> – a feature that brought settlers in frequent friction with the Colonial Office and missionary groups. No wonder, then, to many Britons “colonialism meant coercion.”<sup>159</sup> A consistent theoretical position, if not moral purism, in confronting this contradiction would entail either a radical critique of imperial policy, which certainly had its exponents like Smith or McCulloch,<sup>160</sup> or a fatalistic acceptance that a liberal nation could not be but the worst despot over peoples it colonized, as was conceded by Hume.<sup>161</sup> To play on the double valence of “primitive,” primitive accumulation under colonial expansion was not only primitive in the sense of “originary” of capitalist relations; it also marked a moment of civilizational regress, embodied in the “savage” or “barbaric” actions that propelled such expansion.

Despite such denunciation and dissent, however, the regard for the British Empire as the “empire of liberty” carried the day, as riddled as it continued to be with ambiguities and anxieties. The resilience of the commercial self-image of the British Empire in the face of the political violence repeatedly exposed in its colonial capitalist networks poses a curious puzzle. Such resilience cannot be explained solely by pointing to the increasingly pro-imperial public

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Power’: Political Thought and the Late Seventeenth-Century Foundations of the East India Company-State,” *Journal of British Studies* 47 (2008): 253-83.

<sup>158</sup> Porter, *Empire and Superempire*, p. 46.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>160</sup> For seventeenth-century critics of land appropriations in America, like Robert Gray, Roger Williams, Thomas Morton, and Pierre Biard, see J. H. Elliott, “The Seizure of Overseas Territories by the European Powers,” in *Theories of Empire*, ed. Armitage; Pagden, *Lords of All the World* and “Dispossessing the Barbarian”; Tully, *Approach to Political Philosophy and Strange Multiplicity*. For the denunciation of empire by the classical political economists of the eighteenth century, such as Smith, Ricardo, and McCulloch, see Bernard Semmel, *The Rise of Free Trade Imperialism: Political Economy, the Empire of Free Trade and Imperialism, 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970); Donald Winch, *Classical Political Economy and Colonies* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965); A. G. L. Shaw (ed) *Great Britain and the Colonies, 1815-1855* (London: Methuen & Co, 1970).

<sup>161</sup> David Hume, “That Politics May be Reduced to a Science” in *Essays, Moral and Political* (1742). Smith struck a similar tone in his treatment of plantation slavery in the *Wealth of Nations*, Book IV, chapter 7, par. 55.

opinion in late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century Britain.<sup>162</sup> For not only the contradiction outlined above dated back to the middle of the seventeenth century and extended well into the nineteenth, but the sway of public opinion on the course of imperial policy was at best questionable during 1780-1830 when proconsular imperial expansion coincided with political conservatism in Britain.<sup>163</sup>

I contend that a more plausible explanation for the persistence of the liberal self-image of British colonial capitalism should be sought in the works of middle-class intellectuals who were committed at once to the liberal values enshrined in political economy and to Britain's colonial capitalist economy that undergirded her national prosperity and power. Such intellectuals catered to the British political elite the theoretical resources for furnishing an undeniably imperial political economic order with an ultimately liberal character.<sup>164</sup> I say "ultimately" because the simultaneous defense of British colonial capitalism and its liberal image did not involve simply rejecting the violence of colonial primitive accumulation; rather, it wove together a series of discursive strategies, rhetorical maneuvers, and literary fictions in order to demonstrate that the British imperial economy and the British polity remained at heart wedded to liberal values without denying the violence it visited upon the colonized. Targeting imperial ideology as a perennial "exercise in lofty denial" remains a facile critique, not least because few, if any, who

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<sup>162</sup> This forms the crux of Pitts's explanation in *Turn to Empire*. Marshall's "Free Though Conquering People" provides a good overview of growing imperial confidence. Also see Karuna Mantena's critique of Pitts in "Fragile Universals and the Politics of Empire," *Polity* 38 (2006): 543-55.

<sup>163</sup> Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>164</sup> My emphasis on the middle-class position of these intellectuals is not incidental. Being excluded from direct exercise of political power, the only recourse for middle-class intellectuals for exerting indirect influence on imperial policy remained the theoretical cogency and appeal of their arguments. Hence one could arguably expect to find in the works of such intellectuals the most sustained attention to the universe of political discourse of their time, systematic engagement with the major debates, and a pronounced (even self-avowed) concern with theoretical coherence.

were vaguely informed about the colonial affairs subscribed to this strategy.<sup>165</sup> I maintain instead that the theoretical fulcrum of upholding a liberal self-image of colonial capitalism was *disavowal*, an attitude that is always coupled with the recognition of a disturbing reality. Disavowal should be understood not as a thick, impenetrable silence, a state of mind that consigns the disturbance to the realm of the unspeakable or unrepresentable, but rather as a quite voluble strategy that is “productive in that it brings forth further stories, screens, fantasies that hide from view what is not to be seen.”<sup>166</sup>

This approach challenges the assertions that “the conflict between the domestic [i.e. liberal] and the foreign [i.e. coercive] regime proved too contradictory to bridge” and consequently “hypocrisy is the tribute imperialism pays to democracy.”<sup>167</sup> Despite its tempting simplicity, reducing the various strategies to reconcile liberalism and imperialism to the logic of duplicity and cynicism is difficult to sustain, if only because a survey of the imperial ideology in Britain between late-seventeenth and early nineteenth century shows the British upper classes and policy makers to be “ideologically gullible [but not] hypocrites.”<sup>168</sup> Imputations of a conscious instrumentality to liberalism as an imperial ideology forget that such ideologies and their various performances “primarily targeted their fellow Europeans. It was above all their own countrymen and political leaders that colonists had to convince of the legitimacy of their actions, not indigenous peoples.”<sup>169</sup> And as the following chapters show, many contemporaries found the conflict between metropolitan and colonial regimes, if not resolvable, then certainly manageable. Secondly, arguments from cynicism presume a neat compartmentalization between unambiguous

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<sup>165</sup> Maier, *Among Empires*, pp. 60-1. At least in the British case, however, Maier’s emphasis on democracy is misplaced. For the Britons, the “freedoms” that they cherished as the defining core of their character was of not democratic but liberal nature. See Porter, *Empire and Superempire*, p. 48.

<sup>166</sup> Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, p. 38.

<sup>167</sup> Maier, *Among Empires*, pp. 61, 64.

<sup>168</sup> Porter, *Empire and Superempire*, pp. 24, 44, 53.

<sup>169</sup> Patricia Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession in Europe’s Conquest of the New World, 1492-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 11.

interests transparent to their bearers, and fabricated symbolic systems whose instrumentality is likewise clear to those who deploy them to conceal their true interests. Such an interpretation obscures the ways in which the various agents of the British Empire perceived their interest within the historically circumscribed system of signification they inhabited, itself dependent on a concrete constellation of social practices that structured imperial networks.<sup>170</sup> Most importantly, it overlooks the greater efficacy of expropriation and exploitation when their perpetrators are sincere believers in the morality and propriety of their actions, that deeply staked in the controversy over the meaning of these actions are the very self-conceptions of the expropriators and exploiters. Pocock eloquently encapsulates this dynamic when he writes “though the ideology of agriculture and savagery was formed to justify this expropriation, it also articulated things which the [European colonizers] very deeply believed about themselves ... They were not only expropriators, and this made it easier for them to deny that expropriation was what they were doing.”<sup>171</sup>

In this sense, liberalism was decisively *not* just the ideological handmaiden or epiphenomenon of capitalism. Nor did it represent nothing more than a modality of historicism that denied the colonized the full subjective capacities for self-rule.<sup>172</sup> Rather, it comprised a mode of theoretical reflection and a system of values, which, while finding its conditions of possibility in the historically situated concrete practices formative of capitalist relations, could

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<sup>170</sup> Sartori, *Bengal in Global Concept*, pp. 10-18.

<sup>171</sup> J. G. A. Pocock, “*Tangata Whenua* and Enlightenment Anthropology,” in *The Discovery of Islands: Essays in British History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 214-5. Ann Laura Stoler similarly remarks on the dynamics of imperial benevolence: “Treating humanitarianism as the ruse, the mask or “the packaging” of empire misses a fundamental point. ... Compassionate imperialism was not the false advertising of imperial projects. ... Sympathy conferred distance, required inequalities of position and possibility, and was basic to the founding and funding of imperial enterprises – these were core features of empire that the elaboration of such sentiments helped to create.” Stoler, “Imperial Formations,” p. 53.

<sup>172</sup> The exemplary articulation of this widespread trope in postcolonial studies can be found in Mehta’s *Liberalism and Empire* and Chakrabarty’s *Provincializing Europe*. Also see Chakrabarty, “Subaltern History as Political Thought,” in *Colonial Legacies*, ed. Levy and Young.

not be isomorphically mapped onto these practices. Processes of enclosure, commodification, and dispossession originating in the seventeenth century gave birth to private property, commodity, and free labor as historical objects on which theoretical reflection could fasten and around which liberal tenets such as the private, consent, contract, and self-ownership could germinate and crystallize.<sup>173</sup> At the same time, however, these very conditions of possibility saddled liberalism with contradictions inasmuch as these conditions came into existence through the forcible obliteration of the “strange multiplicity” of lifeworlds, both in Europe but more dramatically in the colonies.<sup>174</sup> Various forms of social mediation that regulated access to the means of social reproduction fell before the sharp edge of colonial capitalism, which instated the jurisprudential notions of the market and the individual agent of subjective rights as the origin of contractual government, thereby inscribing the liberal dichotomy between state and civil society in the universal “narrative of capital.”<sup>175</sup> However, the irreducible element of political violence at work in the laceration of social fabric as well as in its reformation along capitalist lines could always become too intense, visible, and thereby offensive to liberal sensibilities. The forcible social transformations that enabled the formation of worldwide capitalist networks could be undertaken by their perpetrators, supported by their accomplices, and accepted by spectators only insofar as these transformations could be ideationally recast as the expansion of the conditions of liberal values, that is, commercial or market relations as the social domain of subjective rights. In light of this torsional constitutive relation between liberalism, capitalism, and political violence, which became most salient during periods of intensified colonial primitive accumulation,

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<sup>173</sup> Here, I am following Sartori’s excellent theoretical explication of Pincus’s interpretation of liberalism in the context of seventeenth century commercialization of economy. Sartori, “British Empire,” and *Bengal in Global Concept*.

<sup>174</sup> Tully, *Strange Multiplicity and Public Philosophy*, Vol. 2.

<sup>175</sup> This line of interpretation is articulated in the last chapter of Partha Chatterjee’s *Nation and Its Fragments*, to which I am extremely indebted for thinking about the connections between liberalism, capitalism, and colonialism.

instrumental and epiphenomenal approaches to liberalism appear untenable. If liberalism's relationship to capitalism is to be conceptualized under the rubric of ideology, then it ought to be a concept of ideology that hinges on the *necessary misrecognition* of capitalism as an essentially market phenomenon through the *disavowal* of its political immanence and the extra-economic coercion in its colonial inceptions.<sup>176</sup> In sense, colonial capitalism can be construed as the “constitutive outside” or the “prehistory” of liberalism.

If such disavowal underwrote the renewed authorization of and the continued acquiescence in the expropriation and exploitation inherent in the colonial capitalist enterprise, then the more sincere the disavowers were in their conviction that British capitalism essentially conformed to liberal values, and the more universal the terms of their discourse were, the greater was the cogency and sway of their strategies for explaining and justifying British colonial capitalism. The combination of these qualities in certain middle-class intellectuals, like Locke, Burke, and Wakefield, I argue, is what renders their works privileged grounds for observing the dynamics of disavowal. For these figures evinced a *bona fide* dedication to a secular, materialist, and progressive purpose for the British society and in fact for humanity, a purpose that was closely yoked to the idea of improvement, accumulation of wealth, comforts and conveniences, and condensed in such tropes as the “common stock of mankind” (Locke), “universal opulence”

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<sup>176</sup> I borrow the notion of ideology based on necessary misrecognition from Louis Althusser. Althusser's theory of ideology helps one ward against the Marxian disdain for the discursive strategies, rhetorical maneuvers, literary fictions, myths and fantasies encountered in the works of liberal intellectuals (for a good example, see Michael Perelman, *The Invention of Capitalism: Classical Political Economy and the Secret History of Primitive Accumulation* [Durham: Duke University Press. 2000]). Instead of dismissing those myths and fantasies as absurd, I suggest we put pressure on them and dig deeper into the position they occupy within the broader field of argument in order to unveil the crevasses and fault lines they attempt to bridge or conceal. I believe these fault lines traverse the moments where market relations that embody basic liberal principles are revealed to be inadequate for fulfilling the imperatives of capital accumulation, where, in other words, the universal normativity of liberalism comes into contradiction with the universal, self-expansionary thrust of capital.

(Burke), and “accumulation of capital” (Wakefield).<sup>177</sup> Correlatively, the British imperial project appeared to be as much a vehicle for approximating this purpose by carrying out the world-historical mission of spreading commercial civilization as an instrument for ensuring Britain’s survival as European great power.<sup>178</sup> Against this background, intellectuals like Locke, Burke, and Wakefield did the most remarkable job in articulating and navigating the aporias attendant to professing liberal political economic values like contractual freedom and juridical equality at home while violating these very principles through expropriation and bondage in the colonies. Their efforts to imagine British capitalism as essentially liberal, commercial, and pacific, to cordon off this essence from the illiberal eruptions of colonial dispossession and exploitation, and to represent the violence of colonial primitive accumulation as something incidental to British capitalism rather than the very process in and through which it necessarily developed, not only shaped the ways in which modern capitalist economy was theorized in the British political thought. These theoretical attempts also impacted the intellectual topography of liberalism by forcing its constitutive premises into an open confrontation with the illiberal elements of capitalism.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> The materialist orientation of British political economy occupied a great share of the idea of civilization. The British “defined civilization in their own terms and according to their own value system, a system honed over the past century as Britons shaped and were shaped by a capitalist political economy.” Holt, *Problem of Freedom*, p. 76. This is not to assert, however, that such a progressive-secular purpose was the only principle structuring the works of Locke, Burke, and Wakefield. It should rather be considered a crucial vector of thought in the broader social, political, and moral agendas of the authors.

<sup>178</sup> In this sense, Locke, Burke, and Wakefield belong to the ideological landscape of what Mantena calls “liberal imperialism,” which is characterized by “liberal, utilitarian, and evangelical reforms to transform, civilize, and emancipate the native [who] was construed as a child amenable to education, conversion, and assimilation.” This is in contradistinction to “late empire” and “late imperial ideology” that employs culturalist strategies of indirect rule. Mantena, *Alibis of Empire*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>179</sup> Cast in broader theoretico-historical terms, these efforts more broadly belong to a genealogy of disavowal of the political element in the historical development of capitalism, whereby it is reconfigured as an exclusively market phenomenon and conflated with the “economy.”

#### **IV. Overview of The Study**

I designate three historically significant moments in which the conflict between the liberal self-image of British capitalism and the political coercion operative in its formation gained visibility within the debates over property, exchange, and labor. These are (1) the land-appropriations in America that enabled the formation of Atlantic colonial capitalism through mercantilist policies of conquest and settlement, (2) the forcible integration of the Indian subcontinent to global and especially British circuits of capital under the East India Company rule, and (3) the establishment of agrarian capitalism in Australia and New Zealand. This is not to suggest that the question of property engulfed the field in the seventeenth century or exchange in the eighteenth and labor in the nineteenth. These three nodal points of political economy composed not so much a linear sequence, in which each displaced the previous one, as a triadic constellation.<sup>180</sup> Specific world-historical conjunctures in the global genealogy of capitalism foregrounded different elements of this triad as the most urgent theoretical question for securing a solid moral footing for the British colonial capitalist enterprise.<sup>181</sup>

The first two of these issues, property and exchange, materialized in response to the “two key practical problems arising from European commercial and imperial expansion:”<sup>182</sup> legitimization of colonial settlement in the New World, which consumed massive intellectual and ideological energy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,<sup>183</sup> and controversies over

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<sup>180</sup> Property, exchange, and labor roughly correspond to the three dimensions that Carl Schmitt identifies as primal to all human order, or expressed sociologically, system of social reproduction. These are “appropriation,” “distribution,” and “production,” and the problem of moral and practical evaluation and emphasis on each of these aspects vary according to changes in world history. Schmitt, *Nomos of the Earth*, pp. 326-8.

<sup>181</sup> This contention raises the question, urgent from whom? Crudely put, for the agents with vested economic and political interests in Britain’s colonial capitalist enterprise: the political elite presiding over the governmental apparatus both in the metropole and in the colonies, merchants, planters, financiers and landed magnates with shares in joint-stock companies, and later manufacturers and industrialists whose operations fed on the flow of commodities through colonial networks.

<sup>182</sup> Pitts, “Theories of Empire,” p. 215; Tuck, *Rights of War*, p. 108.

<sup>183</sup> Pagden, *Lords of all the World*; Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession*.

global commerce in the eighteenth century, fueled by the struggles to establish predominance in the Asia trade.<sup>184</sup> The third issue, labor, had been brewing in the tumult of social dislocation and proletarianization in an increasingly urban and manufacturing Britain, but its full scale eruption had to await the intersection of working class unrest in the metropole and the gradual emancipation of slaves in the Caribbean colonies in the first third of the nineteenth century.<sup>185</sup> Viewed through the lens of colonial primitive accumulation, these three historical moments encompassed coercive processes through which non-capitalist social forms were assimilated or articulated to extant webs of accumulation. Land tenure, distribution of resources, and the organization of production in the colonies were radically re-ordered and re-oriented in epochally specific ways that would promote profit and accumulation: exclusive private property, commodity chains, and dispossessed labor. These three issues, marking the coordinates where the stakes of capitalist development as well as their normative theorization were driven, found a deep resonance and elaboration in the works of John Locke, Edmund Burke, and Edward Gibbon Wakefield, by virtue of their position as liberal middle-class intellectuals invested in the British colonial capitalist enterprise and entangled in the thick of the world-historical conjunctures that shaped it.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Rothschild, “Global Commerce.”

<sup>185</sup> Holt, *Problem of Freedom*; Davis, *Problem of Slavery*; Madhavi Kale, *The Fragments of Empire: Capital, Slavery, and Indian Indentured Labor Migration to the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998).

<sup>186</sup> At this point I should clarify the method I adopt in the contextualization of these texts, that is, the specific character of the relationship between the historical conjuncture, the author, and the text. I follow two premises in mooring the works of Locke, Burke, and Wakefield in their respective contexts of colonial capitalism. The first of these is, as put neatly captured by Andrew Sartori, the capacity of these authors “to articulate a (relatively) coherent formulation of specific modes of social reflection and ethico-political argument that had either emerged or would soon emerge to prominence.” Sartori, *Bengal in Global Concept*, p. 6. I approach the works produced by these authors as elaborate and original condensation points of social and historical forces, which endowed them with canonicity, as in the case of Locke and Burke, or power to influence policy, as in the case of Wakefield. While I concur with Sartori’s general methodological take on the relationship between text and context, I depart from his dismissal of the importance of the special articulative capacity of particular thinkers. The alternative to construing iconic texts as surfaces of inscription for historical forces is not necessarily to ascribe their authors “ineffable genius or enlightened insight.” Strictly speaking, all such historical texts can be interrogated as points of condensation. A

The next chapter dissects the nodal point of “property” through an examination of John Locke’s works. Few thinkers in seventeenth-century England were as peculiarly situated as Locke, who was a theorist of property in the natural jurisprudential tradition, an advocate of the emergent commercial order under the Whig oligarchy, and an English colonial administrator in the capacity of Secretary to the Council of Trade and Plantations, Secretary to the Lords Proprietors of the Carolinas, and later a member of the Board of Trade.<sup>187</sup> Locke’s theory of property not only exerted a singularly formative influence on what is now conceived as the liberal tradition. He also systematized and innovated on the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century debates over the legitimacy of European land-appropriation in the Americas, debates in which one found open declamations of European incursions into the New World, and which involved such illustrious names as Francisco de Vitoria, Bartolome de las Casas, Hugo Grotious, and Samuel Pufendorf.<sup>188</sup>

I argue that Locke’s defense of moral freedom and equality of all human beings under God’s natural law (a theological understanding of contractual freedom and juridical equality)

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meager few of these gain iconic status, amongst the reasons for which one should include a clearer inscription of the social forces and contradictions that have been of interest to their contemporary and future readers (certainly alongside historical contingencies and politics of textual production and circulation). Everyone grapples with their historical conditions; some are more penetrating than others in their diagnosis and expression. Secondly, I consider each author to be writing “amid upheaval,” that is, in the very thick of the problems of imperial political economy and governance, rather than in clearly isolable “periods” of the first empire, the second empire, and the eve of free trade, with each period having its settled issues and agendas of government (such as mercantilism, free trade, and so on). I embed Locke, Burke, and Wakefield’s thought in contexts in flux, where extant modes of thinking about questions of colonial governance and imperial political economy had revealed their cracks and inadequacies for comprehending the novel world-historical phenomena emerging within the networks of imperial formation. Each author was therefore wrestling with what he and his contemporaries perceived as categorical *problematiques*, rather than isolated historical events. For an explication of the expression of “writing amid upheaval,” see Stephen J. Collier, “Topologies of Power: Foucault’s Analysis of Political Government Beyond ‘Governmentality,’” *Theory, Culture & Society* 26 (2009): 78-108.

<sup>187</sup> For a biographical account of these involvements, see Roger Woolhouse, *John Locke: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 110-119, 155, 333, 361-3, 419, 432, 442. Also see Peter Laslett, “John Locke, the Great Recoinage, and the Origins of the Board of Trade: 1695-1698,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 14 (1957): 370-402; Richard Ashcraft, “Political Theory and Political Reform: John Locke’s Essay on Virginia,” *The Western Political Quarterly*, 22 (1969): 742-58; Maurice Cranston, *John Locke: A Biography* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1957).

<sup>188</sup> See Pagden, “Dispossessing the Barbarian,” and *Lords of All the World*; Arneil, *John Locke and America*; Tuck, *Rights of War*.

collided with the imperative to advance the English colonial cause by appropriating lands in the Americas at the expense of its indigenous inhabitants.<sup>189</sup> Several excellent studies have already documented the incubation of Locke's theory of property in the context of England's and more specifically Lord Shaftesbury's colonial ambitions. Locke's labor theory of appropriation, it has been argued, constitutes an ideological attempt to invalidate Amerindian and other European claims to *dominium* in America.<sup>190</sup> Little attention has been bestowed, however, upon the role played by Locke's peculiar notion of money in his justification of indigenous dispossession, mainly because considerations of capital accumulation have for the most part been left out of colonial interpretations of Locke's theory. Viewed through the prism of colonial capitalism, the theoretical import of Locke's notion of money assumes proportions equivalent to that of labor inasmuch as it expresses a fundamental reorientation to the material world, which is accumulative and futural in its thrust and exclusive and expropriatory in its social effects. On the one hand, as an abstract medium of exchange and accumulation of value, money injects a distinctly capitalist character into Locke's teleological advocacy of the improvement of the earth for the benefit of humanity ("increasing the common stock of mankind"), which forms the backbone of his theory of property. On the other hand, the peculiar "universal tacit consent" that Locke assigns to the origin of money paradoxically introduces an exclusionary tendency into his universal and inclusive principles of natural liberty, moral equality, and entitlement to property. Locke's famous quip, "Thus in the beginning all the World was *America*, and more so than that is now; for no such thing as *Money* was any where known," signals the importance of

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<sup>189</sup> Arneil, *John Locke*, "Trade, Plantations," and Arneil, "The Wild Indian's Venison: Locke's Theory of Property and English Colonialism in America." *Political Studies*, 44 (1996): 60-74.

<sup>190</sup> See, McGuiness, "Fundamental Constitutions"; Tully, *Approach to Political Philosophy*, and *Strange Multiplicity*; Arneil, *John Locke and America*; David Armitage, "John Locke, Carolina, and the 'Two Treatises of Government,'" *Political Theory* 32 (2004): 602-27; Farr, "So Vile and Miserable an Estate," and "Locke, Natural Law"; Lebovics, "Uses of America"; Hsueh, "Giving Orders," "Unsettling Colonies," and "Cultivating and Challenging."

monetization as the line of separating the domain of property from natural common. It thereby designates America as open to free and just appropriation by English settlers as representatives of an improving and monetized economy.

Money's status in Locke's theory of property as the crux of capitalist accumulation and colonial dispossession, combined with the putative universality of its origin as well as of the purpose it serves, renders it the stage for Locke's ingenious negotiation of the tensions between colonial capitalism and liberal universals. What Locke inaugurates here, I maintain, is a magnificent reversal of the conventional terms governing the reception and understanding of property relations and social justice. Through a specific modulation of the relationship between "the common" and the "common stock," Locke turns a capitalist conception of private property into the door opening to universal prosperity and thereby authorizes the enclosure of American lands in the name of humanity.

The third chapter turns to the question of "exchange," which it localizes in the controversies over the purpose of the British East India Company after it assumed political power in India in 1765. These controversies revolved around the theoretical problems broached more generally by the expanding field of operations and increased political clout of colonial joint stock companies in the eighteenth century, problems that concerned above all the nature of political power, commerce, and the relationship between the two in a context of intensified imperial expansion and rivalry.<sup>191</sup> Edmund Burke stood in the midst of these controversies as a self-professed student of political economy, a member of the parliament and the chair of the

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<sup>191</sup> Rothschild, "Global Commerce"; Stern, "Politie"; H. V. Bowen, *Elites, Enterprise, and the Making of the British Overseas Empire, 1688-1775* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996); Bowen, *Business of Empire: The East India Company and Imperial Britain, 1756-1833* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). Also see, Kelly, "Who Counts?"; Alejandro Colás and Bryan Mabee, "The Flow and Ebb of Private Seaborne Violence in Global Politics: Lessons from the Atlantic World, 1689-1815," in *Mercenaries, Pirates, Bandits, and Empires: Private Violence in Historical Context*, ed. Alejandro Colás and Bryan Mabee (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

Select Committee of the Commons charged with investigating the administrative disputes in Bengal under the Company rule. His investigations acquainted him with the vagaries of maintaining an imperial presence in India while making that presence conformable to the principles of liberal political economy which he wholeheartedly advocated.<sup>192</sup>

Burke's espousal of liberal political economy belonged to a discursive universe quite different than that of Locke's natural law philosophy, as it was rooted in a combination of ancient constitutionalism and Scottish Enlightenment conjectural history.<sup>193</sup> While parting ways with cosmopolitan visionaries of commerce like Smith and Kant, Burke was nonetheless quite clear that contractual freedom and juridical equality ought to obtain across the economic space circumscribed by the British imperial power, and that this space unequivocally incorporated the Indian dominions.<sup>194</sup> Instead of the reign of commercial principles, however, he observed the economic intercourse between Britain and India to consist in forcible and unequal exchange, in which political power operated for aggrandizing the East India Company agents at the expense of Britain's Indian subjects. The open contravention of Burke's ideal of "imperial commerce" by the Company's practices of "imperious commerce," I maintain, should be adopted as the perspective for interrogating Burke's fourteen-year long struggle to reform the Indian administration and impeach Warren Hastings, the former Governor General of Bengal. Burke's writings and speeches on political economy and empire betray a sincere conviction that the metropolitan principles of his commercial ideal could be applicable to the imperial possessions

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<sup>192</sup> For an authoritative biography of Burke, see F. P. Lock, *Edmund Burke* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

<sup>193</sup> On Ancient Constitutionalism and Burke's position in it, see J. G. A. Pocock, "Burke and the Ancient Constitution," in *Politics, Language, and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History* (New York: Atheneum, 1971), and for its implications for British rule in India, see Travers, *Ideology and Empire*. For the biographical and intellectual connections between Burke and the Scottish Enlightenment, see Daniel I. O'Neill, *The Burke-Wollstonecraft Debate: Savagery, Civilization, Democracy* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007). For the divergence between Locke and the Scottish Enlightenment, see Dunn, "From Applied Theology."

<sup>194</sup> P. J. Marshall "Edmund Burke and India: The Vicissitudes of a Reputation," in *Politics and Trade in the Indian Ocean World*, ed. Rudrangshu Mukherjee and Lakshmi Subramanian (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1998); Hampsher-Monk, "Edmund Burke and Empire"; Whelan, *Edmund Burke and India*.

whereby the metropole and the colonies could trade as equals under the rule of law guaranteed by the imperial constitution. While Smith and others concluded that economic exchange under the shadow of imperial relations was destined to be extortionate, Burke's commitment to an imperial Britain as a child of providence and an agent of civilization foreclosed decolonization as a desirable course of action. In a bid to reconcile empire and commerce, Burke opted for castigating the British economic exploits that impoverished and exploited Indians as aberrations from the values of equity and public utility that defined the essence of Britain as the most enlightened and prosperous nation in Europe.<sup>195</sup> In this respect, the language of corruption that he employed for lambasting the East India Company represented less a defense of classical values against the social dislocations of capitalism than an index to the contradictions between the liberal commercial conception of capitalism and the profoundly illiberal political modalities through which colonies were articulated to its global networks.

Consequently, I argue that just as Locke attempted to articulate and guard a liberal conception of capitalist private property by subsuming colonial expropriation under a universal teleological narrative of temporal inclusion and common good, Burke strove to mold "commerce" in the image of an essentially voluntary and mutually beneficial exchange between juridical equals by expunging from its conceptual extension the necessarily unequal and asymmetrical relations of exchange that typified colonial capitalism. Consigning such inequality to the contingent and reprehensible contamination of commerce by political power, Burke contributed to the imagination of commerce as categorically distinct from the political sphere

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<sup>195</sup> For similar arguments in the field of cultural criticism, see Sarah Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), and Nicholas Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire: India and the Creation of Imperial Britain* (Cambridge: Belknap, Harvard University Press, 2006).

even as it relied on the latter for its conditions of possibility.<sup>196</sup> Locke's theorization of private property and money as prepolitical relations thus finds unexpected echoes in Burke's gesture towards commodity exchange as a genetically nonpolitical phenomenon.

The question of "labor" as it figures in early nineteenth-century political economy constitutes the object of analysis of the fourth chapter. A common source of concern for the political economists of the period (aligned as they were along the Ricardian orthodox and the Malthusian heterodox camps), the question of labor manifested itself in two guises. The first of these was perceived as a population problem at home. There appeared to be a growing mass of pauperized, unemployable, and redundant bodies in Britain.<sup>197</sup> The problem presented itself not simply as an economic puzzle but as a political trouble as the pressures of labor militancy, most notably Chartism, stoked fears of social revolution amongst the British political elite which now included the middle classes. The second dimension of the labor problem (re)emerged with the abolition of first the slave trade and then slavery in the British colonies.<sup>198</sup> The abolition

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<sup>196</sup> In this respect, Burke can be situated in the institutional and ideological solidification of the boundary between the public and the private at the end of the eighteenth century, whereby social practices and the discourses that regulated them increasingly polarized between the domain of private transactions (the market) and the province of public force (the state). See Colás, "Flow and Ebb." "This was the period when the colonial state began seriously to discipline and control marginal groups and to create wider spheres for the exercise of state power," argues Bayly, whereby the "separation of 'law' from 'economy' and 'government' allowed a wider range to all three." Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, p. 6.

<sup>197</sup> The causes of this perceived social malady were variously sought in the reluctance of capital owners to invest due to falling profit rates, reproductive profligacy of the poor that propelled population growth ahead of agricultural productivity, and increasing food prices due to the Corn Laws and the expansion of cultivation to agriculturally marginal lands. See Himmelfarb, *Idea of Poverty*; Winch, *Riches and Poverty*; Boyd Hilton, *Corn, Cash, Commerce: The Economic Policies of the Tory Governments 1815-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); Hilton, *A Mad, Bad, and Dangerous People? England 1783-1846* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006). For a useful range of interpretations of the population question as it relates to the British Empire, see Shaw (ed) *Great Britain and the Colonies*.

<sup>198</sup> I say "re-emerged" because the labor question, in its domestic and colonial folds, was the subject of intense mercantilist debate in the seventeenth century and found temporary solution in the draconian political and legal measures that ensured a relatively reliable labor supply across the imperial formation. These measures included enclosures, vagrancy laws, maximum wage legislation, indenture, and chattel slavery. For the seventeenth century debates on domestic labor problem, see Joyce O. Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology in Seventeenth Century England*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978). For the discussion of the same problem in the colonial context, see Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*; Holt, *Problem of Freedom*; Davis, *Problem of Slavery*; Kale, *Fragments of Empire*.

expanded the social and geographic background against which the labor problem was analyzed in British political economy. Macroeconomic theories of investment, employment, and accumulation meshed with moral conjectures about self-ownership, enterprise, and work ethic.

While an obscure figure in the canon of political economic thought, Wakefield's name and ideas circulated widely in these debates, especially as they concerned the alleviation of the domestic labor problem by resettling superfluous hands in the British colonies.<sup>199</sup> A Benthamite and a heterodox follower of Smith's political economy, as well as an active promoter of colonization and a leading entrepreneur in the corporate settlement of South Australia and New Zealand,<sup>200</sup> Wakefield criticized such schemes of "pauper shoveling" for the fiscal impracticality of their implementation as well as the moral undesirability of their results. Wakefield's avid readership on the socio-economy of the colonies cultivated a perceptive understanding of capital as a social relation rather than material stock, which informed his analysis of the economic distress in Britain as well as his indictment of pauper relocation plans. On the one hand, Wakefield contended that Britain suffered from an overaccumulation of capital that rendered both capital and labor superfluous.<sup>201</sup> On the other, siphoning excess labor and capital off to Britain's imperial possessions, while temporarily relieving the metropole, culminated in a form of civilizational relapse in the colonies, as would-be laborers dispersed over cheap colonial lands and became smallholding subsistence farmers. This tendency vitiated the conditions of possibility of a class of wage laborers, which for Wakefield formed the fundament of commercial civilization. Unsystematic colonial settlement threw the settlers back to a state that

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<sup>199</sup> The inaugural proponent of this position was Robert Wilmot-Horton, the Under-Secretary of the State for War and the Colonies. See, R. N. Ghosh "Colonization Controversy: R. F. Wilmot-Horton and the Classical Economists," in *Great Britain and the Colonies*, ed. Shaw.

<sup>200</sup> The most comprehensive bibliography of E. G. Wakefield and in fact of the Wakefields as a family is Philip Temple's, *A Sort of Conscience: The Wakefields* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2002).

<sup>201</sup> Winch 1965, *Classical Political Economy*; Semmel, *Rise of Free Trade Imperialism*.

occupied the rung of “barbarism and self-sufficiency” in the stadial theory of the Scottish Enlightenment,<sup>202</sup> a rung which was reserved for the non-European indigenous populations.<sup>203</sup>

Wakefield advised to counter this perceived threat to the civilized self-image of the Britons by mobilizing executive imperial power for artificially creating a class of wage laborers in the colonies. Proclaiming preemptive crown rights and placing an artificial (though not arbitrary) price on all colonial lands would engender and perpetuate a class of proletarian laborers in the colonies, while the prospects of eventually becoming a landowner would motivate the pauperized population in Britain to emigrate of their own volition. In effect, Wakefield’s proposed colonial policy sought to replicate in a preemptive manner what the English Enclosures, Parliamentary Enclosures, and Highland Clearances had historically accomplished in the metropole, namely, the expropriation of the peasantry and the creation of a class of proletarians through the explicit deployment of non-market, extra-economic force. The contradiction between the liberal imaginings of capitalism as a market phenomenon and the originary element of compulsion in its genealogy thus found renewed salience in Wakefield’s plans to reconstitute agrarian capitalism in the colonies. For resolving this contradiction Wakefield resorted to utilitarian fantasies of contractual dispossession by invoking a deliberated consensus amongst mankind, later replicated by colonial settlers, to divide themselves up into the owners of capital and those who work them for a wage.

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<sup>202</sup> Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, p. 234. For the influence of stadial theory on Wakefield’s thought, see Erik Olssen, “Wakefield and the Scottish Enlightenment, with Particular Reference to Adam Smith and His Wealth of Nations” in *Edward Gibbon Wakefield and the Colonial Dream: A Reconsideration*, ed. Philip Temple (Wellington: Friends of the Turnbull Library, 1997); Olssen, “Mr. Wakefield and New Zealand as an Experiment in Post-Enlightenment Practice,” *New Zealand Journal of History* 31 (1997): 197-218; Pat Moloney, “Savagery and Civilization: Early Victorian Notions,” *New Zealand Journal of History* 35 (2001): 153-76.

<sup>203</sup> I am indebted to J. G. A. Pocock for bringing to my attention the differential standards that defined the acceptable ways of life for the British colonists and for the indigenous populations. British middle- and upper-class intellectuals and philanthropists deplored the tendency of the British colonists to relapse into barbarous modes of subsistence and, what is its correlate, vulgar manners. Despite the self-professed civilizing mission of the Empire, it is difficult to find a matching concern for the indigenous populations, like the Maori, who were left to fend for themselves on lands that were not yet appropriated by the British.

Wakefield thereby disavowed the political violence constitutive of “labor” through fictions of consent and *summum bonum*. In these fictions, “labor” *qua* wage labor not only remained a neutral category of political economy but also solidified as the sign and seal of “freedom” understood as self-ownership and defined in contradistinction to slavery or indenture. The renewed rift opened in the universals of contractual freedom and juridical equality by colonial capitalism was sutured once again.

## Conclusion

In a comprehensive review of the recent literature on the British Empire and its liberal mission, Andrew Sartori keenly diagnoses a lingering problem for the new imperial history. For all its trenchant critique of imperialism and its insight into the instabilities attending to the balancing act between liberal universals and colonial particulars, the culturalist approaches to empire face difficulties in responding to contemporary re-valorizations of empire, like that of Niall Ferguson, which sweep such cultural considerations aside and stake their claims in the “practical-institutional” terrain by “link[ing] liberalism to the socioeconomic transformation of the modern world.”<sup>204</sup> Unmistakably, if somewhat awkwardly, located in the waveband of liberal triumphalism underwriting globalization narratives, Ferguson’s account celebrates the role played by the British Empire in the integration of the world into “a global system of economic dependency, based on the liberal practice of commercial exchange, and leading to the ‘optimal allocation of labour, capital, and goods.’”<sup>205</sup> Against such vindications of empire as the historic, if forgotten or disowned, hero of institutional and economic globalization, scholarly excursions

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<sup>204</sup> Sartori, “British Empire,” p. 641.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

into the interplay of difference between the metropolitan self and its colonial others hold little traction.

Conceptualizing property, exchange, and labor as practical and conceptual hinges between the global genealogy of capitalism and the development of liberal thought promises a triangulation of the historical tensions between liberalism and capitalism, as it attunes us to the systematic elisions, disavowals, and representational warps in liberal discourse, which thicken when the concrete historical formation of capitalism refuses to fold neatly onto its representation in liberal imaginary. Adjusting our analytics to the troubled interface between liberalism and colonial capitalism entails a move from interrogating how liberal thinkers “negotiated in different ways the tensions between universalistic moral commitments and a recognition of particularity,”<sup>206</sup> to asking “[w]hat is the real significance of the text’s one-sided misrepresentations that magically transform early-modern mercantilist aggression into the beginnings of what Ferguson understands to be a multilaterally beneficial process of “globalization”?”<sup>207</sup> By recasting the objective structures of global political economy as a central component of liberalism’s relationship to imperial rule, we shift the focus to the practical efficacy of ideas in the renewed authorization of colonial socioeconomic transformations that occasioned glaring and morally reprehensible human costs. The works of liberal middle-class intellectuals like Locke, Burke, and Wakefield, who tried to square the colonial capitalist

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<sup>206</sup> Pitts, *Turn to Empire*, p. 21.

<sup>207</sup> Sartori, “British Empire,” p. 642. Sartori encapsulates this problematic very deftly: “It is the role these strategic elisions perform in flattening the complexity of the British Empire’s position within the global economy as an agent of both modernization and traditionalization, of both global integration and regional peripheralization. Recognizing this allows us to show how the empire served to deepen the social forms of “backwardness” it simultaneously sought to reform; to show how liberalism’s linkage to the global economic order of modern capitalism was fraught with perilous contradiction; to show how empire could be an institutional obstacle to the realization of liberal values as easily as (surely, on balance, more easily than) their vehicle; and ultimately to show how the liberal practices of exchange cannot be prophylactically disembedded from the larger, and contradictory, social processes within which they have operated and continue to operate in the era of globalization.” Ibid.

structure of the British Empire with their genuine commitments to political and economic liberalism, provides us with a handle on this problematic.

Secondly, the analysis presented here suggests that inquiry into the history of liberalism would remain incomplete unless it takes into account this history's mediation by capitalism as an immanently political and historically colonial formation. A survey of the contradictions between liberalism and colonial capitalism offers a materialist perspective on liberalism's historical vagaries, particularly by identifying those formative moments where liberal thought had to enlist other political discourses, such as historicist narratives of progress or culturalist ideologies of difference, in order to suture the rift opened up in its universal moral claims by the manifest unfreedom that accompanied the historical development of capitalism. Put differently, liberalism's uneasy alliance with capitalism as a historically colonial and inherently political formation can provide a hermeneutic key for reading cross-pollinations between liberal thought and different strands of social and political philosophy. Such a perspective answers to Karuna Mantena's call for a more careful theorization of the relationship "between historical and conceptual transformation, between the external and internal sources of intellectual change," by contributing to the makings of a materialist model for explaining the historical heterogeneity of liberalism as a unified intellectual field.<sup>208</sup>

Casting off methodological-nationalist presuppositions and conceiving of empire as the politico-legal order in which modern capitalist relations have developed enhances our analytic focus on the liberal notion of "economy" in at least two ways. First, by re-presenting contemporary global capitalism as the enduring legacy of hierarchical configurations of economic, legal, and social forms forged in imperial crucibles, it brings into sharp relief the historical role of political violence in the formation of modern economic relations. By that very

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<sup>208</sup> Mantena, "Fragile Universals," p. 551

critique, it gestures at the dissolution of “economy” as a purportedly non-political category and the restoration of “political economy” as it was construed at the moment of its historical genesis: a field of knowledge, a system of inquiry, and a correlative ensemble of governmental techniques, which developed in tandem with the transformation of social reproduction along capitalist vectors, and which treated their object (capitalist social formation) as thoroughly mired in power relations, social hierarchies, ethical conceptions, moral regulations, and metaphysical antecedents<sup>209</sup> – in short *a species of political theory*. This is far cry from the contemporary definition of political economy as a relationship *between* economy and politics, themselves presumed to denote unproblematic and self-evidently distinct domains of reality.<sup>210</sup> Obversely, it brings into view the constant ideological boundary-work through the disavowal of the political and colonial underpinnings of capitalism. It alerts us to the role played by the *disavowal of capitalism* in imagining and popularizing the category of the economy as a domain of production and exchange devoid of political coercion. Methodologically, highlighting the global, rather than the national or the European, as the space in which capitalist relations of social reproduction have emerged furnishes us with another crucial register of analysis for placing the canon of social and political thought within a global context.

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<sup>209</sup> Political economy has always been a species of political theory. The principal difference between early-modern students of political theory and its contemporary practitioners is that the former admitted of the status of political economy as a species of political theory or moral philosophy. Today, political economy exists as political theory unconscious of itself. “[E]ven the “practical” science of economics,” remarks Chakrabarty, “which now seems “natural” to our consciousness of world systems, is (theoretically) rooted in the ideas of ethics in the eighteenth-century Europe.” Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, p. 42.

<sup>210</sup> By way of the plainest illustration, the modern idea of “surveying” the resources under sovereign authority owes its conception to the English conquest of Ireland. William Petty, the first modern surveyor and the founder of “political arithmetick” (the precursor to political economy) openly aligned his view of the newly acquired assets in Ireland with the gaze of the state. For Smith and Burke, political economy represented not simply a science but the “science of the legislator.” As Michel Foucault insightfully observes, political economy has since its inception been imagined and deployed as a political rationality of governing people and things. Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics*.

## CHAPTER II

### IN THE BEGINNING, ALL THE WORLD WAS AMERICA: JOHN LOCKE'S GLOBAL THEORY OF PROPERTY

#### Introduction

In the forty years following the publication of Leo Strauss's *Natural Right and History*, Locke scholarship followed the compass of "life, liberty, and property" for mapping out the territory of Locke's political thought. As Straussian, Cambridge, and Marxist schools contended over questions of intent and implication, text and context, reconstruction and extrapolation, a timid and marginal line of interpretation began to appear on journal pages in the 1980s.<sup>211</sup> When it finally made its debut in James Tully's *An Approach to Political Philosophy*, its effect was analogous to the discovery of an uncharted, if not entirely unknown, continent. What oriented this new scholarship was Locke's quip "Thus in the beginning all the World was *America*," which Tully and subsequent scholars took to be more than simply an illustrative appendage to Locke's theory of the state of nature. Cast in the light of Locke's personal and professional involvement in English colonialism, Locke's direct and indirect allusions to the colonies in his manuscripts, notebooks, and correspondence laid the groundwork for a new interpretive perspective that placed his thought in a decisively Atlantic context.<sup>212</sup>

My aim in this chapter is to reappraise Locke's political thought and in particular his theory of property in the context of seventeenth-century colonial capitalism rooted in the Atlantic system. Specifically, I hope to meld the insights generated by the "colonial turn" in Locke scholarship with those rooted in the earlier socioeconomic analyses of Locke's works. My main

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<sup>211</sup> Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965 [1953]). For a brief summary of the debates, see Paul E. Sigmund, "Introduction" in *The Selected Political Writings of John Locke*, ed. Paul E. Sigmund (New York: Norton, 2005).

<sup>212</sup> Tully, *Approach to Political Philosophy*. For a useful overview of the scholarship informed by this perspective, see Armitage "John Locke."

argument regarding Locke's theory of property consists of three interlocking parts. First, Locke's theory of property expressed a specifically capitalistic worldview that centered on the productive capacities of labor and artifice for transforming inert nature into an ever-expanding domain of value. Second, modern natural law theory constituted the moral language in which Locke articulated the liberal economic premises of liberty, equality, consent, and contract. Third, the economic and philosophical valences of Locke's theory of property were informed by and oriented towards the English imperial ambitions in America, mainly because ideas about the accumulation of stock and modern natural law theory both took shape in this period against the background of European expansion in the New World.

I place pivotal emphasis on Locke's peculiar conceptualization of money in his theory of property, which I maintain plays a crucial twofold role. First, Locke's notion of money is central to his articulation of an accumulative worldview imbued with a universal moral force. Second, the same notion of money helps Locke navigate the contradiction between the liberal values enshrined in his theory of property and the dispossession of Amerindians necessary for English colonial capitalism to take hold in the Atlantic. As such, Locke's theory of property represents a momentous intervention in the great seventeenth-century debates on property claims, as it not merely justifies European appropriation of the New World but does so by sanctioning a private, productive, and accumulative mode of appropriation as the superior and morally exalted basis of property. Locke's arguments about money, its origins, and its implications constitute the linchpin of this theoretical configuration, a condensation point where capitalism, liberalism, and colonialism intersect, collude, and conflict. Money's capacity to store value unleashes the productive powers of labor in a drive to "increase the common stock of mankind," while the "universal tacit consent" that Locke ascribes to money's genesis and from which he excludes

Amerindians undercuts their entitlement to their ancestral lands. Consequently, Locke's theory of property embodies a vision of "possessive universalism" that matches in scope and ambition the global inceptions and the universal logic of capital discussed in Chapter I.<sup>213</sup>

I develop this argument in three sections. The first section offers an outline of the seventeenth-century "Atlantic system" of colonial capitalism in which England as an aspirant imperial power and John Locke as one of its official and intellectual functionaries were deeply entangled. Drawing on studies in seventeenth-century economic and intellectual history, I explain why questions of property and appropriation occupied the center stage in the political, economic, and moral debates in this period. I ground these debates in the world-historical significance of the encounter with the New World and its transformative impact on European inter-state rivalries and new conceptions of political government and economic organization. Against this background, I visit the trails blazed by the colonial reinterpretations of Locke, summarizing the implications of Locke's theory of property, political society, and liberal anthropology for the encounters between English colonists and Native Americans.

As invaluable as the contributions of this literature are, they evince a certain perspectival insularity by bracketing off the question of capitalism. In the second and central section of the chapter, I address this shortcoming by rekindling several crucial issues raised in the earlier debates about the place of accumulation in Locke's political economy. I contend that Locke's theory of property represents an attempt to formulate a universal and distinctly liberal language of progress in which the theological-moral injunctions of natural law would map onto the practices and relations characteristic of the English colonial capitalist enterprise. I maintain that this theoretical feat hinges on Locke's idiosyncratic notion of money, which inhabits a

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<sup>213</sup> I borrow the term "possessive universalism" from George Caffentzis, *Clipped Coins, Abused Words, and Civil Government: John Locke's Philosophy of Money* (New York: Autonomedia, 1989).

conceptual zone of indistinction between the moral absolutes of natural law and the historical contingencies of human convention.

In the last section, I draw out the insights we gain by placing the colonial interpretations of Locke in the light of the socioeconomic principles that underpin Locke's global theory of property. Most importantly, I highlight the ways in which money's conceptual ambiguity enables Locke to furnish a liberal self-image for the English capitalism in the face of its structural connection to the extralegal appropriation of American land, and its flipside, the colonial expropriation of Amerindians. I conclude by drawing out the broader implications of Locke's theory of property for thinking about the tensions that accrue between the liberal self-image of capitalism and the systemic deployment of political force that marks its global genealogy.

Weaving together the axes of capitalism, natural law, and empire is at once a bold and modest task, and necessarily syncretic task. It is bold in its scope, as it strives for an integrative picture by simultaneously engaging with the socioeconomic, theological, and colonial approaches to Locke's political thought. It is modest in its objective, because it primarily aims to send up a few flares that would illuminate the broad contours and the complex structure of Locke's political thought in the cusp of seventeenth-century colonialism and capitalism.

## **I. Locke and the Atlantic**

### ***Political Economy of the Colonial Atlantic***

In order to locate Locke's thought in global socio-historical context with some precision, the specifically colonial capitalist configuration of the seventeenth-century Atlantic has to be explained. That Locke conceived his theory of property with Atlantic colonies in mind and with an eye towards justifying the appropriation of land in America is by now a clearly established

argument.<sup>214</sup> What needs to be cast in sharper relief is the pivotal role of land as the hinge of the networks of people, commodities, and ideas that constituted “the Atlantic” as a social system.<sup>215</sup> The foundations of these networks were laid down by Spanish and Portuguese expeditions of conquest and search for gold, accompanied by aspirations to universal sovereignty and self-appointed missions to convert the New World heathens to Christianity.<sup>216</sup> Compared to the Iberians, the English were latecomers to the Atlantic, who penetrated the system through “a little war of trade and plunder, a continuous exertion of economic and naval pressure by individuals acting for private gain.”<sup>217</sup> Despite their penchant to think of themselves as peaceful agriculturalists in contrast to the vicious Spanish *conquistadores*, seizure and plunder were never far from the minds of Englishmen. In any case, the English themselves had a substantial history of conquest in Ireland that would serve as a model and incubator for overseas colonization.<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> The original insight behind this argument comes from Tully’s *Approach to Political Philosophy*. For the most systematic treatment of this argument, see Arneil, “Trade, Plantations, and Property,” and *John Locke and America*. Also see, Ivison, “Locke, Liberalism, and Empire.”

<sup>215</sup> J. H. Elliott describes the Atlantic as a social system consisting in the “creation, destruction, and recreation of communities as a result of the movement, across and around the Atlantic basin, of people, commodities, cultural practices, and ideas.” J. H. Elliott, “Atlantic History: A Circumnavigation,” in *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, ed. David Armitage and Michael Braddick (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), p. 239. Elliott’s description follows the recent explosion of interest in conceptualizing “trans-Atlantic history” as a coherent frame of reference for social, economic, and political analysis, “especially suited to the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century histories of the Atlantic world, when state-formation went hand-in-hand with empire-building.” David Armitage, “Three Concepts of Atlantic History,” in *British Atlantic World*, ed. Armitage and Braddick, p. 22. The most comprehensive recent studies produced in this vein include J. H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492-1830* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); Thomas Benjamin, *The Atlantic World: Europeans, Africans, Indians, and Their Shared History, 1400-1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Nicholas Canny and Philip Morgan, *The Oxford Handbook of the Atlantic World, 1450-1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Douglas R. Egerton, Alison Games, Jane G. Landers, Kris Lane, and Donald R. Wright (eds.), *Atlantic World: A History, 1400-1888* (Wheeling: Harlan Davidson, 2007); Elizabeth Mancke and Caroline Shammas (eds.), *The Creation of the British Atlantic World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).

<sup>216</sup> See Stuart B. Schwartz, “The Iberian Atlantic to 1650,” in *Oxford Handbook of the Atlantic World*, ed. Canny and Morgan; Pagden, *Lords of All the World*.

<sup>217</sup> Kenneth R. Andrews, “The English in the Caribbean, 1560-1620,” in *Westward Enterprise*, ed. Andrews, Canny, Hair, and Quinn, p. 120

<sup>218</sup> For connections between the colonization of Ireland and the colonization of America, see Nicholas Canny, “The Permissive Frontier,” in *Westward Enterprise*, ed. Andrews, Canny, Hair, and Quinn; Elliott, “Seizure of Overseas Territories,” pp. 141-6; Jane Ohlmeyer, “Civilizing of those Rude Partes: Colonization within Britain and Ireland” in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, Vol. I, ed. Nicholas Canny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) [henceforth referred to as *OHBE*].

The turn to colonial plantation agriculture that was to form the backbone of the English Atlantic had as much to do with frustrated attempts to find precious metals or tributary vassals in America as with the English national character.<sup>219</sup> Commercial visions of Hakluyt and other middle-class intellectuals notwithstanding, English colonialism was born of conquest and only gradually “commercialized.”<sup>220</sup> Even then, the forcible appropriation of lands that laid the conditions for English commercial plantations remained as a structurally necessary constant, and “the convention was gradually developed that right to exclusive possession was to be based on fixed and permanent establishment. In this way, the seizure and occupation of territory became the *sine qua non* of the overseas activity of European societies.”<sup>221</sup>

For the English, “plantation” initially signified what it did for the Romans: an alien territory “planted” by people from the mother country. In the seventeenth century, the term assumed its narrow and singularly modern meaning, that is, “an overseas settlement producing a cash crop for export,” worked by indentured or slave labor and ruled by a planter class.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> For the initial emulation of, and subsequent departure from, Spanish model of colonization, see Pagden, *Lords of All the World*, pp. 66-8, 127-8, 149; Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, pp. 9, 21-2; John Parry, “English in the New World,” in *Westward Enterprise*, ed. Andrews, Canny, Hair, and Quinn, pp. 2-5. Elliott further notes that the actual lines of separation between “good conquest” and “bad conquest,” between conquest and settlement, and between English and Spanish patterns and ideas of colonization were not as stark as the English would have liked to believe, and that the idea of commercial colonial plantation was brought to the Atlantic by Spaniards a good century before the English arrived there. Elliott, “Seizure of Overseas Territories,” pp. 141-9 and *Empires of the Atlantic World*, pp. 24-8.

<sup>220</sup> Carolina Shammass elegantly captures with the phrase “commercialization of colonization” the process of reluctant turn to the cultivation of export crops in wake of broken dreams of El Dorado, a point of broad agreement amongst the historians of the English Atlantic. See Caroline Shammass, “English Commercial Development and American Colonization, 1560-1620,” in *The Westward Enterprise*, ed. Andrews, Canny, Hair, and Quinn.

<sup>221</sup> Elliott, “Seizure of Overseas Territories,” p. 145.

<sup>222</sup> Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, p. 106. Nicholas Canny summarily delineates the productive elements of the plantation: land expropriated from Native Americans, labor extracted from white and black bondsmen, and capital provided by a white planter class. Nicholas Canny, “The Origins of Empire: An Introduction,” in *OHBE*, Vol. I, ed. Canny, pp. 31-2. Michael Craton offers a detailed overview of the sociopolitical formation of the English planter class in the Caribbean in the cusp of colonial land and labor appropriation. See Michael Craton, “Property and Propriety: Land Tenure and Slave Property in the Creation of a British West Indian Plantocracy, 1612-1740,” in *Early Modern Conceptions of Property*, ed. John Brewer and Susan Staves (New York: Routledge, 1995). The literature on the multifarious forms of bonded labor in the Atlantic is immense. For some recent appraisals, see Kenneth Morgan, *Slavery, Atlantic Trade, and the British Economy, 1660-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Alison Games, “Migration,” Joyce Chaplin, “Race,” and Christopher L. Brown, “Politics of Slavery,”

Portuguese sugar plantations in Brazil set the model by combining conquered American land with African chattel slavery and reaping immense profits that whetted the appetite of other European contenders.<sup>223</sup> The English followed suit, replicating this pattern for cultivating sugar in St. Kitts, Bermuda and Barbados, and tobacco in Virginia (which incidentally saved the struggling mainland colony from otherwise certain collapse).<sup>224</sup> Scattered private initiatives in the first half of the seventeenth century gained coherence and state backing with Cromwell's Western Design, which boosted English naval capacity in the Atlantic and made Jamaica the jewel of English colonial possessions.<sup>225</sup> By the last quarter of the century, "the critical importance of the plantations in the total scheme of English trade" prompted the English state to become actively involved in the Atlantic slave trade.<sup>226</sup> The plantation economy was increasingly expanded, deepened, and harnessed to the metropole, demographically *via* colonial migration

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all in *British Atlantic World*, ed. Armitage and Braddick; Hilary Beckles, "The Concept of White Slavery in the English Caribbean During the Early Seventeenth Century," in *Early Modern Conceptions of Property*, ed. Brewer and Staves; Hilary Beckles, "The Hub of Empire: The Caribbean and Britain in the Seventeenth Century," in *OHBE*, Vol. I; Zahedieh, *Capital and the Colonies*, pp. 241-5; Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, pp. 96-105. Also see, Richard Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972); Richard Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623-1775* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973); Barbara Solow (ed.), *Slavery and the Rise of the Atlantic System* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Robin Blackburn, *Making of New World Slavery*.

<sup>223</sup> Elliott, "Seizure of Overseas Territories," pp. 144-5, and *Empires of the Atlantic World*, p. 105.

<sup>224</sup> Amongst the British possessions in the Caribbean, Barbados in particular stood out as the trend and pace-setter. "By the 1650s," notes Zahedieh, "the Barbadian planters had developed a blueprint for a sugar and slave system that remained the standard English mode of production for almost two hundred years." Zahedieh, *Capital and the Colonies*, p. 214. For the pioneering role of Virginia in extending the plantation system to tobacco cultivation and its historical legacies, see Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of the Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986).

<sup>225</sup> Canny, "Origins of Empire," pp. 20-3. The "obstinately haphazard" colonization efforts were given a new impetus by the Protectorate's naval policy as "part of a larger national design, in which the state sought to realize the nation's potential, and that of its overseas settlements, in order to maximize power in its great international struggle against England's rivals." Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, p. 113. Post-Restoration policies built on this trend. "In the decades after the Restoration the city [of London] had used its political and commercial strength to convert the promising but dispersed, and mainly private, efforts of the pioneer settlers into a coherent Atlantic system which largely conformed with the Navigation legislation which had been reenacted in 1660." Zahedieh, *Capital and the Colonies*, p. 280.

<sup>226</sup> Tim Keirn, "Monopoly, Economic Thought, and the Royal African Company," in *Early Modern Conceptions of Property*, ed. Brewer and Staves, p. 431. Also see Brown, "Politics of Slavery," p. 235.

and institutionally by the Navigation Acts.<sup>227</sup> Public-private collaboration in colonization thickened through military, diplomatic, and administrative channels presided over by the Council of Trade and Plantations, effectively coalescing into a discernible British imperial formation spanning the Atlantic.<sup>228</sup>

The importance of the Atlantic “slave-plantation complex” for the global inceptions of capital cannot be overstated.<sup>229</sup> Plantation colonies stood in the crux of a massive reorganization of property, production, and exchange on a planetary scale for the explicit purpose of profit. “Often operating at the boundaries of legitimacy,” private colonial agents “absorbed the risks that governments could not afford directly, but which needed to be taken if France, England, and later the Netherlands were to establish claims to the potential wealth that overseas ventures promised.”<sup>230</sup> The motive for profit and accumulation that welded together private and state interests stimulated the introduction in America of private forms of land tenure much stronger than could be found in Europe, absolute commodification of men and women of African origin, and large-scale, capital-intensive forms of agricultural production that outstripped in its efficiency and exploitative brutality anything known in the Old World – in the words of one social historian, “the commercial dynamic that was transforming England ... in the new World found its most uncompromising form.”<sup>231</sup> Global commodity chains that proliferated in and

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<sup>227</sup> Nuala Zahedieh, “Economy,” in *The British Atlantic World*, ed. Armitage and Braddick, pp. 57-63, and “Overseas Expansion and Trade in the Seventeenth Century,” in *OHBE*, Vol. I, ed. Canny, p. 402. Alison Games, *Migration and the Origins of the British Atlantic World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

<sup>228</sup> Michael Braddick, “The English Government, War, Trade, and Settlement, 1625-1688,” in *OHBE*, Vol. 1, ed. Canny; Elizabeth Mancke, “Empire and State,” in *The British Atlantic World*, ed. Armitage and Braddick.

<sup>229</sup> I borrow the term “slave-plantation complex” from Beckles, “Hub of Empire.”

<sup>230</sup> Mancke, “Empire and State,” p. 199. Even the Puritan settlements in the New World, whose Godly mission distinguished them from the plantation colonies in the tow of Mammon, were not absolved of the pursuit of material gain. Elliott makes note of the “the awkward truth that the profit motive was strongly present in New England from the outset and exercised a powerful influence over the founding of new towns.” Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, p. 45.

<sup>231</sup> Keith Wrightson, “Class,” in *The British Atlantic World*, ed. Armitage and Braddick, p. 158. The specific economic dynamics of colonialism whereby the core of the putatively pacific and universally beneficial *doux*

through the socioeconomic transformation of the Atlantic “were directly connected to institutional and organizational shifts, including financial trends that conditioned the very possibility for the global movement of capital.”<sup>232</sup> Each leg of the infamous “triangular trade” generated profits much higher than promised by domestic opportunities of investment;<sup>233</sup> manufactured goods from England, slaves from Africa, foodstuffs and timber from the mainland colonies converged on the Caribbean, rendering it in the words of an economic historian “the hub of empire” and “the primary location of capital accumulation in Americas.”<sup>234</sup>

The plantation itself represented the capitalist enterprise *par excellence*, as it had the logic of capital accumulation inscribed in its *raison d’etre*, design, and operation since its genesis.<sup>235</sup> The quasi-industrial capitalist nature of these large-scale enterprises often was manifested in the conflict of interests between the planter elite on the one hand, and indentured servants and smallholding settlers, on the other. This specific species of colonial bourgeoisie steadily preyed on the latter for dispossessing and mastering their land and labor.<sup>236</sup> The imperative to extract maximum labor from the workforce at minimum cost prompted planters to commission more efficient labor-saving technologies like sugar-mills, the “most advanced

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*commerce* is revealed to be a ruthless and potentially destructive drive for profit and accumulation, or what I label the “dialectics of commerce” is the subject of the next chapter.

<sup>232</sup> Lauren Benton, “The British Atlantic in the Global Context,” in *The British Atlantic World*, ed. Armitage and Braddick, pp. 276-7.

<sup>233</sup> Eric Williams’s *Capitalism and Slavery* remains the classical account of the triangular trade of manufactured goods, slaves, and colonial cash crops, notwithstanding the myriad of challenges and revisions it spurred since its publication. For a sample of critical reappraisals, see, Barbara L. Solow and Stanley L. Engerman (eds) *British Capitalism and Caribbean Slavery: The Legacy of Eric Williams* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

<sup>234</sup> Beckles, “Hub of Empire,” p. 222. Zahedieh clinches this point by highlighting the role of Jamaica as the cash nexus and the supplier of the coin in the Atlantic division of labor. Zahedieh, “Economy,” pp. 62-5.

<sup>235</sup> One of the most insightful studies of the modern capitalist nature of the plantation is Sydney Mintz’s *Caribbean Transformations*, which has informed more recent explorations of the unfree and coercive origins of capitalist relations discussed in Chapter I.

<sup>236</sup> For the endemic conflict between the Caribbean planters and smallholders, Craton, “Property and Propriety,” pp. 500-3. For the same dynamic on the mainland, see Robert Weir, “Shaftesbury’s Darling: British Settlement in the Carolinas at the Close of the Seventeenth Century,” in *OHBE*, Vol. I, ed. Canny, pp. 393-4. For the transformation of English customary forms indentured servitude into virtual slavery in the Caribbean under market pressures and imperatives of accumulation, see Beckles, “Concept of White Slavery.” I discuss the structural contradictions between labor and capital in the context of colonial capitalist agriculture in IV.

technical installations of the time.” The second strategy for profit maximization was to consolidate operations into “large integrated units, with sufficient land and labour to justify their own mill and processing plant,” which by the 1680s had replaced “dispersed production with large numbers of small-holders.”<sup>237</sup>

The slave-plantation complex did not simply spur the proliferation of commercial networks and circuits of capital that tied together the distant shores of the Atlantic; it also gave a crucial impetus to the development of capitalist social forms and productive capacities in England through feedback loops, promoting tendencies towards mass production and consumption, economies of scale, innovations in the industrial processing of colonial imports and exports, new instruments of finance and trade, and investment in shipping and insurance.<sup>238</sup> After assessing comparative data on European economies in the seventeenth century, a noted historian of early-modern England has declared the “conclusive implausibility of the internalist history” of English economic success.<sup>239</sup> “The key factor in explaining the differences in economic development, the key factor in accounting for English and Dutch prosperity in the face of crisis elsewhere in Europe, is the growth of long-distance trade and the development of overseas colonies ... Atlantic trade provides the only plausible explanation for England’s divergence from the European pattern.”<sup>240</sup>

The political framework in which Atlantic colonial capitalism germinated was a new vision and ensemble of governmental techniques that coalesced into the origins of the “fiscal-

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<sup>237</sup> Zahedieh, *Capital and the Colonies*, pp. 216-7, 274.

<sup>238</sup> Zahedieh’s *Capital and the Colonies* is the most comprehensive book-length account of the impact of Atlantic colonialism on England’s long-term economic growth. Cf. Pomeranz, *Great Divergence*.

<sup>239</sup> Pincus, *1688*, p. 82.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.* p. 87.

military state.”<sup>241</sup> Commonly referred to as “mercantilism,” this political configuration had as its objective establishing networks of production and trade and capturing the greatest amount of value produced through these networks for purposes of state- and empire-building:

England, and above all London, had made a major, and exceptional, investment in planting New World lands which shaped economic, social, and political developments from commercial to industrial revolution ... By the mid-seventeenth century it was apparent that empire would deliver both profit and power. England’s political classes united to assert that it ‘was a matter of exact justice’ that any benefits of shipping, trade, and entrepot activity should be reserved for the mother country which that provided the initial start-up labour and capital needed for colonization and continued to supply defence. England should stand like the “sun in the midst of its plantations’ and needed strict laws to prevent the benefits being syphoned off by foreigners, above all the Dutch.<sup>242</sup>

Reducing mercantilism to narrow concerns with the balance of trade misses its real historical significance as a political-economic program with momentous historical consequences for analyzing, promoting, and systematizing the *creation* of value, even if the ultimate target of obtaining “plenty” remained maximizing “power” in European interstate rivalry.<sup>243</sup> As a “peculiarly descriptive theory of imperial antagonism,” mercantilism functioned as novel language in which “European expansion would be understood primarily in economic terms, as theories of *imperium* gave way to recognizably modern doctrines of imperialism.”<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> Brewer, *Sinews of Power*. Patrick K. O’Brien and Philip Hunt, “The Rise of a Fiscal State in England, 1485-1815,” *Historical Research* 66 (1993): 129-176; Michael Braddick, *State Formation in Early Modern England, c. 1550-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>242</sup> Zahedieh, *Capital and the Colonies*, pp. 33, 35.

<sup>243</sup> In his lectures on seventeenth-century political rationalities of rule, Michel Foucault predicates the essence of mercantilism less on concerns with the balance of trade than on governmental techniques geared towards increasing the productive capacities of the population. Prerequisites of augmenting material resources available to the state, or in other words, social conditions of value creation and accumulation enter the language of politics as an object of contemplation and intervention, and “economizes” that language, for the first time with mercantilism. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, pp. 324-8. Joyce Appleby, writing roughly at the time Michel Foucault was delivering his lectures, similarly defines mercantilism as the “differentiation of things economic from their social context,” an economic language that at once guides and restricts political conduct. Joyce Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology in Seventeenth-Century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), pp. 26, 41, 51, 95. For the coherence of mercantilism as a language of political economy, see Lars Magnusson, *Mercantilism: The Shaping of an Economic Language* (London: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>244</sup> David Armitage, “Introduction,” in *Theories of Empire*, ed. Armitage, p. xxvii. This novel language of “power” and “plenty” sprung up in response to historical circumstances in which “neither the classics nor the ancient constitution provided the wisdom necessary to deal with modern problems of political economy ... If wealth was a prerequisite for political survival in the modern world, then concerns about luxury and virtue, the dominant themes in classical and Renaissance anticapitalist discussions, would necessarily be secondary.” Pincus, *1688*, pp. 382, 389.

The mercantilist bent of English colonial policy was undeniable from the mid-seventeenth century onwards, manifesting itself in the proliferation of colonial charters and the promulgation of the Navigation Acts. Above all, those at the helm of the state knew that there would be no British Empire without the Caribbean and its sugar, slaves, and demand for mainland staples and English manufactures.<sup>245</sup> The commercial reorientation of the British political elite and the colonial-commercial alliance consolidating behind the Whig imperial project, itself inspired by a productive ethic of improvement and a programmatic comprehension of wealth creation (seminally articulated in the works of William Petty and others), would come to fruition in the Glorious Revolution and clinch the symbiosis between the politico-legal power of the English state and networks of colonial capitalism in the Atlantic.<sup>246</sup>

Colonial land was the origin, the linchpin, and the highest stake of the Atlantic political economic constellation in which European states tried to carve for themselves zones of imperial self-sufficiency.<sup>247</sup> It should come as no surprise, then, that the legitimate basis of property

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Also see, O'Brien, "Inseparable Connections"; Morgan, "Mercantilism and the British Empire"; Hont, "Introduction."

<sup>245</sup> Canny, "Origins of Empire," p. 30.

<sup>246</sup> For the commercial reorientation of the British political classes, the colonial-commercial alliance in Britain, and its mobilization behind Whig politics and the Glorious Revolution, see Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology*, pp. 10-11, 31-2; Elliott, "Seizure of Overseas Territories," pp. 148-9; Wrightson, "Class," p. 158; Zahedieh, *Capital and the Colonies*, p. 35, 126-7; Craton, "Property and Propriety," p. 500. For the new political economy articulated in and through the constellation of colonization, interstate rivalry, and mercantilism, see William Letwin, *The Origins of Scientific Economics: English Economic Thought, 1660-1776* (London: Methuen, 1963); Pincus, *1688*, chap. 12.

<sup>247</sup> One could justifiably object to foregrounding land as the fulcrum of the Atlantic colonial constellation on the grounds that procuring labor, rather than land, posed the real challenge for those invested in colonialism and plantations. I admit that the "colonial labor problem" had its origins in the Atlantic, as the world-historical phenomenon of chattel slavery and its enduring legacies amply attest. However, there are two reasons for concentrating on land in this period. First of these has to do with colonial political economy. Colonial labor problem was a derivative, second-order problem entailed by the sudden availability of vast tracts of tropical land. Dearth of labor was not absolute but relative, that is, relative to the volume of workforce needed to cultivate a given amount of land (though the constant expansion of Europeans in the Caribbean and on the mainland rendered the labor problem chronic). As Joyce Appleby suggestively demonstrates, the dominant view in seventeenth-century England was one of *overpopulation*, that is, the *abundance* of idle hands that could be put to productive use. The second reason for restricting focus on land in this chapter is the simple fact that, as far Europeans' self-image of themselves was concerned, the eye of the controversy stood on American land-appropriations rather than African enslavement. The question of free and slave labor would have to wait until the early nineteenth century, for reasons aptly argued by

claims in land, and particularly in the New World, was the major question that occupied some of the foremost political intellects of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe.

The early-modern overseas empires of Spain, Portugal, France, Britain and Holland had to be justified, not only to their competitors but also to themselves, and their effects on the metropolitan nations as well as the native and later colonial populations had to be accounted for, understood and explained ... [P]hilosophers shouldered the ideological task of justifying overseas enterprise, and political theory in particular would thereafter bear the marks of early-modern Europe's expanding world.<sup>248</sup>

After the swift obsolescence of the Papal Bulls and the Treaty of Tordesillas, principles of conquest, first occupation, and settlement, derived from Roman and European international law, supplied the terms in which contending European claims to America were contested.<sup>249</sup> The Classical-Christian legalistic tradition in which disputes over colonial property were embedded dictated that land appropriations be legitimated by appeal to some preexisting law, which was complicated by the fact that the lands in question were patently inhabited by peoples thought to be outside the civic history of the Old World.<sup>250</sup> Consequently justifications gravitated towards the plane of *ius gentium* and natural jurisprudence, which hinged on formulating a minimal normative core that could apply to Amerindians and Europeans alike and universally adjudicate property claims.<sup>251</sup> James Tully and David Armitage neatly encapsulate the point:

The newly discovered lands could not be appropriated on the grounds that they were unoccupied, since they patently had a resident population; arguments for the next three hundred years therefore turned as much upon dispossessing the native peoples as they did upon asserting positive rights of ownership against other European states.<sup>252</sup>

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David Brion Davis, to assume the proportions that the colonial land problem bore in the seventeenth century. Hence, the fourth chapter of this project tackles the colonial labor problem in the immediate period around the abolition of slavery in the British Caribbean. See Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology*, pp. 127-151; Davis, *The Problem of Slavery*.

<sup>248</sup> Armitage, "Introduction," p. xv

<sup>249</sup> Pagden, *Lords of All the World*, pp. 39-55, and "Dispossessing the Barbarian."

<sup>250</sup> Anthony Pagden, "The Struggle for Legitimacy and the Image of Empire in the Atlantic to c. 1700," in *OHBE*, Vol. 1, ed. Canny, pp. 37-8. For the most comprehensive treatment of the crumbling of European civic history in the face of the encounter with America, see J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, Vol. IV: *Barbarians, Savages, and Empires* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>251</sup> Richard Tuck, "The 'Modern' Theory of Natural Law," in *Languages of Political Theory*, ed. Pagden, and *Rights of War and Peace*.

<sup>252</sup> Armitage, "Introduction," p. xxii.

One of the leading problems of political theory from Hugo Grotius and Thomas Hobbes to Adam Smith and Immanuel Kant was to justify the establishment of European systems of property in North America in the face of the presence of “American Nations.” Almost all the classic theorists advanced a solution to this problem justifying what was seen as one of the most important and pivotal events of modern history ... to justify European settlement on the one hand, and to justify the dispossession of the Aboriginal peoples of their property on the other.<sup>253</sup>

Theories and ceremonies of possession thus became the means by which European colonists could explain and legitimate their acts of appropriation before their European contenders, and more crucially, before the bar of their own conscience, as such acts almost invariably entailed the expropriation of the New World’s native inhabitants.<sup>254</sup> Debates over the universal moral foundations of property rights were therefore more than a pastime for European intellectuals; they shaped the ideological resources available to public and private agents interested and invested in overseas colonization:

Even if it weakly described actual systems of property-holding, the rhetoric of absolute private property was politically important. The idea that absolute private property was the best way to incentivize owners and maximize productivity was used not only to legitimate the enclosing of commons, but also, as we have seen, to legitimate the taking of land from foreign peoples with different systems of property.<sup>255</sup>

### ***Locke in the Atlantic Context***

Locke, as the most illustrious intellectual of the post-Restoration Whigs and an official functionary of the British Empire, was deeply enmeshed in the administrative webs of colonial capitalism and woven into the ideational texture of the new political economic vision that fastened on these webs. Patronage of Anthony Ashley Cooper (1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Shaftesbury) secured Locke the position of the Secretary to the Council of Trade and Plantations (1673-4) and later

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<sup>253</sup> James Tully, “Aboriginal Property and Western Theory: Recovering a Middle Ground,” in *Theories of Empire*, ed. Armitage, p. 348.

<sup>254</sup> See Pagden, “Struggles for Legitimacy,” pp. 44-51. Also see Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession*, p. 11. For a repudiation of cynicism in European and English attempts to justify the conquest and settlement of America, see Chapter I of this project.

<sup>255</sup> John Brewer and Susan Staves, “Introduction,” in *Early Modern Conceptions of Property*, ed. Brewer and Staves, p. 18.

membership to the Board of Trade (1696-1700).<sup>256</sup> The massive volume of colonial reports, dispatches, and correspondence Locke had to process during his services made him “one of the two best-informed observers of the English Atlantic world of the late seventeenth century.”<sup>257</sup> Locke augmented his stock of administrative knowledge on colonial affairs by reading copiously in colonial travel literature. “By the time of his death, Locke’s collection of travel literature was one of the largest ever assembled in Britain and it comprised 195 books, many maps, and a portfolio of ethnographic illustrations.”<sup>258</sup> Shaftesbury involved him in his designs to found a colony in Carolina, and Locke participated in the drafting of the *Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina* (1669).<sup>259</sup> Locke also had economic investments in English colonialism. He held shares in the Royal African Company that traded in slaves, was one of the merchant adventurers to the Bahamas (1672-1676),<sup>260</sup> and through the agency of his cousin and financial manager Peter King, engaged in “stock-jobbing” in the East India Company bonds.<sup>261</sup> Taken together, these involvements have led one scholar to hail Locke as “the wise organic intellectual both of the seventeenth-century British elite and of future generations of the British ruling classes” and “a

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<sup>256</sup> For biographical accounts of Locke’s professional involvement in England’s colonial policy, see Cranston, *John Locke*, pp. 153-7; Woolhouse, *John Locke*, pp. 110-119, 361-3.

<sup>257</sup> David Armitage, “John Locke, Theorist of Empire?” in *Empire and Modern Political Thought*, ed. Sankar Muthu (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 7. Armitage adds, “only his rival on the Board of Trade, the career administrator Sir William Blathwayt, had a more comprehensive command of English colonial administration by that time.”

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>259</sup> The first programmatic call to bring the *Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina* to bear on the interpretation of Locke’s political writings can be found in Celia McGuiness’s “The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina.” Vicki Hsueh has consistently plumbed the implications of the *Fundamental Constitutions* for republican and liberal constitutionalism in Western political thought, while James Farr has worked on the conflicting provisions of the *Fundamental Constitutions* and the *Two Treatises* on slavery. David Armitage’s meticulous detective-work around the *Fundamental Constitutions* offers fascinating insights into how tightly Locke’s writings on “medical, theological, ethnographical, social, and political” matters were intertwined with his colonial involvements. See Hsueh, “Giving Orders,” and “Unsettling Colonies”; James Farr, “So Vile and Miserable an Estate,” and “Locke, Natural Law”; Armitage, “John Locke, Carolina,” and “John Locke, Theorist of Empire?” For the context of Locke’s participation in the Carolina adventure, see Weir, “Shaftesbury’s Darling.”

<sup>260</sup> Cranston, *John Locke*, p. 155.

<sup>261</sup> Letter from John Locke to Peter King, 4 Dec 1699 and 24 Jan 1701, in *John Locke: Selected Correspondence*, ed. Mark Goldie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 281-2, 291.

great philosopher of the developing world system which linked the old world with the new with ties of domination and subordination.”<sup>262</sup>

Locke’s experience in colonial affairs also honed his acumen in the emergent “science” of political economy.<sup>263</sup> His labor theory of value, clearly inflected by his rumination on the colonies, captured the essence of the accumulative political economic vision that triumphed with the Glorious Revolution.<sup>264</sup> Locke subscribed to a Baconian view of “useful knowledge” that fused natural history with induction for generating knowledge that would improve the material livelihood of human beings. This orientation was manifested most directly in his unrelenting advocacy of boosting agricultural productivity and his scorn for absentee landlords in England, which have led one observer to label him a proponent of “agrarian capitalism.”<sup>265</sup> Locke’s concerns with agricultural “improvement” extended to England’s colonies, as evidenced in his “agricultural espionage” in France in late 1670s “on Shaftesbury’s behalf ... for a practical economic future for Carolina in the business of Mediterranean import substitution.”<sup>266</sup> On matters of commerce and finance, he figured amongst the champions and first shareholders of the Bank of England, which is deemed to be the threshold of modern political economy, and the financial pamphlets Locke published during the Great Recoinage debates made an invaluable contribution to the revolutionary cause.<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> Lebovics, “Uses of America, pp. 568, 578.

<sup>263</sup> William Letwin observes a great discrepancy of clarity and sophistication between the first (1668) and second (1691) drafts of Locke’s economic tract, *Some Considerations of the Consequences of the Lowering of Interest, and Raising the Value of Money*, and contends that the vast improvement of the second draft over the first “can reasonably be attributed to his years of practice in the administration of the Carolinas and the Council for Trade and plantations.” Letwin, *Origins of Scientific Economics*, pp. 167-8.

<sup>264</sup> E. J. Hundert, “The Making of Homo Faber: John Locke between Ideology and History,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 33 (1972): 3-22.

<sup>265</sup> Wood, *John Locke*.

<sup>266</sup> Armitage, “John Locke, Carolina,” p. 611.

<sup>267</sup> For the argument that the Bank of England and the English national debt, which are commonly referred to as the “Commercial Revolution,” mark the break between the classical and modern notions of property and inaugurate modern political economy, see J. G. A. Pocock, “The Mobility of Property and the Emergence of Eighteenth Century Sociology,” in *Virtue, Commerce, History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the*

Locke's expansive professional, personal, and intellectual investments in British colonialism and political economy, or more precisely in *Britain as an imperial economy*, reflected most conspicuously and consequentially in his intervention in the European debates over colonial property rights. Building on and confronting an established pedigree of arguments from natural jurisprudence (articulated most notably by Hugo Grotius and Samuel Pufendorf), Locke's theses on property represented the pinnacle of the seventeenth-century English efforts to validate English claims to American territory, pitted simultaneously against rival theories of appropriation and presumed Amerindian rights to land<sup>268</sup> – to which one should add the criticisms of Englishmen, like Robert Gray and Roger Williams, who claimed that colonization “violated the rights of the American Indians to their property and territorial integrity.”<sup>269</sup> Locke's particular contribution to the global property disputes would reverberate far beyond the immediate context of its articulation, as he “gathered together many of the arguments of the early seventeenth century and his theory set the terms for many of the later theories that were used to justify the establishment of European property in America,” effectively establishing “the unexamined conventions of many Western theories of property.”<sup>270</sup>

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*Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). For Locke's position in Whig political economy, see Pincus, *1688*, p. 459. Also see Patrick H. Kelly, “General Introduction: Locke on Money” in *Locke on Money*, ed. Patrick H. Kelly (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

<sup>268</sup> Scholarly verdict is unanimous on the colonial ideological agenda of Locke's theory of property, though disagreements abound about the exact coordinates of Locke's theory *vis-à-vis* Grotius and Pufendorf as well as the Spanish humanists. Compare, Tuck, *Rights of War and Peace*, Arneil, *John Locke and America*, Pagden, *Lords of All the World*, and James Tully, “Framework of Natural Rights in Locke's Theory of Property,” in *An Approach to Political Philosophy: John Locke in Contexts* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993).

<sup>269</sup> Bhikhu Parekh, “Liberalism and Colonialism: A Critique of Locke and Mill,” in *The Decolonization of Imagination: Culture, Knowledge and Power*, ed. Jan Nederveen Peterse and Bhikhu Parekh (London: Zed Books, 1995), p. 83. Robert Gray in *A Good Speed to Virginia* (1609) declaimed English colonialism with the words, “The first objection is by what right or warrant we can enter into the land of these savages, take away their rightful inheritance from them, and plant ourselves in their places, being unwronged or unprovoked by them.” Quoted in Elliott, “Seizure of Overseas Territories,” p. 148. For a discussion of these and other internal critiques of English colonialism, as articulated by Thomas Morton and Pierre Biard, James Tully, “Rediscovering America: The Two Treatises and Aboriginal Rights,” in *An Approach to Political Philosophy: John Locke in Contexts* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993).

<sup>270</sup> Tully, “Aboriginal Property and Western Theory,” p. 350.

Motivated by these intimate colonial liaisons, recent interpretations of Locke have gone a long way in wresting Locke's political philosophy, not only from the "great men" narratives of European intellectual history, but also from detailed yet narrow confinement in high politics of England.<sup>271</sup> Locke's contractarian defense of individual rights and liberties, often hailed as the fountainhead of Anglo-Saxon liberal constitutionalism, was cast in the shadow of *The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina*, which envisioned an essentially feudal hierarchy for the colony.<sup>272</sup> "Absolute power" over the lives of their slaves that the *Fundamental Constitutions* granted to colonial patricians, compounded by Locke's shares in the Royal African Company, sat uneasily with Locke's indictment of Filmer's absolutist argument for reducing Englishmen to the "vile and miserable estate" of slavery.<sup>273</sup> Above all, the Atlantic focus has brought into sharp relief the incubation of Locke's theory of property in the thick of his enduring investment in England's colonial affairs, and its formulation as a response to the perceived need to provide English land appropriations in America with a solid moral and legalistic foundations. Locke's interpreters have compellingly demonstrated how the "pacific," "sedentary," and "agriculturalist" vision propounded in the fifth chapter of the *Second Treatise* (a chapter that was composed independently of the *Two Treatises*) carried exclusive agendas against the "marauding" Spanish, the "trading" French, and above all, the "wild" Indian.

Locke's theoretical assault on aboriginal property rights has received the most sustained attention and ramified into manifold analyses of his cultural politics of civilization poised against "colonial others." It has been claimed that the centerpiece of Locke's theory of property, namely,

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<sup>271</sup> These two interpretive schemes roughly correspond to the Straussian and Cambridge Schools of Locke scholarship, with the former searching for the hidden wisdom between the lines of Locke's manuscripts and the latter reducing them to political pamphlets.

<sup>272</sup> Pramod K. Mishra, "[A]ll the world was America': The Transatlantic (Post)coloniality of John Locke, William Bartram, and the Declaration of Independence," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 2 (2002): 213-258, pp. 232-4.

<sup>273</sup> Farr, "So Vile and Miserable an Estate," and "Locke, Natural Law."

enclosing and improving the land by “mixing labor,” aims to disqualify Amerindian hunting and gathering practices as grounds of entitlement to land.<sup>274</sup> Denying Amerindians the graces of the “workmanship ideal”<sup>275</sup> is compounded by Locke’s assertion that Amerindians do not live under institutionalized governments. Absence of “proper” political societies and sovereign authority renders America a vacant territory populated by private individuals and households, and therefore open to the appropriation of the colonists.<sup>276</sup> Some have extended the thrust of these insights into more catholic conjectures on Locke’s liberal anthropology and the civilizational hierarchies that structure it. The puzzling coexistence in Locke’s philosophy of inclusive liberal values side by side with exclusionary impulses against non-Europeans have directed attention to his “liberal strategies of exclusion”<sup>277</sup> and uncritical universalization of historically specific (English and gentlemanly) forms of subjectivity.<sup>278</sup> The hidden assumptions of calculating, utilitarian, and self-disciplinary rationality built into Locke’s abstract conception of the self, it has been claimed, translates social difference into deficit, and infantilizes the colonial other by

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<sup>274</sup> Tully, “Rediscovering America”; Lebovics, “Uses of America”; Arneil, “Wild Indian’s Venison; Vicki Hsueh, “Cultivating and Challenging the Common.” Locke conveniently omitted from his accounts indigenous horticulture, which in fact had sustained European colonial settlers in the first decades of their presence in America. Locke was very well aware of Amerindian practices of cultivation by virtue of the colonial reports, travel literature, and ethnographies in his library. For Locke’s strategically selective utilization of the material in his library, see Arneil, *John Locke and America*, pp. 23-41. For J. G. A. Pocock, this does not pose a conundrum, since the Locke and Enlightenment anthropology in general assumed the use of heavy plough drawn by domesticated beasts of burden as the precondition of proper agriculture, which in turn made possible “the capacity for exchange, commerce, specialization and diversification” and the “step into humanity.” Pocock, “*Tangata Whenua*,” p. 208.

<sup>275</sup> Ian Shapiro, “The Workmanship Ideal and Distributive Justice,” in *Early Modern Conceptions of Property*, ed. Brewer and Staves.

<sup>276</sup> Tully augments his analysis of Locke’s agriculturalist justifications by a parallel focus on Locke’s (and more broadly seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Enlightenment thinkers’) parochial constitutionalism, which, he argues, have effaced indigenous forms of government and demoted aboriginal polities to itinerant denizens of the New World. Tully, *J Strange Multiplicity*, esp. chap. 3. For an expanded treatment of questions of constitutionalism, law, and rights in Locke’s colonial forays, see Ivison, “Locke, Liberalism, and Empire,” and Ivison, “The Nature of Rights and the History of Empire,” in *British Political Thought in History, Literature and Theory, 1500-1800*, ed. David Armitage (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>277</sup> Mehta, “Liberal Strategies.” Mehta’s work broke new ground as a postcolonial interrogation of the liberal tradition by introducing the analytic of cultural difference as the challenge for the “universal constituency” of liberalism.

<sup>278</sup> Parekh, “Liberalism and Colonialism,” esp. pp. 87-92.

inscribing her in narratives of historical development and the civilizational tutelage of the colonizing power.<sup>279</sup>

The issue I would like to take with these accounts of colonial expropriation and denigration, and more broadly with the “colonial turn” in Locke scholarship, is a relative lack of sensitivity to the specific socioeconomic parameters of Locke’s historical conjuncture. Parallel to the shift of focus to the other side of the Atlantic, one can observe a shift away from questions of commercialization, accumulation, labor, social rights and obligations, and modern and moral economies, which had structured many of the prior debates on Locke’s philosophy. The colonial turn to Locke has furnished a great service by critiquing the geographic insularity and myopia of these earlier debates. In fact, the very arguments I present here would not be possible without this original critique. Yet, I think it has also been too hasty in unhooking his political philosophy, especially his relationship to liberalism, from the socioeconomic transformations and economic disputes of his time and hitching it to questions of metropolitan identity and colonial difference, particularism and universalism, reason and unreason, and civilization and savagery.<sup>280</sup> The major casualty of the methodological move of displacing Locke’s thought onto global networks has

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<sup>279</sup> The classical formulation of this claim can be found in Mehta’s analysis of the temporal tropes of childhood and growth in Locke’s philosophy. See *Liberalism and Empire*, pp. 30-3, 82, and more broadly *Anxiety of Freedom*. Tully likewise observes that the “set of contrasts [Locke draws between Europeans and Amerindians] makes up the background assumption of the “stages view” of historical development.” Tully, “Aboriginal Property,” p. 351.

<sup>280</sup> Mehta’s position is exemplary of this interpretive swing. It should be noted that even those accounts that are not as culturally oriented as Mehta’s evince a proclivity away from the socioeconomic and towards the cultural. For instance, after a good explication of the material implications of Locke’s theory of property for the Amerindians, Parekh proceeds to the heart of the matter by asking “why Locke went wrong,” and his answer takes him squarely to the domain of ideation and representation, to a “monistic vision of good life,” “simple-minded dualism,” and specific “rational moral imperatives of human status.” Parekh, “Liberalism and Colonialism,” pp. 89-91. Curiously, Arneil ultimately hangs her politically-informed construal of Locke’s defense of colonialism on the universal aspirations of liberal “reason,” and ends on the familiar note that liberalism can either exclude or assimilate difference (i.e. “unreason”) but cannot coexist with it. Insofar as the figure of the Amerindian reveals the contradictions of abstract reason, it stands to represent a “postmodern” challenge to modernity even before its advent. Arneil, *John Locke and America*, pp. 200-11. On a related note, Locke’s theory of toleration gets its fair share from colonial turn, as his claims for religious toleration and coexistence (minus atheists) is revealed to hinge on secularized Christian assumptions on human soul and subjectivity, once again elevated to an abstract, disembodied universal, equidistant to various stripes of religious belief precisely because oblivious to its historical roots. Jakob de Roover and S. N. Balagangadhara, “John Locke, Christian Liberty, and the Predicament of Liberal Toleration,” *Political Theory* 36 (2008): 523-49.

been the dimension of political economy, leaving us with the familiar bifurcation between the vantages of national capitalism and cultural colonialism discussed Chapter I.

In order to integrate the insights derived from political economic and colonial analyses of Locke's philosophy, we need to first revisit an old and contentious debate over the possibility, limits, and morality of capitalist accumulation in Locke's theory of property. I maintain that explicating the economic and moral coordinates of Locke's theory of property and positioning the colonial thrust of Locke's political philosophy in relation to these coordinates helps illuminate the nexus between capitalism, colonialism, and liberalism in the seventeenth century. I argue that observing this intersection requires us to zoom out of the conventional preoccupation with labor in Locke's arguments on property, and bring into focus Locke's notion of money and the theoretical work it performs in his overall theory. If examined from the right angle, Locke's arguments on money reveal intriguing peculiarities, and I contend that these peculiarities result from Locke's attempts to contain the contradictions between, on the one hand, liberal principles of natural liberty and equality enshrined in his theory of property, and on the other, his agenda of justifying the extra-legal appropriation of American lands crucial for the success of the English colonial capitalist enterprise. The specific configuration in which Locke relates money to the precepts of natural law that govern appropriation, dispossession, and accumulation in the state of nature not only morally sanctions the accumulative vector of capitalism, but also wraps its expropriatory colonial thrust in liberal myths of universal consent.

It appears to me that the main reason this point has eluded attention in Locke scholarship is the assumption, pervasive in metropolitan and colonial interpretations alike, that money is a contingent and second-order theoretical construct in Locke's theory of property. When it is not construed as a strategic scheme to unleash accumulation of capital or dispossession of the

Amerindians, money is relegated to irrelevance for understanding the moral parameters of Locke's conception of property. I propose an alternative explanation that has not been considered thus far. Money is a structurally necessary if conceptually ambiguous element that sutures the composite and contradictory edifice of Locke's theory of property, which attempts to formulate a universal defense of property rights and rule of law against extra-legal absolutist power in England, at the very same time it seeks to justify the expropriation of Amerindians through the use of extra-legal force. Locke's notion of money comprises the subtle thread that binds together "life, liberty, and property," the original mantra of political liberalism, and "Thus in the beginning all the World was *America*," the signal for the primitive accumulation of capital in the New World. Perhaps it is no coincidence that remainder of the excerpt above, which is rarely quoted in its entirety, reads "and more so than that is now; for no such thing as *money* was any where known" (II. 49). Extrapolating the full significance of this odd conjunction begins with returning to the old debate on the morality of accumulation in Locke's theory of property.

## **II. Money and Morality of Accumulation**

A major, if recently dormant, fault line in Locke scholarship runs through two prominent interpretive approaches that disagree over the capitalist allegiances and implications of Locke's theory of property. The first of these places the emphasis on the social and economic valences of Locke's theory. Situating his works in the context of the nascent capitalist relations in the seventeenth century, this strand of interpretation considers Locke's understanding of property to be emblematic of the emergent bourgeois sensibility with its central tenets of self-interest, individualism, utilitarianism, alienable wage-labor, robust private property rights, natural

inequality of wealth, and above all, unlimited accumulation of wealth.<sup>281</sup> The second strand explicates Locke's theory of property with reference to his moral worldview, grounded in Christian theology and the natural law tradition. Emphasis falls here on Locke's heavy reliance on the natural law as a divinely decreed system of morality, which incorporates such premises as the inherent purposefulness of God's design, fundamental equality of men as God's workmanship and the correlate obligation to preserve mankind, sanctity of the person and the inalienability of his labor, and the priority of common good and enforceable charity claims over absolute private property rights.<sup>282</sup>

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<sup>281</sup> This interpretation flows from the sociological-economic perspective on Locke opened up by Crawford B. Macpherson in *Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*. However, the construal of Locke as a distinctively bourgeois thinker finds an earlier articulation in Leo Strauss's *Natural Right and History*. Despite their divergences on method and philosophical orientation, the two interpretations concur on the decisively modern, liberal, and bourgeois character of Locke's thought. For the socio-economic perspective on Locke, see, Macpherson, "Locke on Capitalist Appropriation," *Western Political Quarterly*, 4 (1951): 550-66, and *Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*; Hundert, "Making of Homo Faber"; Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology*, and *Liberalism and Republicanism in Historical Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992); Karen I. Vaughn, *John Locke, Economist and Social Scientist*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), and "The Economic Background to Locke's *Two Treatises of Government*," in *John Locke's Two Treatises of Government: New Interpretations*, ed. Edward J. Harpham (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1992); Neal Wood, *John Locke and Agrarian Capitalism*, and *Politics of Locke's Philosophy: A Social Study of "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding"*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); Pincus, *1688*. For the Straussian school, see, Strauss, *Natural Right and History*; Thomas L. Pangle, *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Michael P. Zuckert, *Natural Rights and the New Republicanism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994) and *Launching Liberalism: On Lockean Political Philosophy* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002); Peter C. Myers, *Our Only Star and Compass: Locke and the Struggle for Political Rationality* (Lanhan: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998).

<sup>282</sup> See John Dunn, *The Political Thought of John Locke: An Historical Account of the Argument of the Two Treatises of Government* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969); Karl Olivecrona, "Appropriation in the State of Nature: Locke on the Origin of Property," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 35 (1974): 211-230, and "Locke's Theory of Appropriation," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 24 (1974): 220-234; James Tully, *A Discourse on Property: John Locke and His Adversaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), and "Framework of Natural Rights"; Richard Ashcraft, *Locke's Two Treatises of Government* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987), *Revolutionary Politics and Locke's Two Treatises of Government* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), and "The Politics of Locke's *Two Treatises of Government*," in *John Locke's Two Treatises of Government: New Interpretations*, ed. Edward J. Harpham (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1992); Eldon Eisenach, "Religion and Locke's *Two Treatises of Government*," in *John Locke's Two Treatises of Government: New Interpretations*, ed. Edward J. Harpham (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1992); Alex Tuckness, "The Coherence of a Mind: John Locke and the Law of Nature," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 37 (1999): 73-90; Matthew H. Kramer, *John Locke and the Origins of Private Property: Philosophical Explorations of Individualism, Community, and Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Kirstie M. McClure, *Judging Rights: Lockean Politics and the Limits of Consent* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996); Kim I. Parker, *The Biblical Politics of John Locke* (Waterloo: Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion, 2004).

The rift between the two interpretations, heuristically labeled here as “socioeconomic” and “theological,” can be formulated in terms of the divergent principles of organization of the relations of production, exchange, and distribution that they extrapolate from Locke’s theory of property. The socioeconomic perspective perceives in Locke’s theory the foundational principles of a commercial-capitalist economy insofar as it locates the center of gravity in the primacy that Locke assigns to free and rational pursuit of self-interest and accumulation, accompanied by the implied fairness of such negative externalities as dispossession and inequality. In contrast, the theological perspective prioritizes the moral odium and restrictions that Locke places on acquisitive behavior and hoarding of wealth, which, coupled with Locke’s harnessing of production and property to the fulfillment of moral duties towards others, embed his theory of property in the domain of classical moral economy. These contending visions appear to be irreconcilable within the same theoretical framework, insofar as moral economy circumscribes personal acquisition and accumulation by extra-economic social objectives and ethical conceptions, while capitalist economy is inherently predicated on the pursuit of profit and accumulation of wealth, the dispensation of which devolves to individual proprietors. In other words, restrictions on accumulation are parametric under moral economy, whereas under market economy they are contingent articles of expediency. Consequently, the dispute over the theological underpinnings and capitalist implications of Locke’s theory of property revolve around morality and accumulation, or rather, morality *of* accumulation.

My main argument in this section is that these conflicting renderings of Locke’s theory of property are not as disparate as they first appear, and that a close examination of Locke’s theory of money in the *Second Treatise* provides a different picture, in which theological and capitalist premises are not merely reconcilable but necessarily enmeshed. As I discuss in the last section,

this relationship of necessity bears momentous implications for the explanation and justification of New World land-appropriations within the liberal parameters of freedom, equality, and consent. The existing analyses of Locke's theory evince a lack of perspicacity about the peculiar position of money in the narrative structure of the *Second Treatise*. The theological perspective claims that the origins and the function of money are permissible within the dictates of the natural law. The socioeconomic approach assumes the exact opposite position, namely that money is a theoretical intervention to abrogate the natural law provisions that limit property accumulation. The colonial interpretation likewise attributes Locke's notion of money a strategic role but relocates it from the question of accumulation to that of colonial dispossession.

While acknowledging that all three interpretations grasp a part of the proverbial elephant, I maintain that they are limited by their understanding of Locke's notion of money as historically contingent and hence in an external relationship to the universal tenets of his theological-moral framework. I argue, on the contrary, that a critical analysis of the chapter on property shows that money is not a historical contingency whose relationship to the natural law is one of passive compatibility or strategic intervention, but constitutes an *area of indeterminacy*, in which the theological universals of the natural law and the historical practices of capitalist accumulation shade into each other and coalesce into a *global theory of property* that stakes its claims with equal force in the metropole and the colony. More specifically, I identify the major "work" done by the notion of money in Locke's theory of property as resolving an antinomy *within* the natural law itself to the effect of, first, making possible a relationship of *necessity* between the natural law and accumulation, and second, furnishing a liberal image to America's forcible absorption into British networks of colonial capitalism. I demonstrate that the ingenuity of Locke's theory resides in the particular way he sets the terms and the narrative structure of his account, which

enables him to depart from God's command to make use of the earth for the benefit of mankind and, passing through money's zone of indeterminacy, arrive at the necessity of accumulation, which renders the seventeenth-century colonial capitalist practices not merely permissible but morally commendable.<sup>283</sup>

### ***Locke's Theory of Money: An Overview***<sup>284</sup>

Instead of providing a detailed reconstruction of Locke's entire theory of property in the state of nature, I will focus on the position of money in the larger problematic which John Yolton called "Locke's dilemma"<sup>285</sup>, namely, "how Men<sup>286</sup> might come to have a *property* in several parts of that which God gave to mankind in common, and that without any express Compact of all the Commoners" (II. 25). Locke's way out of this dilemma is to posit labor as an exclusive property in each person, the expenditure of which on the natural common removes a portion of it from the common state and inscribes that person's private property in it (II. 27, 35). However, God, who bestows upon man the earth and the means to appropriate it, also places limits on appropriation (II. 31). The natural law is breached when appropriation overrides, on the one hand, the "sufficiency limitation" which dictates that "enough and as good" should be left in common for the others (II. 27, 33), and on the other, the "spoilage limitation," which prohibits one to engross more than one can mix his labor with, and make use of before it perishes (II. 31,

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<sup>283</sup> The methodological implication of this argument is that the peculiar connection between the natural law and accumulation can only be grasped by focusing on the structural composition of the chapter on property (and of the *Second Treatise* in general). This approach is paralleled and necessitated by the manner of Locke's own theorization, which manages to derive the necessity of accumulation from a holistic narrative rendering of the natural law, without assigning it to any single natural law precept that enters the composition of the narrative.

<sup>284</sup> The *Two Treatises* are cited by treatise and section number, using the following edition of the text: John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government: A Critical Edition with an Introduction and Apparatus Criticus*, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1960).

<sup>285</sup> John Yolton, *Locke and the Compass of Human Understanding* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 195.

<sup>286</sup> I retain Locke's gender denomination throughout the chapter.

36, 38). This double circumscription restricts the amount of private property in the state of nature “to a very moderate Proportion” (II. 36). The invention of money and men’s mutual consent to put a value on it instigate a drastic transformation of this egalitarian state of affairs by enabling one to “fairly possess more land than he himself could use the product of, by receiving, in exchange for the overplus, Gold and Silver, which may be hoarded up without injury to anyone” (II. 50), since “the *exceeding of the bounds of just Property*” lies not “in the largeness of his Possession, but the perishing of anything uselessly in it” (II. 46). By giving men with different degrees of industry the opportunity to continue to enlarge their property, money eventually introduces scarcity of land (II. 45) and “a disproportionate and unequal Possession of the Earth,” yet without encroaching on anyone’s natural rights, for the universal consent conferred on the value of money amounts to the universal consent to the inequality that it engenders (II. 50).

C. B. Macpherson perceives in this chapter a clear “assertion and justification of a natural and individual right to property,” whereby the role of money consists in “remov[ing] the limitations inherent in his initial justification of individual appropriation.”<sup>287</sup> For Macpherson, Locke’s deployment of the notion of money is a strategic one, which, while leaving the moral foundations of individual property intact, cleverly opens up the possibility of utilizing “money and land as capital,” introduces alienable wage-labor, and paves the way for unlimited capitalist appropriation. Perhaps most ingeniously, Locke locates the consent to money along with its ramifications in the state of nature and thereby establishes property and contract prior to civil society and hence as a realm independent of politics.<sup>288</sup> Despite the critical broadsides Macpherson’s interpretation has received, the main axis of his analysis has continued to inform a number of scholars who adhere, albeit more cautiously and critically, to the premise that Locke’s

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<sup>287</sup> Macpherson, *Possessive Individualism*, pp. 197, 204. For a detailed account of the removal of limits, see pp. 204-20.

<sup>288</sup> Macpherson, *Possessive Individualism*, p. 210.

notion of money serves the cause of setting capitalist relations of production on solid theoretical grounds. Locke's intentions have been described as furthering the idea of "natural social laws which operated automatically and independently of man-made institutions"<sup>289</sup> and a "natural market society" beyond the purview of political power, which foreshadowed the "invisible hand" models of the eighteenth century.<sup>290</sup> A closely related argument has been that his conception of money and property is definitively capitalistic<sup>291</sup> and promotes "hoarding" as a way of accumulation for investment.<sup>292</sup> By sanctioning surplus production, Locke's notion of money justifies the dismantling of subsistence economies and the dispossession of the English peasants and the American natives, promotes capitalist relations of production on land,<sup>293</sup> and expresses the capitalist thrust for accumulation on a world scale.<sup>294</sup> Success of the strategic introduction of money hinges on circumventing the natural law yet leaving it intact, and while some hold that Locke accomplishes this maneuver<sup>295</sup>, others see in it the destruction of "the moral purpose associated with God's gift of the earth"<sup>296</sup> and "blatant violations of natural law."<sup>297</sup>

Macpherson's explication of Locke's theory has been criticized, on the one hand, for overlooking the latter's fundamental theological underpinnings and downplaying their moral and communitarian implications, and on the other, for anachronistically reading full-blown capitalism back into a body of work that was informed by biblical exegesis and the great natural

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<sup>289</sup> Appleby, *Liberalism and Republicanism*, p. 60.

<sup>290</sup> Vaughn, "Economic Background," pp. 125, 134.

<sup>291</sup> Vaughn, "Economic Background," p. 122; Lebovics, "Uses of America," p. 570.

<sup>292</sup> Vaughn, "Economic Background," p. 138; Appleby, *Liberalism and Republicanism*, p. 80; Kelly, "General Introduction," p. 3.

<sup>293</sup> Wood, *Agrarian Capitalism*, esp. chaps. 3 and 4.

<sup>294</sup> Caffentzis, *Clipped Coins*, pp. 118-9.

<sup>295</sup> Macpherson, *Possessive Individualism*, p. 213; Vaughn, "Economic Background," p. 135.

<sup>296</sup> Appleby, *Liberalism and Republicanism*, p. 89.

<sup>297</sup> Lebovics, "Uses of America," p. 580.

law tradition.<sup>298</sup> Accordingly, this strand of interpretation, most clearly articulated by James Tully and Richard Ashcraft, focuses on the framework of religion-natural law-morality, in which the preservation of mankind, the principle of common good, and the moral injunction to labor on the earth as God's gift override any natural right to private property and unconditional accumulation. For Ashcraft, the invention of money and its consequences figure as historical contingencies within this framework, which neither directly issue from nor violate the purposes of the natural law.<sup>299</sup> While admitting that money is pre- or a-political, he refuses to conclude that it is "natural." Rather, money belongs to the domain of the "probable knowledge"; it constitutes not a "moral constant" but a "prudential variable," and all property accruing from its use is accordingly conventional.<sup>300</sup> Although money enables men to acquire more "conveniences" through exchange without breaching the moral limitations on property, it introduces inequality and gives rise to the famous "inconveniences of the state of nature" (quarrel and contention), which then drives men to enter the civil society for the protection of natural rights. The conclusions that Tully draws from Locke's theory of money are more radical as he construes the introduction of money as marking the moment of the man's "fall" from the "golden age."<sup>301</sup> The motive behind the accumulation of money is neither the prospect of

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<sup>298</sup> Dunn, *The Political Thought*; James Tully, *A Discourse on Property*, and "After the Macpherson Thesis," in *An Approach to Political Philosophy: Locke in Contexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Richard Ashcraft, "Faith and Knowledge in Locke's Philosophy," in *John Locke: Problems and Perspectives*, ed. John Yolton (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969); Kramer, *Origins of Private Property*; also see, Jeremy Waldron, *God, Locke, and Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 2002), chap. 6.

<sup>299</sup> Ashcraft, *Locke's Two Treatises*, pp. 139, 141, and *Revolutionary Politics*, p. 274 ff.

<sup>300</sup> Ashcraft, *Locke's Two Treatises*, pp. 50, 53-4, and "Politics," p. 32; also see Kramer, *Origins of Private Property*, p. 192. The same point has been reiterated more recently in Parker, *Biblical Politics*, p. 137.

<sup>301</sup> Tully, *Discourse on Property*, p. 150. The earliest articulation of this contention can be found in Dunn, *Political Thought*, 117-9, 247-8. Also see, Ashcraft, *Locke's Two Treatises*, 144-5; McClure, *Judging Rights*, 157ff, 180-1. For a psychoanalytic interpretation of the problems that ensue from the introduction of money, see, Carol Pech, "His Nuts for a Piece of Metal: Fetishism in the Monetary Writings of John Locke" in *Feminist Interpretations of John Locke*, ed. Nancy J. Hirschmann, and Kirstie M. McClure (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007). For my position on capital as an analytic lens and attendant questions of anachronism, see Chapter I.

capitalist investment nor its utility for exchange, but the miser's penchant for simple hoarding.<sup>302</sup> By inculcating in men the unnatural and corrupt "desire to have more than one needs," money renders dysfunctional the natural law of appropriation, which it is the commonwealth's task to reconstitute by redistributing property and bringing it back in line with God's original command of the preservation of mankind.<sup>303</sup>

I believe there are strong grounds to take seriously the theological-moral dimension of Locke's theory of property, and I concur with Peter Laslett that Locke's reliance on biblical exegesis in developing a theory of property cannot be accounted for as "half-conscious traditionalism or plain hypocrisy."<sup>304</sup> On the other hand, the depiction of Locke as a Christian communitarianist with no stake in seventeenth-century capitalist relations is equally untenable. For, in addition to the circumstantial evidence adduced above, Locke was someone who "invested in the slave trade, ... charged interest on loans to close friends and was always tight-fisted, recommended a most inhumane – even for his times – reform of the poor laws, and bequeathed only a minute proportion of a total cash legacy of over £ 12,000 to charity."<sup>305</sup> The question that springs to mind is, if money is a historically contingent phenomenon with a merely conventional basis (that is, outside the natural law), why can the inconveniences it engenders (quarrel and contention) not be resolved by a simple reversion to the pre-monetary state, instead of entailing the formation of commonwealths with their own spate of complications and problems? The question could be answered by conjecturing that Locke is simply hell-bent on advocating property accumulation, even if it occasions logical inconsistencies in his chain of

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<sup>302</sup> Tully, *Discourse on Property*, p. 148.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 151-4. For a more bivalent interpretation of the "desire to have more than one needs", see Kelly, "General Introduction," p. 95.

<sup>304</sup> Laslett, "Introduction," p. 105. Also see Parker, *Biblical Politics*, chap. 1. "Half-conscious traditionalism" and "plain hypocrisy" respectively correspond to the interpretive assumptions of Macpherson and Strauss.

<sup>305</sup> Wood, *Agrarian Capitalism*, p. 74.

argumentation; however, such an economic reduction of the problem assumes that Locke is ultimately prepared to discard the moral foundations of property. This would be blatantly at odds with the main objective of chapter five of the *Second Treatise*, where Locke tries to demonstrate with painstaking effort and intricacy that the moral foundation of private property remains intact even at the stage where it is unequally held.

A possible way of unraveling this conundrum, I propose, is to recast money as an ambivalent conceptual ground that allows Locke to establish a *necessary* relationship between the precepts of the natural law and the accumulation of capital. Illustrating the configuration between the natural law, accumulation, and money necessitates pinpointing the coordinates of money in the broader framework of a teleological imagination of progress that informs Locke's theory of property.

### ***The "Dilemma of the Rational and Industrious"***

A theoretical constant based on "the architectonic importance of theology" in Locke's thought is the idea of the purposefulness of creation.<sup>306</sup> In Ashcraft's words, Locke holds that "God has not only put us here; He intends us to do something."<sup>307</sup> Men are created as innately equipped with the capacity for reason that is necessary for apprehending God's purpose or divine *telos*, which manifests itself in the form the obligations under the natural law.<sup>308</sup> The first and most important moral obligation is the *preservation of mankind*, which Locke constantly reiterates in the *Two Treatises of Government*:

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<sup>306</sup> Ashcraft, "Politics," p. 19.

<sup>307</sup> Ashcraft, *Locke's Two Treatises*, p. 38.

<sup>308</sup> For further discussion of the teleological aspect of Locke's philosophy, see Jeremy Waldron, *The Right to Private Property* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 141, and *God, Locke, and Equality*, p. 159; Ashcraft, *Locke's Two Treatises*, pp. 38, 50, 135, and "Politics" pp. 19-25.

“God having made Man, and planted in him ... a strong desire of Self-preservation and furnished the world things fit for Food and Rayment and other Necessaries of Life, *Subservient to his design*, that man should live and abide for some time upon the Face of the Earth, and not that so curious and wonderful a piece of Workmanship by its own Negligence, or want of Necessaries, should perish again, presently after a few moments of continuance” (I. 86, emphasis added).<sup>309</sup>

God has intended men to “*Increase and Multiply*” (I. 41) and given them the means for realizing this intention, though not without effort. The *telos* of self-preservation is yoked to the obligation to *labor* on the earth in order to provide for human needs. Locke asserts in the chapter on property, “God, when he gave the World in common to all Mankind, commanded man also to labour, and the penury of his condition required it of him” (II. 32). “He gave it to the use of the Industrious and Rational (and *Labour* was to be *his* title to it)” (II. 34). “God commanded, and his Wants forced him to *labour*” (II. 35). Labor’s status as divine injunction renders it a fundamentally *moral* act. “Laboring is not just something we happen to do to resources,” remarks Waldron, “it is the appropriate mode of helping oneself to the resources given what resources are *for*.”<sup>310</sup> It is the divine authority behind the natural law framework<sup>311</sup> that underwrites Locke’s theory of property, whereby “mixing one’s labor” entitles the laborer to private property not only on practical but also on moral terms.<sup>312</sup>

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<sup>309</sup> For similar passages see I. 41, 87, 88, and II. 6, 7, 16, 25, 26, 36, 37, 43, 44, 87, 171.

<sup>310</sup> Waldron, *God, Locke, Equality*, p. 160. On the morality of labor, also see Ashcraft, “Politics,” pp. 32-4; Tully, *Discourse on Property*, pp. 116-121; Hundert, “Making of Homo Faber,” p. 5; Parker, *Biblical Politics*, p. 136.

<sup>311</sup> Here, an important point of clarification regarding Christian theology and the natural law is necessary. In this chapter I approach Locke’s notion of morality in a key that holds these two terms to be intimately entwined. There exists a body of compelling scholarship that suggests that the relationship between theology and the natural law is far from straightforward in Locke’s thought. While acknowledging the complexity of this relationship and the unorthodoxy of Locke’s biblical interpretation, I construe Locke’s notion of natural law as a universally valid and eternal framework of moral standards with ultimately theological underpinnings, which are normatively binding on human activity. Hence, the extent to which Locke actually derives the natural law from divine law or posits it as a self-standing edifice is less important for the purposes of my discussion. The relevant fault line here, as it pertains to the tension between moral economy and capitalist economy, lies not so much in the distinction between biblical theology and natural theology as in the fundamental difference between universal moral tenets on the one hand, and conventional and customary normative-regulatory principles, on the other.

<sup>312</sup> Ashcraft, *Locke’s Two Treatises*, pp. 134. Labor theory of appropriation is articulated in the sections 27-36 in the *Second Treatise*.

Labor at the service of the preservation of mankind is compounded by a third moral obligation, which directs it to the *subjection and improvement of the earth*. Initially contenting himself with property rights in the provisions “produced by the spontaneous hand of nature” (II. 26), Locke later proclaims the “*chief matter of Property*” to be the earth itself and contends, “God and Reason commanded him to subdue the Earth, *i.e.* improve it for the benefit of Life. As much *Land* as a Man Tills, Plants, Improves, Cultivates, and can use the Product of, so much is his property” (II. 32). As with the previous obligations, the improvement of land is not a mere technical expediency but the appropriate method for supporting livelihood. God has intended the uncultivated land lying in nature to be brought under the improving labor of man. “God gave the World to Men in Common; but since he gave it them for their benefit, and the greatest Conveniences of Life they were capable to draw from it, it cannot be supposed He meant it should always remain common and uncultivated” (II. 34). At this juncture in chapter five, the terms of discussion change noticeably and the binary of “value” and “waste,” through which Locke articulates the *telos* of improvement, takes the foreground. Although all useful things owe the great part of their value to labor, none does more so than land, which is “of so little value, *without labor*” (II. 36). If not enclosed and improved by man, God’s gift lies as “neglected, and consequently waste Land” (Ibid). In other words, enclosing and improving the waste of the earth is not only a more efficient way of producing the conveniences of life, it is also a moral duty because, by *rescuing* land from waste, it more fully consummates the purpose for which God has bestowed the earth upon men.<sup>313</sup> This is in marked contrast to hunting and gathering in the first stages of the state of nature, exemplified for Locke by Amerindians, which not only renders men “needy and wretched” for the want of labor and improvement (II. 37), but also falls short of

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<sup>313</sup> The contrast between common waste and improved private property is developed in II. 36-7, 41-5. On the binary of waste and improvement, see, Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, pp. 243-4; Ashcraft, “Politics,” pp. 37-8; Pangle, *Modern Republicanism*, pp. 163-5; Waldron, *Private Property*, pp.169-170, 221-2.

following God's purpose by letting waste the resources that *could* be made use of. As Parekh forcefully puts it, "Locke was deeply haunted by the idea of waste and wanted all the material potentialities of the earth to be fully realized."<sup>314</sup>

At this point one begins to discern a *progressive imaginary*. As men rescue more land from waste by enclosing and cultivating it, as they labor and produce more necessities and conveniences for the benefit of life, in other words, as they transform greater parts of the world into *valuable* things, they better fulfill the obligations of the natural law, and more fully consummate God's purpose.<sup>315</sup> The crucial term Locke devises to substantiate this progressive imaginary is "common stock of mankind":

To which let me add, that he who appropriates land to himself does not lessen but *increase the common stock of mankind*. For the provisions serving to support humane life, produced by one acre of inclosed and cultivated land, are (to speak much within compass) ten times more, than those, which are yielded by an acre of Land, of equal richness, lying waste in common. And therefore he, that incloses Land and has a greater plenty of the conveniences of life from ten acres, than he could have from an hundred left to Nature, may truly be said, to give ninety acres to Mankind (II. 37, emphasis added).

The increase in the common stock is not restricted to leaving more land available for others to enclose and improve, but extends to the products of the earth, as the example of Spain testifies: "... the Inhabitants think themselves beholden to him, who, by his Industry on neglected, and consequently waste Land, *has increased the stock of Corn*, which they wanted" (II. 36, emphasis added).<sup>316</sup> The example of America is most suggestive:

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<sup>314</sup> Parekh, "Liberalism and Colonialism," p. 84.

<sup>315</sup> This is not to imply that material progress and comfortable (as opposed to bare) subsistence that Strauss attributes to the "pursuit of happiness" are in fact the unintended consequence of an ascetic work ethic, as has been held by Weberian explanations (*Natural Right and History*, pp. 235-6). Rather, it is vital for Locke's overall thesis that utilitarian practical orientation and fulfillment of moral obligations reveal themselves at every turn to be identical. This identity opens up the possibility of reading of Locke's theory of property beyond a minimalist conception of moral obligations.

<sup>316</sup> As a result, the "enough and as good" proviso is satisfied by the increase in the amount of available land, and where this is not possible, by the increase in the amount of available provisions, *prior to the invention of money*. Dispossession does not violate the "enough and as good" proviso insofar as the dispossessed is offered the opportunity to labor for a living wage. For a brief and cogent account of the way in which the spoilage limitation supplants the "enough and as good" limitation by way of subsistence, increased common stock, welfare, and charity,

An Acre of Land, that bears here Twenty Bushels of Wheat, and another in *America*, which, with the same Husbandry, would do the like, are, without doubt, of the same natural, intrinsic Value. But yet *the Benefit Mankind receives* from the one, in a Year, is worth 5 *l.* and from the other possible not worth a Penny (II. 43, emphasis added).

The notion of the common stock of mankind constitutes the privileged nexus in Locke's theory of property, around which the obligations to preserve, to labor, and to improve are interwoven and set in moral, teleological motion. God has furnished the earth with material intended for not only the necessities but also the conveniences of life, which allow men to augment their livelihood beyond bare subsistence. The capacious and maximalist understanding of production in Locke's vision is evident: "great and primary blessing of God Almighty, *Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth* ... contains in it the improvement too of arts and sciences, and the conveniences of life" (I. 33). "Industry and accumulation" therefore are endowed with a theological and teleological gravity as the medium in which men "discharge the duty to develop earth's resources and create a prosperous society."<sup>317</sup> The more mankind expands its common stock through the *improvement of land by labor* for the *preservation of mankind*, the more it approximates to fulfilling God's purpose.

It should be emphasized that the intimate connection Locke establishes between industrious accumulation and theological approbation centers not on the individual and his spiritual salvation but on society and its material development. Expressed in words of a historian, Locke's is less a species of "puritan ethic" than of "ethic of productivity."<sup>318</sup> Under the aegis of a God's injunctions and narrated as the unfolding of a divine design through the medium of human

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see, Stephen Buckle, *Natural Law and the Theory of Property: Grotius to Hume* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), chap. 3, and Zuckert, *Natural Rights*, pp. 255, 266-271.

<sup>317</sup> Parekh, "Liberalism and Colonialism," p. 84.

<sup>318</sup> Himmelfarb, *Idea of Poverty*, p. 27-8. Himmelfarb designates Locke, along with Josiah Child and Daniel Defoe, as a proponent of the "ethic of productivity," which she describes as being concerned not with individual but social salvation, less moralistic but more coercive, less subjective and more consequentialist than the "puritan ethic" classically analyzed in R. H. Tawney's *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism: A Historical Study* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1926).

activity on the earth, Locke crafts a materialist theory of progress, in effect setting up the “background assumption of the ‘stages view’ of historical development.” “Locke’s four sets of arguments became conventional figures of the four-stages theories of property in the Scottish and French Enlightenments, even when the theorists disagreed with Locke in other respects.”<sup>319</sup> Augmentation of the common stock as well as the dispositions and methods of achieving it become the index of at once historical advancement and moral rectitude.

The increase in the common stock, however, does not readily assume the form of accumulation. The theological precept that the fruits of the earth are intended for the *use* of mankind (spoilage limitation) restricts the extent of the common stock to what can be actually utilized by human beings before they perish. The point is obvious in the case of the individual producer for whom it is “a foolish thing, as well as dishonest, to hoard up more than he could make use of” (II. 46). One solution Locke proposes to spoliation limitation is gift or barter:

If he gave away a part to anybody else, so that it perished not uselessly in his Possession, these he also made use of. And if he also bartered away Plumbs that would have rotten in a Week, for Nuts that would last good for his eating a whole Year, he did no injury; he wasted not the common Stock; destroyed no part of the portion of Good that belonged to others, so long as nothing perished uselessly in his hands (Ibid).

The crucial point to note here is that while gift or barter overcomes the spoilage limitation for the individual producer, the same limitation remains in effect for mankind as a whole. Even the most durable of goods, such as nuts, are ultimately intended for concrete use and not for accumulation. That is to say, while saving the common stock from waste, barter circumscribes it with the immediate and concrete needs of mankind at a given moment. Subsistence or “hand-to-mouth

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<sup>319</sup> Tully, “Aboriginal Property,” pp. 351, 358. This point finds further, if more circuitous, support from the influence of Samuel Pufendorf on Locke’s thought, acknowledged by Locke himself. Istvan Hont has offered a penetrating analysis of the intimate connection between, on the one hand, Samuel Pufendorf’s conjectures on spontaneous sociability engendered by cooperative material production and, on the other, the Scottish Enlightenment notion of an autonomously evolving civil society, of which religious and political institutions were merely a secondary outgrowth. See Istvan Hont, “The Language of Sociability and Commerce: Samuel Pufendorf and the Theoretical Foundations of the ‘Four-Stages Theory,’” in *The Languages of Political Theory in Early-Modern Europe*, ed. Anthony Pagden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

existence,” regardless of how much it is enriched by the conveniences, remains the paradigm of production and consumption. This might explain why although Locke was cognizant of the complex systems of barter and gift-giving amongst Amerindians he nonetheless disqualified these forms of exchange as a proper solution to the spoilage limitation.<sup>320</sup> The distinction between the paradigms of subsistence and accumulation, as I discuss in the next section, is central to delineating the precise vector of the expropriatory thrust of Locke’s theory of property in the colonial context.

With the introduction of moral restrictions on appropriation, Locke’s interpretation of the natural law, if one may allow the expression, reaches its limits from within and reveals an internal impasse. The industrious and rational, to whom God gave the earth, heed their calling and ardently enclose, improve, and increase the common stock only to find themselves to be producing more than can actually be used, and thereby violating God’s proscription of spoilage. Since the “terrors of natural law no longer strike the covetous, but the waster,”<sup>321</sup> the industrious and rational face “an ethical dilemma.”<sup>322</sup> They can avoid spoilage by limiting their labor to what can be used by themselves and others. This would entail enclosing and improving less than they *could* if the spoilage limitation did not exist, and hence leaving most of God’s gift wasting in common, which is clearly at odds with God’s intentions, for “it cannot be supposed He meant it should always remain common and uncultivated” (II. 34). Alternatively, they can enclose, improve and rescue as much land from waste as their capacity to labor permits. This ultimately culminates in overproduction and the subsequent wasting of the fruits of labor, which is equally against God’s purpose, for “if either the grass on his enclosure rotted on the ground, or the fruit of his planting perished without gathering, and laying up, this part of the Earth, notwithstanding

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<sup>320</sup> Hundert, “Homo Faber,” pp. 573-4.

<sup>321</sup> Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, p. 237.

<sup>322</sup> Ashcraft, “Politics,” p. 38.

his enclosure, was still to be looked on as waste” (II. 38). Put differently, the dilemma is between *letting waste* and *making waste*, or the loss of *potential value* and *actual value*.

The contradiction in question is a grim one, for it implies a contradiction within the natural law. To acknowledge it as such would amount to imputing an inconsistency to the providential design, thereby throwing into question the moral fundament on which Locke erects his theory of property. Consequently, there *must* be something that could show that this apparent inconsistency is not an inconsistency at all, and that it is possible to unleash the full force of industry and labor in the service of God’s purpose. There *must* be a way to labor and bring the entire waste of the earth under cultivation without violating the spoilage limitation, which means that there must be a way to store the *value* created by labor without letting it decay and return to the waste of the common. In other words, there must be a way to *accumulate* if the dilemma of the industrious and rational is to be dispelled. Given this necessary relationship between consummating God’s purpose and accumulating value, in turn, there *must* be a medium in which value can be disentangled from the transience of the perishable goods and accumulated in abstract form for the satisfaction of anonymous future needs. In short, there must be money.

### ***Money: Deus Ex Machina***

Even though Locke cannot directly derive the possibility of accumulation from the original precepts of the natural law, as we have seen, the way he constructs his theory of property culminates in the necessity of accumulation for the consummation of God’s purpose. I argue that the introduction of money, as the medium of accumulation *par excellence*, should be understood as Locke’s attempt to navigate this paradox. However, since Locke cannot deduce the existence of money from the natural law, he assigns it a conventional position, which renders money an

indeterminate phenomenon that is historical and consensual in its origin yet theological and teleological in its import. In the remainder of the section, I elaborate this point by explicating, on the one hand, the work money performs in Locke's theory of property, and on the other, the peculiarity of the consent from which it is born.

The primary function of money is the fulfillment of the spoilage limitation in a way that allows for accumulation.<sup>323</sup> Unlike the concrete products of labor, money would “keep without wasting or decay” (II. 37) and “may be hoarded up without injury to any one” (II. 50). One “might heap up as much of these durable things as he pleased; the *exceeding of his just Property* not lying in the largeness of his Possessions, but the perishing of any thing uselessly in it” (II. 46). However, contrary to what Tully argues, the motive behind the accumulation of money is not “miser's reason,”<sup>324</sup> but the possibility of converting the stored abstract value back into use-value: “And thus *came in the use of Money*, some lasting thing man might keep without spoiling, and that by mutual consent Men would take in exchange for the truly useful, but perishable Supports of Life” (II. 47). While remaining within the paradigm of production-for-use, money introduces an element of temporal freedom by making it possible in principle to postpone the moment of use *indefinitely*. In so doing, it liberates men from the requirement of immediately consuming the products of labor, which characterizes “hand-to-mouth existence,” and enables them to rationally orient their productive activities towards some perceived future good.<sup>325</sup>

The new element of temporal freedom harbors momentous implications for the binary of waste and value, and it is not coincidental that this binary makes its appearance in the very

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<sup>323</sup> For a detailed discussion of the relation of money to spoilage limitation, see Waldron, *Private Property*, pp. 207-9, and *God, Locke, Equality*, p. 171.

<sup>324</sup> Tully, *A Discourse on Property*, p. 150.

<sup>325</sup> On money's centrality to unleashing the productive, transformative, and edifying powers of labor, and to introducing an element of future-orientation in acquisitive behavior, see Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, pp. 240-9; Pangle, *Modern Republicanism*, pp. 163-6; Zuckert, *Natural Rights*, pp. 268-9. On Locke's ideas on “hand-to-mouth existence,” as emblemized by the seventeenth-century English poor, see Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology*, p. 83, and Hundert, “Homo Faber,” pp. 19-20.

section (II. 36) where money is mentioned for the first time. Money resolves the dilemma between “letting waste” and “making waste” by suspending the latter, and frees men to focus their energies on enclosing and cultivating not in accordance with their concrete immediate needs, but based on the extent of their capacity to labor. Consequently, insofar as the subjection of the earth through labor is amongst God’s intentions for the world (II. 34-5), money proves indispensable for the consummation of the theological *telos*. Given this theological significance, it is hard to conceive of money as a mere practical expediency. This point finds support from several central passages in chapter five, which suggest that the invention of money ushers a whole *new way of imagining mankind’s relationship to the world*:

...yet there are *great tracts of Grounds* to be found, which (the Inhabitants thereof not having joined the rest of Mankind, in the consent of the Use of their common money) *lie waste*, and are more than the People, who dwell on it, do, or can make use of, and so still lie in common. Tho’ this can scarce happen amongst that part of Mankind, that have consented to the Use of Money (II. 45).

Note that in this passage, enclosure and improvement of land as grounds of entitlement are annexed to the logic of money, which is at once the condition and the substantiation of the drive to exhaust the earth through its transformation into *value*. Wherever money is used, the land ceases to be waste *in principle*, without regards to the actual state of land, as attested by the fact that Locke does not use the term “waste” to denote the land “left in common by compact” in England (II. 35). With this move, Locke equates the presence or absence of a progressive attitude that strives to put an end to the waste of the world with the presence or absence of monetarization:

Where there is not something both lasting and scarce, and so valuable to be hoarded up, there Men will not be apt to enlarge their *Possessions of Land*, were it never so rich, never so free for them to take. For I ask, What would a Man value Ten Thousand, or an Hundred Thousand Acres of excellent *Land*, ready cultivated, and well stocked too with Cattle, in the middle of the in-land parts of *America*, where he had no hopes of Commerce with other Parts of the World, to draw *Money* to him by the Sale of the Product? *It would not be worth inclosing*, and we should see him give up again to the wild Common of Nature, whatever was more than would supply the Conveniences of Life to be had there for him and his Family (II. 48, last emphasis added).

This last point can be more compellingly illustrated by tracing the Locke's repeated and emphatic deployment of the term "waste" after he introduces the notion of money (II. 36 - II. 50). For an objective empiricist, such as Locke is taken to be, there would be nothing "waste" in nature as such. Nature is apprehended as wasting only when looked upon with a progressive and acquisitive gaze that perceives the world as a *reservoir of potential value to be extracted and accumulated*. This is not only reflected in Locke's monetary assessment of the comparative benefits mankind would derive from uncultivated American wastes and improved English farms (II. 43), but it also grants some clarity on Locke's famous announcement, "Thus in the beginning all the World was America, and more so than that is now; for no such thing as Money was any where known" (II. 49). The strange predication of the state of nature on the absence of money loses its mystery once we see that money inaugurates a paradigm shift from subsistence to accumulation. Whether a plot of land is "worth inclosing" and improving is conditional upon whether it is possible to accumulate the value that is derived from it, which, in turn, hinges on the use of money. "Find out something that hath the *Use and Value of Money* amongst his Neighbours, you shall see the same Man will begin presently to *enlarge* his *Possessions* " (II. 49). As a result, money becomes the nexus around which the religious teleology of subduing the earth and the practices geared towards the accumulation of value coalesce.<sup>326</sup> From this perspective, the enlargement of possessions and the subsequent scarcity in land under a monetary economy is not to be lamented but rather celebrated as the sign of a closer approximation to God's purpose. Such scarcity entails dispossession and inequality in land, true, but it ameliorates

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<sup>326</sup> From this perspective, such capitalist relations on land as large enclosures and agricultural improvement that Locke endorsed in seventeenth-century England are part and parcel of the theological parameters of his theory of property. For the agrarian capitalist tenets of Locke's thought and his historical involvement with the "Baconian improvers," see Wood, *Agrarian Capitalism*, chaps. 2 and 3; Kelly, "General Introduction," p. 100. For a more textual extrapolation of the Baconian influence in Locke's thought, see Pangle, *Modern Republicanism*, p. 166; Zuckert, *Natural Rights*, p. 203.

this inequality by a boost in the production of value that feeds into the common stock of mankind, which renders a day-laborer in England better fed, lodged and clad than “the king of a large and fruitful territory [in America]” (II. 41). Hence money not only leaves intact the moral obligation to preserve all mankind, it fulfills it *better* than the more egalitarian yet more penurious pre-monetary system, barter and gift notwithstanding.<sup>327</sup> And to bring matters full circle, since the expansion of the common stock of mankind is meant by God, money, as the precondition of this expansion, evinces a kernel of theological import.

In the light of the discussion above, it is unconvincing, if not erroneous, to assert that “Money [is] useful in the context of trade, and trade, Locke believes – not ‘unlimited appropriation’ – is beneficial to everyone.”<sup>328</sup> Criticisms of Macpherson’s “possessive individualism” are justified only insofar as “unlimited appropriation” is taken in the narrow sense of individual wealth. Whereas I think the stakes in Locke’s theory are far larger than “possessive individualism” and accumulation of individual fortune. What is articulated here is indeed “unlimited accumulation” but at the global level whose scale is “mankind,” or to cite

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<sup>327</sup> Most importantly, the much-debated right to charity espoused in the *First Treatise* (I. 42) remains in force, and it operates even more efficiently since there is now a larger common stock from which to dispense charity. As Ian Shapiro puts it somewhat bluntly, “Locke formulated an early version of the trickle-down justification for unlimited private accumulation” (36, fn. 4). Shapiro, “Workmanship Ideal,” p. 36n4. The issue of charity in Locke has been a major node of contention, particularly inasmuch as it has been made into a bulwark against unlimited accumulation (see, for example, Tully, *Discourse on Property*, esp. chap. 6). While it is the case that for Locke charity is an enforceable right that gives the destitute a minimal entitlement to others’ economic surplus, this right circumscribes accumulation only insofar as one conceives of the economy as a “zero-sum-game” whereby one’s gain is another’s loss. However, I have consistently argued throughout this section that a “positive-sum-game” *qua* increased common stock is precisely what subtends Locke’s theory of property. Consequently, charity as a right to surplus under conditions of extreme want, especially when pre-qualified with work obligations, is quite compatible with Locke’s accumulative worldview. This position can be most readily gleaned from Locke’s “An Essay on the Poor Law,” in ed. Mark Goldie, *Locke: Political Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1997). For a comprehensive articulation of the idea of charity as an enforceable right, see John Simmons, *The Lockean Theory of Rights* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), especially 307-354. For a similar argument, see Waldron, *God, Locke, Equality*, 170-187. For an account of Locke’s vision of political economy as a positive-sum-game based on labor, efficiency, and commerce, see Steven Pincus, *1688*, chap.12.

<sup>328</sup> Ashcraft, “Politics,” pp. 38-9

Goerge Caffentzis's brilliant coinage, a theory of "possessive universalism."<sup>329</sup> The specific mediation that Locke establishes between the "common" and the "common stock of mankind" by way of privatization, monetarization, and accumulation amounts to nothing short of a magnificent reversal of the conventional terms governing the reception and understanding of property relations and social justice. Locke renders "the private" the door opening onto "the common good"; *particularization* of the common becomes the precondition for *universal* prosperity; dispossession paves the road to welfare (as in the case of the day laborer), while persistence in holding things in common (as do Amerindians) appears as virtual theft from the prospective wealth of mankind. Money functions as the linchpin of a global theory of property, a *new moral economy*, which enlists a theological conception of moral and material progress to the service of primitive accumulation *qua* land enclosures on both shores of the seventeenth-century Atlantic.

### **III. Back to the Beginning**

So far I have discussed the effective implications of the notion of money, namely, the navigation of a contradiction between two components of Locke's theory of property, both equally crucial for the moral force of private appropriation. The first of these, the spoilage proviso, endows original appropriation with a moral force by linking it to the satisfaction of human needs and thereby restricting the domain of appropriation. The second, the injunction to subdue the earth, sanctions the universal enclosure and improvement of the earth's waste for increasing the common stock of mankind. Money resolves the conflicting implications of these moral principles by propelling mankind beyond the material immediacy of hand-to-mouth

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<sup>329</sup> Caffentzis, *Clipped Coins*, pp. 118-9. Also evocative is Pangle's expression "dynamic individualism" which underlies the "goal of unlimited accumulation of exchangeable value ... in a society suffused with the Lockean spirit." Pangle, *Modern Republicanism*, pp. 168-9.

existence, thereby making possible the perpetual development of productive forces and accumulation of value.

The implications of this argumentation for colonial land appropriations are clear: Amerindians would materially benefit if their ancestral lands are enclosed and improved by English colonists. “[T]he Aboriginal peoples are better off as a result of the establishment of the commercial system of private property,” thanks to “not only finished products but also the opportunities to labor”; in short, they are “more than *compensated* for their loss.”<sup>330</sup> The justification of appropriation from common stock of mankind is a powerful one, for it stakes its claims in *universal benefit*, that is, in a catholic principle of non-exclusion. By itself, however, it does not amount to a *liberal* justification of appropriation, insofar as the argument from universal benefit can be easily coupled with a paternalistic notion of authority that rejects the liberal norms of juridical equality and consent, a notion that was forwarded in Locke’s time by Sir Robert Filmer. This brings us to the second conundrum in Locke’s theory of property, which stems from the uneasy coexistence of two distinct agendas. The first is protecting private property in England from the encroachments of extra-legal power propounded by Filmer’s absolutism. The second is establishing private property in America precisely through the deployment of extra-legal power.<sup>331</sup> The first of these agendas is advanced through the language of natural rights,

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<sup>330</sup> Tully, “Aboriginal Property,” pp. 352-3.

<sup>331</sup> Extra-legal power in Locke’s political theory is most clearly articulated in II. 159-168 in his discussion of “prerogative.” This complex notion in effect refers to a residual power lingering from the state of nature that is deployed to respond to the exigencies and emergencies that cannot be foreseen and exhausted by promulgated norms. Therefore, executive prerogative, that is, properly extra-legal power is not answerable to positive law. Its abuse can only be decided upon by the people, the subject of the social contract and the purported source of sovereign power, who determine if and when the executive power has breached the contract that institutionalizes the precepts of the law of nature. In other words, the extra-legal constituent power of the people is the counterpart to the extra-legal prerogative of the executive. See Ross Corbett, “The Extraconstitutionality of Lockean Prerogative,” *Review of Politics* 68 (2006): 428–81; Iain Hampsher-Monk and K. Zimmerman, “Liberal Constitutionalism and Schmitt’s Critique of the Rule of Law,” *History of Political Thought* 28 (2007): 678-95; Clement Fatovic, *Outside the Law: Emergency and Executive Power* (The John Hopkins University Press, 2009), chap. 2. What is significant for our discussion is that insofar as Locke designates the Europeans and Amerindians as interacting in the state of nature (II. 14), and insofar as Amerindians are denied the status of commonwealths (which would render the

departing from a “*state of perfect freedom*” and a “*state of also equality*” in which “all the power and jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another” (II. 4). The second agenda cuts against the grain of this language inasmuch as it endeavors, in matters of appropriation, “to shew, how men might come to have a property in several parts of that which God gave to mankind in common, and that *without any express compact* of all the commoners” (II. 25, emphasis added). Locke’s explicit intention to base original appropriation on a non-contractual basis targeted a more properly liberal stance on property expounded by Samuel Pufendorf, who had followed a pivotal precept of the Western law, “what touches all must be agreed to by all.”<sup>332</sup> Had Locke adhered, as regards American land appropriations, to a strict interpretation of the principle of juridical equality and consent he espoused in the *Two Treatises*, these liberal principles would have worked as stumbling blocks to British colonial capitalist enterprise he adamantly defended. If Locke had “recognized [indigenous] forms of property, settlement in America without consent would have been unjust by his own criteria, for the land would have been owned, rather than unowned and common as the original appropriation argument requires.”<sup>333</sup> Then the reconciliation of Locke’s competing allegiances to liberal principles, themselves rooted in the political economy in England, and to English colonial capitalism that violated these principles in America hinged on demonstrating that land in America was still natural common, and most crucially, that *this common status itself was a function of Amerindians’ consent*. As I illustrate

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colonial encounter one between sovereign states), the force that the Englishmen deploy to expropriate Amerindians emerges as a species of untrammled executive prerogative. This power is untrammled because it is not wielded by a sovereign who has derived it from the consent of the governed who would in turn constitute a natural or political (as opposed to legal) counterbalance through vigilance and legitimate threat of revolution. If one accepts Matthew Connelly’s definition of the “essence of empire” as “the exercise of untrammled power,” then the relationship that Locke envisions between the English and Amerindians, his discourse of natural equality notwithstanding, is an inherently imperial relationship. Matthew Connelly, “The New Imperialists,” in *Lessons of Empire: Imperial Histories and American Power*, ed. Craig Calhoun, Frederick Cooper, Kevin Moore (New York: New Press, 2006), p. 32.

<sup>332</sup> Tully, “Aboriginal Property,” p. 352.

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 357.

below, money not only occupies a structurally necessary position in Locke's theory of property despite its apparent contingency, but it also issues from a paradoxical kind of consent that in principle binds mankind. The *universal and tacit consent of mankind* that Locke ascribes to the historical origins of money discloses money to be a theoretical fiction that paints colonial capitalism in liberal colors.

### ***The Paradox of "Natural Consent"***

"Consent" and "agreement" constantly recur in Locke's discussion of money in chapter five: "the invention of money and the tacit agreement of men to put a value on it, introduced (by consent) larger possessions, and a right to them" (II. 36); "had agreed that a little piece of yellow metal ... should be worth a great piece of flesh, or a whole heap of corn" (II. 37); "in the consent of the use of their common money" (II.45); "things that fancy or agreement hath put the value on" (II. 46); "money... that by mutual consent men would take in exchange for the truly useful, but perishable supports of life" (II. 47); "riches ... have but a fantastical imaginary value" (II. 184). The penultimate section of chapter five is where Locke brings the articulation of land, labor, money and property to a close, and thus worth citing in its entirety:

But since Gold and Silver, being little useful to the Life of Man in proportion to Food, Rayment, and Carriage, has its *value* only from the consent of Men, whereof labour yet makes, in great part, *the measure*; it is plain, that men have agreed to a disproportionate and unequal Possession of the Earth; they having, by tacit and voluntary consent, found out a way how a man may fairly possess more land than he himself could use the product of, by receiving, in exchange for the overplus, gold and silver, which may be hoarded up without injury to anyone ... This partage of things in an inequality of private possessions, men have made practicable out of the bounds of Societie, and without compact; only by putting a value on gold and silver, and tacitly agreeing in the use of Money. For in Governments, the Laws regulate the right of property, and the possession of land is determined by positive constitutions (II. 50).

The conclusion that some interpreters derive from these passages is that Locke is trying to demonstrate that property based on money is conventional and cannot be justified on the grounds

of natural rights.<sup>334</sup> For others, locating the consent to money outside the bounds of society amounts to nothing short of the “naturalization” of money along with the property based on it by excluding their foundations from the domain of political human agency.<sup>335</sup> Put differently, the former interpretation focuses on the *presence of consent* and concludes with money-as-convention, whereas the latter emphasize the *absence of compact* and arrive at money-as-nature. Once again, the question is reduced to the choice between nature and convention, and Locke is forced to choose sides.

I maintain, against this binary, that Locke’s theory of property, insofar as it posits a relationship of necessity between theological universals and accumulative practices, *cannot choose sides* regarding the nature of money. For the indeterminacy of the *consent without compact* that underpins money is the very strength of his theory, in that it allows Locke to depart from theological injunctions (preserve mankind, labor, and subdue the earth) and arrive at the *moral necessity of accumulative practices* (increasing the common stock of mankind).<sup>336</sup> Yet in the process, the explicitly consensual language around money saves Locke the trouble of holding the difficult position that God directly commanded men to accumulate capital even if this meant widespread dispossession and inequality of wealth. In this respect, money remains a peculiar beast with historical and contingent origins yet theological and moral impact. It cannot be derived from the natural law without committing absurdity; neither can it be reduced to sheer convention without impeding the actualization of God’s purpose. Hence the mode of existence

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<sup>334</sup> Ashcraft, *Locke’s Two Treatises*, p. 139; “Politics,” p. 30; Tully, *Discourse on Property*, pp. 147-50. Also see Parker, *Biblical Politics*, pp. 136-7; McClure, *Judging Rights*, p. 171.

<sup>335</sup> Macpherson, *Possessive Individualism*, p. 210; Appleby, *Liberalism and Republicanism*, p. 60; Vaughn, “Economic Background,” pp. 125, 134.

<sup>336</sup> Caffentzis deserves merit for recognizing the exclusion of money from both the natural law and the social contract, however, he concludes by subsuming it under “philosophical law” or “the law of fashion,” which misses the theological significance of money by reducing its use to a matter of habit. See Caffentzis, *Clipped Coins*, pp. 68-72, 144-150.

that money inhabits is paradoxical and can be best expressed by an oxymoronic term such as “natural consent” or “necessary consent.”

The understanding of Locke’s notion of money as a paradoxical “natural consent” or an area of indeterminacy finds support from a careful reading of some of the passages in the *Second Treatise*. The most striking characteristic of the consent given to the use and value of money is its *universality*. Going back to section 50, “men” who “have agreed to a disproportionate and unequal possession of the *earth*” are clearly not a particular group of men but all mankind, the protagonist of the *Second Treatise*.<sup>337</sup> A decade later, Locke more clearly reiterates this point in his famous economic tract, *Some Considerations of the Consequences of the Lowering of Interest, and Raising the Value of Money*: “For Mankind, having consented to put an imaginary Value upon Gold and Silver ... have made them by general consent the common Pledges.”<sup>338</sup> Invocation of “mankind” as the subject of consent to money universalizes the normative reach of the implications of monetarization and effectively turns it into an *agreement that binds mankind*. This is nowhere more clearly indicated in perhaps one of the most crucial passages in the *Second Treatise*:

yet there are *great tracts of Grounds* to be found, which (the Inhabitants thereof not having joined the rest of Mankind, in the consent of the Use of their common money) *lie waste*, and are more than the People, who dwell on it, do, or can make use of, and so still lie in common. Tho’ this can scarce happen amongst that part of Mankind, that have consented to the Use of Money (II. 45).

Note in this passage the curious semantics of mankind, which is at once the unanimous consentor to money *and* a subject riven into, on the one hand, those who use money and abide by the binding power of the original tacit agreement, and on the other, those who do not use money and therefore the subject of a contractual deficit. This social division spatially maps onto the division

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<sup>337</sup> This is paralleled by Locke’s use of the term “earth,” which denotes not a particular geography but the entire world. Locke otherwise specifies America, England, Spain, etc.

<sup>338</sup> John Locke, “Some Considerations of the Consequences of the Lowering of Interest, and Raising the Value of Money,” in Kelly, *Locke on Money*, 233. This also suggests that the assumption of universality espoused earlier in the *Second Treatise* is neither accidental nor temporary.

of the earth into non-waste and waste, natural common and property (including common by compact), lands that can be appropriated without the consent of their tenants and lands that are subject to the consent of their proprietors (including commoners). The penalty (as it were) imposed on Amerindians for not abiding by the tacit agreement to which they have, or *must have*, consented in the lost recesses of time is the pronouncement of their territories as natural common open to appropriation by the members of a monetarized economy like England. In other words, the assumption of universality of the consent to money does not budge in the face of factual contradiction. This arrogation can be theoretically explained if and only if one presupposes the universality of money as a *principle of necessity* that binds the entirety of mankind.<sup>339</sup> If Amerindians have not joined “the rest of mankind” in their common consent to money, it is they and not the “rest of mankind” who are at fault. The responsibility for the status of their lands as natural common is squarely placed on the shoulders of Amerindians, as the legitimacy of appropriating their territories can ultimately be retraced to an act of mutual consent.

Perhaps even more tellingly for its importance in Locke’s theory of property, monetarization is *the only* phenomenon that rests on universal consent in the *Two Treatises*. Other instances of mutual consent in the state of nature, such as marriage, master-servant relations, and exchange of commodities are particularistic contracts that obligate only the parties involved,<sup>340</sup> whereas the consent to money is singular in its binding force over all mankind.<sup>341</sup>

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<sup>339</sup> Kelly tries to resolve this conundrum by construing the term “universal” as “analogous to its use in the term ‘universal truth,’ i.e. everyone on having the advantages of gold and silver as the medium of exchange explained to him, necessarily consents to their adoption.” Kelly, “General Introduction,” p. 88. This interpretation fails to explain how the status of a consensual practice can be akin to “universal truth” unless it is already inscribed in the natural order of human reality, which redirects one to the domain of the natural law.

<sup>340</sup> “The promises and bargains for truck, &c. between the two men in the desert island, mentioned by *Garcilasso de la Vega*, in his history of *Peru*; or between a *Swiss* and an *Indian*, in the woods of *America*, are binding to them, though they are perfectly in a state of nature, in reference to one another: for truth and keeping of faith belongs to men, as men, and not as members of society” (II. 14)

This point can be more emphatically established through a comparison with the only phenomenon whose foundations evince an affinity with those of money. This is the inheritance of property, which Locke treats in section 88 of the *First Treatise*. There, Locke asks the question, “how come Children by this right of possessing, before any other, the properties of their Parents upon their Decease” and discourses,

‘Twill perhaps be answered, that common consent hath disposed of it, to the Children. Common Practice, we see indeed does so dispose of it but we cannot say, that it is the common consent of Mankind; for that hath never been asked, nor actually given: and if common tacit Consent hath establish’d it, it would make a positive and not Natural right of Children to Inherit the Goods of their Parents: But where the practice is universal, ‘tis reasonable to think the Cause is Natural” (I. 88)

Considering the position of money in the light of the logic presented in this passage further underscores its peculiarity. On the one hand, the *tacit consent* underpinning the use of money would clearly position the latter in the domain of positive law, yet this contradicts Locke’s contention that America is natural commons because Amerindians have not joined the common consent to money. On the other hand, the *universality* of this consent and its binding validity for mankind would lead one to conclude that “where the practice is universal, it is reasonable to think the cause it natural”; nevertheless, Locke is incontrovertibly clear about the consensual origins of money. To summarize this point, if the use of money is natural because universal, and hence binds mankind, then it cannot be based on consent; if, in contrast, it is consensual and conventional, then it cannot be natural and hence lacks the power to bind mankind. This leaves

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<sup>341</sup> This discussion also shows that the question of money could provide a fresh avenue of thinking about Locke’s theory of consent. For a broad overview of the debates on Locke’s theory of consent, see John Dunn, “Consent in the Political Theory of John Locke” in *Political Obligation in Its Historical Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); John Simmons, “‘Denisons’ and ‘Aliens’: Locke’s Problem of Political Consent,” *Social Theory and Practice* 24 (1998): 161-182, and *On the Edge of Anarchy: Locke, Consent, and the Limits of Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

money in an ambiguous, indeterminate position located on the border between positive and natural law.<sup>342</sup>

To clinch the analysis of the paradoxical position of money, we might consider a hypothetical scenario: mankind's agreement (express or tacit) to cease using money. Let us suppose that mankind was discontented with the inequalities and "inconveniences" engendered by the use of money in the state of nature, and decided, by universal consent, to cast it into desuetude. As a consequence, *ceteris paribus*, the evaporation of the medium of accumulation would entail a massive decline in the common stock of mankind, precipitous fall in trade, disappearance of the main motive for enclosure and improvement, shrinkage of possessions due to the spoilage limitation, and the return to the common waste all that has been hitherto accumulated beyond hand-to-mouth existence. This would not only drastically reduce the aggregate conveniences of life (the English laborer would now be fed, lodged, and clad more or less like an Indian king), but it would also violate the moral obligations under the natural law by letting the value produced by labor to perish uselessly and by wasting the already subdued and improved land. In short, the withdrawal of the tacit consent from the use of money amounts to a profound moral effrontery, and for this reason it cannot, or rather *must not*, be withdrawn. Hence, whereas all conventional relations established by mutual consent amongst men, including marriage, exchange, or even government, can be undone by another act of mutual consent, the same freedom cannot be permitted in the case of money. In other words, if it is an act of consent that founds money, then it is the only consent that cannot be retracted without violating the

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<sup>342</sup> One could argue that inheritance of property partakes in the same conceptual ambiguity. However, inheritance is directly traceable to the "strong desire of propagating their kind ... and continuing themselves in posterity" that "God planted in men" (which qualifies inheritance as an innate right – II. 56, 88, 190), and can be more broadly subsumed under the natural law obligation to preserve mankind (I. 41, I. 86). What renders money peculiar in comparison is that it lacks a parallel recourse to a natural framework of rights and obligations while having the normative-obligatory efficacy of this framework.

natural law. As a result, the inconveniences introduced to the state of nature by money have to be regulated by the government founded on a further act of consent. Yet the power of revolution vested in “the people” in the case of civil government lacks a counterpart in the case of money, which is ultimately the cause for the institution of government.<sup>343</sup> Regicide is permitted; disaccumulation is not. Governments come and go; historical progress rolls onward. And it righteously catapults the rude beginnings of the world rediscovered in America to the present of mankind.

### ***Colonial Turn Reconsidered***

To clarify and summarize this somewhat dense discussion, I have argued that the notion of money in Locke’s theory makes possible two intertwined theoretical moves. First, it allows Locke to situate his accumulative political economic vision on a universal and inclusive moral high ground by suturing the rifts of his divine teleology through the myth of universal consent. Secondly, at the same moment it folds all mankind in the universal benefits of this accumulative vision, it marks off Amerindians as implied deviants from the foundations of this vision, and thereby excludes them from the domain of legitimate proprietorship in land until they have

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<sup>343</sup> Formation of commonwealths, while remedying the “inconveniences” (inequality, contention, and quarrel) ushered in by the invention of money, opens to question the universalistic tendencies of accumulation extrapolated from Locke’s theory. For instance, Alex Tuckness interrogates the limits of Lockean altruism whereby he concludes that governments are empowered to act to preserve mankind only if such actions do not impair their own citizens’ interests. Nevertheless, Tuckness distinguishes between the national objectives of *specific governments* and the objectives of *government as such*, contending “that a government limited to pursuing the preservation of its own members was furthering, not hindering, the preservation of all mankind.” Alex Tuckness, “Punishment, Property, and the Limits of Altruism: Locke’s International Asymmetry,” *American Political Science Review* 102 (2008): 467-79, p. 472. From this perspective, it is possible to conceive of Locke’s notion of commonwealth mainly as a contrivance devised to make mankind better off, first and foremost by *securing the conditions of investment, innovation, and accumulation*. The degree to which these conditions are maintained and improved becomes the universal criterion for judging the performance of specific governments. Therefore, although I concur with Tuckness’s observation that the role Locke tailored for government was the promotion of “economic growth,” I disagree with his conclusion that economic growth was exclusively geared to buttress national security. As Pincus demonstrates, the secular welfare of citizens and subjects was a self-standing concern of the Whig political vision. Pincus, 1688, pp. 369, 372, 396-7.

joined the “rest of mankind” in the common consent to money. The indeterminacy of money between the natural law and human convention modulates the ambiguous status of Amerindians, who are simultaneously inside and outside of mankind’s consent to money, that is, bound by a universal agreement amongst “mankind” of which they are at once part and yet to join. Layers of conceptual ambivalence opened by these theoretical maneuvers enable Locke to configure inclusionary and exclusionary provisions in ways that authorizes the dispossession of Amerindians at the same time it captures them in myths of natural equality, mutual consent, and global prosperity. In other words, Locke’s theory of property subtly co-articulates socio-spatial displacement and exclusion, on the one hand, and liberal values and the historical promise of development, on the other. It thereby recasts in a liberal mold the fulcrum of seventeenth-century Atlantic capitalism, namely, colonial land appropriations effected through extra-legal force. A sustained analysis of Locke’s notion of money therefore helps us gain novel insights into the ways in which the socioeconomic and theological-moral aspects of Locke’s thought interlock in a bid to sanction the *transatlantic process* of enclosure through a *global vision* of material progress underpinned by a *universalist ideology* of improvement. These insights have been only partially glimpsed by the existing Locke scholarship due to the issues of perspectival insularity discussed earlier. Accordingly, I would like to conclude my discussion by reevaluating two sets of arguments generated by the colonial turn in the light of the foregoing discussion of the morality of accumulation and liberal myths of universal consent.

The first set of arguments focuses on the exclusionary implications of Locke’s political theory of constitutionalism in reducing Amerindians to apolitical tribes dwelling in the state of nature. The second set of arguments picks up the question of colonial exclusion and disenfranchisement from the perspective of subjectivity, and interrogates the implicit

presuppositions of rationality and personhood suffusing Locke's abstract universalistic claims. I suggest that both of these analyses of colonial exclusion can benefit from a materialist perspective on the colonial interface between Amerindian and English modes of social reproduction. I maintain that with the introduction of the money there arise, first, abstract relations of value and the need for their mediation by civil laws, and second, a continuum of subjective maturity keyed to the faculty of abstraction in which Amerindians occupy a "primitive" stage of human development. While I do not have the space here to fully expound on these revisionist claims, I believe they deserve at least a rough sketch.

One could begin by taking seriously the famous line "[t]hus in the beginning all the World was *America*, and more so than that is now; for no such thing as *money* was any where known" (II. 49), and interpret it through the analytic of money developed in this chapter. By "taking seriously," I mean avoiding the habitual treatment of money here as a metonym for labor or agriculture, as an invention that "in Locke's scheme, only extended the reach of the plough."<sup>344</sup> The nature of the paradigmatic distinction that money draws between the beginning and the present of the world should be sought in its uniqueness, that is, in its status as the medium of representation and accumulation of abstract exchangeable value.<sup>345</sup> Considering Locke's repeated emphasis on the "value" that labor creates, and bearing in mind that "value," "waste," and "money" appear almost always in the same sections of the *Second Treatise*, I suggest that money emblemizes the difference between the principles of subsistence (use-value) and accumulation (exchange-value) that structure two contrasting modes of social reproduction. Money does not simply "facilitate" exchange by resolving the inconvenience of barter; it marks in Locke's theory a radical reorientation of production towards the generation of

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<sup>344</sup> Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, Vol. IV, p. 173.

<sup>345</sup> I have hinted at this earlier with reference to the Locke's comparison of American and English land in terms of their yields assessed in pounds and pennies (II. 43).

surplus and profit and thereby a fundamental line of demarcation between properly utilized and underutilized land.

This distinction between the paradigms of subsistence and accumulation (of “hand-to-mouth” and “common stock”) can theoretically deepen the constitutionalist ideology of dispossession that Tully has brilliantly extrapolated from the *Two Treatises*.<sup>346</sup> Tully argues that Locke embedded aboriginal forms of governance in a “Eurocentric narrative of modern constitutionalism,” in which they figured as the primitive ancestors of the European peoples before the latter set up sovereign states through social contracts.<sup>347</sup> The lack of resemblance between Amerindian and European governmental institutions, especially the conspicuous absence of a bipartite structure of monarchy and parliament amongst Amerindians, prompted Locke conclude that the latter inhabited a pre-political state. Locke wrote,

Thus we see, that the *kings* of the *Indians* in *America*, which is still a pattern of the first ages in *Asia* and *Europe*, ... are little more than *generals of their armies*; and though they command absolutely in war, yet at home and in time of peace they exercise very little dominion, and have but a very moderate sovereignty, the resolutions of peace and war being ordinarily either in the people, or in a council (II. 108).

The absence of an institutionalized power to declare war and peace indicated the absence of sovereignty or *imperium* in America, which, in the tradition of natural jurisprudence and *ius gentium* that Locke followed, meant that America was still in a state of nature. And given that original appropriation was possible exclusively in the state of nature, Tully concludes, Locke’s denial of *imperium* to Amerindians effectively translated into opening their lands to property claims by Englishmen.<sup>348</sup>

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<sup>346</sup> For a more recent reiteration of this argument, see Ivison, “Nature of Rights.”

<sup>347</sup> Tully, *Strange Multiplicity*, p. 77.

<sup>348</sup> Initially formulated by Grotius, the argument that *imperium* forecloses claims to property or *dominium*, finds its most lucid expression in the contrast Locke draws between commons in America and in England. By Locke’s standards, both represented “wastes” that ought to be enclosed and improved. However, “in *land* that is *common* in *England*, or any other country, where there is plenty of people under government, who have money and commerce, no one can inclose or appropriate any part, without the consent of all his fellow-commoners; because this is left

Locke attributed to the subsistence paradigm of Amerindians the egalitarian simplicity of a premonetary natural economy, which also characterized the premonetary “first ages of Asia and Europe.” Regulated by the labor and spoilage provisos, natural economy “did confine every man’s *possession* to a very moderate proportion, and such as he might appropriate to himself, without injury to any body, in the first ages of the world” (II. 36). The rudimentary and (this is crucial) *concrete* nature of property in game, fruits, or enclosed land, made very clear what belonged to whom, by what right, and to what end. The objective immediacy of production and consumption rendered property rights legible and relations of exchange uncomplicated. As a result, there existed very little reason for “quarrel and contention,” those famous “inconveniences” of the law of nature. Locke encapsulates this logic lucidly in the last paragraph of chapter five:

And thus, I think, it is very easy to conceive, without any difficulty, *how labour could at first begin a title of property* in the common things of nature, and how the spending it upon our uses bounded it. So that there could then be no reason of quarrelling about title, nor any doubt about the largeness of possession it gave. Right and conveniency went together; for as a man had a right to all he could employ his labour upon, so he had no temptation to labour for more than he could make use of. This left no room for controversy about the title, nor for incroachment on the right of others; what portion a man carved to himself, was easily seen; and it was useless, as well as dishonest, to carve himself too much, or take more than he needed” (II. 51).

The pivotal expression here is “easily seen” – the tree that is felled, the game that is caught, the acorns that are picked, and most importantly, as Pocock reminds us, the land that is tilled by the plough, which visibly inscribes on the surface of the earth the property of those who labored on it.<sup>349</sup> In sum, the paradigm of subsistence, which rests on the satisfaction of concrete needs through the production and consumptions of use-values, leaves little room for ambiguity in

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common by compact, *i. e.* by the law of the land, which is not to be violated. And though it be common, in respect of some men, it is not so to all mankind” (II. 35). In contrast, common land in America was common by nature, where “[a]s much land as a man tills, plants, improves, cultivates, and can use the product of, so much is his *property*” (II 32). For Grotius’s argument that sovereign power over vacant territory exhausts claims to original appropriation by first occupancy, see Hugo Grotius, *The Rights of War and Peace* (New York: M. Walter Dunne: 1901), pp. 89-92.

<sup>349</sup> Pocock, “*Tangata Whenua*,” pp. 203-12, and *Barbarism and Religion*, Vol. IV, pp. 172-3.

property relations and consequently no pressing need for promulgated laws to specify these rights and institutionalized impartial judges to arbitrate property disputes.

What distinguishes the paradigm of accumulation, made possible by the introduction of money, is the increasing mediation of production, exchange, and consumption by abstract exchangeable values – what is precisely and characteristically missing in the subsistence paradigm. Monetization of the economy, production for profit, and commodification of exchange introduce a fundamental element of abstraction into the definition and organization of property. This shift brings into focus a vital issue for Locke’s natural jurisprudential thinking, which concerns itself primarily with intercourse between property-owning individuals.<sup>350</sup> When judged by the standard of the legibility of property claims, questions of labor and improvement fade in significance in comparison to the monetization and abstraction of property. For the abstraction of property not only opens the way to accumulation and inequality of property by allowing one to “fairly possess more land than he himself can use the product of” (II. 50). The mediation of progressively complex social relations by intangible and fugitive exchange values also multiplies the surfaces of friction between property-owning individuals, thereby sparking contentions and quarrels, not because individuals are wicked (recall that natural jurisprudence, unlike civic humanism, is not concerned with social personality) but because the *modus operandi* of property relations is compounded by monetary abstraction.<sup>351</sup> Against this background of

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<sup>350</sup> “In the early seventeenth century, western European theorists of natural law were turning towards theories of natural right, and to that end were constructing the concept of a state of nature, a primeval condition of human existence ... solitary humans were imagined moving in an environment defined as the earth’s surface as yet unappropriated ... with the effect that the individual preceded property, and any system of institutionalized values must be the effect and consequence of appropriation. From appropriation followed property, from property rights, and from rights, government ... [T]he more carefully the individual was defined in terms of his property, his rights and his appropriation, the more clearly it followed that the individual who had not yet appropriated was not yet fully and individual or fully human.” Pocock, “*Tangata Whenua*,” p. 203.

<sup>351</sup> For the convolution of the experiential grasp of the law of nature, see McClure, *Judging Rights*, pp. 180-1. For an insightful political analysis of the function of the early-modern liberal state in managing “frictions” between property-owning individuals, see Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, pp. 342-353.

mounting entropy, the intuitively accessible norms of the natural law become inadequate to the task of regulating natural liberty and property, and the need arises for “established *standing laws*, promulgated and known to the people,” and “*indifferent* and upright *judges*, who are to decide controversies by those laws” in order to secure “the *peace, safety, and public good* of the people” (II. 131).

The necessary connection between monetarized economy and constitutional government in Locke’s narrative therefore constitutes the matrix that modulates the difference between the natural common and sovereign territory, between what is still open to free appropriation and what requires the consent of its inhabitants, between America and England. Insofar as constitutional government with its positive laws represents the end of the state of nature, its structural connection to monetarization effectively welds the end of the natural state to the origins of money. This connection also sheds light on the shifting center of gravity in chapter five from labor to money in Locke’s philosophical adjudication of property claims in land.

Social repercussions of monetarization speak to a second prominent interpretation of Locke’s justification of colonial exclusion and dispossession, exemplarily articulated by Uday Mehta. Adopting a subjectivist lens, Mehta puts pressure on the exclusionary tendencies that are “an aspect of [liberalism’s] theoretical underpinnings and not an episodic compromise with the practical constraints of implementation,” whereby he concludes, “liberal exclusion can be viewed intrinsic to liberalism.”<sup>352</sup> Liberal strategies of exclusion operate by governing the applicability of liberalism’s universal claims by an “implicit and thicker set of social credentials” that constitute the proper subjectivity requisite for political inclusion.<sup>353</sup> Mehta skillfully unearths the rift between the “universal constituency” of the *Two Treatises*, which rests on an

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<sup>352</sup> Mehta, “Liberal Strategies of Exclusion,” pp. 61-2.

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*

“anthropological minimum” devoid of historical and social specificity, and the “exclusionary conventions” of Locke’s *Thoughts Concerning Education*, which prescribe a “pedagogical discipline” for cultivating the sort of reason that “naturally” belongs to the rational, gentlemanly, and civilized subjects.<sup>354</sup> Ruled by the “cosmopolitanism of reason,” Locke’s liberalism negotiates colonial difference by temporally emplotting it as a story of uneven progress and authorizes “the imperial power [as] simply the instrument required to align a deviant and recalcitrant history with the appropriate future.”<sup>355</sup>

I maintain that in order to properly triangulate the colonial implications of subjectivity and reason in Locke’s thought, we need to extricate these questions from Mehta’s epistemological idealism and ground them in the socioeconomic matrix outlined above. For Mehta, the *modus operandi* of Locke’s liberal hierarchies is to assign differential positions to the colonizer and the colonized on a spectrum of reason that is invariably tilted in favor of the former. While specifying the semantic content of the binaries that structure this spectrum, Mehta never conjectures about the material practices that these binaries might be reflecting. Instead, we are told that the source of Locke’s refusal to acknowledge colonial difference as such and his inscription of it as a subjective deficit stems from the “uniformity of the Euclidian space” and “post-Newtonian algebraic continuity” that governs Locke’s liberalism.<sup>356</sup>

I contend, in contrast, that the “teleology of reason” that Mehta posits as the crux of colonial disenfranchisement ought to be understood as an index to the teleology of transition from subsistence to accumulative patterns of social reproduction. In a crucial passage in *Some*

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<sup>354</sup> Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire*, pp. 16, 57; “Liberal Strategies of Exclusion,” pp. 63-70. More generally, see Mehta’s *Anxiety of Freedom*.

<sup>355</sup> Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire*, pp. 18-25, 30-1, 48, 77

<sup>356</sup> Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire*, pp. 108, 127. By embedding Locke in a tradition stretching from Newton back to Euclid, Mehta partakes in the tendency to treat abstraction “as a kind of “original sin” of the West.” Sartori, “British Empire,” p. 625.

*Thoughts Concerning Education*, Locke states that “he that has no master over his Inclinations, he that knows not how to *resist* the importunity of *present Pleasure or Pain*, for the sake of what reason tells him is fit to be done, wants the true Principle of Virtue and Industry; and is in danger never to be good for anything.”<sup>357</sup> The “true Principle of Virtue of Industry” rests with “higher” subjective traits such as instrumental rationality, moderation, sobriety, self-discipline, which are in turn rooted in the ability to suspend the urge for immediate gratification in order to achieve an anticipated future goal. These traits, I argue, properly belong to the accumulative paradigm, and find their medium of expression and development in the realm of abstraction opened up by monetarization. Money itself is born out of the human faculty of abstraction, and the monetarization of the economy engenders increasingly complex social relations, which in turn require the further honing of this faculty.<sup>358</sup> The field of temporal freedom opened by the use of money is rife with possibilities for exercising future-oriented, calculative, rational behavior, for comporting oneself to the present on the basis of a projection of one’s self in a moment that is experientially inaccessible because it does not yet exist.<sup>359</sup> Producing for anonymous and

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<sup>357</sup> John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education, with introduction, notes, and critical apparatus*, ed. John W. and Jean S. Yolton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), section 45.

<sup>358</sup> Caffentzis deserves credit for being, to my knowledge, the first interpreter to discover this connection. See Caffentzis, *Clipped Coins*, esp. pp. 70-1.

<sup>359</sup> This point also restores Locke’s importance to the debate over virtue and commerce, from which J. G. A. Pocock has banished him. Pocock contends that the modern theory of property begins not with the possessive individual or even monetarized exchange, but with the novelty of public debt, which constitutes *the* distinctive feature of the commercial society. For Pocock, it is not the commercialization of the economy but the emergence of public debt, not the market but the stock market, that forms the fulcrum of the classical-modern debate between landed interests and monied interests, and over virtue and corruption. The core of the problem is the mutation of the political relation between the state and the citizen into a capitalist relation. “Government stock is a promise to repay at a future date; from the inception and development of the National Debt, it is known that this date will in reality never be reached, but the tokens of repayment are exchangeable at a market price in the present. The price they command is determined by the present state of public confidence in the stability of government, and in its capacity to make repayment in the theoretical future. Government is therefore maintained by the investor’s imagination concerning a moment which will never exist in reality. ... Property – the material foundation of both personality and government – has ceased to be real and has become a not merely mobile but imaginary. Specialised, acquisitive and post-civic man ... does not even live in the present, except as constituted by his fantasies concerning a future.” Pocock, “Mobility of Property,” p. 112. As I hope I have now made clear, the epistemological ramifications of the socioeconomic sea change engendered by monetarization precede and prefigure the historical shift to modern political economy, which Pocock delays until the institution of the National Debt.

prospective rather than proximate and immediate human needs cannot therefore be reduced to the pecuniary pursuit of self-interest, though it certainly serves that end,<sup>360</sup> it is at the same time the material process of liberation from the immediacy of quotidian experience and of augmentation and refinement of one's mental capabilities. The "desire for money" goes beyond the simple impulse of avarice and extends into "the expression of the distinctly human characteristic of foresight."<sup>361</sup>

If one bears in mind that in the *Essay on Human Understanding* Locke posits the "faculty of *Abstracting*" as the human faculty *par excellence*, which sets our species apart from lower animals, the significance of money and commerce in Locke's overall philosophy comes into sharper relief. It is the "the faculty to enlarge by any kind of *Abstraction*" that places "a perfect distinction betwixt man and brutes."<sup>362</sup> In the *Essay*, Locke defines human subjectivity as consciousness that persists over time and amidst the flux of sense-impressions, consciousness that remains aware of its unity and identity at different temporal and experiential instances, which has led some commentators to label his depiction of the subject as the "punctual self."<sup>363</sup> "Abstracting lifts the mind out of the given flow of sensation and allows it to stand in semisovereign sway over its own contents,"<sup>364</sup> such that the individual "can think of himself, abstractly, as a being that endures from moment to moment."<sup>365</sup> This particular temporal analytic, the future-orientation of thought and behavior, represents a major philosophical and normative thread that binds Locke's theory of the self to his theory of labor and property. One of

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<sup>360</sup> Karen Vaughn notes that the purpose of "hoarding" that Locke leaves unexplored in the *Two Treatises* is clarified as "productive investment" in *Some Considerations*. This is why, Locke maintains in that pamphlet, people are willing to "buy the use of money" by paying interest. Vaughn, "Economic Background," p. 138.

<sup>361</sup> McClure, *Judging Rights*, p. 176.

<sup>362</sup> John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, with an introduction, critical apparatus and glossary*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), bk. 2, chap. 11, par. 10-11.

<sup>363</sup> Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), chap. 9.

<sup>364</sup> Zuckert, *Natural Rights*, p. 283.

<sup>365</sup> Waldron, *God, Locke, Equality*, pp. 75.

the most forceful critics of innate ideas and a towering philosopher of empiricist epistemology, Locke held that selfhood is crafted out of the experience of social practice and convention. Emancipation of human beings from production for immediate consumption and their reorientation to accumulative plans and practices therefore constitutes the socioeconomic crucible where “futural” and more fully human subjectivities are forged. Consequently, as the medium of this transition, money functions as the practical grounds for training that mental faculty which distinguishes us as humans, as a field of potentialities for the consummation of humanity.

If my interpretation is plausible, then, from a Lockean perspective, the relative positioning of various individuals, groups, or classes in relation to monetary economy holds normative implications for judging the plenitude of their subjectivities. This is not to contend that Locke denies Amerindians the faculty of reason and abstraction. Locke quite clearly parted ways with Spanish justifications of dispossession that dehumanized indigenous populations. He declared that all men to be born with the same faculty of reason, which enabled them to discern the moral obligations of the natural law. “[T]hey have Light enough to lead them to the knowledge of their maker ... For the visible Marks of extraordinary Wisdom and Power appear so plainly in all the Works of the Creation, that a rational Creature, who will but seriously reflect on them, cannot miss the discovery of a *Deity*.”<sup>366</sup> By the same token, Locke included Amerindians under the protection of religious toleration. “No man whatsoever ought ... to be deprived of his Terrestrial Enjoyments, upon account of his Religion. Not even Americans, subjected unto a Christian Prince, are to be punished either in Body or Goods, for not imbracing our Faith and Worship.”<sup>367</sup> The hierarchical implications of Locke’s theory should be sought in

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<sup>366</sup> Locke, *Essay*, bk. 1, chap. 3, par. 9 and chap. 4, par. 8.

<sup>367</sup> John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. James Tully (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983), p. 43. Further

subtler grounds than imputations of irrationality, more particularly in the gray zone opened up by the use of money. In this domain, sandwiched between the natural law and human convention, the bounds of rationality as predicated on the faculty of abstraction become fuzzy and contested. Viewed within this field, the logical expression that captures the Amerindian's position takes the form of a double negative: the Amerindian is "not irrational."<sup>368</sup> While He does not lack the rational capacity with which God has endowed all mankind, he does not partake in the practical conditions that enable the consummation of these capacities. I would go further to suggest that from a Lockean perspective the absence of monetarization amongst Amerindians instantiate the *non-exercise* of the faculty of abstraction that they surely possess – a non-exercise, the responsibility for which belongs to Amerindians themselves. This is also in line with Locke's eschewal of other, equally complex manifestations of social abstraction amongst Amerindians, such as symbolic exchange and the use of wampums, as a proper solution to the limits of natural economy.

Locke's insistence on money over other abstractive social forms as the only way to disentangle the transformative powers of labor from the limits of the natural economy, and thus pave the way to the full utilization of human faculties, cannot be explained without recourse to colonial capitalism that mediated the relationship between Amerindians and the English. For Atlantic colonial capitalism consisted of a socioeconomic frontier where the agents of highly commercialized economies confronted non-monetarized communities in possession of lands that they so avidly sought. Accordingly, it was not the absence of monotheism but of monetarization that Locke settled upon for discoursing on property rights in America. If, therefore, we are to

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corroborating this point, Armitage notes "in 1669 the authors of the Fundamental Constitutions had specified that "Idollatry Ignorance or mistake gives us noe right to expell or use [the Natives of Carolina] ill," and that article remained in all later versions of the Fundamental Constitutions." Armitage, "John Locke, Carolina," p. 618.

<sup>368</sup> I owe this insightful formulation to Sibylle Fischer's unpublished essay, "When Things Don't Add Up: The Consequences of an Enslaved Enlightenment," presented at Cornell University in 2008.

search for Locke's liberal strategies of exclusion in the tacit assumptions modulating the differential practical efficacy of purportedly universal human capacities or natural rights, we should not be looking at well-worn culturalist arguments about the unwarranted universalization of European colonizers' parochial subjective assumptions. For this perspective cannot explain why Locke deemed certain forms of abstraction to be binding on property claims while relegating certain others to irrelevance, why he claimed that the absence of money rendered American lands open to appropriation while disregarding Christianity (no less an abstract construct than money) as juridically null in regards to proprietorship. As Chakrabarty remarks, "[t]he point is not that Enlightenment rationalism is always unreasonable to itself, but rather a matter of documenting how – through what historical process – its "reason," which was not always self-evident to everyone, has been made to look obvious far beyond the ground where it originated."<sup>369</sup> I think colonial capitalism of the seventeenth-century Atlantic and its originary position in the global inceptions of capital is a good place to start unraveling this historical process.

## **Conclusion**

The last point casts into relief several more general issues concerning the imperial turn in political theory, and specifically the hermeneutic binary of abstract universals and historical difference through which Locke and other members of the pantheon are read into the history of colonial empires. In the previous chapter, I sketched some of the shortcoming of this interpretive lens, which magnifies the textual enunciation and divides the discursive field into zones of disembodied liberal principles and thick cultural particularisms. Here, I would like to conclude by drawing out the specific implications of my analysis of Locke for this problematic.

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<sup>369</sup> Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, p. 43.

First, the foregoing discussion points to the ways in which the putative foundational dichotomies such as abstract/concrete and universal/particular, out of which we fashion our analytic grids for discerning the colonial inflections of political thought, are themselves woven into historically determinate modes of social reproduction. If we are to dissect Locke's universal claims and historical abstractions, perhaps a more accurate scalpel than Euclidian space or post-Newtonian algebra would be "capital," which is universal in its conceptual logic and global in its geographic horizon, and "commodity" in and through which social relations are mediated through abstract exchangeable value.<sup>370</sup> If this sounds like crude materialism, one need recall that the specific Atlantic context that shaped the orientation of the British towards Amerindians was heavily commercialized by the standards of the time. In fact, what constituted the backbone of the British Atlantic, what propelled thousands of men and women from the British Isles to America and hurled many more from Africa to the Caribbean, what spurred settlements and plantations, what regularized transoceanic relations of production and exchange, in short, what held the British Atlantic together was a vast network of commodity chains in things and humans, driven by the ever-present dreams and plans of profit. One navigated the British Atlantic by the compass of commodity and capital much more reliably than one could Britain itself.

Viewed through this lens, Locke's universal claims for adjudicating property claims in America appear less as arbitrary markers of historical difference, as English parochialism usurping the seat of the universal, or as expressions of Locke's inability to perceive the cultural particularity of his own moral values. Under the "universal constituency" of Locke's theory of property, one can discern the vision of a new socioeconomic order lodged in the capitalist relations crystallizing in the Atlantic basin, a vision with global aspirations to bring mankind within its compass of private property, material productivity, and accumulation of value. That a

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<sup>370</sup> I discuss this point in length in Chapter I.

similar predilection to stake one's claims in universal grounds characterized the arguments of such dissimilar figures as Hugo Grotius (a Dutch jurist) and Josiah Child (a Tory political economist) should draw our attention to the colonial capitalist constellation of the seventeenth century, in which Locke and his contemporaries were invested to varying degrees and purposes. Since this emphasis on the material conditions of the Atlantic context exposes my argument to (for some, convenient) dismissals of economic reductionism, I should reiterate that my aim has been to embed, rather than reduce, Locke's theory of property in the field of concrete possibilities and relations of the seventeenth-century world-historical conjuncture, which structured available political and economic perceptions and priorities. And these perceptions and priorities were the province of not only men of power like Shaftesbury and their intellectual aides like Locke, but also people of middling sorts who invested in colonial trade or joint-stock companies, and even poor masses who indentured their labor in return for their passage to a new and hopefully more commodious life.

Secondly, applying the analytic of colonial political economy to Locke's theory of property helps elaborate in more concrete terms the notion of disavowal that I proposed in the previous chapter for interpreting liberal texts. My analysis of Locke's notion of money as a myth for furnishing a consensual fundament for colonial land appropriation moves our focus away from what the text enunciates to what it performs in its concrete historical context. It calls for reconsidering the tensions and ambiguities we encounter in Locke's theory of property as more than mere examples of the contradictory tendencies of liberal thought, be these inherent in its genetic code or induced by the personal involvement of the thinker in the colonial project. Rather, the analysis presented here refers Locke's theory simultaneously beyond the text itself and its micro-contextual illocutionary function, and illuminates how it codifies the commodity

relations of Atlantic colonial capitalism in natural jurisprudential vocabulary and inscribes America as natural commons within a liberal narrative of original consent. In this respect, Locke's theory of property *expresses* the contradictions of seventeenth-century colonial capitalism as a historically determinate transoceanic system of social reproduction, capturing the co-articulation of the liberal defense of private and commercial property relations in Britain and the illiberal establishment of the same relations in America. At the same time, Locke's theory *intervenes* for managing these concrete contradictions to the effect of contributing to the practical reproduction of Atlantic colonial capitalism. His universally consensual notion of money forms the crux of this intervention, insofar as it sutures the rift between the extra-legal nature of colonial land appropriations and the Britons' image of these appropriations as acts of peaceful, commercial, and universally beneficial settlement. Bracing in this way the liberal self-image of the British exploits against the disturbing implications of lawless conquest in the Atlantic, Locke's theory of property instantiates a crucial moment in the liberal misrecognition of colonial capitalism and the systemic authorization of colonial land appropriations.

When understood as at once an expression and an intervention, it becomes easier to discern the dynamic of disavowal in Locke's theory. Instead of denying and silencing the problem of extra-legal appropriation or simply acknowledging it as an inescapable contradiction, Locke acknowledges and pronounces the problem *eo nomine* and proceeds to a verbose articulation of narratives and fictions in order to de-problematize it for liberal sensibilities. Locke's interpolation of money in his theory of property caters to a fantastic trove of ideological resources for draping capitalism in liberal garbs, including myths of natural consent, oscillating spatial exclusion and temporal inclusion, human communities at once inside and outside mankind, and gray zones of subjectivity inhabited by "not irrational" individuals. Finally, these

conceptual maneuvers and fictions around money operate less as duplicitous strategies Locke employs to hoodwink his audience than “myths” in the anthropological sense of the term, that is, stories that Locke tells to himself and his British contemporaries for explaining their exploits in a vast, vagarious, and contradictory world. If Locke is not trying to blindfold his audience to the colonial illiberality of capitalism that is because his own image of it is essentially liberal.

Finally, the emphasis on Locke’s notion of money not only helps us discern subtler boundaries of exclusion than delineated by the colonial interpretations of Locke, but it also suggests hitherto unnoticed connections between England and America that cut across cultural lines. Embedding the problematic of exclusion in the distinct modes of social reproduction implied by money foregrounds economic complexity, social abstraction, and future orientation as criteria of hierarchization. It thereby brings together Amerindians and the British laboring poor on the common denominator of hand-to-mouth existence. By connecting English enclosures to American land appropriations under the sign of commercial agriculture, it structurally links the dispossessed of England with the soon-to-be dispossessed of America. It sets these two groups apart from the commercial-colonial entrepreneurs of Britain, whose privileged position in the monetary economy of the British Atlantic renders them the proper historical subjects of Locke’s accumulative paradigm. The “wild Indian” who subsists on the “spontaneous products of the earth” is in this respect akin to the “Labourer” whose “share, being seldom more than a bare subsistence, never allows that Body of Men time or opportunity to raise their Thoughts above that.”<sup>371</sup> When transposed to the register of Locke’s theory of subjectivity, this entrapment in the immediacy of subsistence directly contrasts with the workings of the faculty of abstraction, which “lifts the mind out of the given flow of sensation and allows it to stand in semisovereign

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<sup>371</sup> John Locke, *Some Considerations*, quoted in Edward J. Harpham, “Class, Commerce, and the State: Economic Discourse and Lockean Liberalism in the Seventeenth Century,” *The Western Political Quarterly* 38 (1985): 565-82.

sway over its own contents.”<sup>372</sup> Differential access to, and status in, a monetarized economy, therefore, conceivably stands indexical to the level of individual and social development in a scale ranging from commanding money for investment to merely subsisting in a monetary economy to being completely outside of monetarization; from money as capital (M-C-M’) to money as medium of exchange (C-M-C) to the total absence of money (C-C); from English capitalists to English working class to Native Americans.

Insofar as it enables us to perceive this socioeconomic and subjective developmental hierarchy, the focus on money can help us reinterpret a conundrum pointed out by Tully, who countered Macpherson’s thesis of possessive individualism with the accurate observation that the dominant mercantilist view of the English population in Locke’s time was one of “utilizable” individuals, not quite possessed of their capacities and pressed from above to the service of the state. Recasting these categories along class lines, we can add to the possessive individuals who command money as capital, on the one hand, the utilizable individuals who occupy a subordinate status in a monetary economy, and on the other, the discardable individuals who, until and unless they join the global monetary order, are to be swept aside by the tide of historical development. The gradation of socioeconomic status by quantitatively unequal and qualitatively different access to money, and the subordinate co-articulation of possessive, utilizable, and discardable individuals under the overarching vision of “possessive universalism” might offer a fresh perspective on one of the longest-standing debates on Locke’s political and economic allegiances.

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<sup>372</sup> Zuckert, *Natural Rights*, 283.

## CHAPTER III

### NOT A PARTNERSHIP IN PEPPER, COFFEE, CALICO OR TOBACCO: EDMUND BURKE AND THE VICISSITUDES OF IMPERIAL COMMERCE

#### Introduction

Society is indeed a contract ... but the state ought not to be considered as nothing better than a partnership agreement in a trade of pepper and coffee, callico or tobacco, or some other such low concern, to be taken up for a little temporary interest, and to be dissolved by the fancy of the parties ... it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born. Each contract of each particular state is but a clause in the great primeval contract of eternal society

Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*

Thus Edmund Burke set the dichotomous terms of his criticism of the natural jurisprudential theories of social contract, the extremities of which, he thought, impassioned the revolution in France and suffused the radical Lockean sermons of Dr. Richard Price at home. The antithesis between the venal, temporary contract in commodities on the one hand, and the great primeval contract between generations, on the other, has conventionally been interpreted as a classical expression of the conservative, traditionalist, and organicist moorings of Burke's social and political philosophy. Obversely, it has also been construed to mark Burke's anxieties over the disintegration of the inherited social relations under the mercurial pressures of the rising commercial-capitalist forces, embodied in the ascendancy of monied men. What has drawn no attention, however, is the *specificity* of the commodities subject to this contract which stands as the antithesis of Burke's "society" as such. *Pepper, coffee, callico, and tobacco*. The contract that, in its lowly status and fleeting duration, represented the mirror opposite and even the dissolution of constitutive bonds of society was of a *colonial capitalist* nature.

That "colonial capitalism" was *the* decisive historical reality that Burke had to grapple with during his political and intellectual career constitutes the principal insight behind this

chapter. At first sight this framing might seem to tread on familiar ground, given that there is a sizeable literature that examines Burke's forays into political economy, and another, equally sizeable, that explores his tarrying with the problems and conundrums of empire.<sup>373</sup> These two literatures provide us with two "Burke problems," which serve as useful departure points for this chapter. The first "Burke problem" has as its stake the economic soul of the author who once proclaimed that he has "made political oeconomy an object of my humble studies, from my very early youth to near the end of my service in parliament" (LNL, 159-60).<sup>374</sup> In the broad spectrum of positions on this issue, Burke's persona is depicted as an unequivocal capitalist<sup>375</sup> and an ideologue of the Whig commercial ideal,<sup>376</sup> an ardent critic of market society and a defender of the precapitalist morality of governance,<sup>377</sup> an enemy of the poor<sup>378</sup> and their champion,<sup>379</sup> a

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<sup>373</sup> These two debates, of course, do not come near exhausting the range of interpretive frames that have competed over Burke's true identity. For a concise and informative overview of this range of perspectives, see O'Neill, *Burke-Wollstonecraft Debate*, pp. 51-3.

<sup>374</sup> All of the primary texts cited in the chapter are from *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, ed. Paul Langford (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981). Abbreviations of the primary texts cited are as follows:

3<sup>rd</sup>L: *Third Letter on a Regicide Peace*

6<sup>th</sup>A: Speech on the Sixth Article of Impeachment

9<sup>th</sup>R: *The Ninth Report of the Select Committee*

AA: Speech on Almas Ali Khan

AC: *Address to the Colonists*

ER: Speech on Economic Reform

FB: Speech on Fox's India Bill

LNL: *Letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol*

NAD: Speech on Nabob of Arcot's Debts

POH: Speech on the Motion for Papers on Hastings

R: *Reflection on the Revolution in France*

S: *Thoughts and Details on Scarcity*

SC: Speech on Conciliation with America

SEC: Speech on Secret Committee

SNG: Sketch of a Negro Code

SOI: Speech on Opening of Impeachment

SUI: Speech on the Use of Indians

TPL: Tracts Relating to Popery Laws

<sup>375</sup> Crawford B. Macpherson, *Burke* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1980); Jerry Z. Muller, "Edmund Burke: Commerce, Conservatism, and the Intellectuals," in *The Mind and the Market: Capitalism in Modern European Thought* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002).

<sup>376</sup> John G. A. Pocock "Political Economy of Burke's Analysis of the French Revolution," in *Virtue, Commerce, History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Marshall "Edmund Burke and India"; Whelan, *Edmund Burke and India*.

<sup>377</sup> Bromwich, "Introduction"; Francis Canavan, *The Political Economy of Edmund Burke: The Role of Property in His Thought* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1995).

proponent of free trade<sup>380</sup> and the supporter of the mercantilist Navigation Acts.<sup>381</sup> These leave ample room for “ambivalent” Burkes in between, stretched between the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy,<sup>382</sup> between paternalism and capitalism,<sup>383</sup> or between early economic conservatism and late economic liberalism.<sup>384</sup>

The second Burke problem revolves around Burke’s efforts to retain and reform the British Empire, both in the Atlantic and especially in India, on which he valued himself “the most; most for the importance; most for the labor; most for the judgment; most for constancy and perseverance in the pursuit” (LNL, 159). Interpretations launched from as diverse fields as literary theory, imperial history, and political philosophy have cut from the cloth of Burke’s writings and speeches an entire wardrobe of guises. Some scholars present Burke as a defender of empire based on custom and shared culture<sup>385</sup> or providence and imperial responsibility,<sup>386</sup> others as a cosmopolitan thinker in the cause of a less exclusionary, more liberal, and culturally pluralist empire.<sup>387</sup> At times, he appears as an uneasy accomplice in the colonial project and its implicit guilt,<sup>388</sup> or as a founding figure of British imperialism who absolved the empire of its scandal.<sup>389</sup> At other times he is a true Whig who glorified empire as the vehicle for commercial

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<sup>378</sup> Himmelfarb, *Idea of Poverty*.

<sup>379</sup> Pitts, *A Turn to Empire*.

<sup>380</sup> P. J. Marshall, “Introduction,” to *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke, Vol. 5*, ed. P. J. Marshall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981); Whelan, *Edmund Burke and India*; Muller, “Edmund Burke.”

<sup>381</sup> Hampsher-Monk, “Introduction”; Winch, *Classical Political Economy*, and *Riches and Poverty*; Kohn and O’Neill, “A Tale of Two Indias.”

<sup>382</sup> Isaac Kramnick, *The Rage of Edmund Burke: Portrait of an Ambivalent Conservative*, (New York: Basic Books, 1977).

<sup>383</sup> Himmelfarb, *Idea of Poverty*.

<sup>384</sup> Semmel, *Rise of Free Trade Imperialism*.

<sup>385</sup> Hampsher-Monk, “Edmund Burke and Empire.”

<sup>386</sup> P. J. Marshall, “Introduction,” in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke, Vol. 7*, ed. Peter J. Marshall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), and “Burke and Empire,” in *Hanoverian Britain and Empire: Essays in Memory of Philip Lawson*, ed. Richard Connor, Clyve Jones, and Stephen Taylor (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1981).

<sup>387</sup> Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire*; Pitts, *A Turn to Empire*.

<sup>388</sup> Suleri, *Rhetoric of English India*.

<sup>389</sup> Dirks, *Scandal of Empire*.

grandeur and improvement<sup>390</sup> as well as for progress understood in terms of the civilizational categories of the Scottish Enlightenment.<sup>391</sup> Burke's imperialist dispositions – or lack thereof – and their specific character are therefore no less vexing than the question of his economic inclinations.

Each of these problems in understanding Burke's conception of political economy and the role of empire can be traced to the misconception that capitalism and colonialism are separate, aggregative phenomena. It is the contention of this chapter that these problems can be properly tackled only if one conceives colonialism and capitalism as constituting a single historical process of accumulation that is nonetheless multilayered and fractured, and socially, economically, and politically heterogeneous. Therefore, this chapter departs from the major premise that the perspective from which to interrogate Burke's thought is neither capitalism nor colonialism, but "colonial capitalism" as elaborated in Chapter I.

To briefly recapitulate, I understand the term colonial capitalism to describe the formative impact of colonial expansion on the development of global networks of capital accumulation, which are comprised of a heterogeneous array of relations of production and social control, most importantly forms of unfree labor and unequal exchange. In a recent essay, Jennifer Pitts has included among the "the British Empire's systemic injuries" "massive resource extraction, establishment of catastrophic systems of bonded labor, deindustrialization, entrenchment of "traditional" structures of authority, and insertion of subsistence farmers into often wildly unstable global market systems."<sup>392</sup> India's integration to global capital networks under the British rule involved the deindustrialization and peasantization of the Indian textile sector combined with the commercialization of agriculture, especially after the Permanent

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<sup>390</sup> Whelan, *Edmund Burke and India*.

<sup>391</sup> Kohn and O'Neill, "A Tale of Two Indias"; O'Neill, *The Burke-Wollstonecraft Debate*.

<sup>392</sup> Pitts, "Political Theory of Empire."

Settlement of Bengal in 1793.<sup>393</sup> While the dominant organization of production remained ostensibly non-capitalist, by the end of the eighteenth century peasant-based Indian agriculture had been enmeshed in the circuits of British and more broadly European capital. Indian peasants and agricultural laborers, working predominantly in the cultivation of cash crops like indigo, were bonded by forms of debt-peonage and forced to generate a surplus for the East India Company, landlords, financiers and agricultural entrepreneurs, in the form of tax, rent, and interest. Systemic exploitation of the peasantry primarily through non-market means, investment of agricultural tax revenues in financing exports to Europe and China, and the East India Company's manipulation of regional rivalries to expropriate local princes coalesced into a process of "colonial primitive accumulation," that is, extracting surplus from the subcontinent by means of legal and political force and absorbing the region into the global movement of capital, the epicenter of which was increasingly shifting to Great Britain.<sup>394</sup> Andrew Sartori lucidly summarizes the imbrication of coercion and capital in the commercialization of Indian agriculture in this period:

The cultivators were thus already positioned de facto as wage laborers producing surplus out of the capital of the planters. Advances functioned as wages foisted upon the cultivator through either the force of necessity (want of cash) or direct coercion (the threat of dispossession through rent enhancement or naked violence), and forcibly depressed to such a level as to ensure so that the product thus secured would return surplus value.<sup>395</sup>

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<sup>393</sup> For deindustrialization of Indian textile production, see Hameda Hossain, *The Company Weavers of Bengal: The East India Company and the Textile Production in Bengal, 1750-1813* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988). For the Permanent Settlement, see Ranajit Guha, *A Rule of Property for Bengal: An Essay on the Idea of Permanent Settlement* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), and Stokes, *English Utilitarians and India*. For the commercialization of agriculture, see Rajat Datta, *Society, Economy, and the Market: Commercialization in Rural Bengal, c. 1760-1800* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2000).

<sup>394</sup> India figures as one of the major colonial instances that receives fleeting mention in Marx's account of the history of primitive accumulation: "The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population of that continent, the beginnings of *the conquest and plunder in India*, and the conversion of Africa into a preserve for commercial hunting of blackskins, are all things which characterize the dawn of the era of capitalist production. These idyllic proceedings are the chief moments of primitive accumulation." Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, p. 915 (emphasis added). For a full discussion of colonial primitive accumulation, see Chapter I of this study.

<sup>395</sup> Sartori, *Bengal in Global Concept*, p. 57. Subjugation of the peasant mode of production in India to the imperatives of capital accumulation and the proliferation and intensification of unfree forms of labor are widely

The marked illiberality of this process as judged by the bar of contractual freedom and legal equality, or put differently, the incompatibility between the colonial manifestations of capitalism in India and its liberal self-image embodied in ideals of British commercial society, offers us a vantage point for reconsidering Burke's critique of Warren Hastings, and his effort to reform the Indian administration.

One implication of this perspective is that Burke's writings and speeches on India provide us with a glimpse into the broader contradictions that have traversed the history of capitalism and its colonial entanglements. In Burke, we find the combination of a pragmatic statesman and a metropolitan political economist, who theorized the imperial formation from the epicenter of its vast colonial capitalist networks. He was thus cognizant of the centrality of the empire and commerce to British survival and power. At the same time, he was wary of the dangers that the violent exploitation of the colonies by British capitalism posed to his much-cherished liberal image of the British nation and character.

One major objective of this chapter, then, is to confront the two Burke problems as two facets of a larger problem, namely, the contradiction between the violent colonial entanglements and the liberal self-image of capitalism in the late eighteenth-century British Empire. When viewed from this perspective, the problem ceases to pertain exclusively to Burke, and is revealed to be an historical and impersonal conundrum, of which Burke provides a historically specific and very perspicacious expression. As I discuss at length, Burke's rhetorical flourish on the vicissitudes of the British Empire articulates the broader intellectual aporias that follow from attempting to accommodate coercive capital accumulation in the colonies within a liberal cast of

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investigated in postcolonial Indian historiography. For such two excellent works, see Prakash, *Bonded Histories*, and Banaji, "Fictions of Free Labour. Also see, Kenneth Pomeranz and Steven Topik, *The World that Trade Created: Society, Culture, and the World Economy, 1400-the Present* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1999).

contractual freedom, equality, and civilized manners of a commercial society – ironically, a commercial society that materially depended on the surplus extraction and transfer from those very colonies it viewed with anxiety. Seen in this way, the ambivalences and tensions in Burke's thought vanish only to reappear as the products of a coherent attempt to embrace, on the one hand, liberal commercial values and constitutional maxims, and on the other, the coercive-colonial pedestal of British power and glory.

I develop this argument in four sections. The first section documents the material importance that Burke accorded to the Indian dominions for British power and prosperity. Burke had grave concerns about the impact of the East India Company's exploitative policies on the moral standing of Britain; however, given his irreducible imperial commitments, he had to deal with this problem through reform rather than decolonization. While Burke resorted to the classical idiom of "corruption" for expressing the challenge to the British self-image, I argue that this language in fact expressed a singularly modern problem, namely, the contradiction between the liberal values of Burke's "commercial ideal" and the universal violation of these values by Company policies in India. The second section provides a close analysis of Burke's "commercial ideal." I reconstruct from Burke's writings a vision of political and moral economy that endorsed the pursuit of material interest, an ethos of productivity, and self-regulating markets. Most importantly, Burke prescribed a wall of separation between political power and economic transactions, which sustained legal equality and contractual freedom that were indispensable for public utility and equity. While Burke endorsed capital accumulation in the liberal, metropolitan self-image of commerce as a voluntary and mutually beneficial relation, this image was profoundly jeopardized by the colonial expropriation and exploitation in India. The third section builds up a detailed inventory the colonial subversions of the commercial ideal. I argue that

Burke not only diagnosed this subversion but more importantly realized that the subversion arose from the commercial ideal itself. Burke's attempt to salvage the liberality of commerce hinged on the containment of its colonial eruptions, which threatened to reveal the unsettling truth of self-interested exchange and the profit motive. In other contexts, Burke passionately defended the accumulative urge that motivated capitalism, but he was appalled when that urge was amalgamated by political power and turned into outright expropriation and exploitation, both of which were offensively visible in India. Burke's inveterate denunciation of Company rule in India can be understood as an attempt to shore up the increasingly blurred distinctions between civilized commerce and unabashed plunder, enlightened self-interest and unbridled rapacity, and mercantile principle and political rule. In short, Burke was intensely aware of how the liberal self-image of the market society in the metropole was endangered by its violent and "primitive" buttresses in the colonies. Against this theoretical background, I review Burke's later work (1780 onwards) as an attempt to come to grips with colonial capitalism of the late-eighteenth century. The final section focuses on Burke's position on questions of cultural alterity arising from colonial encounters, and investigates the civilizational hierarchies that underwrote his defense of the Indians under British rule. I contend that Burke's championing of the rights of Indians was subtended by the teleological social categories of the Scottish Enlightenment, and can thus be distinguished from his derogatory attitude towards Native Americans and Africans. Burke's view of India as a commercial society afforded that country the protection from the arrogance of revolutionary reason which he so vigorously fought in France and Britain. I argue that the sublime social complexity of commercial societies, which marked the terminus of mankind's historical progress, was the rampart that ought to stand between India and the rude hand of the British. The absence of such complexity in the "primitive societies" of America and Africa,

however, made them both normatively and materially vulnerable to the “primitive accumulation” of British colonialism and its austere civilizing dominion.

### **I. British Empire, British Self-Image**

The tensions between the metropolitan theories of commerce and the colonial forms of exploitation and accumulation on which metropolitan commerce depends constitute what I call the “dialectics of commerce.” Before explicating this contradiction, which preoccupied Burke and motivated his thinking about India, it is important to establish that Burke was *not* an anti-imperialist, as was the case with certain political economists and Philosophical Radicals of his time.<sup>396</sup> The major textual support for an anti-imperialist interpretation of Burke comes from his speech on Fox’s India Bill, where he stated, “if we are not able to contrive some method of governing India *well*, which will not of necessity become the means of governing Great Britain *ill*, a ground is laid for their eternal separation; but none for sacrificing the people of that country to our constitution” (FB, 383). The following sentence (less frequently quoted), however, negates the anti-imperialist implications of his passage, as Burke declares that he is “far from being persuaded that such incompatibility of interest does at all exist” and that the good government of India and the integrity of the British constitution are intimately entwined (FB, 383). P. J. Marshall describes this view as “triumphalist” and notes the surprising alacrity with which Burke incorporated India into the British Empire at a time when the fear of corruption and decline

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<sup>396</sup> The classical example is Adam Smith’s denunciation of the colonial system in the *Wealth of Nations*. Adam Smith, *An Inquiry Into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, R. H. Campbell and A. S. Skinner (eds) vol. II of the *Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1981), Book IV. In addition to free traders like Smith, utilitarians like Bentham and Mill, armed with Say’s Law and the Ricardian theory of rent, justified their “scientific” misgivings over retaining colonies on the grounds of “economy.” A useful overview of the eighteenth-century anti-imperialist arguments from a political economy perspective can be found in Winch, *Classical Political Economy*. For a more detailed and revisionist treatment of the same subject, see Semmel, *Rise of Free Trade Imperialism*. For accounts that emphasize the influence of moral and political categories in eighteenth-century critiques of imperialism, see Muthu, “Adam Smith’s Critique; Rothschild, “Global Commerce; Pitts, *A Turn To Empire*, chaps. 2, 4 and 5; Uday Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire*.

inspired by classical interpretations of Roman history instilled his contemporaries with doubt, hesitation, and anxiety.<sup>397</sup> Burke's frequent support for the retention of colonial possessions reinforces the premise that Burke's fundamental view of empire was positive. In 1783, Burke accused the East India Company and its servants in India not only "of cruelly oppressing and tyrannizing over millions of men" but also of "*destroying an empire*" (FB, 448; italics mine). Two years later, Burke warned the House of Commons about "the abuses which are subverting the *fabric of your empire*" and "the shades of eternal night [that] shall veil *our eastern dominions* from our view" (NAD, 491; italics mine). In order to preserve "the British Empire in the east," Burke then invited the British ruling elite to "stretch and expand" their political vision in proportion to their imperial project and to formulate "a general, comprehensive, well-connected, and well-proportioned view of the whole of our dominions, and a just sense of their true bearings and relations" (NA, 492).<sup>398</sup> This was compounded by his belief that the House of Commons had the means to show the world that "we deserve the superintendence of an empire as large as this kingdom ever held" (NA, 488).<sup>399</sup>

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<sup>397</sup> Burke himself shared these anxieties, as observed by almost every Burke scholar. Nonetheless, he did not despair, for he thought it possible to counter the destructive effects of empire through a Ciceronian politics based on protection, justice, and parliamentary oversight. See Marshall, "Burke and Empire," p. 290-1. In an earlier article, Marshall provides a broad and very useful account of the general anxiety over the Indian empire that characterized the British political culture until the 1790s. See Marshall, "A Free Though Conquering People". For Marshall's "triumphalist" interpretation of Burke, see Marshall, "Introduction," esp. pp. 25-7.

<sup>398</sup> Necessity of an imperial political vision was previously asserted by Burke on the American question. See *Address to the Colonists*, p. 285 for Burke's views on improving the English constitution in order to accommodate the increase in dominions and population.

<sup>399</sup> Burke's agenda to keep the imperial structure intact dates back to his conciliatory position on the conflict with the American colonists. His speeches and writings in this period are sprinkled with Whiggish eulogies for the British Empire as an instrument of improvement, progress, and civilization. In "Speech on Conciliation," English colonists are praised for turning "a savage wilderness into a *glorious empire*" and making "the most extensive and the only honourable conquests, not by destroying but by promoting the wealth, the number, and the happiness of the human race" (SC, 166; italics mine). In the same speech, Burke underscored his steady opposition to the measures that "may bring on the destruction of this empire," and dismissed Josiah Tucker's call for secession (informed by free trade principles) as "childish" (SC, 128). For a recent appraisal of Burke's defense of the Atlantic Empire, see Hampsher-Monk, "Edmund Burke and Empire." Burke's writings on the American empire will be revisited in the last section of this essay, particularly with respect to the comparative civilizational categories that applied to the peoples of America, Africa, and India.

Burke's embrace of empire has been attributed to several reasons. The first is his belief that God, for inscrutable reasons, had providentially led the British down the path of dominion and conquest in India.<sup>400</sup> The second line of interpretation focuses on the constitutional connection of the British government to the affairs of India through corporate charters and grants.<sup>401</sup> Providence and jurisdictional ties mandated a "responsible government" in India, a notion that prioritized duty over dominion, protection over administration, and the wellbeing of the subjects over the enrichment of the rulers.<sup>402</sup> The political economic factors behind Burke's embrace of empire have been relatively ignored, and where mentioned at all, they have been

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<sup>400</sup> The belief that the imperial expansion of Britain was goaded by the hand of God consistently colored Burke's works on empire. "There we are" Burke wrote in the Speech on Fox's India Bill, "placed by the Sovereign Disposer: and we must do the best we can in our situation" (FB, 404). Divine dispensation played a crucial role in the defense of the Indian empire due to the historical and cultural difference between the rulers and the ruled. Against such alterity, historical ties, cultural kinship, or political consent, which fueled Burke's advocacy of empire in America, became unavailable for the same cause in India. Invoking divine design enabled the British to rule by providence if not by consent, and in trust derived from God if not from Indians. The wrath that the breach of this trust would draw was equally providential; "we had already lost an empire" said Burke, "perhaps, as a punishment for the cruelties authorized in the other" (AA, 477). In the inaugural speech at the impeachment of Warren Hastings, providence appears as that divine and natural law which binds every ruler to the moral universal principles of justice and equity (SOI, 352). I would hasten to add, against any instrumental interpretation of Burke's providential arguments, that Burke expounded such arguments in the case of American empire as well. Therefore his resort to God's design in the case of India is not a self-conscious strategic act but the reflection of sincere conviction. My emphasis here falls on the particular role that the idea of providence performs in navigating the Indian problem. For Burke's providentialist arguments in the American debates, see "Speech on Conciliation," p. 166, and *Letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol*, p. 316. On Burke and providence, see Marshall, "Burke and Empire," p. 297, and "Edmund Burke and India," pp. 256-7; Whelan, *Edmund Burke and India*, pp. 6, 257.

<sup>401</sup> Robert Travers notes that the eighteenth century English political thought was by no means unfamiliar with such constitutional entanglements between distant and alien geographies. A complex web of imperial jurisdiction and a "coherent imperial constitution" were believed to tie together the distant parts of the empire. P. J. Marshall traces the formation of a unitary notion of the British Empire back to the Seven Years War and concludes that such a unitary notion informed Burke's ideas on empire. See Travers, "Contested Despotisms: Problems of Liberty in British India," in *Exclusionary Empire: English Liberty Overseas, 1600-1900*, ed. Jack P. Greene (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), esp. pp. 200-1; Marshall, "Burke and Empire," p. 290. My own evidence for the constitutional connection comes from Burke's inaugural speech at the impeachment, where he maintains that the quasi-sovereign powers that devolved upon the Company from the crown, and the administrative powers (especially the *diwani*) that was granted to the company by the Mogul emperor created a web of interconnected and overlapping jurisdictions in Bengal (SOI, 281-2). For an excellent treatment of the sovereign underpinnings and *political* capacities of English chartered companies, and in particular the East India Company, see Stern, "A Politie of Civill & Military Power."

<sup>402</sup> The classical expression of this position can be found in P. J. Marshall's essays. Bromwich places a similar emphasis on trust and duty as the major link between metropolitan statesmen and their imperial subjects. For Whelan the duties of the just and beneficent imperial rule even encompasses the responsibility to reform the bad customs of the Indians. See Marshall, "Introduction," pp. 25-7; "Edmund Burke and India," pp. 256, 261-3; "Burke and Empire," pp. 290-6; Bromwich, "Introduction," pp. 13, 16; Whelan, *Edmund Burke and India*, 236, 271, 278.

incidentally appended to the providential and constitutional explanations.<sup>403</sup> Underplaying the political economic dimension, however, risks overlooking very important material considerations that visibly subtended Burke's imperial attitude and that deserve a much closer attention.

The contribution of the imperial structure to Britain's wealth and power entered into Burke's imperial rationale as early as 1775. Discoursing about the strife with the American colonies, he reminded his audience of the meteoric rise of the colonial commerce and its centrality to British prosperity, as well as how "interwoven" it was into an imperial texture in the Atlantic triangle of Britain-North America-West Indies (SC 112-6).<sup>404</sup> In Smithian fashion, Burke prescribed a light and prudent government for administering the colonial economy, which would spur private enterprise and industry, promote prosperity, and thereby secure a solid revenue base for the state (SC, 163; AC, 280-1). As regards the Indian dominions, Burke was more emphatic about the "interest which this nation [Britain] has in the commerce and revenues of that country" (FB, 381). In an impassioned plea to investigate the Company government in India and its political connections in the parliament, Burke warned the House that "[t]he greatest body of your revenue, your most numerous armies, your most important commerce, the richest source of your public credit ... are on the point of being converted into a mystery of the state"

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<sup>403</sup> For Marshall, Burke's conception of empire is clearly "premodern" and evinces a concern with "honor and reputation rather than with power and profit, which would be incidental benefits." Marshall, "Burke and Empire," p. 297. Strikingly, analyses of Burke's political economic thought rarely incorporate the importance he accords to imperial commerce. Such analyses predominantly focus on his criticism of the East India Company from a *laissez-faire* perspective or on the corrupting effects of imperial revenue on domestic politics. See, among others, Hampsher-Monk, "Introduction"; Macpherson, *Burke*; Winch, *Riches and Poverty*, chaps. 7 and 8; Pocock, "Political Economy of Burke's Analysis"; Muller, "Edmund Burke."

<sup>404</sup> One should remember that Burke's advocacy of colonial commerce diverged from Smith's. While Smith contended that the dissolution of the Navigation Laws would benefit, not hamper colonial commerce, Burke's free trade ideal remained *within* imperial borders. See Canavan, *Political Economy of Edmund Burke*, p. 122; Winch, *Riches and Poverty*, 210. For instance, in Burke's "Speech on Conciliation" one finds a jab at the Smithian free trade argument that the colonial trade "has drawn the juices from the rest of the body" (SC, 114). Cf. Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, Book 4, chap. 7, esp. pp 27-54.

(NA, 491).<sup>405</sup> These remarks, especially when read against the eighteenth-century British anxieties regarding the imperial ambitions of France, provide plausible evidence that for Burke British Empire was a necessary condition for national survival, not to mention power, prosperity, and reputation. This meant that decolonization was not an option, and that the moral conundrums of the empire had to be addressed and resolved *within* the imperial framework. It is only in the light of such irreducible imperial commitments that it becomes possible to properly grasp the moral vexations that colonial capitalism represented for Burke's political thought. Whatever his misgivings might have been, Burke, as a British statesman who was personally and professionally invested in the British polity, had to tarry with empire.

The major moral problem that constantly erupted around the Indian question regarded the image and character of the British nation. Depending on the specific issue that Burke was addressing, he imagined the British political integrity to be judged by the people and princes of India, other European nations, "all the world," and even God himself. Sometimes imploring, sometimes threatening, but always suffused by a sense of urgency, the tone and the consistency of Burke's pleas leave no doubt he was sincerely agonized by what he perceived to be the dissolution of the liberal values that defined the English political tradition. Most importantly, it was the Eastern empire, the endowment of providence and a most prolific source of commercial wealth for Britain, that was breeding despicable, petty, corrupt, pecuniary behavior amongst the Britons, which marred the British name and sapped the moral vitals of the British constitution. Below, I explicate the peculiar contradiction that pertains to empire and commerce in three steps. First, I explore the nature and the expanse of the threat that Burke perceived in this contradiction. Second, I outline the image of the British society that Burke upheld as well as the moral

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<sup>405</sup> Twelve years after this speech, and in an unusually close examination of the political arithmetic of the British economy, Burke would note that out of a total of 10,5 million pounds of British balance of trade in 1796, a staggering 4 million (near forty per cent) was comprised by the East and West Indies trade (3<sup>rd</sup>L, p. 384).

principles on which this image stood. Finally, I specify how and why British rule in India systematically violated these moral principles and jeopardized the British self-image. Having thus triangulated the tensions of colonial capitalism, I conclude with a discussion of the extent to which Burke was successful in diagnosing, addressing, and navigating these tensions.

A survey of Burke's major speeches and writings on empire yields an extensive inventory of his deep commitment to an idealized image of the British polity. In his much acclaimed "Speech on Conciliation," England was hailed as a "great, commercial nation," "a nation, in whose veins the blood of freedom circulates" (SC, 114, 130). This familiar coupling of commerce and freedom retraced the ideological contours of the seventeenth-century British political culture, and intimated the classical conundrum of reconciling freedom and empire. As masterfully demonstrated by David Armitage, the seventeenth-century English response to the specter of a second Rome was to re-imagine the English empire as "Protestant, commercial, maritime, and free,"<sup>406</sup> which, galvanized by the agriculturalist ideal of improvement and productivity, would form the backbone of Whig imperial ideology and persist well into the nineteenth century.<sup>407</sup> Reflecting this image and its origins, Burke stated that denying the American colonists their liberties would necessarily "subvert the maxims" that kept alive the English spirit of liberty (SC, 127). During the war with the colonies, Burke would begrudgingly watch his early premonition come true as the British began "ruling half the empire by a mercenary sword." "Liberty is being made unpopular to Englishmen. Contending for an imaginary power, we are acquiring the spirit of domination, and to lose the relish of honest equality" (LSB, 328-9).

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<sup>406</sup> Armitage, *Ideological Origins*, p. 8.

<sup>407</sup> Anthony Pagden emphasizes the centrality of political imaginary to imperial ideologies, and notes that it is "in the domain of political and cultural self-imagining that the most enduring link between the first [American] and second [Indian] empires is to be found." Pagden, *Lords of All the World*, p. 10.

If the free and commercial image of the British Empire and the principles of liberty and honest equality were already hard to uphold on the American front, they were even more slippery, awkward, and difficult to apply to the Indian dominions. For in India, the British presence was no longer maritime and commercial, and the subjects were neither Christian (let alone Protestant) nor free. Fortified in territorial possessions acquired by conquest, wielding administrative, judicial, and revenue powers over vast and culturally alien populations, and thoroughly convinced of India's perennial tradition of "Asiatic despotism,"<sup>408</sup> the Company in India resembled the Roman garrisons in Egypt rather than the Athenian colonies in Asia Minor. The Greek model of colonization had always been cherished in the English political imaginary as natural, voluntary and based on historical ties, whereas the Roman model was invariably associated with the "spirit of domination" that Burke dreaded.<sup>409</sup> Against this background, it is not surprising that he sounded more alarmed when remarking on the British self-image as refracted through *imperium* in India.

Burke's earliest speech linking British conduct in India and the image of the nation targeted the Company's clandestine involvement in the wars between Indian rulers.<sup>410</sup> Disturbed

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<sup>408</sup> The British preconceptions of Asiatic despotism and their impact on the practices of imperial governance in India are given detailed treatment in two essays by Robert Travers. See, Travers, "Contested Despotism" and "Ideology and British Expansion in Bengal, 1757-72," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 33 (2005): 7-27.

<sup>409</sup> Of Burke's contemporaries, Adam Smith offers an influential contrast between the virtues of the Greek model of colonization (independence, settlement, and kinship) and the vices of its Roman counterpart (conquest, domination, and inequality), which was gaining traction in the late-eighteenth century. This distinction also prefigures the nineteenth-century dichotomy between the "first" and the "second" British Empires, the former comprising the republican colonies in the Atlantic, the latter denoting the Asian possessions that began with commercial factories and ended in territorial dominion. For a meticulous discussion of this dichotomy, its place in the British political imaginary, and its implications for empire-building, see, Armitage, *Ideological Origins*, and Travers, *Ideology and Empire*.

<sup>410</sup> The East India Company had been resorting to extraordinary means of raising revenue, one of which was to engage in "subsidiary alliances" whereby the Company troops would be deployed for "protecting" local rulers in return for a fee. In addition to this racketeering scheme, the Company also engaged in mercenary operations by lending British troops to its local "allies" for their military campaigns. Not surprisingly, this strategy antagonized certain *nawabs*. Hyder Ali of Mysore was one such prince in Southern India, at whose hands the British suffered a severe defeat during the Second Mysore War. The defeat prompted the House of Commons to set up a Secret Committee of Investigation to inquire into the issue. Burke made a stand against the Secret Committee, contending

by the possibility that such strategy was alienating the local rulers and could drive them to court other European powers, Burke resented that Indians considered “the most despotic empires as more liberal than Britain” (SEC 136-7). The proper solution would be to completely publicize the inquiry into the Company’s Indian dealings, and if the House showed the political integrity of chastising its own citizens for their misconduct in distant colonies, “Europe would stand astonished and awed by your conduct” (SEC 138). When Burke drafted and defended Fox’s India Bill in 1783,<sup>411</sup> he demanded administrative reform in India for the vindication of “humanity, justice, and every principle of true policy,” on which he predicated the British self-image. The reform would “turn out a matter of great disgrace or great glory to the whole British nation. We are on a conspicuous stage, and the world marks our demeanor” (FB 381). The Company’s shady dealings, breaches of contract, and mercenary wars for pecuniary aggrandizement constituted a “most atrocious violation of public faith” and “damned our reputation in India” (FB 395, 397). Even more perturbing was the collusion between the delinquent company servants and the Court of Directors in London, which, by perpetuating the abuses in India, brought repugnance upon “*the honour and policy of this nation, ...great calamities on India, and enormous expences on the East India Company*” (FB 438; italics in the

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that a parliamentary Select Committee would be a more proper body to look into the causes of the war and the subsequent defeat. Burke’s proposal would eventually be defeated, and a Secret Committee established.

<sup>411</sup> One should note that Burke did not have grave concerns regarding the British exploits in India until the early 1780s. As of 1781 he still defended the chartered rights of the East India Company against the encroachments of the Parliament and the Crown. He became acquainted with Indian affairs during his capacity as a member of the Select Committee in 1781-1783. The Committee investigated the conflict of jurisdiction between the Council of Bengal and the Supreme Court of Bengal, the latter having been formed by North’s Regulating Act in 1773 in order to curtail the abusive practices of the Company servants in India. One can plausibly state that in 1781 Burke’s stance on the Indian question was still uncertain. While critical of the Company’s dealings with the local rulers, he nonetheless defended its independence from government and from the Supreme Court of Bengal (he also proposed the Bengal Judicature Bill that would curtail powers of the Supreme Court). Burke’s position would dramatically change by 1783. He would call for the abrogation of the Company charter and begin stressing the “universal laws of morality” over and against chartered rights. To observe this shift, compare his “Speech on State of East India Company” and “Speech on Bengal Judicature Bill,” both delivered in 1781, to his “Speech on Fox’s India Bill” in 1783. In the course of his inquiries, Burke was heavily influenced by the information provided by Philip Francis, a recalled member of the Council of Bengal, an inveterate enemy of Warren Hastings, and an English physiocrat whose plans for India would shape Burke’s drafting of the Fox’s India Bill.

original).<sup>412</sup> Harnessing together universal moral principles, sound government, and the British reputation, Burke called upon the house to vote for “destroying a tyranny that exists to the disgrace of this nation, and the destruction of so large a part of the human species” (FB 451).

Burke’s “Speech on Almas Ali Khan” was likewise satiated by alarm over the “disgraceful brand,” “indelible stain,” “ignominy and abhorrence” that stuck to the British honour and character (AA 474-5). Burke was convinced that the infamy of the Indian plunder and oppression had overflowed the boundaries of India. It had drawn the “scorn and derision of the world,” and “interested the curiosity and roused the indignation of all Europe, and ... could descend to posterity unbroken” (AA 462). The same concern was repeated in “Speech on Nabob of Arcot’s Debts,” which asserted the futility of trying to “separate it [India] from our public interest and national reputation,” and summoned the “audience formed by the other States of Europe ... the discerning and critical company before which [the British government] acts” (NAD 550, 552). “The estimation of all Europe” as the bar for judging the British image was once again raised in a motion for paper on Hastings (PH, 54).

Burke’s obsession with the test to which the British self-image was put by the imperial rule in India, and the global spectatorship to which it was thereby exposed, rose to a crescendo in Burke’s inaugural speech at the opening of Hastings Impeachment. It is worth quoting at length:

My Lords, it is not only the interest of a great Empire which is concerned, which is now a most considerable part of the British Empire; but, my Lords, the credit and honour of the British nation will itself be decided by this decision. My Lords, they will stand or fall thereby. We are to decide by the case of this gentleman whether the crimes of individuals are to be turned into public guilt and national ignominy, or whether this nation will convert these offences, which have thrown a transient shade on its glory, into a judgment that will reflect on the permanent lustre, honour, justice and humanity of this Kingdom (SOI, 271).

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<sup>412</sup> Burke’s bundling of the national reputation, Company interests, and the well-being of the natives is an enduring theme in his works on India, and reappears almost identically in his “Speech on Pitt’s India Bill” (1784), p. 457.

The matters were further complicated, however, as issues of material power and glory compounded the universal principles of justice and humanity that distinguished Britain:

Situated as this Kingdom is – and, thank God, an object of envy to the rest of the world for its greatness and its power – its conduct, in that very elevated situation to which it has arisen, will undoubtedly be scrutinized (SOI, 277).

Britain's economic and political rigor, obviously owing in great part to its imperial possessions, could raise doubts about the manner in which these were obtained. These passages hint, subtly but crucially, at Burke's concern to ascertain before the British, the European, and the Indian public that imperial and commercial grandeur could be made compatible with moral conduct and good government. Burke's efforts to salvage the imperial framework and its material benefits while maintaining a morally upright image of Britain as the champion of universal humanity would culminate in his decade-long endeavors to impeach Hastings, reform the Company, and "restore" the empire to its moral purity.<sup>413</sup>

So much for the *extent* of the threat that Burke perceived in the Indian dominions. But what was the *nature* of the threat? What was Burke's idealized image of Britain, and what were the particulars of the British conduct in India that made it so offensive to this self-image? The conventional answer to this question comes in the form of political "corruption." The influx of plundered "Eastern riches" rekindled the classical fears of Eastern corruption, which burdened the once-virtuous Roman republic with the golden chains of the Eastern provinces and dragged it in to the abyss of dissolution and collapse.<sup>414</sup> The specter of Rome was incarnated in what Burke named "Indianism." The term referred to a political network or a "cabal" formed by the

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<sup>413</sup> Earlier interpretations of the Hastings Impeachment as a spectacular act of exorcism include Suleri, *Rhetoric of English India*, chap. 3; Dirks, *Scandal of Empire*, chap. 3; Whelan, *Edmund Burke and India*, p. 101, ff. For the impeachment as Burke's *personal exorcism* of his bourgeois personality, see Kramnick, *Rage of Edmund Burke*, pp. 131-3.

<sup>414</sup> The exemplary formulation of this interpretation can be found in Hampsher-Monk, "Introduction." Marshall, Bromwich, and Whelan pursue the same line of explanation. See Marshall, "Edmund Burke and India," "Edmund Burke and India," and the introductions to the *Writings and Speeches*, Volumes 5, 6, and 7; Bromwich, "Introduction"; Whelan *Edmund Burke and India*, especially chap. 2.

Company servants in India, the Court of Proprietors and the Court of Directors in London, and the most disastrous of all, a growing number of members of parliament who owed their seats to the money and influence of the Company and their allegiance to the Company's interests.<sup>415</sup>

The most succinct encapsulation of the corrupt dynamic of Indianism can be found in a dreadful image that Burke conjured up in his speech on the Sixth Article of Impeachment: "These people pour in upon us everyday. They not only bring with them the wealth they have, but they bring with them into our country the vices by which they were acquired," with many more awaiting to "let loose all the corrupt wealth of India acquired by the oppression of that country to the corruption of all liberties." (6<sup>th</sup>A, 62-3).<sup>416</sup> Burke frequently adduced Roman precedents as he inveighed against the "guilty riches of the East" (6<sup>th</sup>A, 61) and the provincial corruption that was making "inroads into the vitals of the state" (PH, 63). There are many more expressions redolent of the classical fears of political-corruption-via-riches in Burke's speeches. When taken together with his providential rhetoric and his suspicion of monied wealth, these remarks make for the argument that Burke's was a "premodern political conception of empire,"<sup>417</sup> and his main objective in imperial reform was to salvage the "precapitalist morality

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<sup>415</sup> Burke's portents were somewhat vindicated as the King used Fox's India Bill as an excuse to dismiss the Fox-North coalition, and Pitt's electoral victory in 1784 was indebted to considerable support by the India interests. Paul Benfield, a merchant who made his fortune in Madras, in part by funding local wars through expensive loans, was for Burke the incarnation of the corrupt Indian wealth in British politics.

<sup>416</sup> Burke's anxious diagnosis of the Indian influence goes back to 1783, even before the Indian influence would help Pitt strip the Rockinghamites of the governmental seat. In "Speech on Fox's India Bill," the returned company servants "loaded with odium and with riches" are depicted as a pestilence that infiltrates the body politic of the English elite: "they marry into your families; they enter into your senate; they ease your estates by loans; they raise their value by their demand" (FB 443, 403). Two years later, back in parliamentary opposition, Burke is more explicit in his indictment of Paul Benfield who had "no fewer than eight members in the last parliament," ministers of the Pitt administration, and Henry Dundas, a "prosecutor turned protector" for securing political protection for the Indian delinquents (NA, 541-552). In a masterful passage during the impeachment, he cautions the House, "today the Commons of Great Britain prosecute the delinquents of India. Tomorrow, the delinquents of India will be the Commons of Great Britain" (6<sup>th</sup>A, 63). The same idea is repeated in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, where the continual greatness of the House is predicated on keeping "the breakers of law in India from becoming the makers of law in England" (R, 96)

<sup>417</sup> Marshall, "Introduction," pp. 34-5.

of governance of England”<sup>418</sup> and restore “political moralism” to imperial rule.<sup>419</sup>

While this interpretation of Burke’s anxieties is at first glance plausible, I think it remains superficial and incomplete. A closer examination of the normative principles that Indianism violated reveals that the classical language of corruption was the medium in which Burke expressed a novel problem. I argue that Burke’s discourse on *corruption qua amalgamation of politics and commerce*, that is, the use of political power for material aggrandizement and the purchase of political power through wealth, should be read as an index to a uniquely modern contradiction. This contradiction is between, on the one hand, the liberal self-image of capitalism, which envisions commerce as a voluntary contractual transaction between juridically equal individuals in a free market devoid of political power, and on the other, the historical role of primitive accumulation in the genealogy of capitalism, which depends on the deployment of political power and extra-economic coercion for the maintenance of the conditions of capital accumulation.<sup>420</sup> The Indian wealth carried off to England and invested as capital significantly contributed to the accumulation of capital in the metropole, yet the methods of extracting and transferring that surplus appeared reprehensible by the very categories that the British metropole imagined itself. Burke was a perceptive observer of this contradiction and tried to articulate and navigate it by resorting to a syncretic ideological arsenal comprising physiocratic political economy, ancient constitutionalism, Whig history, stadial theory, and classical language.<sup>421</sup>

Recasting Burke as an eighteenth-century intellectual wrestling with the tensions of colonial

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<sup>418</sup> Bromwich, “Introduction,” p. 29.

<sup>419</sup> Whelan, *Edmund Burke and India*, especially pp. 14 and 275-291.

<sup>420</sup> Expressed in terms more readily available Burke, Burke’s image of Britain was that of a commercial society yet the colonial extensions and of inflections “commerce” offended the civilized sensibility of the commercial ideal itself.

<sup>421</sup> Shifting the lens from the philosophical systematicity of Burke’s rhetoric to the novelty of the challenge he faced (a challenge for which no adequate theoretical language had yet been developed) puts in perspective the charges of incoherence leveled at Burke. For a classical example of the charge of incoherence, see Pocock’s “Burke and Ancient Constitution.”

capitalism (tensions that were becoming too palpable to ignore) promises to remove some of the apparent incoherencies in his thought that have fueled the “Burke problems.”<sup>422</sup>

Burke conceived of Britain as a “commercial society” that incorporated an agrarian capitalist economy based on private property in land, agricultural improvement, and wage labor; specialization, technical division of labor, and efficiency in manufactures; a large and highly monetarized national market in consumer and capital goods; a complex system of credit and national debt; and a legal structure that reproduced these conditions by securing private property and enforcing contracts between legally free and equal persons. He not only affirmed this economic reality, but in a somewhat un-Burkean fashion elevated its principles to a normative theory of political economy.<sup>423</sup> A close survey of Burke’s ideas on political economy shows that he espoused a physiocratic variant of capitalism, and, true to the nature of eighteenth-century political economy as a *new moral economy*,<sup>424</sup> articulated a set of liberal principles of economic fairness. These principles, woven into what I call the “commercial ideal,” comprised the free

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<sup>422</sup> This approach also removes some of the awkwardness that pertains to ascribing Burke premodern political preconceptions and modern economic ideas, as does Marshall when he writes, “classical antiquity might have inspired Burke with a belief that empire should be built upon principles of honour, but he was very much a man of his time in his conviction that trade between equals could only be mutually beneficial to both sides.” Marshall, “Edmund Burke and India,” pp. 257-8.

<sup>423</sup> On this point, I agree with Macpherson, Muller, and Himmelfarb that by the late-eighteenth century, the fundamental features of a capitalist economy were more or less in place in England, and Burke’s defense of the existing political economic system was therefore tantamount to a defense of the commercial-capitalist economy. However, as David McNally rightly observes, one needs to avoid reading back *industrial capitalism* into the eighteenth-century political economy. Political economy in the eighteenth-century was primarily concerned with explaining the dynamics of capitalist relations in what was still predominantly an agrarian economy. See McNally, *Political Economy*.

<sup>424</sup> Whether classical political economy was the death knell of the classical-Christian “moral economy” or the codification of a new moral economy has been the subject of intense debate that usually centers on the figure of Adam Smith. Himmelfarb rejects the argument that Adam Smith de-moralized man and economy and harkens to Schumpeter in asserting that the *Wealth of Nations* formulated a “new kind of moral economy” with self-interest as a core “moral principle.” The invisible hand, too, served a moral function, she argues, by connecting the pursuit of self-interest to common good. Himmelfarb *Idea of Poverty*, pp. 46-54. Sankar Muthu elaborates on Smith’s conception of “commerce” as a fundamentally moral category, which harbored utopian impulses of a global network of communication that would foster peace, respect for cultural alterity, and universal prosperity. Muthu, “Adam Smith’s Critique.” David McNally, follows a similar line of conjecture as regards the eighteenth-century pre-Ricardian political economists. McNally, *Political Economy*, pp. xi-xvi. For a classic statement of the “end of moral economy” argument, see E. P. Thompson, “Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century,” *Past and Present* 50 (1971): 76-136.

pursuit of material interest, ethos of industry and efficiency, universal benefit through economic growth, truth and justice of the market, and contractual freedom and *laissez-faire* in agricultural and labor markets.

## **II. Burke's Commercial Ideal**

The conviction that the free pursuit of material interest, combined with a productive ethic of labor,<sup>425</sup> would simultaneously improve personal fortunes and contribute to the overall wealth of the society was a staple of eighteenth-century political economic thought.<sup>426</sup> This premise appeared in Burke's economic remarks as early as 1765 and persisted until 1797. Lambasting the restrictive economic policies of anti-Popery Laws in Ireland, Burke extolled the "desire of acquisition" as "always a passion of long views." "Confine a man to a momentary possession and you at once cut off that laudable avarice which every wise state cherished as one of its first principles" (TPL, 477). Curtailing that laudable avarice by profit ceilings and short tenure terms in landed property not only resulted in "famishing the present hour and squandering all upon prospect and futurity" (TPL, 477).<sup>427</sup> Three decades later, Burke revisited the "desire of

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<sup>425</sup> Himmelfarb, *Idea of Poverty*, 27-8.

<sup>426</sup> For the genealogy of this particular political economic vision, see Pincus. *1688*, esp. chap. 12, "Revolutions in Political Economy." Pincus maintains that by the late-seventeenth century two distinct views of political economy confronted each other, mapping imperfectly yet decisively on the two contending camps of what would become the Glorious Revolution. The victory of the Whigs sealed the triumph of a political economic vision that viewed labor, rather than land, as the principal source of economic value, and thereby prioritized industry and commerce over territory and conquest. This was complemented by a positive-sum conception of commerce that further dampened the thrust behind mercantilist policies of trade. Burke appears to have shared this economic worldview as he criticized mercantilist, zero-sum conceptions of trade in a letter to a friend. "It is in the interest of the commercial world that wealth should be found everywhere. I know that it is but too natural for us to see our own *certain* ruin in the *possible* prosperity of other people. ... Trade is not a limited thing; as if the objects of mutual demand and consumption could not stretch beyond the bounds of our Jealousies." Burke, *Two Letters from Mr. Burke to Gentlemen in the City of Bristol*, quoted in Muller, "Edmund Burke," p. 115.

<sup>427</sup> True to his Whig heritage, Burke hitched improvement in land to the prospect of drawing profit from it. "Every law against property is a law against industry," and such laws in Ireland were tantamount to proclaiming, "Thou shalt not improve." In Ireland, Ascendancy policies culminated in unproductive tenants reluctantly working the land of absentee landlords, leaving the realm unenclosed, unimproved, and wasted, and the public miserable and discontented (TPL, 476-7).

accumulation,” this time to defend monied property that floated the national debt during the Anglo-French War. The desire of accumulation was

a principle without which the means of their service to the state could not exist. The love of lucre, though sometimes carried to a ridiculous, sometimes to a vicious excess, is the grand cause of prosperity to all states. In this natural, this reasonable, this powerful, this prolific principle ... it is for the statesmen to employ it as it finds it ... he is to make use of the general energies of nature, to take them as he finds them (3rdL, 347-8).

Burke was not endorsing self-interest here simply as a “useful” principle. The analogy between the “energies of nature” and the “natural, reasonable, powerful, and prolific” principle indicates that self-interest was akin to an *elemental force in society*, and the desire of accumulation, *pace* the classical interpreters of Burke’s political economy, was stripped of its Aristotelian odium. Self-interest posed less a moral than an epistemological issue, a “first principle” in a sort of social physics, as the question now became how to use the knowledge of men’s self-interest and establish the conditions under which it would augment general prosperity. This question was addressed in Burke’s “Speech on Economical Reform,” which betrays a Baconian streak:

Those things which are not practicable, are not desirable. There is nothing in the world really beneficial, that does not lie within the reach of an informed understanding, and a well directed pursuit. There is nothing that God has judged good for us, that he has not given us the means to accomplish, both in the natural and moral world” (ER, 546).

Burke’s disdain for abstract speculation appears in a different light here, not so much as a ward against the dangerous impetuosity of reason (as usually generalized from the *Reflections*), as contempt for its lack of usefulness. He boasted that his economic proposals were rooted not in “airy speculation” but “in real life, and in real human nature ... in the business and bosoms of men” (ER, 534).<sup>428</sup> Properly managed, the desire to accumulate lodged in men’s bosoms could

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<sup>428</sup> Comparing Burke’s “Economical Reform” to Locke’s journal entry “Understanding” offers one a striking vista of the Baconian tectonics that connected the two political theorists-*cum*-statesmen. For Locke’s Baconian allegiances, see Chapter II of this study.

be a universally beneficent force and it was incumbent on the prudent politician to channel it towards (to use Smith's words) "universal opulence."<sup>429</sup>

It is important to stress that the self-interest that Burke accepted and praised here was not the destructive urge derided by the classical-Christian tradition. It was rather akin to Adam Smith's "desire of bettering our condition, a desire which, though generally calm and dispassionate, comes with us from the womb, and never leaves us till we go into the grave."<sup>430</sup> That is to say, Burke's notion was already inflected by the transformation of destructive passions into the constant and predictable motive of accumulation, insightfully theorized by Albert Hirschman.<sup>431</sup> For Burke (unlike for Smith and other Scottish Enlightenment thinkers), this transformation was indebted less to *doux commerce* than to the civilized manners fostered by Christianity and social prescription, which had over time attenuated the conquering spirit of arrogant nobility that characterized the ancient Britons.<sup>432</sup> Thus rendered calm and dispassionate, self-interest implied two conditions that we have already encountered in the analysis of Locke's political economy: first, that the self-interested subject behave in a rational, settled, and most importantly, accumulative and a future-oriented manner;<sup>433</sup> secondly, following from the first,

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<sup>429</sup> Burke expressed the duty of the politician through an artistic analogy: "People are the masters. They have only to express wants at large and in gross. We are the expert artists; we are the skillful workmen, to shape their desires into perfect form, and to fit the utensil to the use" (ER, 547). In *Letter to a Noble Lord*, the good governance of the economy, or in Burke's words, "true oeconomy" or "higher oeconomy ... is a distributive virtue, and consists not in saving, but in selection." It has "larger views. It demands a discriminating judgment and a sagacious mind" (LNL, 162). These words corroborate Pocock's observation that Burke's definition of virtue was based on the management of public revenue than martial prowess, which made him a defender of the commercial society and the Whig aristocratic government that promoted it. See Pocock, "Political Economy of Burke's Analysis" p. 209.

<sup>430</sup> Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, Book II, Chap. 3, Par. 28.

<sup>431</sup> See Albert Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), esp. pp. 41, 53-62.

<sup>432</sup> An account of this transformation, which made incidental appearance in Burke's works and came to its fullest and most famous blossom in the *Reflections*, was seminally articulated in his aborted project, *An Abridgment of English History*. For a recent discussion of this work and its relevance for Burke's political philosophy, see Richard Bourke, "Edmund Burke and the Politics of Conquest," *Modern Intellectual History* 4 (2007): 403-32.

<sup>433</sup> This subjective disposition translated into saving, foresight, and investment by the propertied classes (farmers, merchants, and the like), and "patience, labor, sobriety, frugality, and religion" for the laboring classes (S, 121, 130-2). Both classes "augment the common stock ... by their industry or their self-denial" (3<sup>rd</sup>L, 349).

labor and consumption be concentrated in productive activities. The first of these conditions had its antithesis in the “thoughtless, loitering, and dissipated life” in Ireland (TPL, 477), while the second condition was most blatantly contravened in the unproductive consumption that sustained the “unprofitable titles” of the royal household targeted by Burke’s economic reform proposals (ER, 483).<sup>434</sup> In short, the harness that tethered self-interest to public prosperity was woven with the strips of a Whig ethos of rational industry and Smithian policy of fostering productive consumption.

While security of property formed the backbone of the Whig worldview in general, Burke’s thoughts on property articulated a particular socioeconomic vision, complete with assumptions and prescriptions for maximizing the material and moral benefits of property. One can plausibly argue that Burke’s views on private property and wage-labor were of the capitalist genus. First, Burke not only favored the private possession of land as a factor of production, but he also argued for the concentration of capital as much as possible. In his economic reform proposals, Burke justified his advocacy of the sale of crown and forest lands on the grounds that such dispersed possessions “are of a nature more proper for private management, than public administration”; with the sales, “property is transferred from hands that are not fit for that property to those who are. The buyer and seller must mutually profit by such a bargain” (ER, 506). This call for the privatization of public lands becomes more intelligible if one bears in mind that Burke’s political career coincided with the period of parliamentary enclosures that

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<sup>434</sup> Even Burke’s cherished nobility had to compensate for their “luxury and even their ease” by paying “contribution to the public; not because they are vicious principles, but because they are *unproductive*” (3<sup>rd</sup>L, 349). While he did not explicitly refer to Smith, Burke’s ideas on political economy and particularly his assessment of revenue management closely followed the Smithian dichotomy between capital and revenue, and its correlate, productive and unproductive labor. This principle was brilliantly though subtly expressed in a passage where Burke likened the preservation of the old, feudal establishment to “embalm[ing] a carcass not worth an ounce of the gums that are used to preserve it” (ER, 510). While this passage has been frequently cited to shore up the “modern” image of Burke, surprisingly, it has rarely been interpreted from an economic perspective. In general, compare Burke’s “Speech on Economical Reform” to the *Wealth of Nations*, Book II.

spanned roughly the century between 1750 and 1850.<sup>435</sup> One can conjecture that Burke had a positive attitude to the whole enclosure process, given that he perceived in the enclosure of crown lands the same principles “upon which you have acted in private inclosures. I shall never quit precedents where I find them applicable” (ER, 506)<sup>436</sup> Public lands were not only to be sold, but they were to be cheap enough so as to leave the purchasers with adequate “capital” for cultivating the land. The principal revenue to be obtained from “these uncultivated wastes” was not from the sales but from the “improvement and population of the kingdom,” which required that the “unprofitable landed estates of the crown” be disposed of and “thrown into the mass of private property” (ER, 507). The capitalist disposition of Burke’s advocacy of private property was more clearly expressed in *Thoughts and Details on Scarcity*, where he openly stated, “monopoly of authority ... is an evil; but the *monopoly of capital* is the contrary. It is a great benefit, and a benefit particularly to the poor” (S, 132-3; italics mine). The reasoning behind this endorsement was the familiar Smithian concatenation of the accumulation of stock, division of labor, increased productivity, expedited accumulation, universal opulence, and improved condition of the laboring population.

Capitalist private property is incomplete without a proletarian labor force, and one finds strong assumptions and normative prescriptions of wage-labor in Burke’s later writings. The laboring classes of Britain were the dispossessed who had nothing but their labor power to sell: “As to the common people, their stock is in their persons and in their earnings” and they were to

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<sup>435</sup> The legal enclosure of common lands consolidated large tracts of private property, which had been in the making since the fifteenth century, and entrenched capitalist relations in agriculture. See David McNally, *Against the Market: Political Economy, Market Socialism, and the Marxist Critique* (London: Verso, 1993), chap. 1; Michael Perelman, *Classical Political Economy: Primitive Accumulation and the Social Division of Labor* (London: Rowman and Allenhend, 1984), chapters 2-4.

<sup>436</sup> Unfortunately, Burke left no substantial tract or speech on the English enclosures. The only relevant remarks, which are mostly in passim, can be found in his unpublished letters entitled ‘Mnemon to the *Public Advertiser*’ (*Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 2, pp. 75-87). Burke’s position in these letters is not very clear, though it seems broadly in line with his economic reform proposals, with additional concerns with the rights of the poor and equity of the process. For a brief discussion, see Canavan, *Political Economy of Edmund Burke*, pp. 118-9.

be paid “according to the operation of general capital” (3<sup>rd</sup>L, 352).<sup>437</sup> The labor power of the common people is “a commodity, like every other,” “an article of trade ... subject to all the laws and principles of trade” (S, 122, 126). Burke’s uncompromising view on labor as a commodity subject to the dynamics of supply and demand was compounded by the amoral and fatalistic acceptance of the precariousness of the laborers’ conditions. Wages were determined not by the “necessity of the vender, but [by] the necessity of the purchaser” and whether one could fetch subsistence wages on the market was “totally beside the question in this way of viewing it” (S, 126). Intervening in the wage-contract was a direct and, in government’s hands, an “arbitrary tax” that encroached upon property (S, 123, 126).<sup>438</sup> Minimum wage or outdoor relief amounted to “trifling with the condition of mankind” for it pushed “those who must labour or the world cannot exist” to “seek resources ... in something else other than their own industry, frugality, and sobriety” (3<sup>rd</sup>L, 355).<sup>439</sup> That capital accumulation accrued from the surplus value generated by the industrious and sober wage-laborer was similarly unequivocal: “the labour, so far as that labour is concerned, shall be sufficient to pay the employer a profit on his capital” (S, 123).<sup>440</sup>

This relation of surplus transfer was couched in the language of a “natural and just” chain of

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<sup>437</sup> Burke stated his positive stance on the expansion of wage-labor in his examination of the British economy in the first half of the 1790s. “An improved and improving agriculture, which implies a great augmentation of labor, has not yet found itself at a stand ... An increasing capital calls for labor: and an increasing population answers to the call. Our manufactures augmented for both the foreign and domestick consumption ... have always found the laborious hand ready for the liberal pay” (3<sup>rd</sup>L, 353).

<sup>438</sup> Burke’s admonition of government intervention was not restricted to agricultural or labor markets. He likewise indicted intervention into credit markets as tantamount to “a tax on that particular species [i.e. monied] property. In effect, it would be the most unjust and impolitick of all things, unequal taxation. It would throw upon one description of persons in the community, that burthen which ought by fair and equitable distribution to rest upon the whole” (3<sup>rd</sup>L, 346-7).

<sup>439</sup> Burke resorted to providential language in explaining this unhappy state: “it is the common doom of man that he must eat his bread by the sweat of his brow” (ER, 355). Famine is explained in the same vein, as the decision of the benign and wise disposer to “with-hold the necessaries of life” (S, 137).

<sup>440</sup> The natural entitlement of the capital owner to a profit on his capital was restated in Burke’s defense of the monied property. “The monied men have a right to look to advantage to in the investment of their property. To advance their money, they risk it; and the risk is to be included in the price” (3<sup>rd</sup>L, 346-7). This is obviously a far cry from the condemnation of usury in the classical-Christian conception of moral economy, and opens to question the classical-traditionalist image attributed to Burke from another angle. For an image of Burke fearful of modernity as defined by money and efficiency, see Bromwich, Introduction, pp. 20, 37.

subordination with enterprising capitalist farmers at the top, descending to agricultural laborers, beasts of burden, and inanimate instruments (S, 125).<sup>441</sup> Regardless of the religious-providential language that Burke mobilizes, it is clear that his vision captured and upheld the entrenchment of capitalist relations of his time, especially in agriculture, inasmuch as it prescribed concentrated private property in factors of production and the employment of legally free wage-labor for the accumulation of capital.<sup>442</sup>

If capital accumulation was one major pillar of Burke's commercial ideal, the other was the justice of the free market. For Burke, the foundations of good government and just laws resided in equity and "general and publick utility" (TPL, 456). Left to its own operations, the market not only maximized public utility but also ensured that the transactions were equitable.

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<sup>441</sup> Burke's natural chain of subordination in agriculture, while it used the language of natural law and the great chain of being, in fact captured the capitalist triad of landlord-tenant-laborer that had by the late-eighteenth century dominated the south of England. Burke himself was at the top of the chain with a moderately sized estate which he rented out to tenants farmers.

<sup>442</sup> Crucially, Burke represented his proposal as "oeconomizing by principle" that was inspired by the "principles of radical oeconomy" (ER, 513), which suggests that he might have had the physiocratic theory in mind. While Donald Winch notes Burke's animosity towards the philosopher-administrator "men of system" like Turgot, there are good grounds for connecting Burke's economic thought to physiocracy. "Radical oeconomy" in the late-eighteenth century referred mainly to physiocratic theory, and Burke declared that his studies in political economy began "even before it had employed the *thoughts of speculative men in other parts of Europe*" (LNL, 159-60; italics mine). In addition to these contextual intimations, the substance of Burke's economic thought also points in a physiocratic direction. The primacy that he accords to "the agriculture of the kingdom, the first of all it's (sic) concerns" is one case in point (S, 123). His advocacy of unlimited agricultural profits, even if they were acquired by hoarding ("turning plenty or scarcity to the best advantage") is another (S, 130). Equally significant is his moral exoneration of the agricultural middlemen, the "factor, jobber, salesman, or speculator, in the markets of grain" who form "a natural and most useful link of connection" (132). In addition to his embrace of agricultural *laissez-faire*, Burke's call for a "simple government" in his speech on economic reform lends indirect support to the conjecture that he had physiocratic tendencies (ER, 501). Certainly, Burke would have despised the legal despot condoned by the physiocrats; however, his own cause of constitutional balance, it should be remembered, was geared precisely to restrain government and thwart its ambitions on property. As he put in the *Reflections*, "Good order is the foundation of all good things. To be enabled to acquire, the people, without being servile, must be tractable and obedient ... They must respect that property of which they cannot partake" (R, 290). While England's ancient constitution confined political power to its "truly public" duties, such as the protection of property and the enforcement of contracts, these duties had to be executed with a simplicity and rigor characteristic of a strong government. In other words, *limited* government did not mean *weak* government. Burke's open animosity to the physiocrats is very likely to have crystallized after the French Revolution, where the French oeconomists were widely believed to have agitated the urban poor against the aristocratic order (which physiocrats sincerely detested). Adam Smith, who was presumably one of the "great and learned men [who] deigned to communicate" with Burke "on some particulars of their immortal works," also displayed physiocratic tendencies, which threw a shadow of radicalism on his economic writings in the post-Revolutionary period (and put his biographer, Dugald Stewart in a difficult position). For Smith's physiocratic tendencies and his affinity with the French *philosophes*, see Semmel, *Rise of Free Trade Imperialism*, pp. 24-32; Rothschild, *Economic Sentiments*.

Burke emphatically asserted in *Thoughts and Details on Scarcity* that the “market alone can settle the price” and does so with an astonishing “truth, correctness, celerity, and general equity” (S, 134).<sup>443</sup> Burke’s conviction in the natural tendency of the markets to justly convert self-interested behavior into societal prosperity went beyond Smith’s metaphorical invisible hand and bordered on the providential belief that “the benign and wise disposer of all things ... obliges men, whether they will or not, in pursuing their own selfish interests, to connect the general good with their own individual success” (S, 125).

It has been suggested that Burke’s devout adherence to market principles was a reflection of the Whig suspicion of state power and a strategic move to circumscribe it.<sup>444</sup> While Burke surely eyed royal patronage with disapproval, the reasons behind his embrace of the market also evinced impatience with its inefficiency in economic matters. “The principles of trade have so pervaded every species of dealing, from the highest to the lowest objects; all transactions are got so much into system; that we may, at a moment’s warning, and to a farthing value, be informed at what rate any service may be supplied” (ER, 513-4). Compared to such efficiency in the exchange of goods and information, the royal practice of “purveyance” (collection of revenue in kind) represented an astounding anomaly in “the living [that is, commercial] economy of the age” (ER, 510-1). Accordingly, Burke proposed to replace patronage networks with “general contract” for supplying goods and services to the crown, and even suggested that the Royal Mint “is a *manufacture*, and it is nothing else; and it ought to be undertaken upon the principles of

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<sup>443</sup> Hence it was only the market that could offer a “fair test of scarcity and plenty” (S, 134). While I do not have the space for a proper discussion of the issue, I would like to mention that there awaits a potentially fruitful analysis of Burke’s political economy from the theoretical perspective articulated by Michel Foucault in his *College de France* lectures. In these lectures, Foucault constructs a genealogy of liberalism and neoliberalism, in which the dual function of the market as a medium of jurisdiction and veridiction occupies a central place. See Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population and Birth of Biopolitics*.

<sup>444</sup> Hampsher-Monk argues that Burke championed free trade mainly to limit the revenue that the crown could derive from duties on commerce, which would enable it to circumvent the parliamentary power of the purse. See, Hampsher-Monk, “Introduction,” pp. 19-20.

manufacture; that is, for the best and cheapest execution, by a contract, upon proper securities” (ER, 513, 517). The Board of Trade and Plantations was likewise placed on the chopping block of cost and benefit on the grounds that, “commerce, the principal object of that office, flourishes most when it is left to itself. Interest, the great guide of commerce, is not a blind one. It is very well able to find its own way; and its necessities are its best laws” (ER, 535).

If public utility was augmented by governmental reform according to market principles that minimized unproductive consumption, the equity principle manifested itself in contractual freedom based on the “great rule of equality” in commercial transactions (TPL, 456). This principle, which constituted the apex of the moral superiority of the free market to all other forms of productive organization, was nowhere more unequivocally asserted than in the *Scarcity* essay. There, Burke expressed his preference “to leave all dealing, in which there is no force or fraud, collusion or combination, entirely to the persons mutually concerned in the matter contracted for” (S, 123). Defending this preference with Smith’s reasoning that the contracting parties knew their interests and their particular circumstances better than any third party, Burke predicated the *equity* and thus the *validity* of the contract exclusively on the volition of the contractors. If the parties were not “completely [masters of the intercourse], they are not free, and therefore their contracts are void” (S, 124). With each party looking to “all possible profit, which, without force or fraud, he can make,” the contract implied compromise and identity of interest (S, 130). Most crucially, in labor contracts “it is absolutely impossible that their free contracts can be onerous to either party” (S, 124-5). While Burke had his misgivings about the theories of *social contract*, these passages unmistakably point to Burke’s conviction that legal freedom and equality, and the categorical exclusion of deception and coercion, rendered *economic contract* the most fair and morally elevated form of organizing material production and

distribution.<sup>445</sup> The difficulty of interpolating Burke's philosophical principles notwithstanding, the foregoing passages establish that his economic principles were predominantly liberal.

The providential aura with which Burke consecrated the market became even more salient when he later defended the "laws of commerce, which are the laws of nature, and consequently the laws of God" against the improvident hands of government (S, 137). *Laissez-faire* constituted the final pillar of Burke's vision of Britain as a commercial society. He reprimanded government intervention in the market not only as inefficient in that it distorted the "truth and correctness" of prices and wages,<sup>446</sup> but also as detrimental to "general equity" insofar as it violated contractual freedom. "The moment that government appears at market, all principles of market will be subverted," and a "monopoly of authority" will emerge under the "appearance of a monopoly of capital" (S, 135). The idea that "to provide us in our necessities ... is in the power of government" was merely a "vain presumption" of statesmen (S, 120).<sup>447</sup> The economic role that Burke reserved for government conformed to a textbook description of

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<sup>445</sup> Freedom of contract and the juridical equality of the contracting parties also held valid for the financial transactions between the state and the citizens. In Burke's view, public debt too should ideally have ideally conformed to the principles of a bargain. "Compulsion destroys the freedom of a bargain ... the moment that shame, or fear, or force, are directly applied to a loan, credit perishes" (LNL, 347). Of course, Burke had in his sights the French revolutionary government's irregular borrowing practices, which bordered on taxation under the rubric of "voluntary contributions." Insofar as it remained purely commercial, Burke did not seem to have a problem with the eighteenth-century novelty of public debt, which for Pocock marks *the* momentous transformation of the state-citizen relationship, and the distinctive feature of the commercial society. See Pocock, "Mobility of Property," pp. 109-112.

<sup>446</sup> Burke discussed the ultimate inefficiency of government intervention by citing, as an example, price controls on corn (S, 127). The inability of government regulation to yield favorable results was not a contingent defect that could be pragmatically remedied; it was impotent from principle. "Laws of regulation are not fundamental laws," writes Burke, "the public exigencies are masters of such laws. They rule the laws, and are not to be ruled by them" (LNL, 161-2).

<sup>447</sup> What is worth attention is the language that Burke used to describe the motives behind government intervention. As opposed to the "reasonable" principle of self-interest that animated commercial actors, government intervention was driven by the "*zealots* of the *sect* of regulation" (S, 126; italics mine). The petulance of this dismissal seems to be underwritten by the odium attached to religious "enthusiasm" associated with the dissenting Protestant sects in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. What is equally striking is Burke's treatment of "pity" (especially for the poor) as a kind of enthusiasm: "When we talk of the poor, that moment our reason quits us. Pity is one of the noblest of the Passions. So is zeal, but zeal and pity are still passions, and extremely apt to blind good men." (S, 129, n2). These passages lend considerable support to the argument that whatever Burke's political, cultural, and philosophical allegiances might have been, in political economy he was a thoroughly bourgeois subject.

*laissez-faire*. While government could “prevent much evil, it can to very little positive good” (S, 120); “the office of the judge cannot dictate the contract. It is his business to see that it be enforced” (S, 124). There could be “no authority on earth” to “judge what profit and advantage ought to be” (S, 125). Instead, the “the truly and properly public” function of the state was to maintain public peace, order, and safety: “Let government protect and encourage industry, repress violence and discountenance fraud, it is all they have to do. In other respects, the less they meddle in these affairs, the better; the rest is in the hands of our Master and theirs” (3<sup>rd</sup>L, 355).<sup>448</sup>

The most important principle in Burke’s *laissez-faire* prescriptions, I argue, was to keep market devoid of political power. In order for the efficiency and justice of the market to unfold, commerce and sovereignty, economy and politics had to remain strictly compartmentalized. This is not to suggest that political power was irrelevant to commerce. On the contrary, it fulfilled a fundamental role in establishing and maintaining the conditions under which the moral and political economy of commerce could survive and flourish.<sup>449</sup> It is not coincidental that “force and fraud,” the two virulent pathogens of commerce, frequently recurred in Burke’s political economic writings, for these were the very stakes in the *specific relation of political power to*

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<sup>448</sup> One should not misread the “encouragement” of industry to mean the proactive economic presence of government. Rather Burke seems to imply here a strategy of giving people incentives for industry. This is supported by his view that commercial affairs constituted a “department of things [that] manners alone can regulate. To these, great politicians may give a leaning, but they cannot give a law” (S, 144).

<sup>449</sup> On this point I follow Pocock’s seminal argument in “Political Economy of Burke’s Analysis,” which is more recently restated and expanded by Winch, and O’Neill. Burke shared in the Scottish Enlightenment conception of “commercial society” as a socio-historical category that referred to a multiplicity of social, political, economic, and moral dimensions, which placed its referent at the terminus of the known historical development of human communities. He parted ways with the Scottish philosophers, however, on the direction of the causal chain. Whereas Smith, Robertson, Millar, and Ferguson looked first and foremost to the commercial mode of subsistence to extrapolate polished manners and civil institutions, Burke prioritized the attenuating impact of organized religion and prescriptive hierarchy on manners. Only after a certain level of refinement was achieved could the relations characteristic of commerce take hold. Muller refers to Burke’s inversion of the Scottish Enlightenment reasoning as the “noncontractual basis of commercial society,” but given that the Scottish philosophers did not credit social contract theories, a more apt concept would be the “noncommercial basis of commercial society.” See Pocock, “Political Economy of Burke’s Analysis” pp. 196-9, 210; Winch, *Riches and Poverty*, pp. 176-9; O’Neill, *The Burke-Wollstonecraft Debate*, chapters 1 and 2; Muller, “Edmund Burke” p.137-8.

*commerce*. As long as government remained in its proper place, that is, in the *margins* of the economy, political power constrained force and fraud. If it *penetrated* into the economy, political power became the instrument of force and fraud. In other words, political power should form a shell that protected and ordered, through property rights and contract enforcement, the field of commercial transaction, yet should not bleed into that field. Political power was a noncommercial precondition of commerce, and for that precise reason, it had to remain noncommercial.<sup>450</sup>

In the next section I contend that the distortion, violation, and outright subversion of the moral and political economy of the commercial ideal in India spurred Burke's efforts at reform and impeachment. His endeavor can be best understood as an attempt to reinstate the boundaries between commerce and political power, economy and sovereignty, public and private, which had become extremely porous and at times nonexistent under East India Company rule.

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<sup>450</sup> The principled wall of separation between commerce and politics was also manifest in Burke's policy proposals. His proposal of a general contract for supplying the crown explicitly excluded the members of the parliament from such transactions, "by following the course of nature, and not the purposes of politics" (ER, 517). Similarly, he proscribed voluntary service in administrative offices on principles of bureaucratic probity: "if men were willing to serve in such situations without a salary, they ought not to be permitted to do it. Ordinary service must be secured by the motives to ordinary integrity. An honourable and fair profit is the best security against avarice and rapacity ... For as wealth is power, so all power will infallibly draw wealth to itself by some means or other: and when men are left no way of ascertaining their profit but by their means of obtaining them, those means will be encreased to infinity" (ER, 531) (astonishingly, Burke thereby repudiated the civic virtue central to classical republicanism). Even Burke's call for the abolition of the anti-Popery Laws evinced a similar indictment of using economic regulation to reinforce political supremacy, that is, by impoverishing the Catholic Irish in order to keep them in a subservient position (TPL, 478-9). Post-revolutionary France, where "sordid mercenary occupation" was admitted to the "title of command" represented the inverted image of the Irish abomination (R, 101). Burke's defense of the landed property can be reevaluated in this light, since landed property, being timid and sluggish, did not display the aggressive traits of monied property (R, 159). Monied wealth, by virtue of its mobility and proclivity to accumulation by novel means, was more prone to usurping political power for self-augmentation, and it was also more easily mobilized by those who aspired to obtain political power through means other than status and merit. Over-representing landed wealth in political power thereby functioned as a ward against the corrosion of the separation between commerce and sovereignty under the pressure of monied interests, and hence served as "the ballast in the vessel of the commonwealth" (R, 102). This implies that Burke had no problem with monied wealth insofar as it remained in its proper sphere, or what Burke would later call "a bottom truly commercial" (9<sup>th</sup>R). The fortune of England had been that "while the landed interest, instead of forming a separate body, as in other countries, has, at all times, been in close connexion and union with the other great [i.e. monied] interests of the country, it has been spontaneously allowed to lead and direct, and moderate all the rest" (3<sup>rd</sup>L, 374-5). As a final point, the idea of a political rim containing a politically void market would also hold the key to explain Burke's advocacy of free trade within imperial borders.

### **III. Dialectics of Commerce**

A survey of Burke's reports and speeches on India reveals that each and every one of the principles of the commercial ideal, in Burke's words "every just principle of commerce," was breached by the British rule in the subcontinent (9<sup>th</sup>R, 306). Given that the commercial ideal was the primary prism through which Burke viewed and judged the British image, his fourteen-year long labors to reform the Indian administration constituted a desperate attempt to shore up the frayed contours of the commercial ideal. A major source of vexation for Burke was that the violators of the commercial principles in India had "come from a learned and enlightened part of Europe, in the most enlightened period of its time ... from the bosom of a free Country" (SOI, 315). On the colonial frontiers of British capitalism, civilized Britons rapidly jettisoned English manners and laws, and turned into barbarous frontiersmen. Equally problematic was the fact that, the victim of the British atrocities was *another commercial society*, which threw into question the civilizational categories that governed the historical-geographical coordinates of the British self-perception. This section begins with an examination of Burke's works from a perspective of the commercial ideal and its desecration in India. The Company's merchant-sovereignty that Burke came to despise represented the most offensive fusion of political power and commercial interest, and inevitably engendered colonial violence and a political economy of plunder. More importantly, I contend that Burke indicated that the source of effrontery to the commercial ideal was not a precommercial atavistic residue or the moral lapse of a few wayward individuals, but the very core of the commercial ideal itself. The natural desire to accumulate that animated the whole commercial society and powered the "great wheel of circulation" was the main force behind the havoc in India. In the colonies, the truth of commerce showed itself to be piracy, the truth of self-interest to be rapacity, the truth of civilization to be barbarity.

While the vagaries of British rule over a vast and culturally alien population might have remained the classical problem of a “free though conquering people,”<sup>451</sup> the issue was complicated by the fact that the agent of British rule was a mercantile company whose *raison d’etre* in India was material gain.<sup>452</sup> The Company’s newly acquired political power inflected its pursuit of commercial interests by opening up non-market opportunities for profit. From 1783 onwards, Burke systematically declaimed Company policies, and provided his audience with detailed accounts of colonial violence and plunder that they supported. The Company’s “despotism” in India was not only “oppressive, irregular, capricious, unsteady,” but more importantly “rapacious and peculating” (FB, 430).<sup>453</sup> Putting power to profit rode roughshod over the commercial principles of property, legal equality, contractual freedom, and mutual benefit, sapping the foundations of a prosperous and just society in India.

Burke’s admonition of the economic policies in India in the *Ninth Report of the Select Committee*<sup>454</sup> displays his conviction that the political economy of the commercial ideal was a

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<sup>451</sup> Bromwich argues that for Burke the major problem boils down to inconsistency and “self-deception in every act of domination.” Bromwich, “Introduction,” p. 33.

<sup>452</sup> By the time the East India Company drew Burke’s attention, and shortly thereafter his wrath, Adam Smith had already supplied a catholic critique of chartered trading companies. Although Burke voiced his aversion to condemning established institutions on such *a priori* theories as Smith’s, his inquiries led him to agree with Smith’s invective against mercantile sovereignty that characterized the Company. Smith had inveighed against chartered companies on two major counts: driven by the necessity for immediate profit, they lacked the broad political vision required for good government, such that they impoverished their dominions instead of investing in their long-term prosperity; second, they lacked the principle of “authority” that would legitimate their rule and had only brute force available as an instrument of rule. Burke’s critique of the Company confirmed these conclusions, but through a more elaborate and characteristically Burkean theorization. As Hampsher-Monk correctly observes, for Burke local customs, values and institutions comprised the “tools of the politician’s trade,” without which the only resort was to violence and force. In their disdain for an alien, “barbarous,” and “despotic” India, the Company officials could never acquire such tools and were virtually doomed to be tyrants. Travers offers a good account of the initial efforts to discover and reconstruct an Indian “ancient constitution” (ironically, Burke and Hastings were both in this camp), which were later abandoned in favor of authoritarian reformism. See Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, Book IV, Chapter 7, Par. 101-8; Burke, “Speech On Fox’s India Bill,” pp. 386-7; Hampsher-Monk, “Introduction,” p. 36; Travers, *Ideology and British Empire*, “Contested Despotism,” and “Ideology and British Expansion in Bengal.”

<sup>453</sup> In Burke’s speech opening Hastings’s impeachment, “avarice” and “rapacity” would be the first two accusations leveled at the defendant (SOI, 275).

<sup>454</sup> *Ninth Report of the Select Committee* was the most comprehensive tract Burke ever wrote on the political economy of the Indian dominions.

universal normative grid, which ought to have applied not only in Britain but also in India.<sup>455</sup> Commerce in India, however, was an “imperious commerce” as the Company, both institutionally through the Council of Bengal and individually through its servants, deployed sovereign prerogative for material aggrandizement (9<sup>th</sup>R, 244).<sup>456</sup> The immediate effect was the abrogation of juridical equality in commercial transactions between the Company agents and the local traders and producers. While the British had always tried to wrest trading privileges and avoid duties in Bengal, they had to run commercial transactions under the nominal authority of the Mogul emperor and the effectual jurisdiction of the nawab. After a string of military victories beginning in 1756 and culminating in de facto rule in Bengal in 1765, the status of the British changed. While the Company strategically retained the nominal sovereignty of the Mogul emperor and the nawab, it effectively governed the province through its chokehold on the revenue system. Burke was not deluded by this strategic façade: “the English are now a people who appear in India as a conquering nation” and any commercial dealing with them was a “dealing with *power*” (9<sup>th</sup>R, 271).<sup>457</sup> “The constitution of the company began in commerce and ended in Empire” (SOI, 283). One of the first things the Company did with its newfound power was to eliminate all native intermediaries between the manufacturers and itself, thereby

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<sup>455</sup> The “Mainspring of the Commercial Machine, the *Principles of Profit and Loss*” were to govern all economic dealings in India (9<sup>th</sup>R, 241). For instance, when the nawab of Bengal abolished all duties in a move to undercut the British abuse of trading privileges, Burke applauded this measure as a “forcible, simple and equitable” retaliation against the “oppressions of the monopoly” (9<sup>th</sup>R, 244-5). Furthermore, Burke extolled the virtues of “rivalship” to redeem and reinvigorate the Indian manufactures, a notion that would later reappear as “market of competition” in the *Scarcity* essay (9<sup>th</sup>R, 268; S, 135). Finally, inveighing against opium and salt monopolies, Burke declared the “unerring standard of the public [open, free, competitive] market” as the rule for Bengali economy (9<sup>th</sup>R, 278). These remarks also establish that Burke’s liberal vision of capitalism can be safely dated back to the early 1780s, if not earlier.

<sup>456</sup> The Company had been at odds with the nawab of Bengal over trading rights since 1717, when it received a *farman* from the Mogul emperor that exempted it from some of the duties on its Indian exports. Company servants printed *dastaks* based on the *farman* and used them in their private transactions, undercutting both local traders and aggravating the nawab. Post-Plassey ascendancy of the Company finally gave a free rein to its servants, who now dealt in the inland trade with exclusive privileges, raking great profits at the expense of local merchants and producers.

<sup>457</sup> Burke constructs a more detailed and critical account of this strategy in “Speech on the Nabob of Arcot’s Debts,” pp 536-7.

rendering its agents “magistrates in the Markets in which they dealt as traders” (FB, 427; 9thR, 245, 259). The stones of legal asymmetry had paved the road to “forced and exorbitant gains of a trade carried on by power” and invariably entailed the dispossession and oppression of the natives (9<sup>th</sup>, 246).

The natural corollary of the juridical inequality was the evaporation of contractual freedom, whereby unilateral coercion and extortion replaced volition, compromise, and mutual benefit overseen by an impartial judge.<sup>458</sup> Under Company rule, forms of bonded labor proliferated, and the system of auctioning off taxes was corrupted by political influence as soon as it was introduced. Burke scornfully observed that the elimination of local middlemen and the advances system reduced the Indian weavers to “virtual vassalage” and instituted “debt peonage” under a “most violent and arbitrary power” (9<sup>th</sup>R, 259-60). A public and competitive market in credit and auctions, which could have freed the Indian producers from “debt bondage,” was deliberately thwarted by Company policies (9<sup>th</sup>R, 268-9). Adding insult to the injury, laborers “defrauded” into debt bondage would be “delivered over like Cattle in Succession to different Masters, who, under Pretence of buying up the Balances due to their preceding employers, find Means of keeping them in perpetual *Slavery*” (9<sup>th</sup>R, 290). Those who managed to avoid debt bondage found that they had no control over how they invested their stock. The monopoly powers of the Company in cash crops, especially opium, were used to force farmers to cultivate

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<sup>458</sup> There was no greater debasement of justice for Burke than allowing one to be a judge in one’s own case. The moment that government or its agents became a party to the contracts which they also enforced, the general law of equality was irretrievably destroyed. This was the case not only in how the Company ran its operations in India, but also how it managed its internal government. Former Company servants involved in delinquencies in India entered the Court of Directors that was supposed to inspect the Indian delinquents (9<sup>th</sup>R, 202-3, 219). “The vote is not to protect the stock, but the stock is bought to obtain the vote,” in order to protect corrupt agents, their corrupt networks of patronage, and their illegitimate dealings in India (FB, 437). In this respect, the Company embodied the “inversion” of all rules and principles of a normal and sound corporation. A more detailed discussion of the principle of impartial arbitration in Burke’s moral philosophy can be found in Bromwich, “Introduction.”

these crops instead of grain, even after the dearth and high costs of foodstuffs led to the 1769-1770 famine that decimated the Bengali population (9<sup>th</sup>R, 270-1, 274).

Subversion of contractual freedom was compounded by the loss of security of property, which manifested itself in confiscation at all levels of social hierarchy. Expropriation of the Indian nobility by the British found its most emphatic account in Burke's "Speech on Almas Ali Khan," where he accused the Company of having invented "the crime of having money ... like the sin against the Holy Ghost in Christianity" (AA, 464-7). In this scheme, wealthy Indian nobles would be first accused of treason on fabricated, vacuous, and purely expedient grounds, and then punished by confiscation, sometimes accompanied by death. While the state's confiscation of property was an anathema to Burke's Whig sensibilities, its conduct under the pretext of a legal trial was a macabre travesty of justice, more execrable than the use of open, sheer force.<sup>459</sup> Instrumentalization of law in the service of plunder brought an indelible disgrace upon the British nation, which Burke thought to "have better institutions for the preservations of the rights of men than any other Country in the World" (SOI, 352). Predation on property also struck Indian farmers and manufacturers, who were first indebted by the arbitrary pricing of the Company, and then visited by Company agents who acted in the power of lenders of usurious loans, assessors of the accruing debts, and finally bailiffs to seize the debtors' property (9<sup>th</sup>R, 259-60).<sup>460</sup> Finally, the lowest strata of Indian society, the *ryots* who worked the land of *zamindars*, were "ruined and made desperate" by extortionate taxes, not only on land (twice the

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<sup>459</sup> Burke summarizes the perversion of law and justice in India very pithily in his speech opening the impeachment: "The great criminal has the law in his hand" (SOI, 290).

<sup>460</sup> *Eleventh Report on the Select Committee*, while apparently dealing with the conflict between Hastings and Francis in the Council of Bengal, is replete with references to the expropriation and humiliation of the Indian nobility. This report, drafted mainly by Burke, contains the bulk of the material that would fuel Burke's later speeches on India. The topics of the report include gifts/bribery, personal use of the Company resources, lack of transparency and accountability, speculation and embezzlement, corrupt and unfaithful dealings, and the use of extraordinary means of revenue and government.

rate in England), but also on such necessities of life like salt under the British monopoly (AA, 463). The situation is starkly put in the “Speech on the Nabob of Arcot’s Debts”

Every man of rank and landed fortune being long since extinguished, the remaining miserable last cultivator, who grows to the soil, after having his back scored by the farmer, has it again flayed by the whip of the assignee, and is thus by a ravenous, because a short-lived succession of claimants, lashed from oppressor to oppressor, whilst a single drop of blood is left as the means of extorting a single grain of corn (NAD, 532-3).<sup>461</sup>

The aggregate effect of these policies was to breach the mutual benefit principle of the commercial ideal in India. Commerce, conducted under the rule of a power that was itself a party in economic transactions, became a zero-sum game, whereby the enrichment of the British meant the impoverishment of Indians.<sup>462</sup> In contrast to the Muslim conquerors before them, the British did not take responsibility for the dominions they conquered; instead, driven by an “insatiable lust for plunder,” they carried away whatever they found available.<sup>463</sup> Under the pretext of patronage and alliance, the Company devised fraudulent methods of co-opting, indebting, and impoverishing local rulers and their dominions (FB, 396, 401-7).<sup>464</sup> Indian riches thus obtained

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<sup>461</sup> Burke’s pathos for the Indian *ryots* reemerges when he asserts that the real defendant in the case of Nabob of Arcot’s debts is not Paul Benfield and other British creditors, but the nawab’s subjects. These were the “most miserable men,” whose “blood withheld from their veins and whipped out of their backs” provided the “extortion, usury and peculation” on which both the creditors and debtors fed (NAD, 496).

<sup>462</sup> The drain of wealth from European dominions in America and Asia was a common theme in the late-eighteenth century political economy debates, and it was openly acknowledged by Adam Smith in the *Wealth of Nations*. However, Smith and other free traders did not see this tendency as inherent to European expansion; rather, they explained it as an incidental problem issuing from the asymmetries of military power in an essentially benign process of exploration and commerce. The problem with this line of thought was, of course, that almost all of the explorations had been motivated by the hope of material acquisition. The “otherwise” beneficent free trade was simply an imaginary species in the European history of “commerce,” which had always been suffused by political force and brute violence. That the underside of positive sum trade within Europe would be a zero-sum game between Europe and the rest of the world is insightfully observed in Couze Venn, “Neoliberal Political Economy, Biopolitics and Colonialism: A Transcolonial Genealogy,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 26 (2009): 206-233, and *The Postcolonial Challenge: Towards Alternative Worlds*, (London: Sage, 2006).

<sup>463</sup> “The difference in favor of the first conquerors is this; the Asiatic conquerors very soon abated of their ferocity, because they made the conquered country their own. They rose or fell with the rise or fall of the territory they lived in. ... But under the English government the order is reversed. The Tartar invasion was mischievous, but it is our protection that destroys India. It was their enmity, but it is our friendship” (FB, 401-2).

<sup>464</sup> An exemplary account can be found in the “Speech on the Sixth Article of Impeachment,” where Burke constructed from the Company’s clandestine political dealings with Mohammed Reza Khan, Nandakumar, and Munni Begum a story of opacity, corruption, disobedience, and violation of human trust at every turn (SA, 37-59). Against this background, he caustically noted the perverse use into which the “chartered rights of men” had fallen in

were siphoned out of the realm, making “the transport of its plunder ... the only traffic of the country” (FB, 427). After providing a detailed account of the “deep, silent flow of wealth from the Carnatic,” which amounted to 20 million pounds between 1760 and 1780, Burke would ask rhetorically, “what are the articles of commerce or the branches of manufacture which these gentlemen have carried thence to enrich India?” (NAD, 492, 494). These and other surveys of the systematic drain of wealth, or “the plunder of the East,” prompted Burke to conclude emphatically, “commerce, which enriches every other country in the world, was bringing Bengal to total ruin” (SOI, 278, 428).

The fusion of political power and commerce reached its apex in the “revenue investment” system of the Company, which Burke examined in painstaking detail in the *Ninth Report*. After the Company obtained revenue rights (*diwani*) of Bengal in 1765, it began to finance its Indian exports by the taxes it levied in that province. This constituted a “new system of trade, carried on through the medium of power and public revenue,” which Burke clearly asserted was “not commerce” but “annual plunder,” or “tribute” disguised as “investment” (9<sup>th</sup>R, 221, 223-6, 231).<sup>465</sup> Insofar as it was driven by narrow and immediate monetary concerns, the revenue investment system obscured the principle that the welfare of the natives and thus good governance was essential for the investment of capital, sustained profits, and steady revenue (9<sup>th</sup>R, 221). Therefore the “vast extraction of wealth” from India was maintained not, as it ought to have been, by the “improvement” of the country but by raising the land rents and by annulling the payments due to local powers, backed up in the last instance by the military force of the

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the hands of the company. The charters that were drafted to protect “sacred rights of men” were now the banner under which the Company desolated the Carnatic.

<sup>465</sup> What compounded the disastrous consequences of this policy was Hastings’s tax farming system, which extracted the “spoils of revenue” by auctioning the collection of taxes off to the highest bidder in five-year periods. Tax farming forced the “ancient proprietors” of land to bid against “every usurer, every temporary adventurer, every jobber and schemer,” thus eroding the hierarchical fabric of the Indian society, tearing to pieces “the most ancient and most revered institutions, of ages and nations” (FB, 426-7).

Company (9<sup>th</sup>R, 231-2). Even more outrageously, despite its intensive pillage of the Indian wealth, the East India Company constantly teetered on the verge of bankruptcy, and had to be bailed out by the British government on more than one occasion.<sup>466</sup> Mismanagement of Company funds and private embezzlement drained the coffers. The system of revenue investment had become a vehicle for remitting private fortunes to England at the expense of *both* British and Indian publics, vindicating Burke's conviction that there could not be public utility where there was no equity (FB, 448; 9<sup>th</sup>R, 235, 242).<sup>467</sup>

Perhaps most worrisome of all, violations of the free market, legal equality, free labor, and free contract were not occasional; their subversion was "regular, permanent, and systematic" (FB, 433) Such violations could not be attributed to the corruption of a few servants. Instead they sprung from the degeneracy of the state itself: "the hand of government, which ought never to appear but to protect, is felt as the instrument in every act of oppression" (9<sup>th</sup>R, 272). The Indian administration represented a complete inversion of the functions that Burke ascribed to government in commercial society: instead of protecting property, it confiscated; instead of enforcing contracts, it dictated; instead of promoting the welfare of the population, it impoverished and depopulated. Moreover, while the Company was not a government in the proper sense, it was neither a proper mercantile body, because, having usurped sovereign power, it had abandoned commercial principles. It was indifferent to the prices paid on the open market; it engaged in systematic breach of contracts; it had poor and fraudulent accounting, bringing upon it insolvency, improvident borrowing, and ruined credit

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<sup>466</sup> The parliament not only came to the financial rescue of the Company, it also granted it exemption from the tea tax that its colonial competitors had to pay.

<sup>467</sup> "It is there the public is robbed ... in its army, in its civil administration, in its credit, in its investment which forms the commercial connection between that country and Europe. There is the robbery" (NAD, 531). The theoretical precursor of this argument was Smith's dictum that chartered companies were deliberately established to aggrandize the narrow interests of the merchants at a disadvantage to both the producers and the consumers of the commodities they dealt in.

(9<sup>th</sup>R, 242-3). In short, “no trace of equitable government is to be found in their politics; not one trace of commercial principle in their mercantile dealings” (FB, 432-3).

The Company, this sovereign-mercantile manticore, strayed from Burke’s commercial ideal not only in its principles of sound policy but also in its moral categories of civilization. It might at first glance appear strange to see Burke referring to the British exploits in India as “barbarous,” given his high esteem for the standing of Britain as “the most enlightened of the enlightened part of Europe” (SOI, 315). Nonetheless, the frequency with which the term appeared in Burke’s discourse indicates that its use is not accidental. In his “Speech on Almas Ali Khan,” Burke referred to Indians as “millions of our fellow-creatures ... whom *our barbarous policy* had ruined” (AA, 463), and poured his scorn on the Company agents’ actions as “*barbarities*” of an “inhuman system” (AA, 471). Two years later, he once again designated Hastings’s policies as “crimes of barbarity” (POH, 65). His derogation of the British in India reached vitriolic proportions in the Opening Speech: “the Company’s service is made out of the very filth and dregs of mankind, the most degenerate public body that has ever existed in the world” (SOI 290). Considered in terms of the Scottish Enlightenment categories that influenced Burke’s thought,<sup>468</sup> British behavior in India represented a civilizational regress from the civility of commercial society to the barbarism of *nomadic* societies. This relapse resonates with Burke’s indignation for the youth of the most Company servants, who neither had the chance to grow roots in Britain, nor had the intention to do so in India, rendering them “birds of passage and prey” that descended in waves upon that hapless country (SOI, 286-90, FB, 402).

On the frontiers of the empire, British men acted like roving *frontiersmen*, a term that can be applied with theoretical force to the British imperial formation more generally. Burke himself

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<sup>468</sup> The biographical and intellectual connection between Burke and the Scottish Enlightenment is convincingly demonstrated in O’Neill, *The Burke-Wollstonecraft Debate*, chapter 2.

had evoked a similar imagery in his discourse on the English colonies in America. Opposing proposals for restricting further English settlement in North America, he warned the House that the colonists would defy the proscription and settle beyond the Appalachians, but in the process “they would *change the manners with the habits of their life*; would soon forget a government by which they were disowned; *would become Hordes of English Tartars*; and, pouring down upon your unfortified frontiers a fierce and irresistible cavalry, become masters of your Governors and Counsellors” (SC 129; italics mine).<sup>469</sup> Polished manners would leave Englishmen in proportion they were cast away from the institutional order and the civilizing influence of Christianity and social hierarchy. While in America this civilizational distance would issue from the settlement of the outback, in India it was the remoteness of the country from the British metropole, a problem that Burke mentioned repeatedly. To continue the analogy, survival in an alien natural environment in North America would force the Englishmen to lose the fine appurtenances of civilized life, and become the “rugged frontiersmen” of Frederick J. Turner’s thesis. Similarly, the alien *cultural* environment in India would instill anxiety, fear, and revulsion in Englishmen, driving them to isolate themselves from Indians, develop harder and sterner attitudes, and lose all possibility of *sympathy* with those people whom they ruled and oppressed.<sup>470</sup>

Taken together, these remarks on the American and Indian dominions indicate that for Burke the imperial frontier was a dangerous space, where gentlemen turned into frontiersmen, civility degenerated into barbarism, polished manners dissipated in the violent grab for land and

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<sup>469</sup> This passage not only attests to the Scottish Enlightenment influence on Burke’s thinking, but also represents a fine instance of the colonial inflection of that influence.

<sup>470</sup> The process of isolation, alienation, and aggression in India is discussed in Jon E. Wilson, “Anxieties of Distance: Codification in Early Colonial Bengal,” *Modern Intellectual History* 4 (2007): 7-23, and *The Domination of Strangers: Modern Governance in Eastern India 1780-1835* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), chaps. 2 and 3.

riches.<sup>471</sup> The catch, however, was that the British Empire that Burke embraced could expand by no other means than the exploits of the frontiersmen in America and India. The colonial frontier, with its attendant moral abominations from a metropolitan perspective, was not an anomaly but the very *modus operandi* of imperial expansion that underpinned British power and prosperity. It was thanks to the primitive accumulation wrought by the colonists in America and the Company men in India that the economic surplus poured into Britain which made the “gentlemanly capitalism” of the metropole possible. *Per* Burke’s suggestion, Britain could have re-established a “truly commercial” relation to India but only at the cost of a massive negative balance of trade,<sup>472</sup> as had been the case until the East India Company (as “providence” would have it) reversed it by violating the “just principles of commerce” and deploying extra-economic violence.

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<sup>471</sup> The moral-civilizational problems posed by the colonial frontier were extensively elaborated upon in the eighteenth century French social thought, as Pagden demonstrates. For Raynal and Diderot, abandonment of settled community was tantamount to the decay of civility, and the colonists became “dissolute, unlocated, and hence uncivilized.” Diderot even argued that the traveler’s identity fell away all together on the frontier. Talleyrand described the colonists as “individuals without industry, without leaders, without customs,” and held that the restless wanderings turned once-civilized people into barbarians. See Pagden, *Lords of All the World*, pp. 165-8. Strikingly, Pagden notes, the French philosophers believed that only the English were immune to the degenerative tendencies of the frontier. This is not surprising given the differential patterns of English and French colonization in North America, the former settling in agricultural communities and sequestering itself from Native Americans, the latter engaging in fur trade and intermarrying with the indigenous populations. Burke’s studies and efforts about India perhaps represent the first critique of the *English frontier* that matches its French counterpart in empirical expanse and theoretical depth.

<sup>472</sup> Drain of wealth *qua* “export of bullion” from Europe to Asia had been the norm until around the mid-eighteenth century and inflamed intense debate amongst political economists since early 1600s. Seventeenth-century classics in this debate are Thomas Mun’s *A Discourse of Trade from England unto the East Indies* (London, 1621) and Sir Josiah Child’s *A Treatise Concerning the East India Trade* (London, 1681). More relevant to Burke’s period is William Robertson’s *A Historical Disquisition on the Knowledge, and the progress of trade with that country prior to the discovery of the passage to it by the Cape of Good Hope* (London, 1792), especially section IV, where Robertson discusses the colonial excursions to America and Asia from the fifteenth century onwards. The fulcrum of Robertson’s argument is the sea change in the historical fortunes of Europe brought about by these excursions. Prior to the discovery of silver and gold in America, and the circumnavigation of the Cape of Good Hope, Robertson observes, Europe’s trade with Asia had been bleeding the European economy dry. The aforementioned “discoveries,” made two years apart, supplied a duty-free trade route and fresh supplies of bullion, which relieved European trade balances and enabled Europe to become the epicenter of a global commercial network. The role of these discoveries in salvaging European prosperity, religion, letters, in short, European civilization, was so momentous in Robertson’s historical vision that he could not but attribute them to “providence.” Given that Robertson was the foremost Scottish Enlightenment influence on Burke’s conception of world history, there are plausible grounds to assume that their historical visions converged. For Robertson-Burke connection, with a good emphasis of the imperial-expansionist implications of their common historical premises, see O’Neill, pp. 42-5, 80-2.

Most importantly, the barbarity that Burke perceived in the conduct of the Company was neither that of the marauding Tartars or Goths, though this was the only vocabulary of barbarism available to him,<sup>473</sup> nor that of the rude and warlike ancient citizens as Pocock argues,<sup>474</sup> but that of the *commercial society itself*. The barbarism that erupted in India was not a relapse into the “conquering spirit of arrogant nobility” which had been tamed into polished manners by religion and prescription. It was a new kind of barbarism fueled by the natural “desire of acquisition,” by the principle of self-interest that was supposed to be “calm and dispassionate,” by that “reasonable, powerful, and prolific principle” of “laudable avarice” that was the “grand cause of prosperity.” In the colonies, these economic and moral principles dialectically turned into their opposites: the desire of acquisition turned into “peculation,” calm and dispassionate self-interest turned into violent “rapacity,” the laudable avarice turned into “sordid avarice,” and the prosperity they ought to have caused turned into “ruination” and “depopulation.” These were the very terms in which Burke condemned the East India Company. On the imperial frontier in India, the Englishmen did not turn into Tartars; they became *banians*.

Banians were the native servants of Englishmen in India, who also acted as commercial agents on behalf of their masters. Burke’s opinion on Banians was extremely low and bordered on loathing. In his speech on Fox’s India Bill, banians were described as creatures “*whose fathers they [Indian nobility] would not have set with the dogs of their flock*” (FB, 426). During the impeachment, the House is warned that if Indianism were suffered to dominate British

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<sup>473</sup> At this point one cannot but remember Burke’s dreadful warning against the returned nabobs’ infection of the British body politic, which conjures up an image of barbarian hordes pressing on into the heart of civilization: “*These people pour in upon us everyday*. They not only bring with them the wealth they have, but they bring with them into our country the vices by which they were acquired” (6<sup>th</sup>A, 62-3; italics mine). This is not an accidental choice of expression, especially when considered together with Burke’s earlier evocation of the “Hordes of English Tartars” in America (SC, 129). These remarks provide an important glimpse into Burke’s social and historical imaginary, in which the fluid boundaries of civilizational scale and the fugitive spaces of the colonial frontier governed Burke’s imperial anxieties.

<sup>474</sup> Pocock, “Mobility of Property,” pp. 114-5, and “Political Economy of Burke’s Analysis,” pp. 195-6. Indeed, Burke was not too fond of the “barbarous, vulgar distinctions” of the “warlike ancestors” of the British (AC, 282).

politics, the British nation would “become a Chain of Twisters, prevaricators, dissemblers Liars, a nation of *Banians*” (6<sup>th</sup>A, 62). Banians were “habituated to misery and subjection, [could] submit to any orders, and [were] fit for the basest services. Having been themselves subject to oppression ... they [were] fit to oppress others” (SOI 292). In the service of Englishmen “the Banyan extorts, robs, and murders” (SOI 293). The figure of banian embodied for Burke the sacrifice of morality at the altar of self-interest, the reduction of all social relations to the temporary collusion for material gain. The dissolution of human sociability as such in the ether of vulgar material gain was represented, first, in the collaboration of the Nawab of Arcot with Benfield and his “cabal of creditors,” which ended up ruining the inhabitants of the Carnatic. Burke denounced this collusion as a “magnificent plan of universal plunder” and labeled the creditors “the determined *enemies of human intercourse itself*” (NAD, 516-8; italics mine). The second incarnation of the social dissolution was the “system of banyans” in Bengal in general, and Hastings’s relation to his banian in particular. In this system, money was the only interracial glue that bound people who otherwise had not, and would never have, an iota of human sociability between them. In other words, the banian was the condensation of the dark underside of the very principles of *self-interest* and *contractual freedom*. These principles reached their extreme form in the colonies, whereby turned into their opposites and became the solvents of society as such. Hence, as the frontispiece quotation that opens this chapter implies, it was not capitalism (men of mobile wealth, monied interest, public credit) but *colonial capitalism* (imperial frontiersmen, unabashed plunder, violence and oppression) that Burke found threatening to his image of society and civilization as such.

In the colonies, therefore, one encountered the violent non-commercial basis of commerce and commercial society. An indirect triangulation of the “dialectics of commerce,”

and window onto the vicissitudes of colonial capitalism is thus the heritage that Burke has bequeathed to political theory. One could perhaps rephrase the conundrum of a “free though conquering people” more accurately as that of a “free though commercial people.”

#### **IV. Burke’s “Peculiar” Universalism**

The foregoing disquisition leaves one central question unanswered. Why would Burke believe that the commercial ideal ought to have governed Britain’s relationship to its imperial dominions in India? After all, Britain’s connection to India was *imperial*, which could potentially explain the “imperious commerce” that he reproached.<sup>475</sup> Three contending interpretations in Burke scholarship respond to this question. The first argues on the basis of Burke’s deep conviction in the existence of a natural moral law, which he prescribed as the norm of universal conduct.<sup>476</sup> All extant human laws, insofar as they were just, were modulations of this natural law, or in Burke’s words, “all human laws are, properly speaking, declaratory” (TPL, 456).<sup>477</sup> Diametrically opposed to this explanation is the argument that Burke’s defense of Indians was a *critique* of universality, more specifically, the universality of reason that the late eighteenth- and

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<sup>475</sup> David Hume openly admitted that a liberal corporatist form of metropolitan government would wreak oppression and plunder in its colonial domains; in other words, he admitted the connection between commercial society and primitive accumulation. Adam Smith hinted at the same connection when he argued that slaves in a free society would be much more miserable and oppressed compared to their counterparts in despotic societies. Burke, on the other hand, tried to disavow this pessimistic link. Since Hume did not have as strong a stake in “free government” as did Burke, he sat more easily with the admission of the metropolitan-colonial nexus of plunder. See, Hume, “That Politics May be Reduced to a Science” in *Essays, Moral and Political*, ed. Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty fund, 187); Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, Book IV, chapter 7, par. 55; also see, Whelan, *Edmund Burke and India*, p. 103 ff.

<sup>476</sup> This interpretation is most elaborately advanced by Whelan, who maintains that the universal moral law was the standard for judging local customs, as well as the fundament of Burke’s notions of governmental duties, rule of law, and law of nations. Whelan, *Edmund Burke and India*, pp. 275-97).

<sup>477</sup> As another instantiation of this belief one could point to Burke’s painstaking attempts to prove that Muslim and Hindu laws were in fact just laws on par with the English common law (SOI, 352-367). In a rhetorical *tour de force* in his speech in the opening of impeachment, Burke proclaimed, “I would as willingly have him [Hastings] tried upon the law of Koran, or the Institutes of Temarlane, as upon the Common Law or the Statue Law of this Kingdom” (SOI, 365). To similar effect is Burke’s advocacy for ruling India not by the letter but the spirit of English law, based on the assumption that the spirit of just laws were everywhere the same, while their form varied according to the character of different peoples (SOI 345).

early nineteenth-century English liberalism mobilized to infantilize Indians and keep them under imperial tutelage.<sup>478</sup> In this account, Burke countered the liberal “cosmopolitanism of reason” with his “cosmopolitanism of sentiment,” which refuses to map social difference along a temporal grid of knowledge, and instead asserts the contemporaneity of different experiences lodged in spatial localities. Burke corrected Lockean liberal fantasies of universalism by pointing to the constitutive links between land, belonging, intersubjective ties, and political identity, which rarely, if at all, take consensual form.<sup>479</sup> A third line of interpretation charts a median course between moral universalism and radical pluralism, and describes Burke’s attitude as a “peculiar universalism” which aimed at expanding British moral sense and aligning it with cosmopolitan principles.<sup>480</sup> The expansion of the moral horizon required that the British felt “sympathy” for the Indians, and Burke’s systematic analogies between India and Europe were geared to familiarize his audience with the cultural alterity in India openly and without derogation.<sup>481</sup>

The interpretation I adopt here does not so much repudiate these three approaches as situates them in Burke’s heterodox appropriation of the Scottish Enlightenment’s stadial theory of history, civilization, and moral sense. This theoretical move specifies the conditions under which the conclusions of these approaches are operable, and more carefully draws out the political stakes of Burke’s Indian endeavors. I contend that the specific moral sensibility and course of action that Burke prescribed to govern India was underlain by his conviction that India was a commercial society and had to be treated accordingly. The failure to do so amounted to

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<sup>478</sup> The groundbreaking work in this theoretical lane is Uday Mehta’s *Liberalism and Empire*.

<sup>479</sup> Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire*, pp. 41-2, 132-44, 175.

<sup>480</sup> This is the position elaborated by Jennifer Pitts in *A Turn to Empire*, chapter 3.

<sup>481</sup> Indeed, Burke noted in his speech on Fox’s India Bill that the British remained aloof to the oppression and sufferings of Indians mostly because they were “so little acquainted with Indian details ... that it is very difficult for our sympathy to fix upon these objects” (FB, 403-4).

injustice by the standards of Burke's universal moral law, yet this moral law was informed by civilizational categories that rendered such non-commercial peoples as Native Americans and Africans legitimately vulnerable to the same practices that Burke deemed unjust in India.<sup>482</sup>

For Burke, the problem with the empire in India was not the presence of an imperious and violent government *per se*, in contrast, for instance, to the pacific republican governments of the American dominions.<sup>483</sup> As has been aptly demonstrated, Burke was comfortable prescribing an "iron rod" for Africans on the Atlantic plantations, not for "crushing" but for "ruling" them.<sup>484</sup> While this was in a tract he co-authored in 1757, an early piece that arguably does not represent "late Burke's" cosmopolitan sensibilities, his "Sketch of a Negro Code," drafted two decades later, betrays the same tutelary mission of civilizing Africans. Burke's attitude towards slavery was certainly more emancipatory than that of his counterparts in that he did not attribute to Africans any essential incapacity to freedom. True to his Scottish Enlightenment sympathies, Africans occupied a savage or barbarous stage in the scale of civilization, and African slaves could accordingly be granted freedom provided they internalized the manners characteristic of a civilized society. The pivotal premise of the Code is that "the habits of industry and sobriety and the means of acquiring and preserving property, are the proper and reasonable preparatives of freedom" (SNG, 578-9). Braided around this premise are practical provisions that include the education of slaves in schools and churches, crafts training, promotion of monogamous families,

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<sup>482</sup> Burke had a second, and equally important reason to condemn colonial violence in India, which I cannot discuss due to limitations of space. Briefly put, grand violence and confiscation imposed on India threatened to tear away the veil that covered the illegitimate origins of all property and government, an act of exposure that was especially offensive to the sensibilities of a commercial society like Britain. While most scholars concentrate on Burke's hysteria over the divestiture of civilized manners in Revolutionary France, it was first in India that the usurpation at the source of all government and the confiscation at the beginning of all property were most outrageously exposed.

<sup>483</sup> Travers is right on mark in repudiating the "settler" and "dependent" distinction that governs the contrast between the American and the Indian dominions of the British Empire, with its attendant dichotomy of liberty and despotism. India is not an "authoritarian turn" given that the American empire had long been built on slave labor, derogation and dispossession of Native Americans as savages, and even the dubiousness of the liberties of domestic subjects and colonial settlers. Travers, "Contested Despotism," pp. 196, 219.

<sup>484</sup> Edmund Burke and William Burke, *An Account of the European Settlement in Americas*, Vol 2 (London: Printed for J. Dodsley, 1757), pp. 127-8. Also see, Kohn and O'Neill, "A Tale of Two Indias," pp. 199-200.

possibility of purchasing one's freedom or of being emancipated in case of excellence in a mechanical art or liberal knowledge (SNG, 574-80). In short, Burke's scheme of emancipation through civilization aimed to forge "proper" subjects by extruding Africans through the grid of an improving Whig outlook. Crucially, however, Burke left the civilizational continuum fluid. If a "free Negro" was proven to be "incorrigibly idle, dissolute, and vicious, it shall be lawful ... to sell the said free Negro into Slavery" (SNG, 581). It was ultimately incumbent on the English Lord Protector of Negroes and the justices of peace to decide the coordinates any given Negro occupied on the civilizational map, which grafted tropes of growth onto stadial theories of history.

If the "crew of fierce, foreign barbarians and slaves" on the Atlantic plantations at least left a door opening to civilization, Native Americans were almost entirely beyond the pale for the Burke. Save for a wishful remark for "bringing those unhappy part of mankind into civility, order, piety, and virtuous discipline," Native Americans were relegated to utter abjection in Burke's discourse (AC, 282). They constituted "fierce tribes of Savages and Cannibals, in whom the traces of human nature are effaced by ignorance and barbarity" (281). Burke admonished the use of Native Americans in the conflict with the colonists, not because of the immorality of such recruitment but because of its consequent horrors:

"... to call from that Wilderness, which is not yet reclaimed [by] the spirited Enterprise of your American brethren and which they looked to as the <present> <object> for the growing industry of future generations, every Class of savages and Cannibals the most cruel and ferocious ever <known> to lay waste with fire hatchet with Murders, and Sanguinary Tortures of the Inhabitants, the most beautiful work of Skill and Labour by which the creation and the name of God was ever glorified by his creatures" (DPUI, 180).

Clearly, Burke's "cosmopolitanism of sentiment" or his "peculiar universalism" did not extend to Native Americans, who had been watching their population decimated by European incursions and diseases, and their lands encroached upon by English settlers. Adding insult to injury, Burke

categorically disqualified the remaining Native Americans from claiming any rights to their lands, and reduced them to mere vagrants in the British empire: “There is but one single nation in America – and that is the English – The Indians are no longer a people in any proper acceptance of the Word – but several gangs of Banditti scattered along a wild of a great civilized empire – A Banditti of the most cruel and atrocious kind such as infest many such empires” (SUI, 365).

That Burke lavished on Indians the sympathy which he dramatically denied to other non-white peoples who were dispossessed, oppressed, and enslaved under the British Empire<sup>485</sup> begs the question: Why India? What drove Burke to condemn the hypocrisy of attending to the Quebecois grievances in the parliament while “universally abandoning the natives of India to their fate”? (AA, 463) What distinguished India from Africa or America that bestowed its inhabitants such care and passion? What prompted him to refer to Africans as “human bodies” or “Negroes” (SNG 563) yet invoke Indians as our “fellow-creatures,” (AA, 463) “fellow subjects of the people of England in India” (POH, 62), and even “our distressed fellow citizens in India” (NAD, 553)? Why was Indianism was accorded the same contemptible status as Jacobinism? What did India, France, and Britain had in common to be the object of the same perceived threat, that of “revolution,” broadly conceived?

My answer to these questions traces Burke’s affinities with the Scottish Enlightenment. India merited Burke’s efforts because it was already a commercial society, while Africans and Native Americans failed to qualify for the same position by the universal metric of civilization. One should not mistake Burke’s usage of the terms “savagery” and “barbarism” for rhetorical flourish. In addition to their moral charge, these concepts also served as fundamental

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<sup>485</sup> This is not to say that it was *only* non-white people that were expropriated and exploited under the British Empire. Prior to the entrenchment of African slavery in the West Indies, the labor problem on the plantations was temporarily solved by the indentured servitude of predominantly Irish and Scottish immigrants, who were previously dispossessed by the English conquests in the British Isles. For a brief and useful account of the Scottish and Irish middle passages and “white slavery,” see Canny, “Origins of Empire.”

classificatory categories that helped eighteenth-century British thought navigate the “great map of mankind” unfurled by the colonial excursions. These categories mediated metropolitan thinkers’ encounter with social alterity, but not in a politically neutral way. They implied power relations as well as supplied ideological themes and tropes that rationalized them. To conjecture, a commercial society could not deal with a savage society in the same fashion it dealt with another commercial society, and vice versa. For Burke, it would be inconceivable that the English would comport themselves to the “just principles of commerce” in their interaction with Native Americans or Africans. Burke’s embrace of a universal moral law did not necessarily mean that the provisions of this law were identical in each particular historical situation. The inflection of this universal law by civilizational categories explains Burke’s sincere and self-righteousness advocacy of the Indian cause *and* his equally candid derogation of Africans and Native Americans. While the universal law of morality and justice provided for gradually bringing savages and barbarians into the ways of civility, trying to assume a similar tutelary role *vis-à-vis* another commercial society was profoundly haughty, unjust, and scandalous. And it was *this* scandal, the real arrogance of revolutionary reason and its pretensions to remake human societies that he denounced in India, cursed in France, and dreaded in Britain.

Central to this explanation is Burke’s thoughts on the capacity of human reason. There is no doubt that he was skeptical of this capacity, especially when it was in “private stock” (R, 138).<sup>486</sup> Statesmen had to resort to the “bank” or the “capital” of ages while confronting the economic and political problems of the nation. When placed on the civilizational scale, however, there emerges a caveat regarding the prerogatives of human reason. At the interface between unequal civilizations, reason cultivated in a commercial society, insofar as it was the apex of the

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<sup>486</sup> This skepticism was not exclusively or even distinctively Burkean. The primacy of psychological moral sense over the faculty of abstract reason was an epistemological tenet shared widely by the Scottish Enlightenment philosophers. See O’Neill, *The Burke-Wollstonecraft Debate*, pp. 33-4.

moral and material progress of mankind, *could* assume without arrogance a pedagogical-civilizational mission over its less civilized counterpart. The crucial feature that simultaneously *authorized reason* over savage or barbarous societies and reined it in commercial societies was the dimension of *complexity*. Social, economic, and moral complexity was the hallmark of commercial societies, which had developed out of the simplicity of the savage, barbarous, and agrarian modes of life through increased division of labor and civilization. While late eighteenth-century Europe was considered a mixed geography of agrarian and commercial social modes, England, followed by France, was celebrated as the epitome (and no doubt informed the conception) of commercial society. Comprising an entrenched capitalist agrarian economy, a vast colonial and commercial network, an intricate system of private and public credit, and manufactures moving towards what would become the industrial revolution, English society constituted a “civilizational pioneer,” a novel social formation that tested the conceptual resources of the thinkers of the period.

The unprecedented socio-economic complexity of commercial society rendered it a sublime social totality that denied the possibility of a panoptic and omniscient perspective from which it could be grasped. While Smith’s attempt to grapple with the profound inscrutability of this social formation yielded the image of an invisible hand governing a secular economy,<sup>487</sup> Burke’s tarrying with this complexity took a turn towards a historical analysis of social institutions shot through with providential theology. Hampshire-Monk captures this problem well when he argues that for Burke “political society” was a “miraculous” assemblage of

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<sup>487</sup> I owe this insight to Foucault’s lectures, where he places the emphasis on the “invisibility” of the invisible hand, indicating the fundamental assumption of inscrutability that pertains to the eighteenth-century liberal vision of the market society. In O’Neill’s account, the Scottish Enlightenment rests first and foremost on a causal theory of “spontaneously generated social orders.” See, Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics*, pp. 279-283; O’Neill, *The Burke-Wollstonecraft Debate*, pp. 35-6.

institutions, rules, moral beliefs, customs, habits, and dispositions.<sup>488</sup> Systemic harmony in a social formation of such magnitude and intricacy could not possibly be the result of deliberate design, save by God, which leads Bromwich to the conclusion that for Burke “society” was a “work of art without a maker.”<sup>489</sup> Macpherson similarly observes the centrality of the “harmony in the natural and political world” to Burke’s social thought.<sup>490</sup> These observations are correct but partial, insofar as they mistake “political society” or “society” as such for a historically specific social formation, that is, *commercial society*. It was only the presence of a complex multitude of contending, or in Burke’s words, “discordant powers” that “the harmony of the universe” could spontaneously arise and thwart the “arbitrary power” that characterized simpler societies (R, 86). Such complex multiplicity *exclusively* characterized commercial societies, in which the fortuitous interplay of manners and the economic division of labor made possible wealth, leisure, arts, letters, and civilization.

The impossibility of a sovereign perspective on commercial society was the fundamental premise behind Burke’s condemnation of the impetuous attempts to remake a society according to an abstract plan. The “diversity of interest, that must exist, and must contend in all *complex* society,” he lamented, was confused and violated by the “categorical tables” or metaphysical taxonomies of the legislators in France (R, 231-2). In a commercial society, “interest, habit, and the tacit convention that arise from a thousand nameless circumstances, produce a tact that regulates without difficulty,” yet the “indiscretion,” “zeal of regulation,” “coercive guidance,” and “magistrates exercising stiff, and often inapplicable rules” disrupted the harmonious self-regulation of the market (S, 126-8). Put succinctly, it was not reason *per se* that Burke wanted to humble; it was reason that made the hubristic claim to regulate or revolutionize commercial

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<sup>488</sup> Hampsher-Monk, “Introduction,” p. 35.

<sup>489</sup> Bromwich, “Introduction,” pp. 36-7.

<sup>490</sup> Macpherson, *Burke*, p. 50.

society. By the same token, however, the simplicity of savage or barbarous societies stripped them of the safeguards against the haughtiness of reason.

Viewed through this theoretical perspective, Burke's veneration and defense of India appears in a light that at once dispels (*pace* Mehta) the semblance of an unconditional veneration for cultural difference, and loads his universal morality with the power relations of civilizational asymmetries. It is beyond doubt that what aligned India's miseries with those of post-Revolutionary France was India's status as a commercial society. India

does not consist of an abject and barbarous populace; much less of gangs of savages, like the Guaranies and Chiquitos, who wander on the waste borders of the river of Amazons, or the Plate; but a people for ages civilized and cultivated; cultivated by all the arts of polished life, whilst we were yet in the woods. There, have been princes once of great dignity, authority, and opulence. There, are to be found the chiefs of tribes and nations. There, is to be found an antient and venerable priesthood, the depository of their laws, learning, and history, the guides of the people whilst living, and their consolation in death; a nobility of great antiquity and renown; a multitude of cities, not exceeded in population and trade by those of the first class in Europe; merchants and bankers, individual houses of whom have once vied in capital with the Bank of England; whose credit had often supported a tottering state, and preserved their governments in the midst of war and desolation; millions of ingenious manufacturers and mechanicks; millions of the most diligent, and not the least intelligent, tillers of the earth. Here are to be found almost all the religions professed by men, the Bramincal, the Mussulmen, the Eastern and the Western Christians. (FB, 389-90).

If Burke was indeed trying to induce sympathy with the Indians by familiarizing it in a language accessible to his audience, then he was trying to induce sympathy for another commercial society, for which he did not refrain from denigrating the inhabitants of America. India not only boasted agriculture, manufacture, and credit on par with European polities, it also had, indispensable to Burke's social vision of a civilized society, a grand nobility and institutionalized religion.<sup>491</sup> Five years later, at the opening of the impeachment, Burke complemented the socioeconomic analysis of India with a discourse on the Indian government, in which he documented in assiduous detail its legal tradition and its conformity to *rule of law* (SOI, 352-67).

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<sup>491</sup> It is worth noting the parallels between Robertson and Burke's analysis of India's civilizational status. Robertson, with whom Burke had the most intellectual affinity amongst the Scottish Enlightenment philosophers, had depicted India as an ancient and commercial society, though recently languishing under the Mogul rule. See Robertson's appendix to *A Historical Disquisition*.

Contrary to British preconceptions, India was not an “Asiatic despotism” but possessed a constitutional government very much like that of Britain. The Indian sovereign

cannot dispose of the life, of the property, or, of the liberty, of any of his subjects, but by what is called the Fetfa or sentence of the law. He cannot declare peace or war without the same sentence of the law; so much is he more than European sovereigns a subject of strict law, that he cannot declare war or peace without it. Then if he can neither touch life nor property, if he cannot lay a tax upon his subjects, or declare peace or War, I leave it to your Lordships to say whether he can be called, according to the principles of that constitution, an arbitrary power (SOI, 354).

In short, India displayed the same social complexity and inscrutability as the English and French societies, which entitled it to the same protection against the undiscerning, ignorant, and zealous policies of the magistrates.

Commerce, trade, manufacture had for ages grown in the shade of Indian nobility and religion and maintained by a constitutional system that protected life, liberty, and property. Under the British *imperium*, however, “that country suffers, almost every year, the miseries of a revolution” and witnessed “the most ancient and most revered institutions, of ages and nations” being trampled by the juvenile arrogance and insolent rapacity of the Company agents (FB, 427). The same rude hands that would later destroy French nobility and religion, which formed the “protecting principles” of “commerce, trade, and manufacture,” had already begun their work in India (R, 130). Through massive confiscation of landed property, they had reduced men of rank and status to a “state of indigence, depression and contempt” (R, 155). Animated not by a “barbarous philosophy” but by an urge for material gain no less barbarous, they had torn apart the “system of manners,” beyond which their dominion in India, like the laws of French Revolutionary government, was “supported only by their own terrors” (R, 128-9). Having drowned equity and public utility, justice and prosperity, they remained a pack of “gross, stupid, ferocious, and at the same time, poor and sordid barbarians, destitute of religion, honour or manly pride” (R, 131). The destructive effects of the simplicity of radical reason on commercial

society was foreshadowed by the simplicity of self-interest that ripped through the complex texture of institutions, customs and values, and left behind naked human existence, shivering under the violence of primitive accumulation.

## **Conclusion**

At the historical level, Burke's objective was to distill commerce as a purely social and economic transaction which could nonetheless be accommodated in an imperial framework. At the theoretical level, this desire to have an "imperial" but not an "imperious" commerce was a specific mode of expressing the dynamic tension between the liberal self-image of capitalism and its material dependence on coercive methods of accumulation that appeared primitive and uncivilized when viewed through this self-image. Primitive accumulation as the "constitutive outside" of liberalism had been going on in the Atlantic and nourishing British capitalism for some time, but it became a problem for Burke for the first time when it cut against the grain of his civilizational categories by despoiling another commercial society. The civilizational parity and common imperial constitution required that the economic dealings between Britain and India be governed by the commercial principles of equality and freedom. However, these legal and moral principles were utterly inapplicable in India. Economic relations in the British colonies were thoroughly enforced by political force, because the imperial relation is unavoidably and transparently a political relation involving subordination, inequality, and unfreedom. Insofar as the imperial relation was the historically specific political shell in which primitive accumulation in India was carried out, and insofar as Burke could not relinquish the British Empire, the only recourse available to him was to openly castigate the agents of primitive accumulation

(Company agents as primitive accumulation incarnate) and try to oust the “odium of primitive despoliation” from the way the British polity was perceived and imagined.<sup>492</sup>

Placing Burke in a historical materialist perspective sensitive to the dynamics of colonial capitalism thus offers an analytical framework that integrates the political economic, imperial, and moral dimensions of his thought and promises a systematic solution to the “Burke problems” that have occupied the historians of political thought. But more importantly, it turns Burke’s thought into a window that looks over the plateau of the history of capital, a plateau riven by dynamic contradictions between the material conditions necessary for the reproduction of capital, and the inventory of images and narratives that capital has of itself. The self-image of capitalism as an exclusively market phenomenon, self-righteously resting on the principles of juridical equality and contractual freedom, has been the keystone of its legitimacy. The elevation of these principles to self-evident universal axioms has secured capitalism the moral high ground in its past and present struggles against alternative forms of social and economic organization. In other words, the conflation of capitalism and the market has played, and continues to play, the greatest part in various hegemonic projects of capital. The interrogation of Burke’s work from a historical materialist perspective reveals, however, that the identification of capitalism and the market has not always been spontaneous and self-sustaining. It has rather involved constant ideological boundary maintenance whereby the profoundly illiberal supports of capital accumulation had to be disavowed, contained, and explained away, especially when their powerful eruptions in the face of hegemonic capitalism rendered concealment and denial unavailable as ideological

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<sup>492</sup> From the perspective of political economy, Burke’s grand proclamation that “Without subordination, it would not be one empire; without freedom, it would not be the British Empire” amounts to fantastic expression of the desire to reconcile the inexorable contradiction between his commercial and imperial ideals. The political economic dimension thereby draws out the actual dynamics of the contradiction, which Bromwich perceives in purely political, and my opinion inadequate, terms of the “contradictory aims and methods of the imperial rule,” that is, “governing heterogeneity of interests within a rule of law framework” Bromwich, “Introduction,” pp. 15, 38.

options. Burke's frantic efforts to shore up a civilized, liberal, commercial self-image for the British Empire against colonial primitive accumulation in India constitutes one momentous and formative chapter in the history of guarding the liberal boundaries of capital. Therefore, students of the history of capital have as much to learn from an analysis of Burke's works as do Burke scholars.

## CHAPTER IV

### LETTERS FROM SYDNEY: EDWARD G. WAKEFIELD AND THE QUESTION OF COLONIAL LABOR

Imperialism was born when the ruling class in capitalist production came up against national limitations to its economic expansion. The bourgeoisie turned to politics out of necessity; for if it did not want to give up the capitalist system whose inherent law is constant economic growth, it had to impose this law upon its home governments and to proclaim expansion to be an ultimate political goal of foreign policy.

Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.

#### Introduction

The second quarter of the nineteenth century was a critical juncture for the fortunes of empire in British social, political and economic thought. Dominant intellectual opinion was leaving its turn-of-the-century hostility for a more favorable disposition towards colonial possessions at the same time the inertia of public indifference to empire was lifting. The first of these shifts stemmed from a growing awareness about the peculiar condition of English capitalism in this period and its potential political ramifications.<sup>493</sup> The second shift was owed to a group of policy entrepreneurs' sustained efforts to convert public opinion to the cause of colonization.<sup>494</sup> A major figure at the intersection of these two currents was Edward Gibbon Wakefield, who devoted his life to establishing in political economic theory as well as in popular

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<sup>493</sup> Alan Shaw provides a useful overview of the shifting sands of official and intellectual opinion on colonization. After 1825, Shaw contends, the economic case for colonization gained the upper hand, not on older mercantilist grounds, but on the basis of political economy. By 1830, "no prominent political economist ventured to attack colonization in principle," with the exception of John McCulloch. A. G. L. Shaw, "Introduction" in *Great Britain and the Colonies, 1815-1855* ed. A. G. L. Shaw (London: Methuen & Co, 1970), especially pp. 16-17.

<sup>494</sup> For a concise treatment of the popularization of the ideas and visions of settler colonialism in nineteenth-century England, see James Belich, "The Rise of the Angloworld: Settlement in North America and Australasia, 1784-1918", in *Rediscovering the British World*, ed. P. Buckner & R. D. Francis (Calgary: University of Calgary, 2005); Belich, "Settler Utopianism? English Ideologies of Emigration, 1815-1850" in *Liberty, Authority, Formality: Political Ideas and Culture, 1600-1900*, ed. John Morrow and Jonathan Scott (Charlottesville, VA: Imprint Academic, 2008). For a more topical treatment of the promotional literature, see Marian Minson "Promotional Shots: the New Zealand Company's Paintings, Drawings and Prints in the 1840s and Their Use in Selling a Colony" in *Edward Gibbon Wakefield and the Colonial Dream: A Reconsideration*, ed. Philip Temple (Wellington: Friends of the Turnbull Library, 1997).

consciousness the necessity and desirability of the British Empire's colonial expansion. On the one hand, Wakefield posed a formidable challenge to orthodox political economy by exposing its limits from a colonial perspective and compelled his contemporaries to regard questions of colonization and empire as questions of political economy proper.<sup>495</sup> On the other hand, his indefatigable labors in organizing colonization societies, lobbying the Colonial Office, generating a promotional literature for colonization, and his quasi-family business of settling New Zealand, would pave the way for the rapid colonization of the antipodes.<sup>496</sup>

This chapter focuses on the first of these efforts by analyzing Wakefield's intervention into the field of early-Victorian classical political economy. Wakefield's thought deserves more attention than has been conventionally bestowed upon it, because it presents a rare condensation point of the major controversies raging over the economic and political prospects of the British society at a time when the global industrial supremacy of England had borne the bitter fruit of domestic social antagonism. More specifically, I argue that Wakefield's political-economic thought bore powerful and original insights into the problem of "overaccumulation of capital"<sup>497</sup>

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<sup>495</sup> For elaboration on the theoretical bridges Wakefield built between classical political economy and theories of colonization, see Winch, *Classical Political Economy*, especially part 2, and "Classical Economics and the Case for Colonization" in *Great Britain and the Colonies, 1815-1855*, ed. A. G. L. Shaw (London: Methuen & Co, 1970); Semmel, *Rise of Free Trade Imperialism: Political Economy, the Empire of Free Trade and Imperialism, 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), especially chapters 4 and 5, and "The Philosophic Radicals and Colonialism" in *Great Britain and the Colonies, 1815-1855*, ed. A. G. L. Shaw (London: Methuen & Co, 1970).

<sup>496</sup> For the direct involvement of the Wakefields in the enterprise of colonizing New Zealand, see among others, Patricia Burns, *The Fatal Success: A History of the New Zealand Company* (Auckland: H. Reed, 1989); Philip Temple, "New Zealand: A Family Business" in *Edward Gibbon Wakefield and the Colonial Dream: A Reconsideration*, ed. Philip Temple (Wellington: Friends of the Turnbull Library, 1997), and *A Sort of Conscience*. For the contribution of Wakefield's colonization efforts to the settlement of Australia and New Zealand, see James Belich, *Making Peoples: a History of the New Zealanders, from Polynesian Settlement to the End of the Nineteenth Century* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996), especially pp 180-9; John Martin, "A Small Nation on the Move: Wakefield's Theory of Colonisation and the Relationship between State and Labour in the Mid-Nineteenth Century," and Eric Richards, "Wakefield and Australia," both in *Edward Gibbon Wakefield and the Colonial Dream: A Reconsideration*, ed. Philip Temple (Wellington: Friends of the Turnbull Library, 1997).

<sup>497</sup> The term "overaccumulation of capital" as used in this chapter draws on Karl Marx's theory of the crisis of capital, articulated in Karl Marx, *Capital* Vol. 3 (London: Penguin, 1991), especially chapter 15. The problem of overaccumulation, which has been variously conceptualized as a problem of "overproduction" and "underconsumption" remains the subject of a long and unresolved debate amongst Marxists scholars. Amongst the most prominent touchstones of this genealogy, one could cite Rosa Luxemburg's *Accumulation of Capital* and

that troubled nineteenth-century capitalism, precisely because he placed (to paraphrase Stoler and Cooper) the metropole and the colony in a single analytic frame.<sup>498</sup> Wakefield's proposed solutions to the overaccumulation problem mobilized this global frame and pointed to colonial expansion not as an incidental safety valve (as was suggested by some of his contemporaries) but as a structural remedy to be applied by systematic political means, thereby forging a metabolic link between capitalism and imperialism. Perhaps most striking was Wakefield's blending of this political-economic analysis with, on the one hand, an unwavering commitment to free trade and free labor that epitomized middle-class liberalism of his time, and on the other, a theory of progress built of the hardened categories of civilization and savagery inherited from the Scottish Enlightenment. The outcome was a grandiose plan of a liberal capitalist empire that heralded a global vision peace, prosperity, and liberty.

More importantly for the central concerns of this chapter, Wakefield's glorious vision was fractured by profound tensions, aporias, and impasses that arose from commitment to economic and political imperatives that could not be immediately reconciled. The first of these commitments attached to the liberal values of contractual freedom and juridical equality that underpinned the ideal of free market devoid of political power, while the second was to the imperatives of capitalist expansion, which involved irreducible processes of dispossession and social displacement subtended by legal and political coercion, which I have discussed in Chapter 1 under the rubric of primitive accumulation. The contradictions between these imperatives came to a head in the early nineteenth century around the "labor problem" and its manifold yet closely

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David Harvey's *Limits to Capital*. A recent reconsideration of the overaccumulation phenomenon with in the context of the current economic crisis is David McNally's *Global Slump*.

<sup>498</sup> Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, "Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda" in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1997), p. 4.

connected metropolitan and colonial repercussions.<sup>499</sup> This chapter deploys Wakefield's analytic and prescriptive engagement with the labor problem as an entry point into the conundrums that confronted the development of capitalism in the early-nineteenth century. Wakefield's Whig affiliations, spliced with Benthamite utilitarianism and neo-Smithian political economy and combined with his championing of colonialism as essential to the survival of capitalism, renders his thought fecund grounds for reconstructing the tensions between the illiberality of capitalist expansion in the colonies and the avowedly liberal banner under which capitalism trotted the globe.

The claims of this chapter proceed along two interlocking axes. The first of these relates to the problem of capitalist reproduction in the early nineteenth century and the status of wage labor therein. I argue that the navigation of the aforementioned tensions was essential to the settlement of the ideological contours of "free labor" in a manner that would render it abundant yet manageable, productive yet docile, in short, compatible with the imperatives of capital accumulation. For Wakefield, English capitalism suffered from a glut of capital and labor, which drove down profits and wages, accelerated proletarianization and pauperization, and stoked labor militancy that threatened social upheaval and confiscation of private property. In the colonies, by contrast, the scarcity of wage labor leveraged the bargaining power of laborers to the point where capital owners shunned investment due to expensive and unstable labor supply. At home, labor was abundant but politically intractable, in the colonies, it was politically inert yet woefully scarce. The ingenuity of Wakefield's solution was his mobilization of political and legal instruments, imperial in nature and utilitarian in principle, for ensuring a supply of dispossessed

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<sup>499</sup> I borrow the term "labor problem" from Eric Williams's trailblazing work *Capitalism and Slavery*, which is prefaced by a discussion of Wakefield's analysis of the colonial political economy. I use theoretical license to deploy this notion beyond the historical object of Williams's analysis, while aware of the possible complications attendant to such capacious deployment.

and tractable labor force both in the metropole and in the colonies. The active role assigned to government in producing and reproducing a class of dispossessed laborers pitted Wakefield's theory and policy proposals against the *laissez-faire* orthodoxy of his contemporaries; at the same time, the subtlety of legal and institutional instruments and minimal direct coercion envisioned in this process of primitive accumulation distinguished his vision from earlier mercantilist labor policies. I contend that the peculiarity of Wakefield's proposals, insofar as they rested on the utilization of political force that did not directly impinge upon individual choice, represented the makings of a neoclassical paradigm, in which the institutional conditions of economic growth were understood in terms of their impact on individual incentives.

The second axis examines Wakefield's conjectures on morals and manners, which were informed by the Enlightenment categories of civilization and savagery and which implicated the early-Victorian Britons' image of themselves. Here the focus is on Wakefield's criticism of the "frontier pathology" that he maintained plagued all settler colonies. The changes he observed in the manners, morals, and tastes of settlers at colonial frontiers represented nothing less than a civilizational regression from "polished" life that represented the extant terminus of human development to "rude" life that characterized the vagrant barbarian or semi-savage peoples.<sup>500</sup> Such deterioration could not be dismissed simply as decay in the moral fabric, however, just as the rise of crime, prostitution, and popular dissent in England was not to be condemned as the triumph of vice. Adducing the Scottish Enlightenment premise that civilization was closely

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<sup>500</sup> The term "frontier pathology" is Erik Olssen's, who coins it in situating Wakefield's writings in the post-Enlightenment intellectual tradition. Pat Moloney expands on Olssen's thesis, by bringing into sharper relief the civilization-savagery tropes in Wakefield's thought. I follow Olssen's and Moloney's insights in developing my arguments on the moral-civilizational dimension of Wakefield's works on political economy and colonization. I am heavily indebted to J. G. A. Pocock's expert treatment of the nineteenth-century Enlightenment thought for explicating the broader social imaginary in which Wakefield's understanding of civilization and savagery was embedded. See Olssen, "Wakefield and the Scottish Enlightenment," and "Mr. Wakefield and New Zealand"; Moloney, "Savagery and Civilization"; Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, especially Vol. 4, *Barbarians, Savages, and Empires*; and *The Discovery of Islands: Essays in British History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

tethered to economic development, Wakefield argued that metropolitan and colonial pathologies had their roots in their respective political-economic and sociological conditions, the correct scientific analysis of which could inform ameliorative policies. The over-concentration of capital and population in the metropole caused social degradation and depravity, whereas their under-concentration in the colonies resulted in a vulgar and repugnant livelihood. These interconnected problems had to be addressed in a political economic framework that centered as much on the colonies as on the metropole. The daunting task at hand was to salvage at once capitalism and the civilized self-image of the British, or more precisely “capitalist civilization,” and Wakefield rose up to this challenge with his theory of systematic colonization.

I develop these arguments in three sections. The first two sections analyze Wakefield’s diagnosis and explication of the labor problem in its metropolitan and colonial moments, which roughly map onto the problems of overaccumulation and the inadequacies of spontaneous colonization. I contextualize the first moment in the debate on falling profits and economic stagnation that preoccupied British political economy in the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>501</sup> The second moment is situated in relation to the broader controversy on the legal and moral status of labor that flared in the wake of the abolition of slavery in Britain’s colonies.<sup>502</sup> Both debates were animated, I maintain, not merely by political and economic concerns for the stable reproduction of capitalist relations, but laden with deeper anxieties about moral and

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<sup>501</sup> These debates are most meticulously examined in Semmel, *Rise of Free Trade Imperialism*, and Winch, *Classical Political Economy*. Also see, Edward Kittrell, “Development of the Theory of Colonization in English Classical Political Economy,” *The Southern Economic Journal* 31 (1965): 189-206; G. S. L. Tucker, “The Application and Significance of Economic Theories of the Effect of Economic Progress on the Rate of Profit, 1800-1850” in *Great Britain and the Colonies, 1815-1855*, ed. A. G. L. Shaw (London: Methuen & Co, 1970).

<sup>502</sup> While Wakefield’s immediate plans concerned South Australia and New Zealand, the West Indies constituted the flashpoint for the metropolitan and controversies over the legal and moral status of labor. Furthermore, while Wakefield did not formulate specific plans for the Caribbean colonies, he definitely brought them, along with Ireland and African colonies, within the scope of his colonization theory. In substantiating these controversies against I which investigate Wakefield’s position on labor, I draw upon the historiographical scholarship that has critically built upon Eric Williams’s work, most importantly, Davis, *Problem of Slavery*; Holt, *Problem of Freedom*; Kale, *Fragments of Empire*.

civilizational values that implicated British self-conceptions. The last section examines Wakefield's theory of systematic colonization, which went beyond simply funneling the excess of the metropole to the colonies (what he criticized as "pauper relocation") and called for orchestrating colonial emigration and settlement with an eye towards maintaining the optimum level of social and economic pressure – overseeing the boiler of the capitalist engine, as it were. The linchpin of the entire theory was the idea of selling colonial lands at a "sufficient price" that would ensure the existence of a class of dispossessed laborers and reasonable wages. Such imperial instruments as pre-emptive crown rights in colonial lands and royal charters for colonization companies were to be mobilized for establishing colonial land and labor markets that would conform to the laws of the commodity and capital accumulation, thereby supplying the institutional conditions of the commercial-capitalist society.

Wakefield's ultimate objective was to extend the civilization of capitalism to the colonies by leaping over or bracketing the precapitalist stages of barbarism. The transplantation of capitalist civilization necessitated an element of social engineering to be achieved through political means, which traversed a number of contradictions between capitalism and democracy, colonization and civility, and *laissez-faire* and utility. These contradictions forced Wakefield to weave contractual fantasies of dispossession, class harmony, and *summum bonum* for circumnavigating them. Such contradictions have eluded attention in the extant scholarship on Wakefield, mainly due to the striking disconnect between political economic and cultural analyses of systematic colonization.<sup>503</sup> This chapter attempts to remedy this disjuncture by

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<sup>503</sup> Scholarly literature on Wakefield is somewhat sparse and far between, at least compared to some of the political economists and political figures of his time. Wakefield's fortunes in British imperial history, especially as written by New Zealand historians, display a certain resonance with the course that British imperial history has taken through the twentieth century. Early twentieth-century Whiggish depictions of Wakefield, such as by A. J. Harrop, Irma O'Connor, and Paul Bloomfield, which hailed the man as the "builder of the British Commonwealth" were eroded by the steady pressure of the revisionist historiography after the 1960s. Michael Turnbull disclosed the questionable pecuniary motives behind Wakefield's colonization efforts; John Miller underscored his mercurial adventurism;

underscoring the intimate connection between the “dismal science” of political economy and civilizational anxieties in Wakefield’s thought. More importantly, I conclude that these contradictions and their negotiation deserve attention because they were formative of the realignment of civilizational tropes around political economic theories of colonization in the early nineteenth century, which can be considered as the moral-epistemological *ur*-form of the contemporary discourses of development and good governance.

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Patricia Burns’s scathing critique targeted the impact of Wakefield enterprise on the European-Maori relations; Peter Stuart’s account drew attention to the unbridled political ambitions that stamped his career in New Zealand and overrode the very policy proposals he had formulated in England (the same shift in position would later be interpreted more favorably by Lloyd Prichard, who perceived in it the virtue of non-doctrinaire flexibility). Australian historians Peter Howell and Douglass Pike wrote the most acerbic criticisms that labeled him a “charlatan” who had not even built a colony, let alone an empire. During the same period, Wakefield fared better under the pen of the British historians of economic thought, who contextualized his thought in the British rather than the antipodean isles. Donald Winch drew attention to Wakefield’s political economy as a doctrine of liberal empire, while Bernard Semmel cast Wakefield and the Colonial Reform movement as the consummate proponents of the imperialism of free trade. Edward Kittrell and G. S. L. Tucker likewise followed Wakefield into the economic orthodoxy-heterodoxy debate, though they honed their focus on more specific issues on profits and rents. After the cultural and colonial “turns” in history, the bicentennial of Wakefield’s birth brought about a resurgence of interest that displayed a predilection for cultural analysis, as attested by recent essays by Erik Olssen and Pat Moloney. Given my focus on the thought rather than the deeds of Wakefield, this chapter draws more heavily on the contributions of the British political economy school and the insights of the cultural analyses than on New Zealand historiographies, incorporated at specific junctures. See A. J. Harrop, *The Amazing Career of Edward Gibbon Wakefield* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1928); Irma O’Connor, *Edward Gibbon Wakefield: The Man Himself* (London: Selwyn & Blount, 1928) Paul Bloomfield, *Edward Gibbon Wakefield: Builder of the British Commonwealth* (London: Longman, 1961); Michael Turnbull, *New Zealand Bubble: Wakefield Theory in Practice* (Wellington: Price Milburn, 1959); John Miller, *Early Victorian New Zealand: A Study of Racial Tension and Social Attitudes, 1839-1852* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958); Peter Stuart, *Edward Gibbon Wakefield in New Zealand: His Political Career, 1853-4* (Wellington: Price Milburn, 1971); M. F. Lloyd Prichard, “Introduction,” in *The Collected Works of Edward Gibbon Wakefield*, ed. M. F. Lloyd Prichard (London: Collins, 1968); Douglass Pike, *Paradise of Dissent* (London: Longmans, 1957); Semmel, *Rise of Free Trade Imperialism*, and “Philosophic Radicals;” Winch, *Classical Political Economy*, and “Classical Economics;” Edward R. Kittrell, “Wakefield and Classical Rent Theory,” *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 25 (1966): 141-52, and “Wakefield’s Scheme of Systematic Colonization and Classical Economics,” *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 32 (1973): 87-111; Tucker, “Application and Significance;” Olssen, “Wakefield and the Scottish Enlightenment,” and “Wakefield and New Zealand;” Moloney, “Savagery and Civilization.” For an overview of the shifting scholarly perspectives in British imperial history see Buckner and Francis, “Introduction.” in Buckner and Francis (ed) *Rediscovering the British World* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005). For a methodological appeal for redefining the parameters of British history as an essentially imperial history by integrating Britain and the colonies in a single framework, see J. G. A. Pocock, “Neo-Britains and the Three Empires” in *The Discovery of Islands: Essays in British History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

## I. Political Labor Problem: The Metropole

### *Metropolitan Debates*

Since the middle of the eighteenth century, a major source of befuddlement for British intellectuals had been the simultaneous appearance of unprecedented wealth and poverty within the national borders, a counterintuitive unity that proved to be permanent and fueled debate over its economic causes as well as political and moral consequences.<sup>504</sup> By the first decades of the nineteenth century, the disquietude reached a new pitch as the age of English industrial supremacy also entailed the dramatic pauperization of the English laboring classes, which left its political mark on the 1832 Parliamentary Reform Act and its economic imprint on the 1834 Amendment of the Poor Laws.

In the field of political economy, the nineteenth-century social science *par excellence*, the social convulsions of the period made a palpable dent in the belief that the economy tended towards competitive equilibrium. By the 1820s this belief had morphed into the orthodox position underwritten by Say's Law, which denied the possibility of economic crisis due to systemic overproduction even though it allowed for short-term sectoral gluts. The challenge to the orthodoxy was spearheaded by Thomas Malthus's view of industrial capitalism as an inherently disharmonious totality ridden with systemic imbalances.<sup>505</sup> The ensuing controversy whirled around the problem of falling profits, which posed "a problem of primary importance in British political economy" insofar as it threw into sharp relief the question of stability and sustainability of industrial capitalism.<sup>506</sup>

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<sup>504</sup> See, above all, the essays in Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff (eds), *Wealth and Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Winch, *Riches and Poverty*; Himmelfarb, *Idea of Poverty*. One should also mention the great political-economic ethnography of nineteenth-century Britain, Marx's, *Capital* Vol. 1.

<sup>505</sup> Winch, *Riches and Poverty*, pp. 246-7; Semmel, *Rise of Free Trade Imperialism*, pp. 51-4.

<sup>506</sup> Shaw, "Introduction," pp. 11-13. For a brief exposition of the problem of falling profits and its pertinence to colonization debates, see Tucker, "Application and Significance," p. 132; Semmel, *Rise of Free Trade Imperialism*,

The orthodox school, with Ricardo at the helm and the Utilitarian philosophers in tow, admitted of falling profits but did not perceive a fatal danger in them. They maintained that profits tended to decline because of the expansion of investment to less fertile marginal lands, and wages followed a similar pattern due to the scissors between the laboring population and the agricultural output. However, countervailing tendencies such as technological innovation and most importantly free trade in food could stave off a systemic crisis for an indefinite future. As long as profits were reinvested (as it was assumed that they would be, no matter how low the profit margin), it would create demand for labor and sustain wages above the subsistence level.<sup>507</sup> The heterodox Malthusian camp, including Thomas Chalmers, Robert Torrens, and Edward Gibbon Wakefield, was less sanguine. Ascribing falling profits to the existence of abundant capital lacking profitable investment opportunities in Britain, they contended that overproduction or “glut” could occur in all sectors of the economy simultaneously. System-wide low returns on capital would encourage hoarding over investment. The growing rift between economic and demographic expansion would translate into a glut in the labor market, pushing up unemployment and depressing wages. In other words, the source of economic stagnation and social distress was not the insufficient accumulation of capital (as Ricardians would hold) but its “superabundance,” or *overaccumulation*. Capital in excess of that which could be invested in employing labor and realize a reasonable profit by the sale of the product was left idle (thus ceasing to be capital), thrown into speculation or driven to bankruptcy, thereby undergoing massive devaluation. The grand outcome was the paradoxical situation of an economy soaked

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chapter 4, and “Philosophic Radicals and Colonialism,” pp. 79-80; Winch, *Classical Political Economy* pp. 79-81, and “Classical Economics,” pp. 97-9.

<sup>507</sup> Ricardian orthodoxy rested on two basic assumptions that rendered it theoretically elegant yet empirically weak. First of these was the assumption of full employment, wherein the productive capacity of a country (which for Ricardo synonymous with its capital) would be fully employed. The second assumption was full internal factor mobility, which signified the possibility of diverting capital with relative ease from those spheres of production suffering from low profits to other sectors with high returns.

with capital and labor, yet suffering from stagnation, unemployment, low wages, and low profits.<sup>508</sup>

Wakefield's view of the socioeconomic conditions in England broadly followed heterodox lights. His theoretical eclecticism in incorporating Smithian and Utilitarian tenets, the comparative and global scope of his analysis, and his prognosis about the political consequences of England's economic ills led him to peculiar insights and policy prescriptions. Malthus had advised to relegate the problem of social distress to natural solutions and wait until the edifying effects of poverty (such as watching one's family starve) instilled moral habits of abstention in the poor and brought the population back in line with what could be gainfully employed. For Wakefield, such passive fatalism was rendered unviable by the increasing political organization of the working class, undesirable by his middle-class philanthropy, and unnecessary by the possible solution he perceived in capitalist colonization.

### ***Accumulation of Capital and the Myth of Voluntary Dispossession***

Wakefield's *England and America* (1833)<sup>509</sup> opens with an impressionistic survey of wealth, comfort and conveniences in England. The diffusion of wealth manifests itself in the

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<sup>508</sup> For a useful overview of the orthodox-heterodox debate about overproduction, its sources, and possible remedies, see Bernard Semmel, *Liberal Ideal and the Demons of Empire: Theories of Imperialism from Adam Smith to Lenin* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), chapter 2.

<sup>509</sup> All references are to Prichard (ed) *Collected Works of Edward Gibbon Wakefield*. A brief overview of the major works of Wakefield examined here would be in order. Wakefield composed his *A Letter From Sydney* (1829) in the Newgate Gaol where he was serving for abducting a wealthy heiress and beguiling her to marry him (the marriage was later annulled by an Act of Parliament). His prison term would mar his name with notoriety and dispose him to pursue his political ambitions behind the scenes, mostly through members of the Parliament whom he converted to the cause of systematic colonization. Wakefield's term in prison has informed disparate perspectives on Wakefield. For sympathetic authors, the time in Newgate represented the moment of moral awakening that channeled Wakefield's ambition into philanthropic and reformist paths (Prichard, "Introduction," pp. 12-13) (Wakefield indeed condemned the death penalty and transportation in an essay entitled *Facts Relating to the Punishment of Death in the Metropolis* [1831]). For less sympathetic historians, Wakefield's philanthropy was a sham. Ged Martin, for example, contends that social ostracism and imprisonment pushed Wakefield into a world of fantasy dominated by a pathological, haughty egocentrism. Ged Martin, "Wakefield's Past and Futures," in *Edward Gibbon Wakefield and the Colonial Dream: A Reconsideration* ed. Philip Temple (Wellington: Friends of the Turnbull Library, 1997).

wide array of popularly available consumer items, a large professional class, and relatively comfortable servants. These markers of wealth, however, pale in comparison to the “facility with which in any part of England, funds are raised for any undertaking that offers the least chance of profit” (EA, 324). Wakefield’s explanation of the plenty in consumer and capital goods at first sight followed the familiar Smithian tenets of division of labor and specialization, with the concomitant effects of productivity, innovation, and frugality. In England, the farmer was

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Whatever the impact, during his three years of service, Wakefield interacted with other inmates, and those sentenced to transportation to Australia incited an interest in him in matters of colonization. In his own words, “whilst in Newgate, I had the occasion to read with care every book concerning New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land, as well as a long series of newspapers published in these colonies. Becoming thus pretty well acquainted with the true prospect of a convict about to be transported, and being in the habit of conversing on the subject with such prisoners gave me a perfect opportunity of ascertaining the state of their feelings” (*Facts Relating to the Punishment of Death in the Metropolis*, p. 266). The result of these studies was his *Letters from Sydney* published in the Morning Chronicle as a series, and later republished as *A Letter from Sydney*. This work had a peculiar style in that, although Wakefield had never been to Australia, it contained an economic and sociological account narrated by an imaginary entrepreneur in New South Wales, who served as the mouthpiece of Wakefield’s analysis of the colonial labor problem. Ideas propounded in *A Letter from Sydney* found more systematized reiteration in Wakefield’s *Plan of Company to be Established for the Purpose of Founding a Colony in Southern Australia, Purchasing Land Therein, and Preparing the Land so Purchased for the Reception of Immigrants* (1830). This plan would serve as the repository of principles and policy proposals for the string of Colonization Societies founded by Wakefield and Colonial Reformers, from South Australian Land Company to New Zealand Land Company. In 1833, *England and America* was published, the most comprehensive political economy tract Wakefield wrote. Wakefield’s analysis of the social and economic problems troubling England made its debut in *England and America*, which was laid out together with a systematic investigation of the colonial labor problem and a full articulation of the theory of systematic colonization. Between this work and *A View of the Art of Colonization* (1849), Wakefield published numerous pamphlets and articles, the latter appearing mostly in the Philosophic Radical journal *The Spectator*. He also co-authored with John Ward a promotional book, suggestively entitled *The British Colonization of New Zealand* (1837) and published under the name of his son, Edward Jerningham Wakefield. Furthermore, he participated in the Durham Mission to Canada and drafted those parts of the Durham Report (1839) as pertained to the management of public lands, and served as witness before Parliamentary committees regarding waste lands (1836), New Zealand (1840), and Australia (1841). *A View of the Art of Colonization* bore the sediments of his efforts to promote colonization with half-heartedly celebrated partial victories and bitterly resented larger disappointments. While Wakefield dictated the entire book, the exposition of the arguments were organized in the form of a series of letters between Wakefield and an anonymous member of the Parliament, the latter acting in the function of a “statesman” willing to promote colonization yet ill-informed and hesitant, consulting Wakefield’s expertise on the matter. The semblance of letter-exchange not only endowed the book with a more dialogical quality, it also enabled Wakefield to put the objections to this systematic colonization (accruing in the last twenty years) in the mouth of a high-ranking Colonial Office acquaintance of the statesman. In other words, the letters from the statesman operated as the discursive medium in which Wakefield consistently unfolded the counterarguments and rebuttals to his theory of systematic colonization and responded to them. *A View of the Art of Colonization* found lukewarm reception, mainly because its theses overlapped to a great extent with those in *England and America*. Nonetheless, Wakefield more clearly elaborated in this book some of his major arguments, and introduced some apparently minor yet theoretically significant contentions, especially regarding the nature and role of government and law in colonization. In the remainder of the chapter the primary texts are referred to by the following abbreviations in brackets: *A Letter from Sydney* (LS); *Plan of Company to be Established for the Purpose of Founding a Colony in Southern Australia* (PC); *England and America* (EA); *A View of the Art of Colonization* (AC).

nothing but a farmer and the agricultural laborer worked only in agriculture. English farmers' exemplary industry and foresight shone forth in their employment of scientific knowledge for experimenting with and improving agricultural methods, which, combined with sufficiently large and secure tenure, enabled them to benefit from economies of scale and "wait for distant returns" (Ibid, 328, 330-1). Thanks to the immense agricultural productivity, "more than two-thirds [of the rural population] are set free, to follow other pursuits" and flocked into the manufacturing and industrial sector (Ibid, 332). English industry mirrored the concentrated, specialized and capital-intensive form of the countryside, whereby the "congregation in one place vast numbers," "steam power," and "large factories" honed the competitive edge of the English manufactures in foreign markets, and rendered "improvement" and "rapid material progress" the signature of "the greatest commercial nation in the world" (Ibid, 332-6).

Wakefield's explanation of England's productive powers diverged from Smith's in one apparently formal but actually momentous conceptual reformulation. Smith had identified "division of labor" as the root cause of productivity. Wakefield objected by arguing that the term concealed two distinct processes. The first of these was the "combination of labor" among separate individuals performing joint tasks, and the second comprised the "division of employments" between different individuals or groups and technical specialization (Ibid, 327). Crucially, the second could not arise in the absence of the first, that is, before individuals were placed in a social situation where they would be willing to cooperate for producing social necessities, rather than each working for satisfying the entire battery of his own individual needs.<sup>510</sup> In other words, the *social* division of labor preceded and conditioned the *technical*

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<sup>510</sup> I retain Wakefield's gender denominations throughout the chapter.

division of labor in production.<sup>511</sup> England represented a sterling case of the social and technical division of labor, as combined labor set in work in agriculture in turn released more labor which could then be combined in large scale manufactures, feeding not only into social specialization between agriculture and manufacture, but also technical specialization within each sector. In contrast, the “cottier system” in Ireland, France, and America was characterized by the dispersal of the factors of production amongst a large number of small producers who had to allocate their labor time amongst various tasks, or in other words, by the division of individual labor and consolidation of employments. The consequent lack of specialization and absence of economic scale resulted in the production of fewer commodities of poorer quality, and posed a formidable obstacle to the accumulation of capital (Ibid, 331).

The crux of Wakefield’s reformulation of Smith’s “division of labor” lay in the preconditions of combined labor, an insight, as we shall see, he derived from his study of colonial economies. Smith had assumed the social division of labor to be always already present in all human societies, from the earliest recesses of time.<sup>512</sup> According to Wakefield, this assumption flowed from the confusion of the state of the British society for the state of all human societies. Great Britain represented an exceptional case in human history insofar as it was the first society where the “laborers for hire constitute the bulk of the people” (AC, 793). “One

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<sup>511</sup> The specific form of cooperative production whereby individuals performing different activities would satisfy mutual needs was the commodity economy. Marx would later develop this point in his discussion of cooperation and the centrality of social division of labor to commodity production. Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, chaps. 13 and 14. A focused theorization of the difference and relation between social division of labor and technical division of labor can be found in Perelman, *Invention of Capitalism*, especially chap. 4.

<sup>512</sup> Smith wrote, “As it is by treaty, by barter, and by purchase, that we obtain from one another the greater part of those mutual good offices which we stand in need of, so it is this same trucking disposition which originally gives occasion to the division of labour. In a tribe of hunters or shepherds a particular person makes bows and arrows, for example, with more readiness and dexterity than any other. He frequently exchanges them for cattle or for venison with his companions; and he finds at last that he can in this manner get more cattle and venison, than if he himself went to the field to catch them. From a regard to his own interest, therefore, the making of bows and arrows grows to be his chief business, and he becomes a sort of armourer.” Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, bk. I, chap. II, par. 3. He made the same point with hunters and bowmakers, almost *ad verbatim*, in *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, where he concluded, “This bartering and trucking spirit is the cause of the separation of trades and the improvements in arts.” Adam Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), chap. VI, par. 46.

cannot use capital merely by wishing to use it,” Wakefield contended; “the use of capital and division of labor result from some anterior improvement” (EA, 325-6), and the formation of a workforce for hire, or a class of wage-laborers, comprised this “anterior improvement.” Thanks to the availability of a large dispossessed labor force in England, labor could be combined in various forms, in different degrees, and for a multiplicity of tasks, because laborers lacked independent access to means of labor and social reproduction and therefore deferred to the managerial authority of the employer. The existence of “the laboring class; that is, a class whose only property is their labor, and who live by the sale of that property to the other classes” ensured that laborers would voluntarily submit, *via* contractual agreements, to function as part of combined labor and characterized those “modern states, which deserve to be called civilized” (EA, 337). In less “civilized” countries such as Ireland, Spain, Portugal, and France, the predominance of small proprietorship turned people into “something between capitalists and workmen,” whereas in England, “a complete separation has taken place between capitalists and workmen, the labouring class compose the vast majority of the people” (Ibid, 338).<sup>513</sup>

This “complete separation” lauded by Wakefield would later be theorized by Marx under the rubric of “primitive accumulation,” “the process which divorces the worker from the ownership of the conditions of his own labor.”<sup>514</sup> Marx zeroed in on the centrality of this

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<sup>513</sup> The connection between the presence of a dispossessed workforce and civilization traced the Scottish Enlightenment predication of the civilized ways of life on property relations, economic division of labor, social complexity, and the generation of material surplus that could sustain leisure necessary for cultivating arts, letters, sciences, polished manners and refined morals – a connection we will revisit in length below. Secondly, the association of wage labor with civilization stemmed from the absence of direct coercion that contrasted starkly with serfdom, *corvee*, slavery and other forms of bonded labor braided with open extra-economic force. Marx himself observed this moral valence of wage labor when he remarked that wage labor under capitalist social division of labor “appears as a more refined and civilized means of exploitation.” Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, p. 486. For the Scottish Enlightenment parameters of civilization and their connection to social, economic, and legal conditions, see Berry, *Social Theory of the Scottish Enlightenment*, especially chaps. 5 and 6.

<sup>514</sup> Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, p. 874. A superb treatment of primitive accumulation as an essentially theoretical, rather than historicist, notion is provided by Massimo de Angelis’s works. The great merit of de Angelis’s argument is to theorize this notion as originary in the *constitutive* sense of being present whenever capital-relation is produced and

separation to Wakefield's analysis and considered him as the theorist of primitive accumulation *par excellence*.<sup>515</sup> Marx maintained that the expropriation of the immediate producer constituted the "prehistory of capital" and the precondition of the "capital-relation" that hinged on the extraction of surplus labor from the dispossessed worker for the self-valorization of capital. Equally significantly in this case, the capital-relation proceeded through the fair exchange of labor-power for wages freely contracted on the labor market. The majority of the population in England who were "set free, to follow other pursuits" were thus free in the double sense of the term: free to sell their labor to whomever they pleased, and free (that is, cut off) from the means of production, first and foremost, the soil. This double freedom that Wakefield celebrated as a liberal political economist had its concrete genealogy in the English Enclosures and Highland Clearances, which marked the makings of the modern English working class through the legal and political violence of the "bloody legislation" and "parliamentary enclosures."<sup>516</sup>

The historical process of primitive accumulation was omitted in Wakefield's works,<sup>517</sup> and its place filled by what I call a "myth of voluntary dispossession." As will be discussed

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reproduced. See, de Angelis, "Separating the Doing and the Deed," and *Beginning of History*, especially chapters 10 and 11.

<sup>515</sup> Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, chap. 33.

<sup>516</sup> On English enclosures in general and the place of Parliamentary Enclosures therein, see Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, chapters 26-27; Gregory Clark and Anthony Clark, "The Enclosure of English Common Lands, 1475-1839," *Economic History Review* 61 (2001): 1009-1036; G. E. Mingay, *Parliamentary Enclosure in England: An Introduction to its Causes, Incidence, and Impact, 1750-1850* (London: Longman, 1997); J. M. Neeson, *Commoners: Common Right, Enclosure, and Social Change in Common-Field England, 1700-1820* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Joan Thirsk, *Tudor Enclosures* (London: Routledge and Paul, 1959); Michael E. Turner, *English Parliamentary Enclosure: Its Historical Geography and Economic History* (Folkstone: W. Dawson, 1980); J. A. Yelling, *Common Field and Enclosure in England: 1450-1850* (Hamden, Archon Books: 1977). For a brief overview of the "bloody legislation," see Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, chapter 28. A fascinating study of the repressive legislation that worked to consolidate wage relations is provided by Peter Linebaugh's *London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Verso, 2003). A similar history, with an Atlantic scope and an emphasis of the resistance of laborers to such legislation, can be found in Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many-Headed Hydra*.

<sup>517</sup> One exception was an early-nineteenth century pamphlet reproduced in *England and America* (pp. 340-2), mainly to the effect, however, of emphasizing the pauperization of the English agricultural laborers rather than criticizing enclosures *per se*. The same pamphlet also criticized the Poor Rates instated by the Speenhamland Laws for not only driving wages down but also impairing motives to industry, providence, and good conduct. John Martin's mistaken attribution of this pamphlet to Wakefield himself has disposed him to think of Wakefield as at

below, while Wakefield evinced a keen perspicacity in explaining the causes of colonial slavery with reference to the historical absence of “wage-labor” in colonies,<sup>518</sup> he spared the origins of wage labor from the same historical-analytic probe. Instead, he assigned it, much like Adam Smith, to the fictional recesses of time. By claiming that “the accumulation of stock must, in the nature of things, be previous to the division of labor,” Smith had endowed political economy with the theological element of “original sin.”<sup>519</sup> Marx argued that Smith’s position partook in a “childish insipidness” in that it envisioned a spontaneous emergence of wage labor through initial acts of parsimony and profligacy, whereby a “diligent, intelligent, and frugal elite” accumulated wealth and a great many “lazy rascals ... finally had nothing to sell but their skins.”<sup>520</sup> While Wakefield did not share Smith’s assumptions of spontaneity in the birth of social division of labor, he spun a fable no less conjectural. Prior to the separation between workers and capitalists, all individuals worked on their own “capital” only as necessary to ensure their own subsistence – not unlike, Wakefield added, the contemporary state of American settlers, Irish cottagers, or French peasants. Far from triggering an unequal “accumulation of stock,” the natural unfolding of the production process reached a plateau where “all members of the society are supposed to possess *equal* portions of capital” (Ibid, 326, emphasis added). Such egalitarianism, however, “would not admit of much further improvement in the productive powers of industry” (Ibid). Under these conditions, “no man would have a motive for accumulating more capital than he could use with his own hands,” making it impossible to undertake any work, such as infrastructural projects, that required the “employment of many hands and fixed capital” (Ibid, 326). An economically stationary stage ensued and locked society

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heart sympathetic to workers’ cause and their desire to have access to land. As will be shown below, nothing could be farther than the truth. John Martin, “Small Nation,” pp. 108-9.

<sup>518</sup> See William, *Capitalism and Slavery*, chapter 1.

<sup>519</sup> Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, Book II, Introduction; Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, p. 873

<sup>520</sup> Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, 873.

in a paradigm of mere subsistence by confining it to at best a primitive economy of petty commodity production. With this conjecture, Wakefield gestured towards at least an implicit antagonism of interest between the individual left to his own devices to pursue his ends and society whose common good lay in a configuration of economic behavior beyond what could be spontaneously expected from individuals.

Instead of confronting this problem in historical terms, however, Wakefield took refuge in the convenient proposition that

Mankind have adopted a ... contrivance for promoting the accumulation of capital, and the use of capital when required, both in large masses and fixed shape: they have divided themselves into owners of capital and owners of labour. But this division was, in fact, the result of concert or combination of labour. The capitals of all being equal, one man saves *because* he expects to find others to work for him; other men spend *because* they expect to find some men ready to employ them; and if it were not for this readiness to cooperate, to act in concert or combination, the division of the industrious classes into capitalists and labourers could not be maintained (Ibid, 326-7).

That individuals could “concert” to their own dispossession and therefore to their dependence on others for their subsistence in order to promote capital accumulation has struck some as absurd, to say the least.<sup>521</sup> Indeed the fable in question posits *rational and self-possessed individuals* inhabiting a sort of natural state with *equal freedoms* to make use of their labor and stock. It then places these individuals in a quasi-tacit *social contract* of dispossession to which they accede in full knowledge of the *ends* to be achieved (capital accumulation) and the *means* to achieve them (separation of labor from the instruments of labor). Rather than dismissing such ideas as absurd, it might be more helpful to consider Wakefield’s conjecture as a fantasy for accommodating the imperative of primitive accumulation within a liberal cast by removing any and all possibility of constitutive coercion, unfreedom, and inequality from the process by which “free labor” comes

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<sup>521</sup> Marx’s withering disdain for classical political economists is well known, and he did not spare Wakefield. Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, p. 934. Perelman likewise dismisses Wakefield’s conjecture as outrageous and absurd. Perelman, *Invention of Capitalism*, chapter 10. Such summary dismissals are unfortunate, for they miss the significance of such hypothetical conjectures in suturing the rifts in the theoretical fabric, navigating tensions and aporias, and effacing the limitations of a system of argumentation.

into being. Equally importantly, this liberal cast betrays a utilitarian bent, since proletarianization is not the unintended consequence of fortuitous profligacy or frugality, but a socially conceived necessity and an object of cognition that impacts how individuals choose to behave. “Saving” or “spending” based on one’s expectations of *others*’ economic behavior presents itself as an option only insofar as a patterned social reality underpinned by particular institutional arrangements (such as private property and a market in free labor) is in place or in the making. Shifting the angle from individual behavior to social totality, given the *ends* of capital accumulation, the maintenance of the institutional arrangements that reproduce a specific social pattern represents the *means* by which individual incentives governing economic behavior are keyed to capital accumulation. While, *pace* J. B. Brebner, I would not stretch Wakefield’s utilitarianism to the borders of “bureaucratic collectivism,”<sup>522</sup> the notion of a quantifiable common good (however rudimentary), instrumental causality, and legal positivism that flow from this philosophy constituted crucial theoretical resources for Wakefield’s peculiar negotiation of the historical necessity of primitive accumulation. For while Wakefield put a contractual lid on the problem of primitive accumulation for the time being, the conundrum of the illiberal origins of capitalism would return to haunt his analysis, especially when his plans for establishing capitalism *de novo* in the colonies forced him to revisit these origins, trailing in their wake similar myths of contractual dispossession.

### ***Overaccumulation and Crisis of Social Reproduction***

Before Wakefield could turn to the colonies, however, he had to face a more pressing problem at home. The blessed fruit of a large proletarian workforce that had been growing on the

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<sup>522</sup> J. B. Brebner, “Laissez-Faire and State Intervention in Nineteenth Century Britain,” *The Journal of Economic History* 8 (1948): 59-73.

soil of primitive accumulation was turning bitter in the 1820s and 1830s. The immediate cause of the problem was the overaccumulation of capital in England. The end of the Napoleonic Wars sealed a major well into which the English agriculture and industry had been pouring the output of their expanding capacity, causing a glut in the commodity markets and prompting the imposition of the Corn Laws to prevent the total collapse of agricultural prices in England. Consequently, diminishing returns on capital investment discouraged the investment of savings, culminating in an “abundance of CAPITAL” (Ibid, 324). “Capital creates capital,” declared Wakefield, and in England “by reason of the vast masses of capital already invested, there seems but little room for the profitable investment of more, millions accumulate so rapidly, that funds are never wanted for even the most hazardous undertakings” (Ibid). Wakefield was in effect assailing Say’s Law by contending that post-war England had been suffering from systemic overproduction. Since 1815, woefully low profits struck not one or two but all of the major sectors of the English economy (farming, manufacture, commerce, and retail). “Each distress has lasted fifteen years, and all the distresses together make a *permanent general distress* ... [a] *steady national distress*” (Ibid, 355, emphases added). Since the end of the war, rapidly accumulating capital could find no space for investment and realization in England, regularly flowing out to unproductive speculative ventures, “glutting distant markets,” and inflating short-lived bubbles (such as in South American mines or foreign securities) only to be subject to “occasional destruction on the grandest scale” (AC, 798).<sup>523</sup>

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<sup>523</sup> Examining the conditions leading up to the economic crisis of 1825-6, Boyd Hilton remarks, “The reduction of interest on government debt, and a shortage of opportunities for domestic investment in the period between the canal and railway building eras, fortuitously deflected all this extra capital into foreign loans and joint-stock ventures overseas.” Hilton, *Corn, Cash, Commerce*, pp. 204-5. For a broad historical perspective on financialization, speculation, and economic crises, see Charles Kindleberger, *Manias, Panics, and Crashes: A History of Financial Crises* (New York: Basic Books, 1978).

If the problem remained confined to the cyclical destruction of excess capital, there would be no cause for alarm. However, absence of new investment also meant growing unemployment and the approximation of wages to the “minimum” level. While the immediate cause of the fall in wages was greater competition for jobs in an “overstocked labor market,” the influx into England of “barbarous and easily satisfied Irishmen” and the factory system that rendered “the work performed by man’s labor more simple and easy” combined to depress wages below what used to be an acceptable pay for the English workman (Ibid, 343-4). The latter was no longer a freeman, nor was he a slave; he was a “pauper” (Ibid, 339). Acute pauperization was compounded by chronic proletarianization due to capitalist competition at narrow profit margins. Large enterprises could weather the low profit rate by virtue of their scale, whereas small capitalists, whether in agriculture, manufactures or commerce, frequently sunk into bankruptcy, leaving behind “hundreds and thousands of people who lost their capital” and joined the ranks of the laboring class (Ibid, 356).<sup>524</sup> Pauperization and proletarianization prepared the conditions for the ruthless exploitation and deplorable working conditions of the poor masses, especially women and children who were particularly vulnerable. Wakefield’s middle-class philanthropy blossomed in his sympathetic account of children recruited through parish apprenticeship system who perished while being overworked in millineries or sweeping chimneys, women who found no avenue of livelihood available but “prostitution for bread,” many who dove into the pit of crime and ended up in “fine jails,” and those who sought consolation in the gin-shops

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<sup>524</sup> In her reconstruction of the genealogy of totalitarianism, Arendt remarked that the imperialist expansion in the last third of the nineteenth century “had been touched off by a curious kind of economic crisis, the overproduction of capital and the emergence of superfluous money ... which could no longer find productive investment within the national borders,” which was accompanied by “another by-product of capitalist production: the human debris that every crisis, following invariably upon each period of industrial growth, eliminated permanently from producing society.” The insight of Arendt’s observation is acute; however, its historical claim is off the mark by several decades. Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, pp. 135, 150.

mushrooming in poor neighborhoods (Ibid, 347-351).<sup>525</sup> Rebuking the haughty moralism of his time, Wakefield declared, “not vice and misery, Mr. Malthus, but misery and vice is the order of checks to population ... In England, those who compose the bulk of the people are too cheap to be happy” (Ibid, 353).<sup>526</sup> If Malthus stripped political economy of morality, then Wakefield rendered morality dependent on political economy.<sup>527</sup>

At the heart of the problem lay the separation of labor from the instruments of production, the very fount of England’s economic superiority. In times of economic growth, this separation formed the precondition of capitalist productivity insofar as it enabled combined employment and technical division of labor under the efficient direction of capital. However, the absence of sufficiently high rates of profit vitiated the structural conditions and subjective incentives necessary for investment (combination of labor and capital in production), thereby generating glut in capital (low interest rate and speculation) and labor (unemployment and underemployment). Wakefield attempted to explain this paradox by introducing a third variable to capital-labor binary, namely, the “field of employment,”<sup>528</sup> which broadly denoted the field of

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<sup>525</sup> Deteriorating conditions of the urban poor would prompt an investigation in 1840 by Royal Commission of Inquiry into Children's Employment. Karl Marx provides a striking account of the hyper-exploitation of children in manufacturing and domestic industries, which would prompt a most devoutly capitalist and callous political economists like Nassau Senior to declaim “the most frightful picture of avarice, selfishness and cruelty on the part of masters and parents, and of juvenile and infantile misery, and destruction ever presented.” Nassau Senior, *Social Science Congress*, pp. 55-8, quoted in Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, pp. 623-4.

<sup>526</sup> Susan Thorne offers an original account of the shift in English middle-class philanthropy from socioeconomic to moral explanations for the plight of the poor, mainly in response to the aristocratic backlash against what the upper classes perceived to be a subversive collusion between the middle and lower orders. As I illustrate below, Wakefield was quite aware of this collusion and its potential consequences, which occupied a significant place in his analysis of the political crisis he believed awaited Britain. See Susan Thorne, “The Conversion of Englishmen and the Conversion of the World Inseparable: Missionary Imperialism and the Language of Class in Early Industrial Britain,” in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1997).

<sup>527</sup> Malthus’s exclusion of moral questions, especially as regards the condition of the poor, from the management of the economy is a point agreed upon by a diverse scholarship. See, for example, McNally, *Against the Market*, chap. 3; Himmelfarb, *Idea of Poverty*, chaps. 4 and 5.

<sup>528</sup> Wakefield used the terms, “field of employment,” “field of production” and “field of investment” interchangeably. I will be referring to this notion simply as “the field” in the rest of the paper. Wakefield’s theory brought together the Ricardian theory of diminishing agricultural returns and Smithian theory of competition of capitals to explain the saturation of the field of employment and falling profits. While he most frequently identified

profitable opportunities for investment. Wakefield pilloried the orthodox for their “worship of capital,” which had rendered “Bentham, Ricardo, Mill, M’Culloch, and others” blind to a fundamental tenet of political economy: “capital” was not synonymous with “production” (EA, 371) and “it does not follow that, because labour is employed by capital, capital always finds a field in which to employ labour” (Ibid, 517).<sup>529</sup>

The proportion between the amount of capital and the field of employment in any country, by impacting profits and wages, constituted the variable of economic expansion or stagnation.<sup>530</sup> Readily available fertile land comprised an abundant source of foodstuffs and raw material, reducing the costs of reproducing labor and of industrial inputs, thereby maintaining high profits and high real wages, creating further incentives for investment and employment. The best illustration of a large field-to-capital ratio was America, where capital, no matter how fast it accumulated, found profits from improvement and agriculture in the fresh lands opened up by the westward expansion.<sup>531</sup> By contrast, the dearth of uncultivated fertile land in England, combined with the Corn Laws that reduced access to the produce of fertile lands elsewhere, constricted the field in which capital could circulate. “War ceasing, great masses of capital were

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the field of employment with fertile land (Ibid, 375), he deployed the term more capaciously to refer, on the one hand, to productivity, specialization, and comparative advantage in the use of land, and on the other, to the expanse of the markets in which surplus produce could be realized (AC, 804).

<sup>529</sup> In explaining the relationship between capital and field of employment, Wakefield resorted to a strange literary strategy by arguing to have discovered this insight in a dream. In his dream, Wakefield found himself on Robinson Crusoe’s island. After a long night’s chat about Crusoe’s rich stock and cozy comforts, he woke up to rising sea levels that flooded most of Crusoe’s arable land and rendered most of his “capital” superfluous (EA, 366-70). The dream, one has to admit, was very poorly and awkwardly constructed, yet its significance can be interpreted to emphasize the pervasiveness of economic orthodoxy Wakefield was combating, such that only the insights of a dream could break through its encrustation.

<sup>530</sup> Wakefield constructed a broad taxonomic system based on the relative ratios of capital, labor, and field, for explaining the average the level of profits and wages in different countries. His approach was fundamentally comparative and underlain with ideas of uneven development. Differential capital-labor-field ratios yielded high profits and high wages in America, high profits and low wages in Bengal, high wages and low profits in postwar France, and low profits and low wages in postwar England (EA, 375).

<sup>531</sup> Marx made a similar remark regarding the US expansion to Native American lands. Marx argued that thanks to the expanding arable fields, the application of machinery to agriculture did not yet expel any agricultural workers in America, in direct contrast to English agriculture. Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, p. 637.

no longer wasted every year but were accumulated in England ... Both the capital and the people increased faster than the field of production was enlarged” (EA, 376).<sup>532</sup>

Wakefield utilized hydraulic imagery to express the dynamic between capital and the field. The trope of “want of room,” that is, too narrow a field of employment, dotted his analysis and pertained first and foremost to capital. The “competition of capital with capital” for limited profitable opportunities was “the immediate cause of all other competitions” (AC, 798). Limited investment curtailed employment and left “less room for the subordinate classes,” spurring competition not only amongst laborers but also amongst “professional classes” (doctors, lawyers, tutors, and the like) who were virtually “snatching the bread out of each other’s mouths” (Ibid, 360-2). The aggregate impact of the cyclical economic crises, or “alternations of hoarding, wasting, and panic,” on England amounted to no less than a potential crisis of social reproduction at all levels of society: laboring classes drifted into pauperization and moral degradation; sons of the lesser gentry found respectable career opportunities foreclosed to them, which in turn undercut the prospects of marriage for the daughters of the same class (EA, 363-5); small capitalists joined the ranks of workers, while wealthy manufacturing and commercial classes slowly abandoned the “old-fashioned” habits of rationality and industry for financial speculation, and cultivated the “spirit of the gambler” (AC, 799).<sup>533</sup>

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<sup>532</sup> A simple yet illuminative expression of the field of employment is “demand for capital” as reflected in the interest rate, and interest rates were unusually low in mid-1820s. Hilton, *Corn, Cash, Commerce*, chapter 8. Too narrow a field of employment, that is, low to no demand for capital portended its immanent devaluation. Winch, “Classical Economics,” p. 97.

<sup>533</sup> Perhaps most strikingly, Wakefield situated England’s shift to overseas financial speculation in a broader pattern of economic collapse that he observed in Genoa, Venice, and Holland (EA, 375, 411). By correlating financialization and the dissolution of imperial economic formations and tracing this connection through Italy, Holland, and Britain, Wakefield presaged Arrighi’s conclusions in *The Long Twentieth Century* by a century-and-a-half. Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power, and the Origins of Our Times* (New York: Verso, 1994). What Wakefield perceived to be speculation, however, in fact belonged to a broader trend in the composition of economic growth in England with commerce and finance claiming an increasing share. While England retained competitive advantage in manufactures for the most of the nineteenth century, European and American tariffs in 1830s forced a threefold change in the direction of English economic activity. First, British industrialists turned to India as a significant market. Secondly, Britain’s “failure to dominate her chief competitors,

One ingenious theoretical feat Wakefield accomplished throughout this exposition was to depict an “industrial and commercial system operating most inharmoniously and requiring a constant expansion of the fields of production and employment”<sup>534</sup> while managing to steer the problem of political economic disharmony away from the waters of class conflict. In Wakefield’s narrative, capitalist and working classes rode the same boat (the former at the helm, of course), and they swam or sank together. “The agricultural laborer is a miserable wretch, no doubt,” Wakefield wrote, “because he obtains but a very small share of the produce of his labor; but this is a question, not of distribution, but of production” (EA, 329). Not the avarice of the employers but the extremely low profit margins graded wages down, since no employer would hire workers unless the latter’s labor yielded a profit. Put differently, the pie to be divided between the capitalist and the worker was too small, and Wakefield singled out the insufficient field of investment as the culprit. That in England “both classes, capitalists and laborers are fighting for room” offered support to the conjecture that “masters and servants have one and the same interest,” in stark contrast to the confused contentions about the distribution of surplus, which served nothing but introducing “bad blood” between the two classes (Ibid, 372-4). Therefore, by displacing the contradiction between labor and capital onto the contradiction between capital and the field of employment, Wakefield demoted a fundamentally *political economic* contradiction

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and especially to prevent their industrialization” spurred the formal expansion of her colonial dominions. Thirdly, it diverted capital into financial activities and “invisible earnings” from credit and capital exports. Expansion of white settler colonies in America and Australasia absorbed most of the British financial capital. P. J. Cain, “Economics and Empire: The Metropolitan Context” in *The Oxford History of the British Empire* Vol. 3, ed. Roger Louis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 34-5; P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, “The Political Economy of British Expansion Overseas, 1750-1914,” *The Economic History Review* 33 (1980): 463-90, p. 466. Since 1822, Britain had been running a visible trade deficit, which had reached £23 million per annum in 1840s; however, the country was in £5 million in credit per annum during the same period, thanks to “invisibles” that reached the £28 million notch, “more than a quarter of which came from earnings in overseas investments.” Boyd Hilton, *Mad, Bad, and Dangerous*, pp. 12-13. The ascendancy of commercial and finance capital in Britain has been theorized by Cain and Hopkins as the rise of “gentlemanly capitalism.” See P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: Innovation and Expansion, 1688-1914* (New York: Longman, 1993). For a useful essay that situates these arguments in the broader landscape of theories on empire and economics, see A. R. Dilley, “The Economics of Empire,” in *The British Empire: Themes and Perspectives*, ed. Sarah Stockwell (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008).

<sup>534</sup> Semmel, “Philosophic Radicals,” p. 87.

(the separation of labor from the instruments of production) to a *technical economic* contradiction (the rational reluctance of capital to employ labor under low profits). The natural convergence of interest between capital and labor constituted a major utilitarian cornerstone in Wakefield's thought, one that was chiseled from the idea of aggregate economic growth as *summum bonum*. Wakefield would lean on this cornerstone more than once in his attempts to reconcile, on the one hand, his proposed policies of primitive accumulation necessary for capitalist reproduction in the colonies, and on the other, the liberal premises of free labor and *laissez-faire* hegemonic in his time.

### ***Dilemma of Democracy and Civilization***

A possible solution, conceivable within the parameters of Wakefield's analysis and also conformant to the *laissez-faire* sensibility of the time, was to wait until excess capital and labor were destroyed and "the quantity for use is brought to a level with the field of investment" (Ibid, 798), though this would mean widespread poverty, famine, disease, and death. Such a solution might have seemed acceptable, necessary, or even inevitable for Reverend Malthus, but for Wakefield, passivity threatened more than just the misery and decimation of the laboring poor. His ominous remark, "if their condition be such that it must be worse before it can be better, the crisis is coming" gave expression to a growing anxiety of his time (EA, 353). The laboring poor did not share Malthus's fatalism; instead, they embarked on the path of political organization for social change. Socialism and Chartism were riding the wave of popular radicalization that had sprouted in the early nineteenth century, and despite such repressive reactions as the Peterloo Massacre and Six Acts, the laboring classes were continuing to agitate for universal suffrage.<sup>535</sup> Adding to these sources of political distress and most immediate for Wakefield's context, the

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<sup>535</sup> Richard Brown, *Chartism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

Swing Riots erupted in 1830 in the south and east of the English countryside, destroying agricultural machinery, setting fire to ricks, and destroying tithe barns.<sup>536</sup>

Wakefield wove a fascinating narrative of popular dissent and mobilization in England that revolved around class relations with the middle order as the pivot of the story. The French Revolution of 1789 had roused the English middle classes from their “slothful and slavish” immersion in mundane economic affairs and sparked “political excitement” for reforming a corrupt and inefficient constitutional order (Ibid, 387). This impulse gained a new direction with the Haitian Revolution that alerted the middle classes to the plight of the “slaves” at home, and kindled the philanthropic mission to “improve the physical and moral state of their inferiors” (Ibid, 389). The pressure of the aristocratic-clerical backlash notwithstanding, the political pedagogy of the middle class taught the English working class “to be thoroughly discontented with their lot,” and instilled the belief that “their misery was owing to bad government” (Ibid, 391).<sup>537</sup> The most important development that turned the recently acquired political consciousness into a combustible political force was the July Revolution of 1830 in France, where the poor urban masses made “the very important discovery” of the “barricades,” which in turn “led to this great political discovery in England; that the nation had outgrown its laws” (Ibid, 394-5). Haunted by the specter of urban revolt and pounded by public pressure, the Parliament finally passed the Reform Act of 1832. The subsequent electoral reform appeased the middle classes; however, persistent property qualifications for the franchise frustrated the laboring

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<sup>536</sup> Eric Hobsbawm and George Rudé, *Captain Swing* (New York: Norton, 1975).

<sup>537</sup> “It seems well to observe here,” wrote Wakefield insightfully, “that ever since the poor of England were taught to read, the English have found a standing army absolutely necessary” (EA, 391).

masses, instigating the dissolution of the alliance between the two classes and the birth of Chartism.<sup>538</sup>

“The new constitution of England was obtained by physical force,” Wakefield contended, and “those who compose the physical force know this, are proud of it, and will never forget it. Universal suffrage was, is, and will be the object of the working classes” (Ibid, 399-400). This left the newly empowered middle classes facing a grim dilemma, and a properly political economic one at that. On the one hand, they could not honestly and credibly deny the vote to the laboring class to whom “they owed their charter” and with whom they could not risk an open confrontation. Class conflict was not an option because of the peculiar political economy of England, which harbored a preponderantly urban proletariat and a very complex social and technical division of labor (AC, 793-4). Under these conditions, “the regular course of industry depends so much on confidence and credit” that “any social convulsion, if it should last but a week, must produce a series of convulsions, one more violent than the other” (EA, 400; also see AC, 795). Unlike America, Ireland, or other states of Europe (except Holland), where the persistence of peasant economies would dampen the ramifications of social unrest, English economy and social structure was rendered very fragile by the very separation of labor from the means of production.

On the other hand, the middle classes could not immediately give in to the demand for wider democracy, for the wretched and degraded state of the laboring poor sheared them of the reason and foresight necessary for exercising political power. The whole matter ultimately boiled

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<sup>538</sup> “Chartism and socialism,” Wakefield observed wryly, represented the “fruits of popular education in this country” (AC, 793). There is a conspicuous resemblance between Wakefield’s and Marx’s accounts of the political education of the middle and working classes, and the role that the former played in drawing out the latter to the political arena in its struggle against aristocracy, inadvertently supplying the working class with the preconditions of its own political education. The tendency Wakefield observed pointed to “many a struggle for the mastery over a restricted franchise and private property: and in these struggles, I perceive immense danger for everybody” (Ibid, 794).

down to the problem of property. Laws promulgated by the representatives and in the interest of a “poor, discontent and ignorant” multitude would invariably target private wealth and ultimately culminate in a “revolution in property” – a point overlooked by the philanthropists, Wakefield observed condescendingly, who were not tutored in political economy (Ibid, 404). Even though Wakefield admitted that the pre-1832 economic legislation expropriated the lower orders through policies on interest and the national debt, a counter-expropriation through inflationary measures would open the flood-gates to repairing “one great robbery [by] another great robbery” (Ibid). Under “a legislature moved by the wretched,” therefore, “there would be no end to confiscation” (Ibid, 405). Insecurity of property would decimate investor confidence, freeze credit markets, ignite capital flight, terminate in economic depression that would exacerbate the condition of *all classes*, worker and capitalist alike (AC, 794-5). Hence, from a utilitarian perspective confiscation would not only “injure the majority,” but for England (unlike for France’s more rudimentary economy) was “synonymous with destruction” (EA, 405).<sup>539</sup>

At stake, then, was nothing less than survival of “civilization” under the inevitable advent of “democracy,” a question that had preoccupied prominent European intellectuals since the French Revolution.<sup>540</sup> As Thomas Holt correctly observes, the British “defined civilization in their own terms and according to their own value system, a system honed over the past century as Britons shaped and were shaped by a capitalist political economy.”<sup>541</sup> The compatibility of this civilization with democracy could no longer be confined to speculation and had to be confronted

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<sup>539</sup> Wakefield saw “inestimable value” in “a distinct and full account of the political economy of the French Revolution,” mainly to inform an estimation of the economic costs of property confiscation in Britain (AC, 795). Similar concerns had been raised by Edmund Burke at the height of the Revolution. The important point to emphasize is that when it came to the question of property, Wakefield’s utilitarianism and Burke’s conservatism put aside their differences and converged on the primacy and indispensability of a “political order” as such, in comparison to which the nature of that order ranked as secondary. See. Pocock, “Political Economy of Burke's Analysis.”

<sup>540</sup> See, for example, John Stuart Mill, “Spirit of the Age,” and “Civilization” in *Essays in Politics and Culture*, ed. Gertrude Himmelfarb (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1973). Also see, O’Neill, *Burke-Wollstonecraft Debate*.

<sup>541</sup> Holt, *Problem of Freedom*, p. 76.

by the English at the policy level.<sup>542</sup> If the “misery and ignorance” of the English laboring population disposed it to abuse the extended suffrage, Wakefield argued, then the concrete solution had to tackle the political economic roots of such misery and ignorance.<sup>543</sup> “Nature herself forbids that you should make a wise and virtuous people out of a starving one,” and only by providing the working class with “high wages, leisure, peace of mind, and instruction” that one could cultivate “prudence and wisdom” necessary for self-rule (Ibid, 410). And the wages could be raised only by solving the problem of overaccumulation, by expanding the field in which redundant English capital could productively employ English labor. The temporal horizon of Wakefield’s solution displayed a humble realism, though one shot through with urgency. While he reckoned that maintaining high wages “for twenty years or so” and bestowing “comfort and knowledge upon *one generation* of the poorer class might be a step to the permanent cure of misery and vice,” he emphatically asserted, “there is not a year to lose” (Ibid, 407-10).<sup>544</sup> On this depended not only the “great experiment” of reconciling democracy and civilization, but the very “existence [of the English] as a wealthy and civilized nation” (Ibid, 410).

The grand implication of this long exposition can be summarized as follows. For Wakefield, the separation of labor from capital constituted both the necessary precondition of capitalist civilization, inasmuch as it underpinned social and technical division of labor, and the principal source of its crisis, insofar as it made the combination of labor and capital tenuously dependent on profitability. When profitability declined, the outcome was misery amongst plenty,

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<sup>542</sup> The situation was delicate and pregnant with momentous, if opposing, possibilities. Whigs saw themselves, Holt argues, standing between a new liberal order and the chaos of the mob. Holt, *Problem of Freedom*, p. 51.

<sup>543</sup> Dangerous political dispositions extended beyond the “wretches” and inflected those whose initial fortunes had fallen prey to the destructive vicissitudes of overaccumulation. “A ruined man is a dangerous citizen; and I suspect that there are at all times in this country more people who have been ruined than in any other country” (AC, 799).

<sup>544</sup> When it came to the question whether population pressure on the means of subsistence could be resolved permanently, the general opinion was pessimistic. Nonetheless, ensuring prosperity and comfort for a single generation, some believed, would grant the British policy makers the “breathing room” necessary for the political education of the working classes. See, Winch, *Classical Political Economy*, chapter 6; Semmel, *Rise of Free Trade Imperialism*, chapters 3 and 4; Kittrell, “Development of the Theory of Colonization.”

which stoked the fires of labor militancy. In the metropole, the labor problem was a *political* problem. Each economic bust added to the numbers of the pauperized, aggrieved, and barbarized proletarians. By cramping them ever more ruthlessly in the already-congested labor market, it built up the systemic pressure that threatened to explode in social upheaval that would be tantamount to a civilizational bust. For Wakefield, the stakes of the upheaval were the destruction of the *capital-relation* through the forcible abridgment of the separation between labor and the instruments of production. This would mean *peasantization*, a return to the rude lifestyle that characterized “less civilized” countries such as Ireland, Portugal, and America.<sup>545</sup> This meant the end of civilization as the early Victorians knew it. As Bernard Semmel accurately points out, most of what has been considered the exclusive province of Marxist analysis, such the internal contradictions and crisis of capitalism, overaccumulation, socioeconomic polarization, and class conflict, was anticipated by Wakefield and some other Philosophic Radicals “over a decade before Marx came to England.”<sup>546</sup>

For keeping the capital-relation operational (ensuring at once the dispossession and the employment of labor), Wakefield offered two solutions. The first was the Repeal of the Corn Laws in order to access an enlarged field of production by way of commerce. As long as Britain could buy cheap corn cultivated on American lands, she would effectively expand her field, reduce the costs of reproducing British labor, and raise real wages and profits at once. While Wakefield’s argument was a commonplace of the free trade position, he went beyond this commonplace by arguing that the Repeal catered to the interests of *all* social classes in Britain.

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<sup>545</sup> Wakefield broke tectonic economic cycles to four main stages. The “progressive” stage was characterized by the accumulation and relatively even distribution of capital. The “stationary” stage (an obvious citation of Ricardo) witnessed the slowing down of accumulation and falling profits. If continued unabated, stagnation culminated in economic crisis, which in turn led to the fourth, “retrograde” stage in which capital dissipated, means of production scattered, and productivity vanished (EA, 376).

<sup>546</sup> Semmel, *Liberal Ideal*, p. 31.

Ricardo had proclaimed an inverse proportion between the interests of the landed classes and the interests of the rest of the society, and the promise of the “big loaf” had become in early nineteenth century a discursive nodal point around which working class discontent coalesced with the industrialists’ assault on the Corn Laws. Wakefield reversed this position by laying out in detail how the landlords could also materially benefit from the Repeal, through factor and product diversification under an expanded domestic market (thanks to rising real wages) and consequently enjoy higher rents (Ibid, 420-3).<sup>547</sup>

The assertion of class harmony paled in comparison to Wakefield’s other divergence from Ricardian free traders, namely, his view that the Repeal itself would not suffice to resolve England’s problems. Relying on free trade alone would not only expose England to the vagaries of the world market in food (a point also emphasized by Malthus and Torrens) but also introduce complications into financing food imports. By the 1830s, English manufactures were beginning to feel the sting of the American and European tariffs,<sup>548</sup> which led Wakefield to propose the establishment of a free trade emporium off the coast of China, where English manufactures (and opium) could be exchanged for silver, which in turn could finance food imports from America and the Continent (Ibid, 431-60).<sup>549</sup> Yet the complexity of this scheme encumbered it with high transaction costs and vulnerabilities in comparison to the more politically protected and economically predictable plan of turning imperial possessions into agricultural hinterlands, loyal to England, without tariffs, employing English labor, and hungry for the manufactures of the

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<sup>547</sup> For a focused treatment of Wakefield’s rent theory and the Corn Laws, see Kittrell, “Wakefield and Classical Rent Theory.”

<sup>548</sup> Cain, “Economics and Empire,” p. 34.

<sup>549</sup> This proposal actually presaged the establishment of Hong Kong. Wakefield remarked, “if there be any foreign restriction on the foreign demand for English manufactured goods, restrictions which it is in the power of the English government to remove, interference for that purpose is a proper office, a bounden duty, of government” (EA, 430). It might come as a surprise that such proponents of free trade as the Colonial Reformers should later support the Opium War (which they did), but as we can see, the theoretical premises for endorsing the establishment of free trade by the military-diplomatic arm of the state were already in place in the early 1830s.

mother country.<sup>550</sup> Crucially, this metropole-colony nexus depended not on monopoly but on the similarity of cultural tastes, which distinguished Wakefield's vision of an "empire of free trade" from the mercantilism of the "old colonial system."<sup>551</sup> Wakefield's consequent proclamation of a "new colonial system" was grandiose and visionary:

The whole world is before you. Open new channels for the most productive employment of English capital. Let the English buy bread from every people that has bread to sell cheap. Make England, for all that is produced by steam, the work-shop of the world. If, after this, there be capital and people to spare, imitate the ancient Greeks; take a lesson from the Americans, who, as their capital and population increase, find room for both by means of colonization. You have abundance, superabundance of capital; provide profitable employment for it, and you will improve the condition of all classes at once. ... Invest it in colonization; so that, as it flies off, it may take with it, and employ a corresponding amount of labor, if there be any ... May the explanation assist to point out a way, by which the English shall escape from that corrupting and irritating state of political economy, which seems fit to precede the dissolution of empires! (EA, 411).

Ricardians had accomplished most of the theoretical work in favor of the Repeal, which was not yet to come for another decade-and-a-half. In contrast, colonization, though in existence, was at best scattered and spontaneous, and lacked a theoretical godfather. A major task was to recruit political economy to the cause of colonization while countering the orthodox indictments of colonies as "outdoor relief for the aristocracy." This would involve demonstrating that *all classes* in England would gain by colonization, if properly conceived and executed. Wakefield stepped up for this role.

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<sup>550</sup> However, Wakefield dissented from Torrens's idea of an imperial *Zollverein*, the mercantilist residues of which did not square with Wakefield's free trade principles. *Plan of a Company* (1830), for instance, stipulated free trade for the prospective Australian colony, not only with the mother country but also with the rest of the world. For Torrens's vision of an imperial *Zollverein* and Wakefield's response, see Lionel Robbins, *Robert Torrens and the Evolution of Classical Economics* (London: MacMillan & Co, 1958), chapters 6 and 7.

<sup>551</sup> Semmel, *Liberal Ideal*, p. 32.

## **II. Economic Labor Problem: The Colony**

### ***Spontaneous Colonization and Its Shortcomings***

Whether or not Britain actually teetered on the verge of a terminal economic crisis and political upheaval, its perception by the British political elite proved credible enough to incite action. One obvious remedy that presented itself to Wakefield's contemporaries was to defuse the pressure of poverty and social unrest by shipping the poor, and especially the Irish, off to British colonies, initially to Canada and later to the antipodes.<sup>552</sup> As Karen O'Brien puts it poignantly, the white settler in the early nineteenth century appeared "not so much as a standard-bearer of Britain's civilizing mission, but as a casualty of industrialization, war, and poverty, and as an economic migrant."<sup>553</sup> The main figure behind emigration schemes in the 1820s was Sir Robert Wilmot-Horton, the Tory Under-Secretary of State for War and the Colonies. Wilmot-Horton justified his emigration proposals on economic and moral grounds. Economically, assisting the colonial emigration of the indigent by mortgaging the poor rates would have lower long-term costs than sustaining them at home.<sup>554</sup> Culturally, Wilmot-Horton appealed to ascendant Tory Romanticism that condemned the morally corrosive impact of urbanization and industrialization and envisioned "return to the land" (in this case, colonial settlement) as a path to moral regeneration.<sup>555</sup> Wilmot-Horton's plans sparked a major political economic controversy. Ricardo, James Mill, Bentham, and McCulloch, joined by Malthus, displayed at best a lukewarm

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<sup>552</sup> Emigration as a solution to the metropolitan population problem did not conquer policymaking minds easily and spontaneously, however. In 1815, emigration of skilled artisans and mechanics still constituted a crime under English law. By the end of the Napoleonic Wars, however, such mercantilist restrictions gave ground before the opinion that "emigration would help resolve the menacing spectre of overpopulation and act as a safety valve for popular discontent that was beginning to sweep the country in the aftermath of a severe economic depression and chronic post-war employment." Kent Fedorowich, "The British Empire on the Move, 1760-1914," in *The British Empire: Themes and Perspectives*, ed. Sarah Stockwell (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), p. 70.

<sup>553</sup> Karen O'Brien, "Colonial Emigration, Public Policy, and Tory Romanticism, 1783-1830," in *Exclusionary Empire: English Liberty Overseas, 1600-1900*, ed. Jack P. Greene (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 161.

<sup>554</sup> Fedorowich, "British Empire on the Move," p. 72-3.

<sup>555</sup> O'Brien, "Colonial Emigration," pp. 161-2.

attitude to colonization as an economic remedy, and perceived it desirable only if the burden of the poor rates exceeded those of assisting emigration; even then, emigration was to be deployed as a temporary measure.<sup>556</sup> Robert Torrens and Nassau Senior by contrast were strong proponents of state-assisted emigration, although they disagreed with Wilmot-Horton's specific proposals for funding the project.

Wakefield's entry to this debate "may be compared to the descent of some gorgeous tropical bird among the sober denizens of a respectable farmyard."<sup>557</sup> Born to a Quaker middle-class family of philanthropic ideas and deeds,<sup>558</sup> son of a land agent who wrote a widely acclaimed survey of Ireland, and brimming with political ambitions that drove him to found a number of colonization societies and land companies,<sup>559</sup> Wakefield did not conform to the average image of the political economist of his time. While Wakefield's strong embrace of utilitarian principles situated him with the Philosophic Radicals, what distinguished him there were his efforts to convert, with some success, his fellow utilitarians to the cause of colonization.<sup>560</sup> The inflection of Philosophic Radicalism with colonial concerns would result in the Colonial Reform Movement, and "the novelty and inner unity" of Wakefield's doctrine

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<sup>556</sup> Winch, *Classical Political Economy*, pp. 51-7; Shaw, "Introduction," pp. 5-7. For the orthodox, the long-run tendency was still towards equilibrium. Colonization represented a matter of cost-benefit analysis and a better redistribution of internal factors of production. For Malthus and his "vacuum theory," which contended that the demographic space opened up by emigration would be filled up by accelerated procreation, the real and permanent solution resided in the moral education of the poor in the ways of abstinence.

<sup>557</sup> Robbins, *Robert Torrens*, p. 154.

<sup>558</sup> For the influence of Quaker heritage on Wakefield's thought, see Graham Butterworth "Wakefield and the Quaker Tradition," in *Edward Gibbon Wakefield and the Colonial Dream: A Reconsideration*, ed. Philip Temple (Wellington: Friends of the Turnbull Library, 1997). This influence is significant insofar as Quakerism in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries proved to have the gift to "assimilate utility and rational self-interest to a humanitarian ethic," deploring visible cruelty while "creating a moral climate in which highly ethical purpose could disguise the effects of power." Davis, *Problem of Slavery*, p. 253. As I discuss below, Wakefield's sufficient price theory sought to exert a subtle form of power over laborers while claiming it to be a liberal alternative to slavery.

<sup>559</sup> For the series of colonization societies and colonial land companies founded by Wakefield, see Prichard, "Introduction," pp. 29-43. The direct and indirect policy impact of these organizational efforts lies beyond the scope of this chapter.

<sup>560</sup> The most prominent Philosophic Radicals, in addition to the obvious Jeremy Bentham, James Mill, and John Stuart Mill, were George Grote (MP), William Molesworth (MP), Francis Place, and John Roebuck (MP). For an authoritative study of the Philosophic Radicals, see Elie Halévy, *The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism* (London: Faber & Faber, 1952).

would associate the Radicals with “positive programmes of empire based on the new economic science.”<sup>561</sup> Moreover, Wakefield would claim convincing Bentham in the benefits of systematic colonization as his greatest intellectual achievement and leave an indubitable mark on the political economy of John Stuart Mill.

As we have seen, Wakefield deemed it imperative that excess labor and capital be exported. However, he declared Wilmot-Horton’s proposals for colonial emigration to be poorly conceived and impracticable for achieving this end. First, these proposals lacked an overarching logic or “system” in the utilitarian sense of a totalizing calculation of ends and means. Instead, in the words of Charles Buller, they desperately aimed at “shovelling out paupers to where they may die without shocking their betters with the sight or sound of their last agony.”<sup>562</sup> This drawback glared in Wilmot-Horton’s plans for financing colonial passage and settlements by mortgaging the poor rates. Relocated paupers were to be transformed into small landowners supplied with a year’s provisions and agricultural implements, and after a year, they were expected to start repaying their mortgages by selling their agricultural produce. The utter inexperience of emigrants in agricultural techniques aside, the real problem for Wakefield resided in the subsistence-orientation of small proprietorship and the absence of properly integrated commodity markets in the colonies. Even if the emigrants managed to produce a surplus, the chances for monetarizing the surplus were nil. Consequently the financial burden of assisted-emigration would remain perpetually on the shoulders of the English taxpayer. Secondly, the tone and provisions of Wilmot-Horton’s plans appealed only to the most wretched

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<sup>561</sup> Semmel, “Philosophic Radicals,” pp. 77-8. Amongst the more outstanding of Wakefield’s disciples in matters of colonization were William Hutt, Charles Tennant, Charles Buller (MP) and Robert Torrens (MP). A longer list of subscribers to Wakefield’s principles of colonization can be found on the member list of the Provisional Committee of the South Australian Land Company (13 of the 23 members being MPs), in “Appendix III” to *England and America*, in *Collected Works*, ed. Prichard, p. 615.

<sup>562</sup> Charles Buller, 1834 Parliamentary Speech.

and desperate, “the scum of the mother country” (PC, 282), and laced the name “colony” with the odium of destitution, vice, and social degradation. Such associations hardly helped to induce self-respecting English laborers, let alone higher classes, to emigrate, as it also hampered the motives to invest in colonial lands. In other words, Wilmot-Horton’s schemes could make only the most miniscule dent in the problem of excess capital and labor. Finally, the mode of land disposal laid out by Wilmot-Horton consisted of land grants by the crown in vast tracts, opening the door to patronage, speculation, corruption, and pecuniary aggrandizement, providing grist for the mill of the orthodox and utilitarian critiques of the colonies as a racket for supporting the old, unproductive, parasitic aristocracy.<sup>563</sup>

### ***Pathology of the Frontier***

The absence of a preconceived system afflicted the schemes of spontaneous colonization in yet another important way. Wilmot-Horton provided no stipulation for reforming the loose, unregulated, and sporadic manner in which colonial lands had been hitherto settled. Against this, Wakefield forwarded his signature argument in the colonization debate, namely that uncontrolled “dispersal” over vast and fertile land constituted the root cause of all the economic and moral ills that plagued all known colonies in human history. The colonial problem diagnosed by Wakefield, and which Erik Olssen calls “pathology of the frontier,”<sup>564</sup> consisted in the civilizational relapse of colonial settlers along the scale of social development. This perception of social pathology was conditioned by a particular normative lens crafted from categories of savagery and civilization, which refracted social difference as civilizational deficit. While the secular trope of civilization and savagery was broadly though loosely shared by the eighteenth-

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<sup>563</sup> For a comparison of the Wilmot-Horton’s and Wakefield’s colonization plans, see Ghosh “Colonization Controversy.”

<sup>564</sup> Olssen, “Wakefield and New Zealand,” p. 205.

and nineteenth-century Enlightenment thought, its maturation into a coherent theoretical framework belonged to the province of the Scottish Enlightenment. Of this philosophical tradition, Adam Smith represented the major influence on Wakefield both in political economy and moral philosophy.<sup>565</sup>

As briefly discussed in the previous chapter, the stadial theory of the Scottish Enlightenment comprised a materialist sociology of human history, which envisioned interlocking stages of social development predicated on the dominant mode of subsistence, property system, and division of labor. The density and complexity of these institutional pillars of social reproduction in turn heavily influenced the development of the “moral sense” that the Scottish philosophers held to be a universally constant human feature. The stadial theory betrayed a clearly progressive, if not teleological, grammar as it graduated human societies on a scale bracketed on one extreme by the most primitive “savage” races, and on the other, by the most advanced “commercial” peoples, with the nomadic “barbarians” and sedentary “agriculturalists” occupying the intermediary stages. The developmental journey departed from the coarse and simple lifestyle characterized by vagrancy, rude manners, warlike tendencies, and natural freedoms of an elemental kind, and moved towards complex forms of social interaction that cultivated pacific dispositions, polished and refined manners, and civil society in which one could remain free under voluntarily submission to authority.<sup>566</sup>

By the early nineteenth century, these civilizational categories had become, albeit in simplified and even vulgar forms, the basic furniture of social and political thought in Britain, especially as Britons tried to locate themselves in the “great map of mankind” that was unrolling

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<sup>565</sup> Olssen, “Wakefield and the Scottish Enlightenment,” pp. 54-8.

<sup>566</sup> Pocock, “Mobility of Property,” and *Barbarism and Religion* Vol. 4, chapters 9 and 10; Berry, *Social Theory of the Scottish Enlightenment*, chapters 5 and 6. Berry and Pocock’s analyses supply enough evidence to regard the notion of “commercial society,” as conceived by the Scottish Enlightenment and their disciples, as roughly synonymous with the term “capitalist civilization” used here.

in an ever-expanding colonial world of social alterity.<sup>567</sup> The discourse of civilization and savagery operated as an “anthropological, legal, and moral framework with which early Victorian categorized non-European peoples.”<sup>568</sup> However, the implication is not that the Britons crafted this discourse as a cynical ideology of colonial dispossession and exploitation.<sup>569</sup> For the same discourse of savagery and civilization also shaped the Britons’ image of themselves as reflected on the mirror of colonial encounters. This is particularly significant, because the main preoccupation that suffused Wakefield’s perception of the colonies did not stem from the encounter with the indigenous savage, whom he almost insisted looking past. The real colonial encounter was with the barbarian lying dormant in the commercial self, which rose from its slumber in the colonies.<sup>570</sup>

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<sup>567</sup> P. J. Marshall and Glyndwr Williams, *The Great Map of Mankind: Perceptions of New Worlds in the Age of Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

<sup>568</sup> Moloney, “Savagery and Civilization,” p.153.

<sup>569</sup> The argument that the Europeans developed the discourse of civilization for expropriating and exploiting non-European peoples carries a tempting simplicity (and also overlooks expropriation and exploitation at home). This argument suffers, however, from a stunting facility insofar as it presumes a neat compartmentalization between unambiguous interests transparent to their bearers and fabricated symbolic systems whose instrumentality is likewise clear to those who deploy them to conceal their true interests. What such an understanding of ideology occludes is the constitutive role played by ideology in the way people perceive and conceive their interests. Similarly occluded is the greater efficacy of expropriation and exploitation when their perpetrators are sincere believers in the morality and propriety of their actions and that deeply staked in the controversy over the meaning of these actions is the very self-conception of the perpetrators. Pocock neatly encapsulates this logic in his investigation of the European encroachment upon Maori lands in New Zealand: “[T]hrough the ideology of agriculture and savagery was formed to justify this expropriation, it also articulated things which the Pakeha [European settlers] very deeply believed about themselves ... They were not only expropriators, and this made it easier for them to deny that expropriation was what they were doing ... Even when they debate their actions in expropriating *tangata whenua*, they are more often than not debating what they have been doing to themselves, rather than to *tangata whenua*.” Pocock, “*Tangata Whenua*,” pp. 214-5.

<sup>570</sup> In Moloney’s words, the threat lurking in the colonial frontier was “reverse conversion,” whereby, instead of converting natives to the ways of civilization, the colonists would jump the civilizational ship and sink into barbarism. Moloney, “Savagery and Civilization,” p. 171. Indeed, the danger that Europeans have perceived in the “nativization” of European colonists at “permissive frontiers” is almost coeval with the history of colonial encounters themselves. For a seminal work plumbing this question, see Canny, “Permissive Frontier.” However, an important distinction should be underscored between, on the one hand, relapse into barbarism through contact with the natives as examined by the extant scholarship, and on the other, a similar civilizational relapse that issues from socioeconomic conditions. The crux of the matter is that such conditions were believed to be at once the cause of the barbarism of the natives and the barbarization of the Europeans, operative even in the absence of any sustained interaction between the two groups. It is the latter kind of “reverse conversion” that was at stake in Wakefield’s theory.

Refracted through these lenses, what appeared on Wakefield's canvas was nothing short of an "unnatural" regression from commercial society to semi-nomadic barbarism.<sup>571</sup> He encapsulated the stakes of the colonial problem in a forceful passage about American colonists:

the people of America may, in this respect be likened to the Tartar conquerors of China, who, being themselves barbarous, consider all but themselves barbarians ... This narrowness of mind, arising from ignorance, seems proper to the barbarous conquerors of China; but in colonies planted by the most civilized nations, it is a degenerate sentiment, a step backwards from civilization to barbarism, and out of the course of nature, which seems favorable, stoppages reckoned, to the improvement of mankind (EA, 466-7).

While the problem was most acute in America, it was by no means its peculiarity. Wakefield adduced "the rudeness, the semi-barbarism of what are called back-settlements in Canada and New Brunswick" (AC, 871) and the "semi-barbarous, Tartarian, ill-cultivated, poverty-stricken wilderness" of the Australian bush (EA, 112) to support his hypothesis that every colonist "gradually learns to like the baser order of things, takes a pleasure in the coarse licence [sic.] and physical excitement of less civilized life" (AC, 873). Amidst massive differentiation in natural environment (climate, soil, flora, fauna), what remained strikingly constant was the social degeneration of colonists into a rude, parochial, narrow-minded, superstitious, cantankerous people, beset by relative material and absolute cultural poverty, with little surplus and no leisure, arts, or letters, and consequently no refinement (LS, 119). This constancy led Wakefield to turn to sociological and more specifically institutional causes for explaining civilizational regress, which he deemed to be the "natural and inevitable [outcome] of a faulty mode of colonization" (EA, 464).<sup>572</sup>

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<sup>571</sup> See, Olssen, "Wakefield and New Zealand," pp. 205-11, and "Wakefield and the Scottish Enlightenment," p. 52, 58; Moloney, "Savagery and Civilization," pp. 171-2.

<sup>572</sup> Wakefield can perhaps be considered the first theorist to conceive of the method of "natural experiment" in explaining economic development. Comparing the US to Canada, he observed the "striking difference in the prosperity of two sets of people, cultivating the same soil, under the same climate, with the same degree of knowledge, and divided only by an imaginary line" (EA, 531), expressing a methodological approach that anticipated Daniel Posner's "natural experiment" in ethnic conflict by one-and-a-half centuries. Daniel N. Posner,

In all his political economic monographs, Wakefield singled out the system of royal land grants as nurturing the germ of the colonial labor problem, from which sprouted all colonial evils. The abundance of cheap and fertile land that could be obtained for a trifle not only goaded investors (not to mention speculators) to engross more than could be viably cultivated, but more importantly, made land accessible to laborers.<sup>573</sup> As soon as the worker saved enough to buy land, he ceased working for a wage and became a landowner himself, not only reducing colonial wage-labor supply and pushing wages up, but in doing so, also expediting the process whereby other laborers became landowners (Ibid, 110-2). The expensive and unreliable labor supply precluded any possibility of large-scale economic undertaking that required combined labor and fixed capital, thereby discouraging investment and reinforcing the tendency towards subsistence economy on smallholdings. Importing more laborers, “five thousand starving peasants” from England or even “twenty thousand industrious and skillful Chinese,” was to no avail; they, too, would disperse and become freeholders as soon as they could (LS, 108-9).<sup>574</sup>

The tendency of colonial laborers to become smallholders struck at the heart of Wakefield’s economic theory by undoing the separation between labor and capital on which the entire edifice of capitalist civilization rested. The precariousness of social division of labor

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“The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas Are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi,” *American Political Science Review* 58 (2004): 529-45.

<sup>573</sup> Wakefield’s observation was accurate regarding the vastness of the grants (Thomas Peel, the tragic colonist of the Swan River settlement in South Australia, was initially granted a staggering 500,000 acres, which were then revised down to a still massive 250,000 acres). Yet Wakefield overstated the ease with which land could be purchased, cleared, and settled by workers without substantial means. Eric Richards notes, “laborers generally did not obtain land quickly; access to land was constrained much more by the economies of scale and the capital requirements of pastoralism.” Richards, “Wakefield and Australia,” p. 95. Also see, John M. Ward, *James Macarthur: Colonial Conservative, 1798-1867* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1981), p. 48.

<sup>574</sup> Nonetheless, in the postscript to *A Letter from Sydney*, Wakefield seriously considered and argued for Chinese indentured labor to work in the colonization of South Australia and New Zealand, reflecting the broader tendency to view the Pacific as “a labor reserve for indentured servitude.” Donald Denoon and Marivic Wyndham, “Australia and the Western Pacific,” in *The Oxford History of the British Empire* Vol. 3, ed. Roger Louis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 553. When his predictions based on systematic colonization theory failed to materialize in New Zealand in 1850s, Wakefield would not hesitate to push for promoting the immigration of Chinese indentured workers. Prichard, “Introduction,” p. 67.

stunted the technical division of labor, thereby restricting the scale of production and surplus generation to a very modest level. Even when surplus was generated, the lack of communication between dispersed producers and towns made it extremely difficult to market it (Ibid, 103-4).<sup>575</sup> This further reinforced subsistence farming geared towards producing “a sufficiency of mere necessaries of life” (PC, 295).<sup>576</sup> For example, “many a New South Wales farmer grows no more corn than will supply his family, because he could be unable to remove a surplus quantity from his own barn” (LS, 132). Consequently, “there is little division of labor, and you might roll in plenty, without possessing anything of exchangeable value. You must do everything yourself; and flocks in the wilderness are not worth much more than the wilderness itself” (Ibid, 107). An economy characterized by production for immediate needs resulted in

a barbarous condition, like that of every people scattered over a territory immense in proportion to their numbers; every man is obliged to occupy himself with questions of daily bread; there is neither leisure nor reward for the investigation of abstract truth; money-getting is the universal object; taste, science, morals, manners, abstract politics are subjects of little interest (LS, 119)

Wakefield’s disdain with colonial subsistence economies was clear enough. Yet this still fails to explain why he associated it with “barbarism” that the Scottish philosophers reserved for pastoralist nomads (with Central Asian “Tartars” representing the emblematic case). Cultivation of land in most of the colonies was the dominant mode of subsistence, and squatters aside, even the pastoralist occupations such as sheep raising were not “nomadic” in the proper sense. The key to this puzzle resides in Wakefield’s term “earth-scratchers” (EA, 493). “Earth-scratchers” denoted those who lived by horticulture (American backwoodsmen and the indigenous populations alike) at the same time it excluded horticulture from the category of cultivation

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<sup>575</sup> The problem of markets and communication was so urgent for Wakefield that he even fantasized, during his refutation of Ricardo’s theory of rent, about a global commodities market and airfreight. “If nature had provided markets in waste countries, or if mankind could fly, easily carrying great weights through the air then indeed the value of land used in producing food for the market would depend on superior natural fertility” (EA, 414-5).

<sup>576</sup> Again, in characteristically comparative fashion, Wakefield identified the same subsistence tendencies in more “backward” economies of Continent Europe and Ireland (EA, 327).

proper. If Wakefield's remark "the Americans have only scratched instead of cultivating" (LS, 157) supplies us with the first part of the puzzle, then the second part is offered by Pocock's comment that the Enlightenment thinkers perceived of horticulturalists as "scratching the ground for a while before moving on. They had not escaped from the vagrant condition, and were no further from savagery."<sup>577</sup> Instead of "improving" the soil with plough and manure, the settlers opted for "moving from one piece of land to another as the natural fertility of each piece is exhausted" (EA, 488n). Under such conditions of quasi-vagrancy, prerequisites of civilization such as intensive agriculture, monetary economy, and literacy (at once the signs and the conditions of durable, continuous social intercourse) led only the most incipient and rudimentary existence in the colonies.<sup>578</sup>

Wakefield's examination of colonial afflictions once again resorted to hydraulic imagery, with "dispersal" and "spreading" inverting the "want of room" in the metropole. "Concentration" constituted the operative analytic term:

But rudeness and civilization are effects as well as causes. By going further back, by substituting dispersed for rude, and concentrated for civilized, we get nearer, at least, to the truth. In the history of the world, there is no example of a society at once dispersed and highly civilized; while there are instances without end, in the history of colonization, of societies which, being civilized, became barbarous as soon as they were dispersed over an extensive territory (EA, 468).

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<sup>577</sup> Pocock, "*Tangata Whenua*," pp. 211-2. Surely, Wakefield was neither the only nor even the first to observe the barbarizing tendencies of the colonial frontier. Pocock has compellingly demonstrated the sway the binary of sedentarism and vagrancy held over the eighteenth-century Enlightenment thought, to the extent that "the step into humanity was taken with the acquisition of capacity for exchange, commerce, specialization and diversification" (and commerce and agriculture were often telescoped) while "a wandering condition dehumanize[d] or precede[d] humanization." Edmund Burke had voiced his concerns about North American colonists turning into "English Tartars" more than half a century earlier, and Anthony Pagden shows that Diderot, Raynal, and Talleyrand had already associated the decay of civility, loss of identity, and dissolution of morals with the vagrancy of the frontier. Pocock, "*Tangata Whenua*" pp. 208-9, 215; Edmund Burke, *Address to the Colonists*, in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, ed. Paul Langford (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981); Pagden, *Lords of All the World*, pp. 165-8. As with many other colonial pathologies, for Wakefield, Americans represented the epitomic case of barbarization by vagrancy. The American colonists were "a people without monuments, without history, without local attachments, ... without any love of birthplace, without patriotism" (LS, 124, 134). Equally strikingly, Wakefield's unfavorable opinion of slavery in the West Indies and North America issued partly from the constant relocation of plantations due to soil exhaustion.

<sup>578</sup> Pocock, "*Tangata Whenua*," pp. 201-2.

The division of labor and socioeconomic complexity that characterized commercial society depended on a certain level of social density, dynamism, and pressure,<sup>579</sup> which diffused under the centrifugal pull of cheap land in the colonies. “[S]uperabundance of good land belong[s] to many savage nations,” Wakefield declared, and “men’s minds [are] as narrow as their territory is extensive, preventing the native growth of liberal feeling and polished manners” (EA, 483, LS, 122). The inverse proportion between abundant land and civilizational integrity manifested itself universally. For example, in South Australia, “the power to spread at will” stretched the social texture ever thinner, culminating in the “present Tartar state” of the colonists (LS, 152). In North America, Elizabethan land grants, Jefferson’s Louisiana Purchase, and Jackson’s land policies, by making immense amounts of land popularly available, had paved the way for an “uncouth, ignorant, and violent ... mass of North Americans,” and spawned the “white savages of Kentucky” (LS, 114, 124). To the South, the same logic manifested itself in post-independence Argentina, whose inhabitants eventually dispersed over the Pampas and degenerated into nomadic gauchos who “subsist ... on the flesh of wild cattle, ... and have lost most of the arts of civilized life; not a few of them are in a state of deplorable misery” (EA, 483). “The savage descendant of Spaniards” were mirrored by the farmers of South Africa, the “most ignorant and brutal race of men” as well as by the “hordes of savages” of the French Louisiana (Ibid, 528, 532). Regardless of their cultural and political status, people who dispersed over large colonial lands constituted a “new people,” who “whether new or old, dependent or independent, have a capacity for greatness, and yet remain insignificant, solely in consequence of their excessive territory” (LS, 158). They were those who

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<sup>579</sup> Ironically, this argument was also wielded by contemporary *opponents* of emigration, who saw in the social density of Britain a potential for further division of labor, increased productivity, and solution to poverty. See Kittrell, “Wakefield’s Scheme” pp. 97-8.

though they continually increase in number, make no progress in the art of living; who, in respect to wealth, knowledge, skill, taste, and whatever belongs to civilization, have degenerated from their ancestors; ... who, ever on the move, are unable to bring anything to perfection; whose opinions are only violent and false prejudices, the necessary fruit of ignorance; whose character is a compound of vanity, bigotry, obstinacy ... we mean, in two words, a people who become rotten before they are ripe" (Ibid, 151-2)

Hence, the "new people" signified a civilizational rather than a temporal status: not young, but degenerate.<sup>580</sup>

Put summarily, in the colonies, civilization decomposed due to *too much room*, as Wakefield's almost obsessive use of the words "dispersal" and "spreading" attests. Social rarity due to sparse population and inadequate communications<sup>581</sup> vitiated the material conditions of civilization (productivity, surplus, accumulation, social complexity) and undermined its cultural corollaries (leisure, arts, letters, sciences, and polished manners). In the metropole, civilization threatened to *implode* under the ever-increasing pressure of capital and labor pressing against the claustrophobic walls of the narrow field of employment. In the colonies, labor and capital

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<sup>580</sup> The unnatural degeneracy of civilization was also instantiated in the subversion of the social order in the colonies in the form of extremely fluid class boundaries. Wakefield's fictional Australian colonist expressed his revulsion toward his former servant, who, having become "an Australian aristocrat," "has grown enormously fat, feeds upon greasy dainties, drinks oceans of bottled porter and port wine" (LS, 105). As a result of labor scarcity, the colonist continued, "I became a slave of my slaves. Can you think of a more hateful existence?" (Ibid, 106). The same subversion extended to women in the colonial society. "Fancy [a vulgar body in England] converted, by sudden elevation to the first place anywhere into a vulgar fine lady" (Ibid, 120). Wakefield's anxieties about the subversive impact on social order of letting colonists choose to do as they wish (including loitering, squatting, and idling), however, had a much older genealogy. Early modern mercantilist debates were suffused by preoccupations over the pursuit of self-interest by masterless men and the potential "abuse" of liberties, as the social fabric of the English countryside frayed under the onslaught of the enclosures. For a solid scholarly examination of these debates, see Joyce O. Appleby, "Ideology and Theory: The Tension between Political and Economic Liberalism in Seventeenth-Century England," *American Historical Review* 81 (1976): 499-515. Such tendencies of social subversion, Wakefield argued, could be best remedied by the immigration of the English gentry to the colonies. The gentry, "the most valuable class of emigrants" in Wakefield's mind, would become "landowners in the colony, or the owners of capital lent at interest or farmers of their own land." Their presence in the colony would "most beneficially affect the standard of morals and manners" by holding up an exemplary combination of "honour, virtue, intelligence, and property" (AC, 829-30). "The self-restraints which belong to civilization would be substituted for the barbarous licence of colonial life; for the sense of honour may be transplanted like the habit of crime" (Ibid, 925). Dalziel remarks that Wakefield's vision of the ideal colonial society replicated the English class structure, minus "the unfit, the unstable, and the idle." Raewyn Dalziel "Southern Islands: New Zealand and Polynesia," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire* Vol. 3, ed. Roger Louis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 583.

<sup>581</sup> Marx noted that "social density is more or less relative. A relatively thinly populated country, with well-developed means of communication, has a denser population than a more numerous country with badly developed means of communication. In this sense, the northern states of the U.S.A. for instance are more thickly populated than India." Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, p 473.

dissipated in the agoraphobic immensities of the same field, and as the social reproduction of commercial society came to a grinding halt, its civilization slowly *languished* in a state of fatal torpor.

### ***Colonial Critique of Political Economy***

Wakefield conceptualized the social pressure that sustained the commercial society in the term “the degree of concentration,” a “category of political economy,” which encapsulated “that which will lead to the combination of labor necessary to obtain the greatest quantity of produce from a given number of hours’ work and a given quantity of capital” (PC, 304). This abstract, utilitarian economic calculus in effect boiled down to the following question: how to secure the social pressure necessary to retain the capital-relation. One had to maintain the level of social compulsion necessary to keep the laborers working for the capitalists, thereby making possible social and technical division of labor, however, without squeezing laborers to the point of pauperization and discontent, beyond which they turned against the capitalist property system. Wakefield’s colonial framework of analysis had rewarded him with a crucial political economic discovery: people worked for a wage only if they had to, and only to the extent that they had to. This was in fact an old mercantilist insight that had been lost to classical political economy,<sup>582</sup>

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<sup>582</sup> The predominant controversy about labor in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was how to get laborers (many the victims of English enclosures) to work for a wage beyond the satisfaction of their subsistence needs. Not yet infused with a “productive ethic,” let alone with a “puritan work ethic,” the laboring poor were not quite “laboring.” One seventeenth century commentator complained that the idle and lazy English workers would not work unless “two days pay will keep them a week”; another reproached them for being “too proud to beg, too lazy to work, when ‘tis either too hot or too cold, an will choose their own time and wages, or you may do the work yourself.” Appleby, *Economic Thought*, p. 146. The completion of primitive accumulation in England, the consequent dependence of workers on the labor market, manufactures, factories, and the prolongation of the working day can be considered as some of the sources behind classical political economy’s amnesia about the mercantilist debates, and the impression that labor had always been employed by and for capital. Appleby’s account of the seventeenth-century mercantilist debates on labor, in chapter 6 of *Economic Thought*, is masterly. For the role of puritan work ethic in the consolidation of capitalism in England, or what is also known as the “Tawney thesis,” see Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*. For the “productive ethic” thesis that qualifies and complements Tawney’s position, see Himmelfarb, *Idea of Poverty*.

and Wakefield had to retrieve it from the colonies, where he repeatedly observed a “passion to own land” that was coupled with a tendency to engage subsistence farming. “The desire of becoming a land proprietor, for the gratification of which [the laborer] is willing to make great sacrifices” constituted the most trenchant obstacle to generating surplus, because “by a *small quantity* of labor on new soil, he produces a sufficiency of the mere necessities of life ... and contents himself with producing little more” ” (PC, 297-8). While “the desire of becoming a landed proprietor is so great in all Colonies” (Ibid, 305), the sterling case was once again American settlements “where a passion for owning land prevents the existence of a class of laborers for hire; and where, consequently, half of the crop is sometimes left to rot upon the ground” (EA, 326).” Wakefield would later elevate these initial observations to the status of a universal principle, and proclaim that “the passion for owning land ... belongs to human nature,” and “property in land is the object of one of the strongest and most general of human desires” (AC, 929, 937). It was this desire for direct access to land, coupled with the latter’s abundance in the colonies, which gave rise to scarcity of labor, or the *colonial labor problem*.<sup>583</sup>

The desire or passion to own land has a momentous, twofold implication for our analysis. First, insofar as it permeates the very tissue of human nature, one can hardly discipline (let alone dislodge) it, which leaves one with the option of controlling its *effects* by manipulating the

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<sup>583</sup> One enduring theoretical merit of Wakefield has been to posit the problem from which Marx could extrapolate the crucial antithesis between individual private property and capitalist private property. The former accrued from the labor of its owner and served as a pedestal for relative economic independence, whereas the latter emerged from the destruction of individual private property and the subjection of the dispossessed to the imperatives of capital accumulation. Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, pp. 927-31. This is a simple yet momentous theoretical point that ought to be borne in mind in engaging with libertarian arguments, such as articulated by Robert Nozick, which mistakenly treat all private property under capitalism as if it were individual private property, thereby reaching the fallacious conclusion that taxation is “on a par with forced labor.” Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, 1974), p. 169. The antithesis between individual and capitalist private property helps us see that if Nozick’s principles of entitlement were to be strictly applied to the chain of possessions culminating in contemporary capitalism, very few, if any, holdings would be legitimate.

conditions in and through which this desire translates into behavior.<sup>584</sup> I return to this point below in discussing Wakefield's systematic colonization scheme as a utilitarian calculus and institutional blueprint that aims to *harness* this desire for inducing the emigration of labor and capital to the colonies. Secondly, Wakefield's choice of "desire" and "passion" has a mystifying effect. "Passion" or "desire" to own land is mystifying in that it misrepresents a basic social propensity, one that has been the practical norm in the most of known human history, namely that human beings have organized social production primarily around the security of livelihood and *not* for the accumulation of surplus on the part of private individuals<sup>585</sup> – a point that finds support, among others, in Karl Polanyi's ethnological studies, as well as E.P Thompson and Peter Linebaugh's historical research into the commons and commoning.<sup>586</sup> This propensity appears as a "passion" or "desire" only when inflected by the viewpoint of capital, here borne by

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<sup>584</sup> The obvious theoretical precursor of this principle was Bentham's utilitarianism, but the monument to its practical implementation was the US Constitution that embodied the strategy to manage factions by "controlling its effects" rather than by "removing its causes" (*Federalist Papers*, No. 10). It is perhaps not surprising that despite all his contempt for the colonial pathology of American settlements, Wakefield harbored great admiration for the utilitarian outlook that Americans had cultivated, from the lowest orders to the highest-ranking politicians. "American ministers" were lauded for being "active men of business," and the "American fashion" of performing a task was to perform it "with a view to utility" (EA, 453, 456).

<sup>585</sup> For instance, Holt remarks, "life's goals for most humans who have walked this earth are better described in terms of the relative absence of scarcity and peril than in the full achievement of satisfaction and security." Holt illustrates this point through an analysis of the paths chosen by the former slaves in the West Indies, who shunned wage labor even if it meant higher income, and opted for small proprietorship and petty commodity production organized in autonomous villages. Holt, *Problem of Freedom*, p. 5. Likewise, Davis cautions against reducing the socioeconomic transformations wrought by the Parliamentary Enclosures, above all the "dehumanization of labor," to the question of "real wages," instead emphasizing the laceration in the social fabric wrought by the displacement from land. Davis, *Problem of Slavery*, pp. 402-3, 464-8. It is not coincidental that both authors focus on processes of primitive accumulation (enclosure and enslavement), which constitute the capital-relation by destroying or subordinating forms of social reproduction that are not immediately compatible with the accumulative logic of capital.

<sup>586</sup> Karl Polanyi, *The Livelihood of Man*, ed. Harry W. Pearson (New York: Academic Press, 1977) and *Great Transformation*, chapter 2; Peter Linebaugh, *Magna Carta Manifesto: Liberties and Commons for All* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); E. P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (London: Merlin Press, 1991). John Weaver explains the widespread penchant for landed property in the British colonies with reference to the peculiarity of Anglo-Saxon culture in highly valuing freehold landownership. While this cultural interpretation is disputable, what is more certain is that small property in the colonies did not translate into patterns of isolated settlements. As Charles Sellers illustrates, even the American settlements that Wakefield held in such disdain comprised less a scattered string of insular households dotting the frontier wilderness than tightly organized communities, the social reproduction of which neither depended on, nor was oriented towards, the generation of surplus and its realization in the market. Weaver, *Great Land Rush*; Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

Wakefield, a viewpoint for which the accumulation of value is so doxically entrenched that no one can “reasonably” dissent from its desirability, unless one is misled or blinded by “passions” or “desires.”<sup>587</sup>

In England, such passions and desires remained effectively under check, because primitive accumulation *qua* enclosure of land had advanced to a degree where the laboring classes had no choice but to work on somebody else’s land, on the condition, of course, that the latter reaped a profit. The “social pressure” necessary to keep laborers working (and capital owners investing) was sustained by strong private property rights in factors of production and by the compulsion of market mechanism. The capital-relation that “naturally” obtained between factors of production in the metropole dissolved in the colony like a “clump of earth thrown into a river.”<sup>588</sup> Land and labor defied the laws of supply and demand. As the laborers brought from England abandoned their would-be employers to set up their own freeholds, the initial stock fell prey to “unproductive consumption” (PC, 289).<sup>589</sup> Capital, which self-evidently referred to “stock” and “money” in metropolitan political economy, was revealed to be a *social relationship* the moment it crumbled into its constituent elements (labor and means of production) in the colony. Land and instruments of production ceased to be “capital” because “capital which cannot

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<sup>587</sup> This line of reasoning was resonant with Wakefield’s remarks elsewhere that equated civilization with the socially acquired capacity to resist the urge to immediately gratify passions and desires (AC, 925). The same disposition would later surface in Wakefield’s anthropological discourse on man as a conscious, planning, futural *homo faber*, which unfolded in all its transparency in the geographical and social *terra nullius* of the colonies (Ibid, 827).

<sup>588</sup> I borrow this brilliant metaphor from Eric Hobsbawm’s *Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914-1991* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1994), p. 175.

<sup>589</sup> Wakefield was most likely following the distinction that Smith drew in the *Wealth of Nations* between the expenditure of income as “revenue” as opposed to “capital.” Only the latter form of expenditure employed labor in productive activities, which generated value and augmented the wealth of the nation. This specific formulation resonates with Wakefield’s designation of the aristocracy as the “spending class” (EA, 364), a term he chooses deliberately to denote the unproductive consumption of surplus as “revenue.” See, Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, book II, chapter III; cf. Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, Part II.

be employed, which lies idle for want of employment, is as if it did not exist” (EA, 373),<sup>590</sup> and the scarcity of “labor” as a political economic category made sure that this happened. “What the capitalist brings to the colony in the shape of labor, ceases to be labor the moment it reaches the colony” (Ibid, 553). The colonial conditions disclosed the heavily social and historical conditions that primed large-scale cooperation and division of labor, which “seems in old countries like a natural property of labour” itself” (AC, 846).<sup>591</sup> As with labor, so was with land rent. Extremely limited conditions of transforming “plenty” into “value” (i.e. commodification) severed the Ricardian cord between rents and “natural fertility of the soil” and instead predicated land values on the proximity to social factors of production (labor, manure, and other inputs) and social infrastructure (roads, towns, ports, markets) (LS, 161-2; EA, 413-6).<sup>592</sup> In short, as Wakefield’s final verdict on classical political economy stated, “their economists, in treating of colonies, have worked with no other tools than those which they were accustomed to use in explaining the phenomena of and old country, to facts that never existed in the colony” (EA, 525).

Unveiling the analytic limits of political economy from a colonial perspective, however, is only half of the story. More importantly, Wakefield’s own account of England’s economic conditions was indebted to the global expanse of his analytic frame that pivoted on the

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<sup>590</sup> Regarding stock, Wakefield wrote, “I could fill pages with an account of the number of things, which would be of great value in England, which would be considered capital in any densely peopled country, but which we throw away as rubbish” (LS 112).

<sup>591</sup> Marx argued that classical political economy was born in the age of manufacture and therefore conceived of cooperation only through the lens of the division of labor in manufacture. This did not imply, however, that classical political economy’s view of division of labor was simply false. For the capacity of human labor to enter cooperative production processes had been ostensibly crystallized under the managerial direction of the manufacturing system. Consequently, productive powers of cooperation had always appeared under the sign of the entrepreneurial genius of the capitalist. Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, chapters 13 and 14.

<sup>592</sup> Insertion of land into relations of production primarily as a commodity rather than an instrument for satisfying subsistence needs comprised the precondition of moving on to the stage of commercial society. “There is no fourth stage until land becomes purely a commodity.” Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion* Vol. 4, p. 173n. Similarly, commodification of land is the *sine qua non* of a self-regulating market society for Polanyi. Polanyi, *Great Transformation*, chapter 6. One should add in passing that in his critique of the naturalist assumptions of metropolitan economists, Wakefield crossed paths with Marx, who later disparaged Ricardo for seeking “refuge in organic chemistry” for explaining the falling rate of profit (Marx would find Wakefield’s explanation based on “competition” similarly inadequate). Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 754.

metropole-colony nexus. “The passion to own land” represents Wakefield’s mode of apprehending the tendency of laborers to seek relatively direct access to the means of social reproduction without the mediation of the capital-relation and the concomitant compulsion to generate surplus in order to make a living. The colonial tendency towards subsistence economy on smallholdings threw into sharp relief the narrow preconditions of “labor” as a category of political economy, that is, as capital-positing labor, as labor that contributes to the self-valorization of capital.<sup>593</sup> Similarly, Wakefield groped at the relational nature of capital in his observations on the breakdown of the capital logic, in the form of hoarding and devaluation in the metropole and unproductive consumption in the colony. The colony was Wakefield’s window opening onto the metropole.<sup>594</sup> This movement from the colony to the metropole was reflected in the sequence of his works. *A Letter from Sydney* (1829) and *Plan of a Company* (1830) focused exclusively on the colonial labor problem. After roughly triangulating the nature of capital as a social relationship in these early works, Wakefield devoted roughly half of *England and America* (1833) to the analysis of the metropolitan economy, before further expounding on the colonial labor problem.<sup>595</sup> Wakefield’s intellectual pendulum then swung back to the colonies, this time with an eye towards possible policy designations drawn from the theoretical insights, which made their embryonic appearance as early as *A Letter from Sydney*

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<sup>593</sup> Classical political economy’s conflation of labor with capital-positing labor has been observed by British colonial officials as well. For example, Lord Sydney Olivier, once the Governor of Jamaica and Secretary of State for India, noted that labor in the language of political economy “always means occupation for the for an employer at wages,” the reason behind the Victorian perceptions of the freed people as inveterate enemies of industry. Quoted in Holt, *Problem of Freedom*, p. 148.

<sup>594</sup> Marx was perhaps the first to discern the broader theoretical implications of Wakefield’s study of the colonies. “It is the great merit of E. G. Wakefield to have discovered, not something new *about* the colonies, but, *in* the colonies, the truth about capitalist relations in the mother country.” And this discovery was “that capital is not a thing, but a social relation between persons which is mediated through things.” Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, p. 931. Unfortunately, Marx’s condescending and dismissive (to say the least) prevents him from appreciating the larger stakes embedded in this discovery, and not just for Wakefield but for early Victorians in general, stakes that are tethered to the fortunes of capitalism and civilization in England.

<sup>595</sup> Wakefield continued to articulate the same line of critique in the annotations to his edition of Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*. I have refrained from bringing these annotations into the fold of this analysis since they basically replicate the theoretical points made in *England and America*.

and came to full maturation in *England and America* and *A View of the Art of Colonization* (1849). Wakefield's swing back to the colonies comprises the third and last part of this chapter.

To underscore how closely the metropole and the colony were yoked together in Wakefield's social imaginary, I would like to risk one last conjecture. The intensity of Wakefield's abhorrence of the colonial life could perhaps be explained by the latter's uncanny premonitions about the predicaments of England. In a perverse way, the colonial mode of subsistence and the attendant civilizational forms provided a disturbing glimpse into what England would look like if its socioeconomic ailments were not immediately mitigated, and the danger of social revolution were to be let run its spontaneous course. A post-revolutionary England would not be a post-capitalist society (as Marx sanguinely presaged) but would revert to a *precapitalist* society, the living embodiment of which was the colonies. Class conflict in England "must end in England's ruin; which might make England a *hunting field, or a place fit to receive convicts from America*" (EA, 405-6, emphases mine). The allusion to the wilderness of the colonial frontier and the penal colonies of South Australia is incontrovertible. The economic regress and civilizational degeneration that accompanied the movement from the metropole to the colony provided the imagery in which Wakefield gazed at the barbarizing consequences of a possible economic and civilizational bust in England. Of course, a peasant society ought to have nothing inherently "uncivilized." Nonetheless, the collusion of political economy with Enlightenment tropes of civilization and savagery under the sign of "progress" constituted the grammar on the basis of which the "difference" of peasant societies would be translated into a "deficit" in civilizational terms.<sup>596</sup>

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<sup>596</sup> While a critic of political economy, Marx himself was not exempt from such acts of translation, as attested by his well-known deprecations of the "idiocy of rural life."

Given that the early Victorian Britons viewed themselves through the stadial model of civilization and savagery, Wakefield's invocation of "regress" should not be overlooked as a colloquial matter, but taken as expressing a fundamental idea of social development that was linear yet not inexorable, and therefore reversible and precarious.<sup>597</sup> What Wakefield believed he observed was once-civilized Englishmen sliding on the slippery civilizational slope towards the lower rungs of barbarism and savagery. The problem not only implicated the aforementioned imperative of exporting surplus English labor and capital *en masse* to the colonies. As Pat Moloney reminds, "Victorians had more than their capital invested in such schemes. Civilization and savagery defined who *they* were."<sup>598</sup> Consequently, Wakefield's scheme of colonization would not be worth trying if salvaging civilization in England could only be obtained at the cost of barbarizing Englishmen abroad.

### ***Slave Labor and Competing Barbarisms***

Wakefield admitted that not all colonies in human history had fallen prey to the barbarizing tendencies of an open frontier. Coastal towns of North America and the West Indies had long been centers of prosperity and could hardly be called barbarous in the sense described above. In such colonial settlements, the colonial labor problem was resolved through the employment of bonded labor, of which slavery represented the most controversial type. Wakefield wrote *A Letter from Sydney and England and America* in the heat of the public and official debates over the emancipation of slaves in the British West Indies, and his analysis bore the marks of, as well as intervened in, these debates.

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<sup>597</sup> Moloney remarks that the early Victorian perceptions of the Maori analogized the latter to the Scottish Highlanders of 1700 as well as to the ancient Britons who had begun their journey to civilization with the Roman contact. "Like a photograph album of one's juvenile years, it could excite nostalgia and romanticism, but also embarrassment and rejection." Moloney, "Savagery and Civilization," pp. 157-8.

<sup>598</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

Wakefield's view of slavery evinced the same political economic perspective he applied to pauperism in England. Parting ways with contemporary philanthropy, he traced the causes of slavery to "not moral but economic circumstances: they relate not to vice and virtue, but to production" (AC, 928). The "permanent" and "original cause of slavery" could be firmly traced to the "*superabundance of land in proportion to people*" that generated the colonial labor problem (EA, 479).<sup>599</sup> Enslavement of American Indians, African chattel slavery, and a host of other kinds of "virtual slavery," including redemptioning, indenture, convict labor, pauper migration, and apprenticeship, had served as historical remedies to the colonial labor problem, ensuring the combination of labor in large-scale agriculture, most importantly in such export staples as sugar, tobacco, and cotton (EA, 470-80, AC 849-53).<sup>600</sup> Wakefield was effectively challenging, though not completely rejecting, the argument that free labor yielded a productive performance superior to slave labor, an argument that comprised the heavy "capitalist" artillery of the liberal "humanitarian armoury."<sup>601</sup> Wakefield rested his challenge on the theoretical

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<sup>599</sup> "I can conceive that slavery was revived for something else than the gratification of man's worst propensities," wrote Wakefield, and "it will never be abolished by appeals to the hearts of the slave-owners ... What was the sole cause of the revival of slavery by Christians, but the discovery of waste countries and the disproportion which has ever since existed in those countries between the demand and the supply of labor?" (LS, 113).

<sup>600</sup> In Southern Australia, for instance, which never had chattel slavery, meager progress was indebted to the system of convict transportation. Even then, the unreliability of the transportation system in meeting the demand for a constant labor supply (combined with the moral decrepitude of convicts) would make many an Australian capitalist long for "African slaves," which they would indeed obtain "if public opinion in England did not forbid it" (LS, 135-6; EA, 485). Accordingly, "if Australasia should become independent to-morrow, these people would find some means of establishing slavery in spite of all the saints" (LS, 114). Prior to the onset of the African slave trade, convict transportation and indenture offered the principal means for populating the West Indian plantations with white (and during Cromwell's reign, predominantly Irish) bonded laborers. See Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, pp. 9-16. For excellent scholarship on forced migration and bonded labor, see Marcus Rediker, Cassandra Pybus, and Emma Christopher (eds) *Many Middle Passages: Forced Migration and the Making of the Modern World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007). On convict labor in Australia, see Hamish Maxwell-Stewart, *Closing Hell's Gates: The Life and Death of a Convict Station* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2008); Lucy Frost and Hamish Maxwell-Stewart, *Chain Letters: Narrating Convict Lives* (Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 2002).

<sup>601</sup> Andrew Porter, "Trusteeship, Anti-Slavery and Humanism," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire* Vol. 3, ed. Roger Louis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 204. This is not to say, however, that Wakefield did not find slavery reprehensible. He was an Enlightenment thinker through and through. His convictions sat squarely atop the late eighteenth-century intellectual bloc against slavery, in which secular theories of moral sense, sympathy, and ethics of benevolence combined with liberal political economy to transform the attitudes toward labor, property, and individual responsibility. Davis, *Problem of Slavery*, pp. 45-6, 82.

premise that economic productivity was first and foremost a function of social cooperation and division of labor, and only secondarily a creature of individual skill or willingness to work. If social cooperation and division of labor were in place, free laborers would be preferable to bondsmen, since they did not carry the motivational blight that afflicted slaves. In the colonies, however, free labor, *qua* its tendency to disperse, was the very solvent of the conditions of economic productivity, and slavery represented the only viable instrument for securing a labor force large, pliable, and constant enough to undertake specialized production and economies of scale.<sup>602</sup> This had dawned upon Wakefield's fictional Australian capitalist, who "had not bound [his workers] by indentures, for [he] was weak enough to think that free agents would prove better servants than bondsmen" (LS, 106). Indeed, as Henry Taylor, one of the architects of the emancipation in the West Indies remarked, "free agents" proved more advantageous to slaves on all counts except "in the continuity and the certainty of [the] supply of labor."<sup>603</sup> However, as Thomas Holt underscores, considerations of "*continuity* and *certainty*" (or in Wakefield's words, "constancy") overwhelmingly governed colonial capitalist classes' policy of labor recruitment.<sup>604</sup>

During and after the emancipation, the planters set their eyes on the East Indian labor reserves and mobilized their connections in the Colonial Office for the organized migration of indentured laborers to the West Indies. Madhavi Kale's excellent analysis of the indenture debates reveals the acuity of the colonial labor problem driving these schemes, as well as the conundrums faced by the British humanitarians and policy makers as they tried to reconcile the

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<sup>602</sup> "Slavery is a question of labour, the original purchase of all things ... Slave labour is on the whole much more costly than the labour of hired freemen ... Slavery, therefore is not preferred to the method of hiring: the method of hiring would be preferred if there were a choice: but when slavery is adopted, there is no choice: it is adopted because at the time and under the circumstances here is no other way of getting the labourers to work with constancy and in combination" (AC, 927-8). David Brion Davis historically traces the continued and "immense profitability of slave labor" through the surge of slave populations in the Western Hemisphere in the half century before the emancipation, concomitant with the "comforting illusion that slave labor was inefficient, unprofitable, and an impediment to economic growth." Davis, *Problem of Slavery*, p. 61.

<sup>603</sup> Quoted in Holt, *Problem of Freedom*, p. 123.

<sup>604</sup> *Ibid.*

ideology of “free labor” that increasingly defined the British self-image and the material necessity to provide a viable solution to the colonial labor shortage.<sup>605</sup> Initially denounced by the abolitionists as yet another form of slavery, Indian indentured servitude ultimately comprised the ground for a “liberal compromise” between colonial entrepreneurs and the proponents of free labor.<sup>606</sup> Given Wakefield’s efforts to popularize his theory, it should not come as a surprise that he was explicitly invoked as an authority by at least one West Indian planter, William Burnley, who adduced his theory lock, stock and barrel in his advocacy of labor importation to the British Caribbean.<sup>607</sup>

Ironically, slavery, execrated in Britain as a most barbaric form of domination, formed the central pillar of civilization in the colonies. “Had slavery never existed,” Wakefield contended, a Jamaican planter “would, in the natural course of things, have been a little West Indian farmer, perhaps scarcely be able to read – certainly not fit to be a member of civilized society” (LS, 113). Thanks to the “riches, leisure, and instruction” afforded by the surplus generated by slaves and realized in the European and American markets, planter societies could cultivate the civilized features characteristic of commercial peoples. The perceived link between colonial slave economies and capitalist civilization, while most systematically treated by Wakefield, generally suffused the abolition debates and stamped not only planters’ but also policymakers’ anxieties surrounding the emancipation and apprenticeship. “The worst fears of

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<sup>605</sup> See Kale, *Fragments of Empire*, especially chapter 2. For the increasing centrality of the ideology of “free labor” to the hegemony of the British middle classes after 1832, as well as its dialectical relationship to the abolitionist discourse, see Davis, *Problem of Slavery*, especially pp 349-60.

<sup>606</sup> Kale writes, “the peculiarity of indentured migration was the ambiguous space it occupied and opened in the dichotomizing discourse on slavery and freedom. On the one hand, [it] was represented as a new system of slavery ... On the other hand, it was defended as a form of free labor especially suited to distinctively imperial conditions, where natural resources and labor were not always coincident.” Indentured labor “qualified as free labor, not only because men and women chose to enter into them, but also, and more important, because the guarantor of their freedom of choice was the imperial government and its agents.” Kale, *Fragments of Empire*, pp. 173-4.

<sup>607</sup> *Ibid*, 44-8. While Wakefield noted the West India planters’ pleas to the imperial government to organize the mass migration of free labor from Africa to the West Indies, he was not a principled proponent of indenture (AC, 931). This did not mean, however, that he excluded it as a practical option, as evidenced both in his writings (LS, 170-7) as well as in his official policy proposals after he settled in New Zealand. Prichard, “Introduction,” pp. 66-70.

the men who had fashioned British policy,” writes Holt, was the perceived tendency of the freed people “to establish independent freeholds,” as expressed in a planter’s warning “our present apprentices will answer to our necessities only in proportion to the facilities of their becoming petty settlers being withheld from them.”<sup>608</sup> The danger of peasantization registered itself in a civilizational as well as economic key, wherein subsistence farming, market gardening, and petty commodity production outside the wage relation conjured up visions of “savage indolence” and “cultural regression.”<sup>609</sup> The “Malthusian and Wakefieldian dicta” that “ex-slaves be prevented from obtaining land” became the official policy of the day, in an effort to counter, in Lord Glenelg’s words “the natural tendency of the population to spread over the surface of the country, each man settling where he may, or roving from place to place in pursuit of virgin soil.”<sup>610</sup>

The absence of colonial slavery meant the stall of civilization, while its abolition meant civilizational decay. However, slavery itself did not stand free of moral complications. The moral considerations that Wakefield exorcised from the causes of slavery returned in its effects on the character of the slaveholders. While a partial “economic remedy,” slavery constituted a “political and social malady” that offended the liberal-Whig sensibilities on which the English character was predicated (AC, 853). The origins of these sensibilities were rooted in the transvaluation of

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<sup>608</sup> Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*, pp. 143, 146.

<sup>609</sup> Ibid. For a good overview of the colonial labor problem in the Caribbean and the dilemmas of emancipation, see Gad Heumann, “The British West Indies” in *The Oxford History of the British Empire* Vol. 3, ed. Roger Louis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). Heumann similarly emphasizes the intimate connection conceived by the policy makers between the quest for abolishing slavery without “casting the West Indies in barbarism” and retaining plantation economy without slaves. A great work on the anxieties and conundrums of “civilizing” the Caribbean freedmen is Catherine Hall’s *Civilising Subjects*.

<sup>610</sup> Lord Glenelg’s dispatch to West Indian governors, quoted in Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*, p. 74. Wakefield did not believe the West Indies to be immanently susceptible to barbarization because he perceived in the apprenticeship system the practical continuation of slavery (EA, 486). In fact, until and unless another method of procuring an abundant and reliable labor supply was devised, he saw the chances of top-down abolition to be next to zero. If abolition would at all come to pass, it would follow the resistance and struggle by the apprentices or the political secession of the colonies. In the latter case, barbarization of the Argentines after independence and abolition portended the fate of the British colonies (EA, 483).

social values during the consolidation of capitalism in eighteenth-century England where the polished individual of commercial society was increasingly juxtaposed to the slave-owning, rude and even barbarous figure of the ancient citizen.<sup>611</sup> “In the pre-commercial society ... the exchange of goods and services is so underdeveloped that the normal human relationship is that between master and slave, lord and serf. Only as commerce develops do social relations become capable of generating civil authority.”<sup>612</sup> Seen in this light, colonial slave economies resembled less the commercial society from which they spun off than the pre-commercial stage the British had supposedly left behind. Slavery, and especially African chattel slavery, represented a condition as “artificially distanced from civil society as that of savagery was naturally remote.”<sup>613</sup>

Once again, the civilizational tropes outlined above could offer the guiding thread into Wakefield’s statement, “slavery is full of moral and political evils from which the method of hired labor is exempt” (AC, 928). Colonial slavery as a mode of labor control stood outside civil society and planted one foot of the slave-owner firmly in the soil of unprincipled, brute might. It resolved the labor problem through immediate coercion, which placed it squarely outside the liberal principles of consent and contract that increasingly demarcated the British political and moral character under the ascendant leadership of the commercial classes. As David Brion Davis compellingly demonstrates, at once constitutive of and pitted against the idea of “free labor,” slavery became a “unique moral aberration” no longer compatible with the changing “attitudes toward labor, property, and individual responsibility,” and “the needs and values of the emerging

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<sup>611</sup> Pocock, “Mobility of Property,” pp. 107-9, 114-5, and “*Tangata Whenua*” p. 206.

<sup>612</sup> Pocock, “Mobility of Property,” p. 121.

<sup>613</sup> Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion* Vol. 4, p. 6.

capitalist order.<sup>614</sup> The forcible expropriation and exploitation inherent in enslavement glared too disturbingly in the face of the relatively subtle, flexible, and institutionally relayed forms of labor control and social discipline that were being developed and disseminated in England in this period.<sup>615</sup>

Against this ideological background, the passages below (written twenty years apart) pinpoint the civilizational coordinates of slavery in Wakefield's thought:

Convict labor being a kind of slavery, the employer of convicts is a species of slave-driver, and his children are little slave drivers. As his slaves have more rights and more reason than the black slaves of Virginia, his position is more injurious to his character than that of the Virginian slave-owner ... One can imagine a kind of master of downright slaves; but to drive men, half slaves and half freemen, *must* make the driver a brute ... the injury done to the character of the master by our slave system is quite perfect. Is this not a great evil? (LS, 136)

Negro slavery is detestable for the master who was not bred, born, and educated within hearing of the driving-whip. If I could find a stronger word than detestable, I would apply it to the life of a decent Englishman who has become a driver of convicts in Tasmania. ... [The] political danger and social plague [of a degraded slave population] is tolerable, indeed, for those who are used to it, and to whom it is, moreover, a convenience in other respects; but the British capitalist is not used to it (AC, 852-3)

Arresting the barbarizing expansion of the frontier by means of coerced labor gave rise to another form of civilizational relapse, namely, turning the slave-owner into a cruel despot and compromising the liberal English character.<sup>616</sup> Here was another conundrum for spontaneous

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<sup>614</sup> Davis, *Problem of Slavery*, pp. 82, 254, 349. However, the cause of antislavery did not imply sympathy for the laboring class on the part of the abolitionists. If antislavery played an indisputable role in "making a sincere humanitarianism an integral part of class ideology," it also shaped the discursive plain on which disciplining the British working class according to the dictates of industrial capitalism could be undertaken and understood in a liberal language by fusing utilitarianism with an ethic of benevolence. The crucial point underscored by Davis is that antislavery ideology to which Wakefield subscribed represented a "highly selective response to the exploitation of labor," "isolating specific forms of human misery, allowing issues of freedom and discipline to be faced in a relatively simplified model." Davis, *Problem of Slavery*, pp. 402-3, 455-8, 464-8.

<sup>615</sup> The abolition of slavery belonged to a broader genus of institutional reforms that targeted prisons, police, and poor relief in the 1830s and 1840s, which built on the modern techniques of disciplinary power chronicled by Michel Foucault, and which constituted the essential institutional conditions of the consolidation of capitalist relations, or what Polanyi labeled "the great transformation." See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), *Birth of Biopolitics*, and *Security, Territory, Population*.

<sup>616</sup> In this observation, Wakefield was not alone. Catherine Hall points out the uneasy coexistence of material symbiosis and cultural revulsion that marked the relationship between the West Indies and England. For the English, "the wealthy planters represented forms of vulgarity, backwardness, and degeneracy that inverted the standards of English civility and culture." The West Indies represented "a kind of outpost of the metropolis, an extension or perhaps an excrescence of the British self rather than a place entirely separate." Davis similarly emphasizes the notoriety of the "white population" of Barbados "for its vulgarity, alcoholism, and general improvidence." Catherine

colonization: free labor in the colonies culminated in vagrant savagery, while bonded labor bred barbarous despotism. The inhabitants of free colonies were free but not civilized (like the savages of the American wilderness), while those of the slave colonies were relatively civilized but not free (like the subjects of Asiatic despotisms). Whether they set sail for becoming homesteaders or planters, “something happened to Britons when they left the island shores.”<sup>617</sup>

### **III. Systematic Colonization: the Metropole and the Colony in Full Circle**

#### ***Shoring Up Capitalism and Freedom***

If capitalist civilization and its liberal image of itself were both to be upheld in the colonies, “free labor” had to be consummated as a notion. It had to remain “free,” that is, the exclusive private property of the laborer who could alienate it through contracts. At the same time, it had to remain “labor,” that is, a commodity the purchase and employment of which yielded a surplus.<sup>618</sup> We have reconstructed Wakefield’s analysis of the antithesis between these two imperatives. In this third and last section, I turn to his proposed methods to mitigate this antithesis and bring the imperatives of accumulation in the metropole and imperatives of civilization in the colony together in a harmonious resolution. Wakefield’s scheme of systematic colonization sought to connect the two loci through streams of labor, capital, commodities, and culture, which could relieve the pressure in the metropole by channeling excess labor and capital to the colonies without, however, letting them to disperse over the wild. In hydraulic terms, the steam had to be let out of the over-pressurized boiler, not into open air where it dissipated and

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Hall, “What did a British World Mean to the British?” in *Rediscovering the British World*, ed. P. Buckner & R. D. Francis (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005), p. 26, 28. Davis, *Problem of Slavery*, p. 52.

<sup>617</sup> Hall, “What did a British World Mean to the British?” p. 27

<sup>618</sup> As Kale aptly remarks, what was lacking in the post-emancipation Caribbean was not labor, but labor that yielded a surplus. Kale, *Fragments of Empire*, pp. 55-60.

vanished, but into artificially constructed chambers in order to obtain optimum pressure on both ends of the transfer and to secure a free, reliable, and contented labor supply.

We have seen that in Wakefield's view labor was either free or not; all hybrid forms of labor control (indenture, apprenticeship) qualified as "virtual slavery." His policy proposals reflected such dichotomous bearings, as it only provided for the emigration of legally free labor. Wakefield's ingenious solution to the colonial labor problem wove together a *laissez-faire* stance on the labor contract, which by the early nineteenth century had calcified into the decisive mark of free labor,<sup>619</sup> and a strategy for *indirectly coercing* free labor into remaining capital-positing wage labor. Both capitalist relations *and* freedom could be achieved in the colonies, Wakefield argued, by placing an artificially inflated price on public lands in order to prolong the period for which emigrants had to work as wage laborers to save enough for becoming landowners. The compulsion to work would remain; however, it would issue not from the sound of master's lash or the sight of the gallows but from the Malthusian fear of destitution and the Smithian desire to improve one's condition.

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<sup>619</sup> By the end of the eighteenth century, the laborer's consent to enter into a wage contract with the employer had been the juridical sign of freedom, regardless of whether or not the laborer was in practical bondage. The debates over free labor in Britain came to a head around the status of Scottish colliers and salters (broached during the case of *Knight v. Wedderburn*) who had been bound to mines for life and some of whom wore collars with the names of their employers. The conclusion of the case, conjoined by such illustrious names as John Millar, was that the lifetime bondage of colliers, viewed in the light of "high wages," represented not legal slavery but "commercial regulation" based on expediency. The decision demonstrated "the importance of wages as a symbol of exchange and voluntarism even in a situation of nearly absolute subordination." Davis, *Problem of Slavery*, pp. 489-92. The similar argument would resurge in Lord Grey's criticism of Henry Taylor's gradual abolition plans, which granted one day of the week to slaves to work on their own account, save, and purchase their freedom (what was also known as *contracion* in Spanish colonies). Grey drew an impervious line between slavery and freedom and squarely predicated the latter on the idea of "wage contract," struck by the mutual consent of fully free and equal parties. Holt, *Problem of Freedom*, p. 47. The notion of "freedom" that the British policymakers to explicitly formulate after the emancipation turned out to be the freedoms of the "possessive individual" theorized in C. B. Macpherson's *Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*. A concise overview of the transvaluation of the wage relation, during which it morphed from an indicator of dependency to the hallmark of independency can be found in Nancy Fraser and Lisa Gordon, "Dependency Demystified: Inscriptions of Power in Keyword of the Welfare State," *Social Politics* 1 (1994): 4-31.

Obviously, for these “voluntary” and “economic” motives of labor to be more than a good idea in the colonies, one needed employers to invest capital and laborers to employ. Given that one could not force either to immigrate to the colonies, the means of convincing them had to be devised. Wakefield’s theory of systematic colonization offered an elaborate solution to this problem, yet one that depended on the highly demanding condition that all of its prescriptions be implemented simultaneously and uniformly. Behind this reasoning lay the Benthamite theory of human motivation, especially as it related to property. “Expectation is a chain that unites our present existence to our future existence,” wrote Bentham, and “the idea of property consists in an established expectation.”<sup>620</sup> If capitalists and workers were to sink their property (stock and labor) in colonial land, they had to be assured that they would obtain reasonable returns, since “he who has no hope that he shall reap will not take the trouble to sow,” a dictum of Bentham’s that applied quite literally in this case.<sup>621</sup> Following Bentham’s legal positivism that decreed the birth and death of law and property in unison, Wakefield advocated and actively lobbied for an Act of Parliament to underwrite his systematic colonization plans. Additionally, he worked for the publicization of the anticipated results of systematic colonization, which, especially when sanctioned by prominent political economists of the time, could instill in policymakers and prospective emigrants a favorable set of expectations regarding colonization.<sup>622</sup> In one respect, the whole plan was a leap of faith, yet one subtended by the “science” of political economy. This

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<sup>620</sup> Jeremy Bentham, *The Theory of Legislation* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1931), pp. 110-1.

<sup>621</sup> Jeremy Bentham, *Rationale of Reward* (London: John and H. L. Hunt, 1825), p. 318. Wakefield’s advocacy of wage labor found another source of theoretical sanction in Bentham’s utilitarian endorsement: “substitute alluring for coercive motives: reward for punishment. With suitable precautions, abolish all services in kind, all forced labour and slavery. A country peopled with serfs will be always poor. Pay for labour in money, and the reward, mingling drop after drop with the labour, will sweeten its bitterness.” Ibid, p. 307.

<sup>622</sup> In the modern microeconomic lexicon, the “set of expectations” invoked here roughly translate into “incentive structures,” especially if specific expectations and their behavioral effects are preconceived, anticipated, and hoped for, as was the case for Wakefield. Hence, although it sounds anachronistic for the early nineteenth century, I will be using the term “incentives” and “incentivizing” to refer to Wakefield’s preferred mechanism for implementing his colonization schemes.

myth of profitability and prosperity would prove to be more successfully self-actualizing than one would expect. As one New Zealand historian put it, “the image was marketed before the reality existed, and helped create it.”<sup>623</sup>

### ***Commodity Fictions, Colonial Fabrications***

The cornerstone of Wakefield’s policy measures was the mode of land disposal in the colonies. The manner in which individuals appropriated colonial land heavily influenced the predominant forms of property, the organization of labor, and consequently the prospects of socioeconomic development. The “grants system” hitherto adopted by European governments represented a “faulty mode of colonization” inasmuch as it made land accessible to people who would otherwise be wage laborers and thereby spawned the colonial labor problem with deplorable consequences detailed above. Now, Wakefield admitted that governments could not control the amount of fertile land available to settlers. They could control, however, the disposal of secure titles, or in other words, legal property in land. Assuming that no person would settle on land without a solid title to it, Wakefield suggested that the British government adopt two principal measures for restricting the expanse of private property in the colonies in order to prevent dispersal and ensure social concentration. Social concentration meant wage labor, which could be combined and directed by employers; capital accumulation, leisure, and civilization would follow. “Government might, by restricting the amount of grants, establish and maintain the most desirable proportion between people and territory,” Wakefield wrote, and added, “every government, therefore, possesses the power to civilize its subjects” (LS, 158-9).

As the first measure, the grants system ought to be replaced by the sale of colonial lands, which would give the government a much more precise instrument of disposal.<sup>624</sup> This policy

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<sup>623</sup> Belich, *Making Peoples*, p. 358.

envisioned much stronger and exclusive preemptive crown rights over, and stricter government management of, colonial lands than had been the case under the grants system.<sup>625</sup> Unchecked private property in land had been a curse. For colonization to proceed along civilized lines, land “must not only be waste, but it must be *public property*, liable to be converted into private property for the end in view” (EA, 527, emphasis added). And the “end in view” being the enlargement of the field of production for capital and labor, the “power of government over waste land must be exerted actively” in bestowing land titles, while at the same time, to prevent dispersion, “that power must be exerted negatively, in refusing titles to waste land” (Ibid, 538). The tandem deployment of the powers to grant and withhold secure titles would enable the system to operate like an “elastic belt” (Ibid, 541), tightly enclosed around the field of production and exerting the necessary amount of pressure to sustain the accumulation of capital, expanding outward when the pressure of accumulation pressed against the field of production.<sup>626</sup>

Wakefield’s proposal had to vie with two established approaches to the economics of colonization. One of these was the orthodox position, summarized by James Mill’s contention that the British economy could employ all its capital and labor at home even if Britain were

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<sup>624</sup> This was one field in which Wakefield’s efforts bore fruit in the form of Ripon Land Regulations adopted in 1831, after which the sale of colonial lands replaced the land grant system in Canada, the West Indies, and Australasia.

<sup>625</sup> English chartered companies in the seventeenth century were granted not only land in America but also the exclusive discretion over its disposal. Similarly, the British East India Company as a semi-autonomous governmental body handled the regulation of property in the territories under its government. See Stern, ““A Politie of Civill & Military Power.”” Neither was this tradition restricted to the English. The Dutch East India Company (VOC) went so far as to claim its dominions as its exclusive sovereign property, asserting against the United Provinces that such possessions “could be sold for profit to the Spanish or to any other enemy of the state.” Julia Adams, *The Familial State: Ruling Families and Merchant Capitalism in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), p. 61.

<sup>626</sup> The “elastic belt” principle would play the crucial role of orchestrating the conditions underpinning Ricardian rent theory by *gradually* expanding agriculture out to marginal lands, thereby protecting rents from the collapse that typically followed from dispersion. These outcomes would be obtained by the administrative feat of the local government, which would ensure that “the capital and labor possessed by the Colony at any given time, will be employed on those portions of land, which from quality or situation, can be most advantageously cultivated, and such concentration of population aimed at, as shall produce that degree of combination of labour which is most favorable to production” (PC, 303).

surrounded by “Friar Bacon’s Wall of Brass,” at which Wakefield’s “elastic belt” took an open jab. We have seen Wakefield’s response to this position in Section 1, and need not retrace it here. The other and more important position was Smith’s dictum that abundant fertile land in the colonies guaranteed productivity and prosperity. This line of thought was seminally articulated in John Locke’s labor theory of property a century earlier. Locke had claimed America to belong to the natural common (much like Europe had been ages ago), open by divine design to private appropriation by anyone who would subdue and improve it by his labor. Everything of material value to human existence flowed from the mixing of labor with land; therefore, the prosperity and happiness of mankind increased in proportion to the enclosure and improvement of the earth’s common.<sup>627</sup> As discussed in detail in Chapter 2 of this study, Locke formulated his theory with the English colonies in America in mind. Smith likewise celebrated the combination of English agricultural skill with fertile American soil, unburdened by heavy taxes and government interference characteristic of the old country, which paved the stones to opulence in America. From this perspective, Wakefield’s proposal of government-created scarcity of land would lay the ax to the root of colonial prosperity.

I have described Wakefield’s objection to Smith as regards the subversive impact of abundant land on the colonial labor market; however, there existed another problem with such abundance that directly pertained to land itself. Wakefield agreed that the superabundance of land in the colonies rendered it a species of natural commons, “supplied, like air or water, in unlimited qualities”; however, this was precisely the problem from a political economic point of view, since this supply was “not in any proportion to the market demand for land, but so as to

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<sup>627</sup> Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, pp. 301-10.

prevent such a demand” (AC, 933).<sup>628</sup> Strictly speaking, “common” as a category is outside the frame of supply and demand, and from the perspective of the colonizers all colonial land was practically in the natural common. By invoking the peculiarity of colonial conditions, Wakefield attempted to undercut the *laissez-faire* offshoots of the Smithian lineage, which invoked the natural value of land arising from the dynamics of supply and demand. It was not natural fertility, Wakefield argued, but competition for land that created land rents (the vital sign of a thriving land market) and such competition issued from scarcity in land (EA, 423). The facility with which land could be obtained, however, translated into the absence of scarcity, the central dynamic that gave life to the interplay of supply and demand. Consequently, no scarcity, no competition, no market.<sup>629</sup> In the colonies, the “tragedy” of the commons issued not from the absence of private property, *pace* Garret Hardin, but from its ubiquity. Against this background, Wakefield’s “elastic belt,” constructed from strong preemptive crown rights and public property claims, represented the boundaries of the colonial territory to be cordoned off, negated as commons, and reconstituted as “property” of a specific type – mutable property, property that had an exchange value, or in short, commodified property.<sup>630</sup> Wakefield thereby countered both

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<sup>628</sup> Wakefield’s denial of any value to the commons was in line with the labor theory of value to which he subscribed. “The accumulated produce of labor is wealth,” wrote Wakefield (LS, 133), and declared labor to be “the original purchase-money of all things” (EA, 523). Another theorist of the labor theory of value, Karl Marx made the crucial distinction between “nature” and “raw material,” wherein he distinguished the latter by virtue of human labor that went into its production. Nature neither embodied nor could be expressed in terms of abstract human labor. Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, p. 287.

<sup>629</sup> Wakefield analogized the profusion of private property in the colonies to inflationary monetary policy, which reduced the value of land and money, respectively. Liberally granting colonial lands to private persons, he held, was akin to mining a gold deposit to depletion and flooding the economy with currency coined from it irrespective of the demand for money (EA, 427).

<sup>630</sup> While it would have been absurd to say that land had no value for colonial small proprietors (their socioeconomic independence and survival hinged on it), it would still have made sense to speak of colonial land having no exchange value, insofar as commodity form had not become the main social form in which land was conceived and transacted. Moloney provides a very pertinent overview of the debates on the status of land and property in New Zealand and the competing theories of appropriation (labor, first occupancy, sovereignty). In the confrontation between Lockean, Scottish, and Utilitarian theories of colonial land, the association of property with exchangeable value was a strikingly constant tenet (again, to recall Pocock, without commodity in land, commercial stage, or capitalist civilization, could not be attained). Moloney, “Savagery and Civilization,” pp. 163-6.

Locke's philosophical argument (labor) and Smith's economic reasoning (opulence) as adequate grounds for the free appropriation of land. He rebutted the former by substituting, in Benthamite fashion, positive law for natural law as the foundation of property, and the latter by demonstrating the need for government intervention to create land as a commodity and an object of investment.<sup>631</sup> This theoretical confrontation crucially highlighted the political, legal, and essentially non-market preconditions of the market in land.<sup>632</sup>

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<sup>631</sup> For Wakefield, the line that divided "waste" from "property" was drawn neither by labor nor by use or settlement, but by law. He defined "waste land" that constituted the object of colonization as "land that is not yet the property of individuals, but liable to becoming so through the intervention of government" (EA, 504). The familiar trope that faces us here is *terra nullius*, lands that are "empty" from the perspective of legal entitlement, not necessarily because they are unoccupied (for the term applied to inhabited land) but because they are occupied "improperly." This question is a continent of its own, and a proper treatment of it lies beyond the scope of this chapter. Instead, I consider *terra nullius* here as it structures the labor problem. On that basis, I would like to briefly point to some of the stakes in, and disputes around, the status of colonial lands as it relates to Wakefield's colonization plans. The distinctive debate in Western political and legal thought over the status of colonial lands is coeval with the contact with the New World and has involved such illustrious names as Francisco de Vitoria, Francisco Suarez, Hugo Grotius, Samuel Pufendorf, John Locke, and Emerich de Vattel, among others. Amongst these figures, John Locke occupies a privileged place inasmuch as he systematized earlier natural law arguments on the issue, and formulated an original theory of appropriation based on labor, productivity, and material-cultural civilization which provided the ideological script for deciding on whether a given tract of land was *terra nullius* (see Chapter 2). Pat Moloney and Patricia Burns have sufficiently established that Wakefield and Colonial Reformers' viewed Australia and New Zealand (the immediate object of their colonial designs) as essentially *terra nullius*. The proclamation of the antipodean geography as empty land issued, on the one hand, from the civilizational perceptions of "proper" occupation of land by intensive agriculture, monetarization, and a system of letters, explored extensively by Pocock. On the other hand, it mobilized a constitutional discourse of sovereignty, which assessed the strength of the indigenous peoples' claims to land and often found them wanting. These lines of legitimization worked with much more facility in Australia, thanks to the hunter-gatherer mode of subsistence and the feeble military organization of its inhabitants, whereas it ran into substantial difficulties in New Zealand, where the Maori not only had sedentary horticulture but also an extensive political organization recognizable by the British gaze. Matters were further complicated when the presumed threat of French claims on New Zealand prompted James Busby to engineer the declaration of independence of New Zealand (1835) by a convention of the prominent tribal chiefs and then the voluntary annexation of New Zealand to the British Crown with the Treaty of Waitangi (1840). The initial recognition of Maori sovereignty, only for the express purpose of its transfer to the crown, positioned them much more strongly vis-à-vis the colonists when it came to the question of land, as the myths of *terra nullius* foundered on the express necessity to purchase land from the Maori who were now rightful subjects of the British Crown. The transfer of sovereignty constituted the crucial political basis for two developments regarding land. First, it laid the groundwork for preemptive crown rights over "unoccupied" land (itself an object of tug-of-war between the Maori and the settlers), which was precisely what the Maori thought they were not ceding by the Treaty of Waitangi (a source of ongoing ire among the Maori today). As Pocock puts it, "What was at issue was not merely the creation of a Lockean sovereignty with authority to regulate the transfer of lands, but that of a pre-emptive sovereignty with authority to make itself the source of legal title to land ... What looked like a guarantee of possession to the *iwi* has in practice meant to them the imposition of a greater capacity for alienation than they desired ... it is the question of crown title which has in the end become crucial." J. G. A. Pocock, "Law, Sovereignty, and History in a Divided Culture" in *The Discovery of Islands: Essays in British History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Secondly, it extended British jurisdiction to land disputes between the Maori and the colonists, paving the road to the Native Land Court (1865), which accelerated the dispossession of the Maori through legal means. One should

Ironically, therefore, while Wakefield's privileging of government chokehold on landed property raised liberal eyebrows and *laissez-faire* indignations (discussed below), his scheme intended nothing less than the enclosure and nurturing of a sphere in which the movement of land could conform to the metropolitan laws of commodity and capital. Wakefield consummated this argument in a hypothetical scenario, wherein he fantasized about the physical production of land for the market:

Suppose then, that Liebig<sup>633</sup> should discover a process by which the water of the sea might be converted into fertile land, at a cost of, let us say forty shillings an acre. Suppose, further, that the state did not monopolize the exercise of this art, and allowed a free trade in it. Immense capitals would be invested in this trade. The quantity of sea converted into land would be as much as there was a prospect of being able to sell for the cost of production and a profit besides (AC, 937).<sup>634</sup>

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keep in mind, of course, that the practical enforceability of these measures owed to the drastic weakening of Maori resistance after the Maori Wars (1845-1872). In other words, might and right worked in tandem for folding New Zealand into the imperial embrace, a scheme that Wakefield openly endorsed and criticized only for its moderation and circumspection. Wakefield blamed the slow pace of colonization in New Zealand on the failure of the British government to extinguish native rights in land and poured his indignation at the Colonial Office and the Church Missionary Society for attempting to "protect" the Maori from the colonists by bridling the latter's aggressive expansion into Maori land. To recapitulate, while subtended by strong beliefs in the civilizational superiority of the British over the Maori, Wakefield's views on colonial expansion in New Zealand did not follow Lockean labor theory of property in which improvement of land entitled individuals to it. Rather, it bore affinities to Grotius's arguments that sovereign claims to unoccupied land, regardless of labor or improvement, preempted and extinguished individual claims. The political and legal power of the British state represented, analogous to Parliamentary Enclosures, the wedge that was to be driven between the Maori and their lands. A useful overview of the Western European debates over the legal status of colonial lands can be found in Pagden's, *Lords of All the World* and Seed's *Ceremonies of Possession*. For the constitutionalist arguments deployed in deeming colonial lands as *terra nullius*, see Tully, *Strange Multiplicity*. For the exploration of Locke's impact on *terra nullius* arguments and his colonial entanglements, see Tully, "Rediscovering America," and Arneil, *John Locke and America*. For the implications of early Victorian civilizational discourse and conceptions of sovereignty for British forays with the Maori, see Burns, *Fatal Success*; Moloney, "Savagery and Civilization;" Dalziel, "Southern Islands;" Pocock "Tangata Whenua," and "Law, Sovereignty and History." A brief overview of the transfer of Maori lands to European settlers through litigation in the Native Land Court, see M. P. K. Sorrenson, "The Politics on Land" in *The Maori and New Zealand Politics*, ed. J. G. A. Pocock (Auckland: Blackwood & Janet Paul, 1965). For a more extensive discussion of the development of Maori-colonist relations along social and economic axes and of the place of land disputes and political conflict therein, see Belich, *Making Peoples*, chapters 5-11.

<sup>632</sup> An interesting comparison can be drawn here between Wakefield and Locke's methods of preventing the dispersal of the colonists. Locke's involvement in the Carolina colony is well known, and his correspondence about the colony reveals anxieties about the dispersal of the settlers and the disintegration of the settlement. This colonial administrative preoccupation can provide a new angle of interpretation on Locke's famous limitation of engrossing land by the natural law injunctions to labor, to use the fruits of land, and to leave as good and enough for others. John Locke, *Two Treatises*, pp. 306-13. When viewed through the colonial lens, these natural law precepts can be recast as *moral barriers against dispersion* the same way Wakefield's sufficient price comprises a *legal barrier*.

<sup>633</sup> Justus von Liebig was a scientist who specialized in, and significantly contributed to, biological and agricultural chemistry.

<sup>634</sup> One should note that such fantasies were not the sole province of eccentrics like Wakefield. Ricardo had argued earlier, "If with every accumulation of capital we could tack a piece of fresh fertile land to our Island, profits would

Costs that attended the production of land for sale at a profit (i.e. capitalist production) would be sufficient to align land relations with the market logic. “In the colonies” however, “there is no such cost of production. There, the whole good effect must be produced by a price imposed by the government, or not produced at all” (Ibid, 938). This price would help demarcate a capitalist enclave, sequestered from the unruly waste surrounding it, within which labor and land could find their market price. In the waste of the colonies, the *production of land-as-commodity* through the exercise of political power unfolded openly and without entanglement in English customary and common law – a point that forces Karl Polanyi’s account of the fictitious commodity in land and of the “great transformation” in general beyond its archipelagic confines.

The powers to grant and withhold property in land could be simultaneously exerted by the indirect, economic, and productive instrument of an artificial price on public lands. This constituted the core of Wakefield’s famous “sufficient price” theory. The price had to be “sufficient” to fulfill several social utility functions at once. First and foremost, it ought to be sufficiently high to make land financially accessible and appealing only to a certain type of purchasers, namely, those with the economic means (capital) and intention to invest in and improve land.<sup>635</sup> The obverse side of this objective was barring people with meager resources (the majority of the settlers) from obtaining landed property, and by denying them the ownership of land (the principal means of production in the colonies), compel them to work on others’ property. As early as *A Letter from Sydney*, Wakefield advocated the imposition of “some considerable price on land” for the purpose of maintaining “a constant supply of the demand for well-paid labor,” such that a colony could obtain the economic fruits of “the more divided labor

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never fall.” David Ricardo, “Essay on Profits,” in *The Works and Correspondence of David Ricardo* Vol. 4, ed. Piero Sraffa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), p. 18.

<sup>635</sup> The artificially inflated prices, Wakefield argued, would also discourage another form of unproductive investment in land, namely, speculative engrossment.

of its less scattered people” and “the greatest increase of wealth and civilization” (LS, 159-60). This argument he would constantly refine and reiterate, in policy form in *The Plan of a Company* (PC, 276-8) and in the political economic discourse of *England and America* (540-7) and *Art of Colonization* (935-50).

Throughout the twenty years that separated the first and last of these works, Wakefield confronted persistent criticisms that assailed the possibility of setting a sufficient price.<sup>636</sup> To such criticisms he responded by asserting the status of sufficient price as the outcome of a multivariate calculus that had to factor in circumstantial data. His earlier remarks displayed some hesitancy on the subject. “Still, how is the proper price to be ascertained? I frankly confess that I do not know. I believe that it could be determined only by experience” (LS, 159). By the time he consummated his theory in *Art of Colonization*, he sounded confident and scientific:

There is no price that would be suitable for the colonies generally: the price must needs vary according to peculiar natural and other circumstances in each colony: and in order to determine the price for each colony, practical proceedings of a tentative or experimental nature are indispensable ... That it is so becomes very plain, when one considers what are the elements of a calculation made with a view of determining the sufficient price for any colony (AC, 939)

The scientific-experimental conception of sufficient price also glimmered in Wakefield’s designation of it as a “variable force, completely under the control of government” (Ibid, 935), through which the proportion between land and labor could be calibrated to achieve the desired results. True to this spirit, Wakefield did not entrust such a technically sophisticated manner to colonial governors, who were “always a sailor or a soldier” and “as fit to manage a great work of public economy as Adam Smith was fit to navigate a ship or command a regiment” (EA, 534). Wakefield’s suggestion that the British government commission a political economist for each colony (LS, 165) might sound ludicrous, but it was consonant with the scientific-utilitarian

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<sup>636</sup> Prichard, “Introduction,” pp. 23-4.

underpinnings of his project; it also foreshadowed, if not “rule by experts,” then certainly “rule with experts” that distinguished the government of economy, or economic governmentality.<sup>637</sup>

Whether one could pinpoint a sufficient price for all colonies was an incidental question compared to the golden rule to which it served, namely, “so limiting the quantity of land, as to give the cheapest land a market value that would have the effect of compelling labourers to work for some considerable time for wages before they could become landowners” (AC, 935). “There is but one object of a price; and about that there can be no mistake. The sole purpose of a price is to prevent labourers from turning into landowners too soon” (Ibid, 939-40).<sup>638</sup> In this capacity, sufficient price theory formulated the legal and political means of reproducing in the colonies the class of dispossessed laborers that the Parliamentary Enclosures (itself a massive politico-legal instrument) had been producing in the metropole. British political sovereignty that drove a wedge between labor and land in Britain was summoned reappear in the colonies as a barrier that prevented their reunion. Wakefield celebrated the sufficient price theory as the path to “extending” the civilization of the old society to the colonies, “planting perfect offshoots” of Britain and its energetic Anglo-Saxon race, creating “Better Britains” exempt from the metropolitan and colonial pathologies.<sup>639</sup> What the sufficient price theory also extended as the

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<sup>637</sup> Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics*, p. 286.

<sup>638</sup> What price was “sufficient,” how soon was “too soon,” these questions were subject to the aforementioned “elements of calculation” that included, among others, the rate of population increase, volume of immigration to the colony, rate of wages and the cost of living that determined workers’ average rate of saving, and the nature of the soil and climate, which impacted how large a tract of land would be an economically viable unit for self-cultivation. In the face of a dynamic multiplicity of variables, Wakefield proclaimed, “to name a price for all the colonies, would be as absurd as to fix the size of a coat for mankind” (AC, 940).

<sup>639</sup> The ultimate achievement of systematic colonization was to be “the extension to new places of all that is good in an old society” (civilization, experience in the arts of production, mutual assistance, skilful application of capital and labor, ready markets to dispose of surplus, high profits and wages), or in other words, precluding the emergence of “new people.” If successfully executed, the colonists would be “enjoying all the advantages of an old society without its evils; without any call for slavery, or restrictions on foreign trade; an old society in every thing save the uneasiness of capitalists and the misery of the bulk of the people” (EA, 549). The contours of Wakefield’s vision of colonization could perhaps be discerned more clearly by considering whom it excluded. The urban *Lumpenproletariat* and the parasitic aristocracy, who shared the traits of unproductivity and moral dissipation, had no place in Wakefield’s colonies (accordingly, the agents of New Zealand Company concentrated their recruitment

precondition of all these glorious visions was the process of primitive accumulation. Once again, the production of “fictitious commodity,” this time in labor, found its undisguised and premeditated execution in the colony.

Inversely to land, however, labor could be made to conform to the laws of supply and demand only when it existed abundantly relative to the amount of capital in a given field of employment, or to borrow from Marx, when capital had at its disposal a reserve army of labor.<sup>640</sup> Wakefield lamented the absence of such a reserve army in the colonies where labor that could be hired tended to be so expensive as to render it impossible to realize a profit. This practically meant that “labor” in the classical political economic sense, that is, wage labor employed for profit did not exist. The elegance of Wakefield’s scheme resided in its production of relative scarcity of land and relative superfluity of labor, and therefore a capitalist market in both, in one stroke of the sufficient price. For accomplishing this double feat, Wakefield drew upon political and legal instruments of imperial nature, to an examination of which we now turn.

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efforts in the English countryside). Similarly, the Irish and the Highland Scots were emphatically excluded, since their indolent and barbaric condition ill-fitted them to be the pioneers of civilization in new lands, in stark contrast to the “energetic, accumulating, prideful, domineering Anglo-Saxon race” (AC, 850) (“Lowland Scottish” managed to obtain a place on a par with “purely English” when it came to colonization. AC, 802). The transplantation of metropolitan relations was not restricted to the economic realm. The colonial political system would also mirror that of the mother country, though only after the colony achieved the social and economic maturity for self-government. The latter would be modeled on the English Ancient constitution and “harmonious government,” where franchise would be restricted by landed property qualification. Such qualification would have the effect of politically authorizing the gentry and the middle classes, and equally importantly, those members of the working class whose industry and moral integrity had raised them to the level of landowners. Landowners would have higher stakes in, and a stronger commitment to, the wellbeing of the colony. Raised to the higher degree, a more strenuous qualification in landed property and hereditary titles ensconced in a higher chamber (equivalent of the House of Lords) could encourage the gentry to emigrate (AC, 918-9). “The British Constitution [has] grown up by slow degrees ... In order to give a colony the immediate benefit of it, we cannot wait to let it grow from the seed as it has grown here, but we must transplant a perfect offshoot” (Ibid, 919). Although the connection between sound political institutions and the prosperity of a people had proven itself an incontrovertible universal maxim, once again, it unfolded fully in English exceptionalism. “Whilst colonial prosperity is always dependent on good government, it only attains the maximum in colonies peopled by the energetic Anglo-Saxon race” (Ibid, 799-800). For a discussion of Wakefield’s idea of extending the old society without its social pathologies and the popular colonial visions of “Better Britains” with which conversed, see Olssen “Wakefield and New Zealand,” and Belich, *Making Peoples*, pp. 298-305. For the significance of “neo-Britains” and “Better Britains” for reconceptualizing British social and political history, see Buckner and Francis, “Introduction,” and J. G. A. Pocock, “Neo-Britains and the Three Empires.”

<sup>640</sup> For the relationship between the reserve army of labor and the market in labor, see Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, p. 792.

### *Imperial Governmentality*

What distinguished Wakefield's scheme from more glaring processes of primitive accumulation was its embeddedness in what I would like to call, following Couze Venn, "imperial governmentality." Venn uses the term to denote the amalgamation of three modalities of power, namely, biopolitics, economic rationality, and militarism, exercised through techniques of subjection/subjectification that are developed, emulated, and refined within networks of colonial rule.<sup>641</sup> In expounding on this "hybrid form of power," Venn's emphasis falls upon the combination of "the right to kill of sovereignty ... with elements of the disciplinary and normalizing strategies of biopolitical power."<sup>642</sup> While fully agreeing with Venn on the irreducible and persistent presence of "originary violence" in the genealogy of capitalist relations and attendant forms of subjectification,<sup>643</sup> the moment of primitive accumulation I highlight here partook of more indirect and discrete methods of exerting power. Put bluntly, one could not brandish the lash for promoting colonization while championing the cause of free labor (convicts were the exception, but they were not free anyway). Accordingly, Wakefield's colonization schemes display a stronger affinity with the logic of "imperial labor allocation" that Kale outlines in her account of Indian indentured migration to the Caribbean.<sup>644</sup> Wakefield's strategy pursued even more invisible and circumspect routes, since unlike the "brown men" who were

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<sup>641</sup> For a full explanation of the concept, see Venn, *Postcolonial Challenge*, especially pp. 62-74. For the treatment of imperial governmentality in relation to Foucault's theoretical paradigm, see Venn, "Neoliberal Political Economy."

<sup>642</sup> Venn, "Neoliberal Political Economy," p. 212.

<sup>643</sup> Venn, *Postcolonial Challenge*, p. 164. One great merit of Venn's engagement with Foucault is the stress he places on the constitutive role played by violence, and in particular colonial violence, in the development and application of techniques through which the subject of enterprise, or what Foucault calls *homo oeconomicus*, comes into being. As crucial as this point is, it lies beyond the scope of this chapter, not least because Wakefield considered those segments of the population he targeted for emigration as already to be *homines economici* capable of responding to opportunities for maximizing economic gain (higher profits and wages).

<sup>644</sup> Kale, *Fragments of Empire*, pp. 5-6. Like Venn, Kale draws attention to the range of imperial legal, financial, and military technologies through which "empire made labor accessible to suitably situated employers." *Ibid*, p. 159.

ignorant and thus vulnerable to deceit and fraud by their prospective employers, Wakefield's prospective emigrants represented "properly free" laborers: English, male, white, civilized, and in control of their own labor.<sup>645</sup> Therefore, their economic freedom could not be abridged.

Political freedoms, however, were another story. In the early nineteenth century, the institutional arsenal of the British Empire contained a variety of politico-legal instruments of rule, the most important of which was the status of "crown colony." This status bound a colony to the Colonial Office through a colonial governor with powers that bordered on the plenary.<sup>646</sup> Though a source of much ire, especially amongst the colonial elite, and a purported anathema to "English liberties," the crown colony status constituted an indispensable conduit of colonial reform in the nineteenth century.<sup>647</sup> Although Wakefield consistently advocated for colonial self-government over crown colonies,<sup>648</sup> the "uniform" and "permanent" implementation of the

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<sup>645</sup> Ibid, 111-3. As I discuss below, emigration of women comprised an indispensable component of Wakefield's schemes, yet he did not consider women to be independent laborers. Rather, the vision he had for women was one of domestic labor (which did not qualify as "productive" labor) and financial dependency on the husband.

<sup>646</sup> Peter Burroughs provides a helpful overview of the institutional government of the British Empire in the nineteenth century, in which he emphasizes the institutional innovation, variation, and adaptability that typified British rule over distant colonies and dependencies. In a noteworthy passage, he identifies the impact of Wakefield's scheme on imperial conventions. "Most ambitiously, the Colonial Office adopted in 1831 as part of Imperial practice the leading principles of Edward Gibbon Wakefield's theory of systematic colonization with respect to restrictive land sales [aforementioned Ripon Regulations] and assisted immigration to Australia, in a bid to shape the colonies' land use, landownership, and economic development according to a doctrinaire blueprint. Colonial slavery and the transportation of convicts were discontinued in favour of both free and indentured labour." Peter Burroughs, "Imperial Institutions and the Government of Empire," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire* Vol. 3, ed. Roger Louis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 172.

<sup>647</sup> The contrast drawn between "despotic crown rule" and "English liberties" in the colonies was more apparent than real. British imperial tradition of governance had always operated through a variegated hierarchy of subjecthood. In this spectrum between freedom and subjection, persons were differentially positioned according to class, race, gender, corporation, nationality, and locality. Rana's *Two Faces of American Freedom* provides an incisive account of the British hierarchy of subjecthood and traces its continuity in the post-Revolutionary US. As Stoler puts it, imperial governmentality has always rested on "gradated variations and degrees of sovereignty and disenfranchisement — on multiplex criteria for inclusions and sliding scales of basic rights. Each generated imperial conditions that required constant judicial and political reassessments of who was outside and who within at any particular time." Ann Laura Stoler, "Degrees of Imperial Sovereignty," p. 139.

<sup>648</sup> Such virtues as knowledge and interest in local affairs, enterprise, bonds of fraternity and common ancestry distinguished colonial self-government from the vices and mischief arising from governing from a distance, including the administration by strangers, jobs and monopolies of trade, and the diversion of resources into less productive fields (EA, 579-83, 586-7; AC, 859-64, 880-1, 892). The dichotomous terms of this comparison mirrored the familiar language of contrasting Roman "garrisons" to Ancient Greek "colonies," a point iterated in Adam Smith's critique of the old colonial system in the *Wealth of Nations*. "Municipal government was a main cause of

policy of land sales at a sufficient price hinged on preemptive crown rights over colonial land and the undisputed authority lodged in colonial governors.<sup>649</sup> Obtaining the anticipated results while retaining the formal freedom of labor unimpaired required the dexterous utilization of this politico-legal tool.

Wakefield acknowledged this point by lamenting the “paucity of government” that afflicted British colonies, and lambasted crown colonies not so much for “too much government” as for “misgovernment.” Especially in his later works, he made the crucial distinction between the founding of a new society and its reproduction, to each of which he assigned a different governmental logic. “Intervention of government is more, and more constantly needed in the multifarious business of constructing society, than that of preserving it.” The cardinal role government played in such social construction was “opening the public waste to settlers by extensive surveys, and in converting it into private property according to law” (AC, 868).<sup>650</sup> After surveying the secondary, infrastructural undertakings such as drainage, fencing, roads, and bridges that would lie within the province of the state, Wakefield emphatically concluded,

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the greatness of the greatest empires,” Wakefield argued, and the English had thus far managed to offset the drawbacks of the Roman precedent by sending out their own people for colonizing, rather than colonizing by subordinating other people (AC, 876).

<sup>649</sup> Lord Glenelg’s (Secretary of State for War and the Colonies) 1836 dispatch to all West Indian colonial governors, which virtually stipulated that Wakefield’s theory be implemented to maintain capitalist civilization in the post-emancipation West Indies is a case in point. Glenelg wrote in his dispatch, “In new countries, where the whole unoccupied territory belongs to the Crown, and settlers are continually moving in, it is possible, by fixing the price of fresh land so high as to place it above the reach of the poorest class of settlers, to keep the labour market in its most prosperous state from the beginning.” Glenelg continued, “The minimum price of land, therefore, should be high enough to leave a considerable portion of the population unable to buy it until they have saved some capital out of the wages of their industry, and at the same time low enough to encourage such savings by making the possession of land a reasonable object of ambition to all.” Quoted in Holt, *Problem of Freedom*, pp. 74-5.

<sup>650</sup> This task needed not be performed by the Colonial Office. Wakefield thought chartered colonization companies to be equally, if not more, competent agents of colonial settlement and government, invoking the “colonizing wisdom of our ancestors” with reference to the seventeenth-century corporate charters (AC, 921). However, Wakefield’s position on chartered companies was unconventionally flexible, as he had no qualms in considering them to be appendages to the Colonial Office. Such subordination of corporate bodies to the imperial state went against the Whig tradition of upholding the rights of chartered companies against the encroachments of the crown (Edmund Burke’s earlier position on the East India Company being a classical case). Wakefield concluded *A View of the Art of Colonization* by gesturing at “some suggestions, the aim of which is, to make colonizing companies seated in the mother-country, very effective instruments of the state in promoting the emigration of capital and labour, because properly-empowered and properly-restrained instruments” (AC, 991).

“Without plenty of government, the settlement of a waste country is barbarous and miserable work ... It is difficult, as impossible, to colonize well without plenty of government ... The quality of government, I repeat, is of less moment to colonists than the amount” (Ibid).<sup>651</sup>

Wakefield reiterated this premise in another register that offered a glimpse into the political underpinnings of imperial governmentality, that is, the nexus between imperial sovereignty and the rule of law:

The grand point for the colonies, as to government, is that they should always know what they might lawfully do, and what they might not. What the law permitted or forbade them to do would be of comparatively small importance. ... I ask that the colonies should be governed, as a trespasser or vagrant is prosecuted in this country, that is to say, “according to law;” that they should be ruled even according to the law-martial of a man-of-war rather than left to the lawlessness of a pirate ship; that they should be *governed* by the imperial power instead of being the sport of the chapter of accidents” (AC, 902)

A surface-level analysis of this passage highlights the violation of property rights as the shared ground of vagrancy, trespass, and piracy. However, reconsidered in the light of Wakefield’s preference of “imperial power” over “accidents” and “law-martial” over “lawlessness,” vagrancy, trespass, and piracy indicate the absence of any settled and fixed framework of rules, norms, or even conventions. In symbolically marking this absence, these three evils give palpability to a more profound political problem that Wakefield discerned in the colonies. When left alone, the colonies lacked “order as such,” or to borrow from Carl Schmitt, a *nomos* that provided the conditions on which norms could be applicable. Without the ballast of the imperial government, the colonies would be as chaotic (or anomic) as a pirate ship, and as Schmitt famously remarked, there existed no norm (most importantly, respect for life, liberty, and

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<sup>651</sup> In this vein, Wakefield’s proposed plan for colonizing South Australia stipulated that the colony would be a crown colony until its adult male population reached 10000 (PC, 277). In part, this stipulation reflected a widespread opinion amongst contemporary colonial policy makers, which held self-government to be viable only in economically mature colonies. A 10000-strong adult male population was taken to indicate an adequate level of economic development.

property) applicable to chaos.<sup>652</sup> In short, empire provided the politico-legal preconditions of the governmental techniques through which capitalist civilization could be established in the colonies under the aegis of political economic liberalism.

That its political preconditions were imperial does not detract from the distinctively governmental logic of Wakefield's theory of systematic colonization. With "imperial governmentality," we bring Michel Foucault's analysis of power under liberalism within the fold of political economy inflected by colonial considerations, which can lend strong theoretical purchase on the specific *modus operandi* of primitive accumulation implied in Wakefield's vision.<sup>653</sup> Expressed in Foucauldian terms, the sufficient price theory represented a scientific discourse, which referred to the controversial yet authoritative field of political economy, and through which the political-legal power of the state could be relayed to produce in the colonies the social effect of dispossession that was constitutive of capital-relation. One distinctive character of this theory was the subtlety and discretion of the power it authorized in molding labor relations, which set it apart from its mercantilist predecessors. Unlike such blunt measures as maximum wage legislation that early-modern mercantilism prescribed, Wakefield's theory upheld the inviolability of the labor contract and the principle of voluntarism. The hoped-for effects were to be produced by targeting, not the individual behavior itself, but the social and economic environment that surrounded him.<sup>654</sup> The scientific knowledge of human motivation would inform policy plans for configuring the set of interventions that would direct individuals

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<sup>652</sup> Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, ed. George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), p. 13. Wakefield hinted at the chaotic propensity of spontaneous colonization in his conjecture on the South Australian colonists in a manner that disclosed the civilizational metrics of his conception of order. "Our grandchildren will be a race of unmixed barbarians, more *ungovernable* than the white savages of Kentucky" (LS, 124).

<sup>653</sup> While there are plausible grounds for considering Foucault's works on discipline, sexuality, and punishment as forming a constellation around the question of power exercised by liberal precepts, the main and incontrovertible grounding of this argument invoked here can be found in *Security, Territory, Population*, and *Birth of Biopolitics*.

<sup>654</sup> For the explication of the insightful formulation, "minimum economic and maximum legal intervention," see Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics*, pp. 89, 118-120, 131-3, 137-8, 145-6, 167.

to act, of their own volition, in a manner to that would realize the socioeconomic objectives of systematic colonization.

The government “cannot force either capital or people to emigrate,” Wakefield remarked emphatically, “the principal [*sic.*] of *laissez-faire* must be strictly observed in this case” (AC, 824). However, the government possessed “control over the *disposition* of people and capital” and could manipulate these dispositions into “*inducements* to emigration for various classes of people,” which Wakefield termed “the *charms* of colonization” (AC, 824-5, emphases mine). After a comparative economic survey of Britain’s colonies, Wakefield concluded, “in all these cases, people are attracted from a worse to a better proportion between land and people; from lower to higher profits and wages. That it should be so is consistent with the principles of human nature and political economy” (EA, 551).<sup>655</sup> In order to relocate excess capital and labor from England to the colonies, then, one ought to create the conditions of high profits and wages in the colonies. Prospective colonial capitalists had to be assured of an abundant and pliable labor force, adequate economic infrastructure, and steady rents. Since such labor supply did not naturally present itself in the colonies, it had to be “regulated” by administrative means, and sufficient price was the price paid for such regulation, order, certainty, and “system” (Ibid, 556-7). “The sufficient price alone” however, provided “only for civilized, not for rapid colonization” (AC, 952). For expediting the process, Wakefield complemented the policy of sufficient price with that of the “emigration fund,” whereby the revenues from the sale of colonial lands would be spent on defraying the costs of emigration of workers, thus further increasing the labor-land ratio in the colonies (AC, 952-7; EA, 555). Taxes would be laid, not on land but on rents, and the

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<sup>655</sup> Wakefield observed the same “natural” inclinations in the Chinese, who displayed their penchant for higher profits in the pervasive activities of smuggling with the British. His call for founding a free trade emporium on an island off the coast of China similarly aimed at manipulating these inclinations to the benefit of British economic interests (EA, 453-8).

rent revenue would be ploughed back into productive activities by supplementing the emigration fund and financing infrastructural improvements (roads, ports, towns) that would further raise land values (LS 162).<sup>656</sup> Social status and “right to a liberal popular Government” would constitute the social and political incentives compounding the economic ones (PC, 301).

Encouraging labor emigration would similarly rely on the promise of liberal wages, and more importantly, the prospects of ultimately becoming a landowner. This would rely in part on publicity efforts to remove the stigma attached to colonial emigration in the early nineteenth century due to pauper shoveling and convict transportation, and Wakefield promoted the publication of celebratory letters from poor emigrants to their friends in England (EA, 568-71; AC, 828-9). The other dimension of the effort was political economic. The sufficient price in each colony had to straddle a fine line, in that it ought to be sufficiently high for delaying most settlers’ plans for establishing independent property, yet sufficiently low for keeping these plans within the range of viable ambition so as to motivate settlers to work and save as wage laborers.<sup>657</sup> Put differently, the sufficient price was artificial but not arbitrary. It did not crystallize at the intersection of supply and demand, but it served as the linchpin of a utilitarian calculus that neither indulged nor frustrated but harnessed the “passion to own land” and turned it into a motivation to work for a wage.

The ultimate promise of landownership has led some historians like John Martin to paint Wakefield as a friend and advocate of the laboring class.<sup>658</sup> This interpretation confuses strategy

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<sup>656</sup> On Wakefield and colonial rents, see Kittrell, “Wakefield and Classical Rent Theory.” What stands out in a broad view of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century debates on land rent is their consistent inflection by divergent colonial contexts. For instance, for the detours that Malthusian and Ricardian rent theories have taken through colonial India, see Guha, *Rule of Property* and Stokes, *English Utilitarians*.

<sup>657</sup> “No pains should be spared to teach the laboring classes to regard the colonies as the land of promise, which it should be their highest ambition to be able to reach. Nor does this matter concerns the poorer orders among us alone: in the colonies a large proportion of the children and grandchildren of the highest families in this land must be contented to fix their abode, unless they resolve to drag on a life of dependence and indigence here” (LS, 100).

<sup>658</sup> Martin, “Small Nation.”

and objective. The imperative of maintaining a dispossessed working class that guided the theory and proposals of systematic colonization belies the image of Wakefield as a sincere believer in landownership for *all* laborers, since this would categorically annihilate the working class. Yet, for inducing the emigration of labor the prospects of landownership had to be more than simply a myth, and it had to be possible for *some* laborers to rise to the rank of proprietors. The dialectic between the myth of social mobility and the imperative of labor supply is captured by James Belich's treatment of the recruitment efforts of the New Zealand Company founded by Wakefield and his entourage. The latter preferred, Belich argues, "social sojourners" who immigrated to the colonies for the purpose of "bettering themselves." Such aspirations of social mobility formed the most formidable bulwark against worker dissent and rebellion. The dreadful scenario for the colonial entrepreneurs was the hardening of the colonial laborers into "social settlers," that is, not only remaining contented with their working class position but also becoming aware of its structural permanence, which made for tight social organization and class conflict.<sup>659</sup> "It was not classlessness," concludes Belich, "but class harmony that was the imperative"<sup>660</sup> – or put differently, an abundant *and* docile labor force. The formation of a laboring class in the colonies through voluntary emigration required *individual laborers* to become landowners while impeding the same for *laborers as a class*. The prospects of landownership for all, realized for few and hampered for many, was to be mobilized, ironically, for undercutting the pervasive landownership that Wakefield perceived to be the source of all colonial pathologies.

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<sup>659</sup> One anticipated benefit of the emigration fund was to shorten the average duration of wage labor workers had to perform before they could become landowners, thereby dampening their resistance to sufficient price and reinforcing the sense of social sojourning (AC, 956-7).

<sup>660</sup> Belich, *Making Peoples*, pp. 300-2. In the ideal case, laborers would constitute an economic yet not a political class, which would mean resolving the economic labor problem without letting it tip over into the political labor problem.

Liberal governmental techniques of systematic colonization incorporated a further, and distinctively biopolitical dimension. This should not come as surprise, given that the metropolitan and colonial pathologies diagnosed by Wakefield were fundamentally problems of social reproduction. The twin objectives of relieving England of its excess population and populating the colonies would be most efficiently achieved by promoting the emigration of young couples, thereby transferring not only bodies but also their fertility (LS, 164). Wakefield's blueprint for the colonization for South Australia stipulated that the people assisted by the emigration fund "consist entirely of *young* married or marriageable persons *of both sexes in equal numbers*" (PC, 276). In the long run, the population growth spurred by this demographic policy would obviate the colonial labor problem. "If all the people who have removed from Europe to America had been young couples, just arrived at the age of puberty, slavery in north America must have long since died a natural death" (AC, 971)<sup>661</sup> Gender balance in colonization targeted more than simply demographic effects. One of the crucial anticipated outcomes of such balance was the sexual division of labor. "Two men, each of whom should be obliged so to divide his labour between household cares and the work of production, would produce less than one man giving the whole of his time, attention, and labour, to the work of production" (EA, 562). Raewyn Dalziel keenly observes that Wakefield's "combination of labor" implicitly included women's labor as a condition of productivity while denying such labor itself any productive quality.<sup>662</sup> The second crucial outcome would be the civilizing impact on women and

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<sup>661</sup> Intense utilitarian preoccupation with "greatest happiness" also impressed its mark on the biopolitics of emigration. "As the greatest quantity of relief from excessive numbers would be comprised in the least number of people, the maximum of good from emigration would be obtained, not only with minimum cost, but, what is far more important, with the minimum of painful feelings" (EA, 573)

<sup>662</sup> Raewyn Dalziel, "Men, Women, and Wakefield" in *Edward Gibbon Wakefield and the Colonial Dream: A Reconsideration*, ed. Philip Temple (Wellington: Friends of the Turnbull Library, 1997), pp. 81-3.

domesticity in their capacity to “sop up, civilize and anchor chaotic surplus males.”<sup>663</sup> Colonies had been characterized by an unruly preponderance of single men believed to be prone to debauchery, coarseness, and a dissipated life, against which “women were perceived as the sub-heroic mediators of complex and civilized society, constantly softening and refining the passions of man.”<sup>664</sup> “The moral advantages” accruing from gender proportion would be manifold, argued Wakefield. “No man would have any excuse for dissolute habits ... Every pair of immigrants would have the strongest motives for industry, steadiness, and thrift ... The colony would be an immense nursery” (EA, 567). In short, “without women, colonization could not succeed” (AC, 979). The key to inducing women to emigrate would be the promises of a bright future haloed by the middle-class ideals of womanhood and conjugality, prospects of marriage, domesticity, and respectability.<sup>665</sup> This strategy would complement the more direct method of regulating the gender ratio by offering passage funds to married couples while denying them to single men (EA, 574).

Finally, in order for all these promises to be credible and powerful enough to induce emigration, the whole plan needed to be implemented with a “complete uniformity” and “permanency,” and as mentioned above, underwriting it with an Act of Parliament would offer the best possible solution (Ibid, 540, 578). This, in turn, required inducing the Colonial Office and the members of the Parliament to support the plan and converting prominent political economists to the theory of systematic colonization in order to exert indirect pressure on the policymakers. Those with the power of policy were attracted to the self-financing provisions of Wakefield’s scheme, which stipulated that the emigration fund should accrue “not from

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<sup>663</sup> Belich, *Making Peoples*, p. 334. To this end, colonial entrepreneurs followed the Tory myths about the moral integrity of rural population into the English countryside, which they combed for single women who could be convinced to emigrate. Ibid, pp. 334-6. Also see Fedorowich, “British Empire on the Move,” p. 78.

<sup>664</sup> Pocock, “*Tangata Whenua*,” p. 213.

<sup>665</sup> Dalziel, “Men, Women, and Wakefield,” pp. 83-4.

government, but from the capitalists of the mother country” (EA, 574). Early Victorian policymakers viewed the empire with an economic eye, comparing its costs and benefits. At the height of this debate between 1830s and 1850,<sup>666</sup> a blueprint for relieving population pressures through emigration funded by private capitalists had its “charms.”<sup>667</sup> The same provisions also appealed to political economists, especially in Wakefield’s depiction of systematic colonization as a spontaneously synchronized machine with a self-adjusting land/labor ratio, which imbued it with the “imprimatur of economic science.”<sup>668</sup> Wakefield boasted his correspondence with, and conversion of, Bentham and noted, “the form of the present treatise [*England and America*] was suggested by one of the wisest and best of mankind” (Ibid, 517).<sup>669</sup> While Bentham had been a late-life convert, John Stuart Mill was a disciple from the beginning.<sup>670</sup> If Wakefield’s strength

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<sup>666</sup> Porter, Andrew, “Introduction,” in *The Oxford History of the British Empire* Vol. 3, ed. Roger Louis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 26.

<sup>667</sup> The credit for the active propagation of Wakefield’s ideas in the British Parliament and the Colonial Office circles belonged to such Colonial Reformer MPs as Charles Buller and William Molesworth.

<sup>668</sup> Richards, “Wakefield and Australia,” p. 96-7. Initial drafts of the theory of systematic colonization contended that the land/labor proportions in the colonies and the flow of emigration would be spontaneously adjusted by the interplay of land sales and the emigration fund. Later, Wakefield explicitly renounced such claims of self-regulation, declaring (inconsistently) “nobody has ever attributed to it that magical property of being able to work itself without legislative or administrative care” (AC, 942). In this respect, Wakefield’s political economy resembles much less that of Adam Smith’s than that of James Steuart’s, who analogized a commercial economy to a very complex and delicate watch that required fine-tuning by the trained hands of an economic expert. In a similar tone, Wakefield contended, “in colonization, as in watch-making or navigation, the doing has certain results in view” (AC, 790). For the parallels between Wakefield and Steuart, see Perelman, *Invention of Capitalism*.

<sup>669</sup> This claim is corroborated by a paper amongst Bentham’s unpublished manuscripts, entitled, true to Bentham’s peculiarity, “Colonization Society Proposal, being a proposal for the formation of a Joint Stock Company by the name of the Colonization Company on an entirely new principle intitled (*sic.*) the Vicinity-Maximizing or Dispersion-Preventing principle.” Bentham not only detailed the rules of settlement to be followed in the founding of a colony, he also meticulously described the physical exercises that the emigrants were to perform during their oceanic passage. Semmel, *Rise of Free Trade Imperialism*, p. 94.

<sup>670</sup> Mill’s adherence to Wakefield’s principles is well known amongst the scholars of the history of economic thought. See Semmel, “Philosophic Radicals.” The following excerpt from *The Principles of Political Economy* (published the same year as Wakefield’s *Art of Colonization*) lends illustrative support to this connection. “To appreciate the benefits of colonization, it should be considered in its relation, not to a single country, but to the collective economical interest of the human race ... It is a question of production, and of the most efficient employment of the productive resources of the world ... There needs be no hesitation in affirming that Colonization, in the present state of the world, is the very best affair of business, in which the capital of an old and wealthy country can possibly engage.”

lied not in his comprehension of political economy<sup>671</sup> or the practical success of his theory of colonization,<sup>672</sup> then he was certainly adept in “inducing” a diverse audience into thinking that systematic colonization offered a platform that harmonized the interests of capitalists and laborers, metropolitans and provincials.<sup>673</sup>

Wakefield’s reliance on voluntarism, however, did not exclude other, more repressive instruments of imperial governmentality. On the contrary, in good utilitarian fashion, he had already factored in how the bonded labor of the convicts, certainly more tightly tethered to the imperial-sovereign rather than governmental power, could be integrated into his liberal schemes of colonization. The sharp end of imperial governmentality showed its uncompromising face in Wakefield’s proposals regarding the use of transported convicts. “The Transports would act as pioneers to a future army of emigrants,” Wakefield conjectures, “and when they had paved the way for a settlement, not penal, they might be removed to other desert places. In this case, their labor would, of course, be confined to preparing the settlement for the habitation of better men” (LS, 166). The government “would be a capitalist, employing its money with a view to remunerating profit” (Ibid, 167). In other words, convicts, thanks to their legally degraded status, would function as colonial frontiersmen, preparing the way for, yet not belonging to civilization.

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<sup>671</sup> Tucker, for instance, criticizes Wakefield for simply not understanding the theories he opposed. Tucker, “Application and Significance,” pp. 139-40.

<sup>672</sup> In the opening pages of *A View of the Art of Colonization* (1849) Wakefield admitted the tarnished record of systematic colonization in yielding the anticipated results, yet blamed it on the impediments thrown in its way by the Colonial Office. Even though systematic colonization “has never had a fair trial anywhere,” and its success in South Australia, New Zealand, and Canada were at best relative, it had the favorable impact, Wakefield argued, of changing the public opinion both at home and in the colonies (AC, 784-9).

<sup>673</sup> O’Brien underlines the remarkable convergence of Tories and Whigs around Wakefield’s colonial vision, by virtue of the its weaving together economic viability and moral regeneration *via* government intervention. The theory of systematic colonization “exerted a disproportionate influence upon the reconceptualization, in the first half of the nineteenth century, of Britain’s relationship with its colonies, of their nature, economic purpose, and the kinds of imperial future they might bring.” Likewise, Belich notes the remarkable array of allures that laced the colonies in the discourse of Wakefieldian colonizers: a bride’s paradise for middle class women, an investor’s paradise for capitalists, a haven for uneasy professional classes with promises of gentility, and a heaven for skilled agricultural and urban workers who would find respectability and independency. O’Brien, “Colonial Emigration,” p. 164; Belich, *Making Peoples*, pp. 306-8, 324-7.

They would serve as the imperial shock troopers of settler capitalism, establishing bridgeheads for the reserve army of labor directed by the prospective colonial captains of industry.<sup>674</sup>

### ***Conundrums of a Liberal Panacea: Voluntary Dispossession Revisited***

Extending the old society to the colonies through webs of systematic colonization conjured up a panacean vision for Wakefield. If it were to be properly institutionalized and underwritten by the imperial state, and if all of its provisions were to be set in motion simultaneously, systematic colonization would prompt the free and voluntary emigration of capital and labor with no fiscal burden to the public.<sup>675</sup> It would thereby provide the mother country the urgently needed relief from surplus population, opening up the “breathing room” in which a solution to the metropolitan labor problem could be devised.<sup>676</sup> By concentrating workers around capital owners in the colonies, it would ensure social density, combined labor, and the division of employments, obviating the necessity of slavery. It would subject all colonial workers to the moral edification of labor, and offer the chance of landownership to the industrious among them.<sup>677</sup> It would make possible the surplus and leisure for the cultivation of

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<sup>674</sup> And the state, thanks to its impersonal and bureaucratic probity, could presumably operate as a slave driver of convicts without being subject to the corrupting effect of such a position. This latter implication was curiously reminiscent of the contrast drawn between the private-mercenary government of Warren Hastings and the public-bureaucratic government of Lord Cornwallis in British India.

<sup>675</sup> And capital and labor *did* immigrate to the colonies in explosive waves, beginning in the 1820s. See Belich, “Rise of the Angloworld,” and Fedorowich, “British Empire on the Move.”

<sup>676</sup> The spatio-temporal limits to this remedy arose at the interface between, on the one hand, the inexorable tendency of capital to expand or else to fall into crisis, and on the other, the geographic finitude of fresh land in the world. Yet Wakefield did not despair. “This stupendous good must have a limit as to its duration. Of course it must; because the world is of limited extent. But even if a system of free migration were adopted in all new countries, so as to permit the population of the world exert its utmost capacity of increase, still half a century must elapse before the pressure of population upon territory would be felt, at the same moment, all over the world; and perhaps in the course of fifty years we might discover a way to “new countries” in the moon, or, what appears quite as difficult, a means of checking population otherwise than by sin and sorrow” (LS, 164).

<sup>677</sup> The significance of laboring flowed beyond the bounds of morality and spilled over into the domain of anthropology. Wakefield’s anthropology conceived of the human being as an essentially futural and possessive *homo faber*. The “principle of human nature is a love of planning for oneself, executing one’s own plan, and beholding the results of one’s own handiwork. In colonizing, individuals and communities are always planning, executing, and watching the progress, or contemplating the results of their own labours ... If you had been a

letters, arts, and polished manners.<sup>678</sup> It would transform immense colonial wastes into agricultural hinterlands for the investment of metropolitan capital. It would establish a free and symbiotic exchange relation between industrial centers hungry for cheap food and raw materials and colonies in need of manufactured goods.<sup>679</sup> With restored wages and profits on both ends of the exchange, the working class would be rendered comfortable, receptive to political education, and most importantly made to understand the virtues of the system of private property.<sup>680</sup> The empire of Britain would expand and consolidate her great power status, not by the force of arms but through the pacific process of capitalist expansion.<sup>681</sup> Strings binding the colonies to the

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colonist, or architect of society, you would feel, as well as Bacon knew by means of his profound insight into the human nature, that colonization is a heroic work” (AC, 827). Human beings derived almost an existential satisfaction “from the perpetual and visible sequence of cause and effect, designed and watched by the operator,” and accordingly, “the life of a settler, when colonization prospers, is a perpetual feast of anticipated and realized satisfaction” (Ibid, 828). This principle of human nature could find only stunted and distorted expression in the asphyxiating economic conditions of the metropole. Its full, unadulterated unfolding in the empty lands of the colonies transformed the latter into more than an economic field of investment and into a laboratory for conscious human activity.

<sup>678</sup> “Wealth will bestow leisure; and leisure will bestow knowledge. Wealth, leisure, and knowledge mean civilization. Schools and colleges will be established. The arts and sciences will flourish ... A nation will be born free, under a clear sky, and will be highly instructed” (LS, 133).

<sup>679</sup> Wakefield was in effect vindicating Smith’s theory on the impact of markets on economic growth. “In order to sell merchandise in a colony, it is necessary that the colony should *exist*,” wrote Wakefield (EA, 505). Criticism of mercantilist monopolies on colonial markets was justified, but one ought not throw the baby out with the bathwater, for “the uses and abuses of colonization are very different things” (Ibid, 508). The government ought to bring colonies into existence yet allow them to trade freely, which would create a natural mutualism between the metropole and the colony. “[The emigrants] would be growers of food and raw materials of manufacture for this country: we should buy their surplus food and raw materials with the manufactured goods. ... Thus employment of capital and labor would be increased in two places and in two ways at the same time; abroad, in the colonies, by the removal of people and capital to fresh fields of production; at home, by the extension of markets, or the importation of good and raw materials” (AC, 806). The outcome would be the augmentation of “population, wealth and greatness of the empire ... imperial wealth and greatness” (AC, 954-7).

<sup>680</sup> “The colonists, being an instructed and civilized people, would be as well qualified to govern themselves as the people of Britain, and being a wealthy people, they would be able, without going to war, to assert the birth-right of all British subjects ... Qualified, entitled, and powerful to govern themselves, they might either take a share in framing the general laws of empire, by means of their representatives in the British Parliament; or if a means jealousy on the part of Englishmen should prevent such an arrangement, they might frame their own laws, in a Colonial Assembly, under the eye of a viceroy” (LS, 169). The education of the colonists would include “a foundation of moral, political, and general knowledge, as may fit the colonists for the exercise of their political rights” (PC, 278).

<sup>681</sup> Preparing the conditions for the consolidation of capitalist relations would function as the *modus operandi* of empire building. “Certainty of obtaining labor in the new colony would be the strongest inducement to the migration of capitalists, ambitious to take part in laying the foundation of an empire” (EA, 577). The benefits that would accrue therefrom were not limited to economic-fiscal ones but catered to the political advantages of Pax Britannica. The “extent and glory of an empire are solid advantages for all its inhabitants, and especially those who inhabit the

metropole would be woven of mutual economic interest and fortified by a common cultural heritage and liberality of spirit.<sup>682</sup> Civilization and democracy would lock arms under the aegis of an empire of liberty. A mighty experiment indeed.

A major conundrum remained, however, without accounting for which the theory of systematic colonization rested more on stilts than on posts. As Eric Richards notes, Wakefield's proposals for government intervention were formulated "in the teeth of the *laissez-faire* doctrines of the times."<sup>683</sup> The Smithian precept that private individuals were the best judges of the decisions affecting their interests, and what is more, that free pursuit of individual interest was the best route to furthering social utility, had become a *doxa* of political economy by the early nineteenth century that one did not challenge lightly. Malthus, Ricardo, and especially McCulloch rebuked systematic colonization as an offense against the *laissez-faire* doctrine, insofar as it laid the heavy hand of the government in the most important business of a colonist, namely, choosing the location and the amount of land he purchased as he ought to see fit. While this offense also implicated laborers, it pertained more immediately to wealthier colonists, whose private decisions to buy land would be subject to such extraneous and suspiciously vague considerations as "land-labor ratio" and "degree of concentration."

To these challenges, Wakefield responded by invoking the social irrationality of spontaneous colonization, an argument that hinged on the juxtaposition of short-term and long-term considerations and apparent and actual interests. The former of these binaries was

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centre." "The possession [of an empire] is worth more in money than its money cost," insofar as "it enables to keep the peace of the world." "This immense empire causes the mere name of England a real and a might power" (AC, 809). Expressed in utilitarian-economic terms, establishing a perceived preponderance of imperial power would offset the costs of preempting aggression and maintaining peace through actual military might, thereby serving as an informal institution that reduces the transaction costs of peace.

<sup>682</sup> "Mutual dependence would prevent oppression on the one part, and on the other a wish for independence; reciprocity of interest would occasion mutual good will; there would no longer be injurious distinctions, or malignant jealousies, or vulgar hatred between British subjects, wherever born; and Britain would become the centre of the most extensive, the most civilized, and above all, the happiest empire in the world" (LS, 169).

<sup>683</sup> Richards, "Wakefield and Australia," p. 97.

encapsulated in the passion to own land, while the latter issued from the imprimatur of economic science that Wakefield purported to represent on the questions of colonization. “There is no business more entirely a man’s own business than that of a settler picking new land for his own purpose,” admitted Wakefield; “I would *if possible* open the whole of the waste land of a colony to intending purchasers” (AC, 982, emphasis mine). However, “the truism of our time, that in matters of private business the parties interested are sure to judge better than any government can judge for them, is an error, if the best of governments could determine as well as the settler himself the quality and position of land the most suitable to his objects” (Ibid). If there were “a perfect liberty of choice” (a nineteenth century cognate of “free market”),

the settlers would disperse themselves too much ... wander about the waste portions of the colony ... where, being distant from a market, and from all that pertains to civilization, they would fall into a state of barbarism: instead of acquiring wealth as all colonists ought to do, the settlers would only raise enough produce for their own rude subsistence; and the colony, instead of exporting and importing largely, would be poor and stagnant (Ibid)

“In a word, there would be mischievous dispersion” concluded Wakefield, and continued, “But mischievous to whom? Mischievous, if at all, to the settlers themselves. The supposition then is, that the settlers would injure themselves in consequence of not knowing what was for their own advantage” (Ibid, 983).

In broader terms, the disagreement between Wakefield and the *laissez-faire* proponents turned on the question whether “economic sovereignty,” that is, the possibility of a totalizing viewpoint to which economic processes are transparent, was possible.<sup>684</sup> Wakefield broached the possibility of such a viewpoint. The baffling complexity of the economy in England might have obscured the fundamental principles governing the movement of labor, capital, and land, and correspondingly of wages, profits, and rents. In the colonies, however, such complexity dissolved and laid bare the extra-economic conditions on which these economic principles

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<sup>684</sup> I borrow the term “economic sovereignty” from Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics*, pp. 282-3.

depended. Social and technical division of labor had not and could not have arisen spontaneously from the propensity to truck, barter and exchange, and the desire to better one's condition. Without the separation of labor from the means of production, which in turn was imposed by political and institutionalized by legal means, "capital," "labor," and "land" as classical political economy understood them would not exist. For Wakefield, then, the primacy of the politico-legal in establishing the capital-relation and consequently the commercial economy constituted the window through which the entire landscape of economic relations could be surveyed. In the colonies government intervention proved not only necessary but also inevitable for entitling people to land, which made it possible to implement Wakefield's dictum "it is for the good of all that no individual should be allowed to *injure* other individuals by taking more than the *right* quantity of waste land" (EA, 537, emphases added).<sup>685</sup> The "right" quantity of wasteland clearly implied an overarching calculus in which it functioned as a manipulable variable for maximizing social utility.

With the exception of the small proportion of the people who in the case supposed would be labourers for hire, every man would be palpably interested in making land dearer, even the labourers would have the same interest, though it would be a little more remote and therefore, perhaps, much less obvious. In all probability, therefore, we should pass a law for making land dearer (AC, 938).

The same grounds of social utility, which made it an "injury" to engross more land than was in the greatest good of all, also authorized the politically-instigated and maintained dispossession of laborers. The latter would catch up with the wisdom of the scheme later.

However, while the capital-relation certainly represented the condition of highest social utility, a self-referential invocation of social utility for justifying primitive accumulation would not simply be totalizing but, insofar as it came at the expense of individual liberty, profoundly illiberal. Abridging the gap between the natural desire to own land and the imperative of

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<sup>685</sup> Once again, one can hear Lockean echoes of injuring others by engrossing more land than one morally can under the natural law, though stripped of its natural law "stilts," as Bentham would put it.

reproducing a class of wage laborers by way of state power, while leaving this power ideologically naked, would hardly appeal to prospective colonial laborers or the political economists of the time. Nor could it withstand the charges of despotism and designs of reducing laborers to a state of perpetual servitude. To navigate this problem, Wakefield revisited the contractual fantasy of dispossession discussed earlier, which he had forwarded for explaining the origins of wage labor in the world. The preemptive crown rights, restrictive land titles, and sufficient price represented “nothing but the enforcement of a *compact among all* who are interested in the disposal of waste land; and *agreement* that none shall be allowed to injure others, that the *greatest good* of all should be consulted” (537, emphases added). By conjuring up a colonial contract of dispossession amongst “all who are interested,” which obviously included landowners, middle classes and laborers, Wakefield not only reintroduced the principle of consent and therefore liberty and volition, but he once again appealed to the harmony of class interests, this time in the colony. The voluntary self-division of mankind into capitalists and workers in the dawn of time repeated itself in the colonies. In both cases, the decision of the contractors was supposedly informed by a notion of common good keyed to the *telos* of productivity and capitalist civilization – a paradoxical notion that was at once accessible only to the political economist yet transparent to all, in conflict with the natural and universal passion to own land yet powerful enough to override this passion through reasoned agreement. State intervention resolved this paradox in practice, while opening a rift in the fabric of liberal political economy. Wakefield’s fantasy of contractual dispossession, not unlike Edmund Burke’s “well wrought veil” to be thrown on the ignominious beginnings of all property, covered over this rift. If, as John Locke famously proclaimed, “in the beginning, all the world was America,” then in the colony one witnessed those beginnings.

## Conclusion

The foregoing analysis of Wakefield's works in relation to their specific historical context opens onto three major avenues of inquiry and helps one rethink them in a colonial capitalist framework. The first of these concerns the history of liberalism's troubled relationship with capitalism, a trouble that has received relatively little scholarly attention, partly due to the tendency to conflate capitalist relations with market relations.<sup>686</sup> At this point, one should note that Wakefield's observations comprised less an accurate description of the capitalist relations in the metropole and the colonies than a theoretical attempt to grapple with the *tendencies* inherent in these contexts. Wakefield erred in declaring the economic crisis in England to be terminal, yet his diagnosis of the tendency of industrial capitalism toward glut, financialization, and crisis was on the mark. In the colonies, it proved much harder for laborers to become self-sufficient farmers than Wakefield surmised, but colonial labor scarcity did present an endemic problem (as attested by English indenture, African slavery, and then Indian indenture). Likewise, small property owners turned out to be far from the autistic subsistence farmers Wakefield imagined them to be, instead engaging in petty commodity production, participating in export and import chains, and settling in organized communities.<sup>687</sup> Accurate, however, was his observation that economic

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<sup>686</sup> It is perfectly conceivable to have market relations that are not capitalist, as demonstrated by excellent scholarship, including Arrighi's *Adam Smith in Beijing*, Braudel's *Civilization and Capitalism*, and Abu-Lughod's *Before European Hegemony*. Chakrabarty makes the emphatically Marxian case against seeing money and commodity as inherently capitalist and draws attention to the use of state violence to destroy these "independent forms" and rearticulate them in accordance with the capital logic. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, p. 64. For Marx's elaboration of this point, see Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value* Part III, pp. 468-91. Inversely, it is perfectly conceivable to have formally non-capitalist relations that are articulated to circuits of capital accumulation, plantation slavery being a prime, but only one, example. On this point, see, among others, Banaji, "Fictions of Free Labor" and Bhandari, "Disguises of Wage Labor."

<sup>687</sup> Australian colonists, for instance, eagerly enmeshed themselves in the evolving global market, "exporting and importing everything that could be shipped." Denoon and Wyndham, "Australia and the Western Pacific," p. 550. Similar concerns over the freedmen were misguided, as demonstrated by the rise of new villages and markets and by mixed economies of petty commodity production and selective wage labor. Holt, *Problem of Freedom*, pp. xxii, 156.

enterprise in the colonies did not follow the logic of large-scale undertakings with concentrated capital and wage labor, or in other words, that formal capital-relation had not yet obtained. Settlers avoided working for wages, and when they did work for wages, they leveraged labor scarcity to negotiate for employment on terms detrimental to capital accumulation.

For Marx, a historical study of capitalism revealed that “before he [the laborer] spends his leisure time in surplus labor for others, compulsion is necessary,” and Wakefield’s analysis and policy proposals belong to this historical study.<sup>688</sup> Without the accumulation of surplus labor, civilization of capitalism collapsed like a house of cards, and the barbarism that Wakefield observed at the frontier symptomatically captured this collapse. The evanescence of “labor” as soon as the prospective laborer disembarked the ship and the concomitant disintegration of commercial society disclosed the element of extra-economic force requisite for extracting “labor” from bodies by keeping them separate from the means of production, most importantly, land.<sup>689</sup> Plantation slavery represented the logical extreme of this separation, human life reduced to brute *homo laborans* for the sake of capital. The centrality to the emerging middle-class hegemony of the transvaluation of the wage contract into the hallmark of freedom, however, had rendered such forms of forced labor an impossible alternative to the barbarism of the frontier. The fantasies of contractual dispossession conjured up by Wakefield, both in genetic and colonial versions, attempted to navigate, and in those very attempts underscored, the tensions between the imperatives of capital accumulation and liberal precepts of contractual freedom and legal equality, tensions that came to a head most saliently in the colonial labor relations and were inscribed in Wakefield’s theoretical explorations.

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<sup>688</sup> Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, p. 651.

<sup>689</sup> For a fascinating elaboration of the relationship between body and labor-power from a Marxist-feminist perspective, see Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body, and Primitive Accumulation* (New York: Autonomedia, 2004), pp. 133-55.

Secondly, the foregoing discussion makes fresh inroads into relationship between sovereign and governmental modalities of power. Venn contends that colonial rule was characterized by the “absence of pastoral power,” indicating the sovereign power over life as the only governmental modality.<sup>690</sup> Wakefield’s theory of systematic colonization requires a severe amendment to this and other contentions that are disposed to map sovereign and governmental techniques too easily on the colony and the metropole, respectively. On the one hand, Wakefield’s proposals problematize the identification of the colony exclusively with sovereign power, insofar as they envision the extension to the colonies of the conditions under which pastoral power could be the predominant form of governing colonial populations, in contrast both to the lawlessness of the frontier and to the whip of the master or the military officer. On the other hand, by highlighting the irreducible element of sovereign power as the core of a *nomos* and the condition of possibility for governmentality, they unseat the assumption that sovereign power in the West has been permanently supplanted by liberal forms of governmental power. Making a detour through the history of capital (a history on which Foucault makes only incidental claims), it critically probes the Foucauldian inclinations to equate sovereignty with archaic, premodern politics, and gestures towards the need to re-center on the nexus between colonial politics and the idea of modern sovereignty.<sup>691</sup>

A third strand of analysis underlined by a critical interrogation of Wakefield’s works pertains to the erasure of legal coercion and political violence deployed in the establishment of economic institutions that are today celebrated for promoting capital accumulation. Colonial genealogies of differential economic performance as mediated by economic institutions have

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<sup>690</sup> Venn, *Postcolonial Challenge*, p. 67.

<sup>691</sup> Carl Schmitt’s *Nomos of the Earth* remains a touchstone in any inquiry into this nexus. Also see, Tuck, *Rights of War and Peace*; Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty*; Gerrit W. Gong, *Standard of “Civilization” in International Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984); Eve Darian-Smith and Peter Fitzpatrick (eds) *Laws of the Postcolonial* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999).

increasingly been the object of scholarly attention at the crossroads of political science and economics.<sup>692</sup> Wakefield's adoption of a comparative institutional analysis in explaining differential levels of capital accumulation across a wide range of colonies, with a focus on such variables as the degree of concentration of labor and capital, forms of land tenure, labor regimes, land-labor-capital ratios, and complexity of social and technical division of labor,<sup>693</sup> positions him as a forgotten forerunner of the acclaimed "new institutionalist" perspective of economic growth.<sup>694</sup> The latter shares with Wakefield's paradigm the utilitarian-marginalist assumptions about human behavior and its manipulability through institutional arrangements that shape incentive structures. The convergence is not only methodological. There exists a baffling coincidence between what Wakefield technically defined as "colony" and what goes under the name "neo-Europe" in the new institutionalist literature. "Americans, Canadians, South Africans, and Australasians" (LS, 152), which Wakefield identified as "new peoples," are the exact set of populations that are singled out by Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson for their growth-enhancing institutions.<sup>695</sup>

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<sup>692</sup> The seminal work in this strain is North and Thomas, *Rise of the Western World*, matched in influence perhaps only by Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson, and James Robinson "The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development." *American Economic Review* 91 (2000): 1369-1401. More recent exemplars of such scholarship can be found in Jared Diamond and James A. Robinson (eds) *Natural Experiments of History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010). Some scholars have decided to extend the microeconomic analysis of institutional determinants of economic growth beyond the colonial encounters and into the dawn of history; Barry Weingast, Douglass C. North, and John J. Wallis, *Violence and Social Orders: A Conceptual Framework For Interpreting Recorded Human History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), and Carles Boix "A Theory of State Formation and the Origins of Inequality" (unpublished manuscript presented at Cornell, February 2011) are cases in point.

<sup>693</sup> See *England and America*, pp. 318-338, 372-5, 531, and *A View of the Art of Colonization*, pp. 878-9, 889.

<sup>694</sup> The theoretical and methodological affinities between Wakefield and Douglass North, the pioneer of the neoclassical school of new institutionalist economics, have been noted at least by one scholar. See Winch, *Classical Economics*, p. 99.

<sup>695</sup> Acemoglu, Johnson, Robinson, "Colonial Origins." For a similar yet non-economistic conceptualization of "neo-Europes" and "tropical peripheries," see B. R. Tomlinson, "Economics and Empire: The Periphery and the Imperial Economy," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire* Vol. 3, ed. Roger Louis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

The point, however, is not simply to return to an obscure historical figure the honors he has been denied. Rather, the potential merit of revisiting Wakefield with an eye towards contemporary institutional analysis is to unearth the element of extra-economic coercion, legal or political, that lies to varying degrees in the pedigree of most, if not all, stories of economic success predicated on the accumulation of capital. The insights gained from the foregoing analysis can pry open the technical, antiseptic language of the neoclassical approach to colonial trajectories of economic performance, and help us peer into the forcible obliteration or abortion of alternative ways of being, alternative modes of apprehending the world, and alternative modes of social reproduction not completely yoked to the imperatives of capital accumulation. It can enable one to reappraise what Schumpeter called “creative destruction” and what Marx had labeled “real subsumption,” firmly rooted in neo-Europes, as a process predicated on the complete extirpation or displacement of indigenous populations, invalidation and annihilation of their ways of life, and the establishment of tight linkages to the extant flows of capital, labor, and technology.<sup>696</sup> Viewed through these historico-theoretical lenses, *terra nullius* reappears as a trope of social imagination that encompasses not only geographic but also *social surfaces*, which can be experimented on, ploughed, landscaped, and improved for the cultivation of capitalist relations. Deployment of politico-legal coercion through the sharp edge of state sovereignty, which has often accompanied colonial proclamations of *terra nullius*, glimmers in less obvious though no less momentous declarations of *social terra nullius*, ranging from Walter Eucken’s schemes for restructuring German (and more broadly European) agriculture strictly in accordance with market logic<sup>697</sup> to brutal experiments with “authoritarian liberalism” under the

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<sup>696</sup> Similarly, it recasts the “failed” modernization of peripheral economies as differential articulations to global circuits of capital, or in Marxian lexicon, as processes of formal subsumption, which, from the perspective of capital accumulation, need not be “failures” at all.

<sup>697</sup> Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics*, pp. 140-2.

confluence of Augusto Pinochet and Friedrich von Hayek.<sup>698</sup> Naomi Klein has written persuasively about the “blank slate” created by the shocks of natural and social disasters and their central role in blazing capitalist inroads into the capillaries of the social tissue.<sup>699</sup> The “rise of disaster capitalism” she explores, however, has been sprouted originally in soil of colonialism. A critical tarrying with Wakefield and the conundrums he waded through can help us discern the *ur*-language or the grammar of primitive accumulation, in which we find articulations of the destruction of lifeworlds and their reconstitution in the image of capital. Wakefield and his contemporaries’ view of Australia could perhaps provide us with the primordial image of a wilderness to be conquered and a waste to be tamed, which continues to pulsate in the World Bank’s discourses on economic reform.<sup>700</sup>

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<sup>698</sup> For an important yet unduly neglected study of the intellectual and biographical connections between Schmitt and ordoliberals, and of the interaction between Pinochet and Hayek, see Renato Cristi, *Carl Schmitt and Authoritarian Liberalism: Strong State, Free Economy* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998).

<sup>699</sup> Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2007).

<sup>700</sup> Paul Cammack’s work offers theoretically insightful, if strictly presentist, efforts in this direction. See, Paul Cammack, “What the World Bank Means by Poverty Reduction and Why It Matters,” *New Political Economy* 9 (2004): 189-211.

## CONCLUSION

The historical relationship between liberalism and capitalism has been one of uneasy union, a relationship of mutual constitution fraught with tensions and dependent on ideological balancing acts for its continuation. Interlocked by the hinges of property, exchange, and labor, liberalism as a philosophico-discursive field and capitalism as a global social formation comprise a contradictory whole. As the foregoing chapters illustrate, the global processes of primitive accumulation have not only instituted the socio-material basis of capitalism but also given rise to antithetical social forms that introduced a deep rift into the formation of liberalism. The colonial genealogy of capitalism constitutes the terrain on which one finds such foundational liberal concepts as private property, commodity exchange, and free labor to be genetically tied to their disowned cousins, namely, extrajudicial land grabs, systematic plunder, and chattel slavery. The active disavowal of these ties in liberal thought, exemplified in the works of Locke, Burke, and Wakefield, provides us with an analytic thread into the complex relationship between colonialism, capitalism, and liberalism.

As I hope to have demonstrated, the analytic of colonial capitalism can offer a more precise triangulation of the coordinates of liberalism *vis-à-vis* European colonialism than offered by overwhelmingly culturalist approaches. Currently, there exists an impressive inventory of historical instances in which the confrontation between liberal universals and colonial particularisms gave rise to diverse and even discordant narratives such as inexorable universal human progress,<sup>701</sup> cosmopolitan pluralism,<sup>702</sup> and insurmountable cultural difference.<sup>703</sup> What

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<sup>701</sup> Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*; Chatterje, *Nation and Its Fragments*; Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire*. It should be noted that even the most trenchant critiques of imperial liberalism acknowledge its internal variability, discerning a redeeming potential in the “cosmopolitanism of sentiment” that marks “this other liberalism.” Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire*, pp. 20, 43.

remains wanting is a theoretical axis around which these instances can be sutured and their specificity explicated with reference to common dynamics unfolding in the uneven topography of colonial expansion. Jennifer Pitts describes liberalism as a “set of characteristic dispositions [that have] always been articulated in universal terms” yet have always already been inflected by “various circumstances.”<sup>704</sup> This formulation confronts us with the task of constructing an explanation of *how* historical circumstances shaped and colored the “universal ambitions” of liberalism across specific imperial sites, and *why* liberal politics of universalism revolved around certain social practices and not others. As a corollary, we need an account of how markers of colonial difference varied over historical periods, or in other words, a systematic elaboration of the link “between historical and conceptual transformation, between the external and internal sources of intellectual change.”<sup>705</sup>

Colonial capitalism offers one such analytic that casts into relief the political and economic conditions that shaped the field of colonial transformations and the concomitant liberal ideologies of rule. More specifically, I believe the extent to which colonial primitive accumulation *assimilated* (destroyed and reconstructed) or *articulated* (subordinated and managed) non-capitalist relations of social reproduction in the colonies can serve as a useful heuristic. Settler capitalism of the “neo-Europes,” which was invariably conditional upon the extirpation or dramatic marginalization of local populations (as in America and Australasia), arguably gave palpability and plausibility to the triumphalist narratives of universal progress *qua* the expansion of the market, civil society, life, liberty and property.<sup>706</sup> In contrast, confronted by

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<sup>702</sup> Pitts, *A Turn to Empire*, and “Empire, Progress”; Muthu, *Enlightenment Against Empire*, “Adam Smith’s Critique,” and “Diderot’s Theory.”

<sup>703</sup> Hall, *Civilising Subjects*; Mantena, *Alibis of Empire*.

<sup>704</sup> Pitts, “Free for All.”

<sup>705</sup> Mantena, “Fragile Universals,” p. 551.

<sup>706</sup> For an encompassing account, see James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

the resilience of non-capitalist social relations and the risk of social upheaval attendant to capitalist reconstruction (as in South Asia and Africa), colonizers opted for intensifying these relations for surplus creation, becoming convinced in the process that these “traditional” ways of life were hopelessly ingrained in the social genetics of the natives.<sup>707</sup> The displacement of Native Americans who refused to be “Red Lockean” was inscribed in the inexorable progress of human history,<sup>708</sup> while the failure of the Permanent Settlement in Bengal to create capitalist farmers and virtuous yeomen was attributed to the insurmountable singularity of the Indian society, their village communities, their “castes of mind.”<sup>709</sup> Conceived thus, the uneven and heterogeneous development of global capitalism in imperial networks can provide a systematizing matrix for the dilemmas of liberalism, which arose from its encounters with concretely situated socioeconomic relations. Through this lens, we could glimpse into the global dynamics that connected the various context-specific articulations of liberalism with other, non-liberal social philosophies and imperial ideologies, as liberal thinkers grappled with the vicissitudes of colonial capitalism.

The perspective of colonial capitalism further complicates the interplay of liberal universals and colonial difference by disclosing the civilizational hierarchies that cut across the colonizer-colonized divide and the ostensible lines of race and culture on which this divide is conventionally predicated. As the previous chapters on India and New Zealand illustrate, British settlers, planters, and company agents occupied an ambivalent position in British social imaginary. On the one hand, they were an integral and indispensable part of the imperial polity

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<sup>707</sup> See, among others, Washbrook, “Law, State”; Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Ann Laura Stoler, *Capitalism and Confrontation in Sumatra’s Plantation Belt, 1870-1979* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995).

<sup>708</sup> Ronald Takaki, *Iron Cages: Race and Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Knopf, 1979).

<sup>709</sup> Dirks, *Castes of Mind*.

as British subjects under a “coherent imperial constitution,”<sup>710</sup> and as the pioneers of the British Empire who established the networks through which British capital could expand, penetrate, and transform the colonies through settler capitalism and extractive ventures.<sup>711</sup> On the other hand, the same colonial entrepreneurs were variously derided by metropolitan thinkers as unruly, expansionist, despotic, barbaric, and essentially uncivilized. The ambiguous and shifting civilizational status of the British colonizers themselves problematizes the assumption that discourses of civilization and savagery, stadial theories of progress, and ideologies of colonial difference targeted the colonizers’ non-European other. Relying on race and culture as the primary operators of colonial difference offers little leverage in explaining, for instance, why the Irish and the Scottish, whom the English initially viewed to be racially inferior, were gradually incorporated into the “white” race in the eighteenth century. Similarly, why the enclosing and improving smallholder, who was hailed as the agent of civilization in seventeenth-century American colonies, was deemed in nineteenth-century Australasia to be stagnant or even regressive on the scale of human development? Focusing on socially heterogeneous, economically uneven, and politically asymmetric networks of imperial formation can offer some answers to these puzzles by embedding these specific instances of racialization in the relations of production, labor regimes, and social struggles around the slave-plantation complex as the hinge of Atlantic colonial capitalism. To put it summarily, the perspective of colonial capitalism can address those questions of universalism and cultural difference where the culturalist accounts remain incomplete in their own terms.

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<sup>710</sup> Travers, “Contested Despotisms.”

<sup>711</sup> Tomlinson, “Economics and Empire.”

While the study presented here stages its principal intervention in the scholarship on liberalism and empire, it also opens up two trajectories of future inquiry in the field of political theory. I would like to conclude this section by foregrounding and clarifying these trajectories.

### ***Political Immanence of Capital***

An important theoretical question raised by this study concerns what I would like to call the “political immanence of capital.” Salvaging the notion of “primitive accumulation” from the narrow confines of Marxian economics and reformulating it as a category of political analysis casts familiar concepts of political theory in new light. This theoretical proposition already has precedents on which to build. For instance, Partha Chatterjee has brilliantly framed primitive accumulation as the destruction of non-capitalist forms of community, which brings into existence the social constructs that liberal thought treats as axiomatic: the individual of subjective rights, the totalizing politico-legal framework of the nation-state, and the market-*cum*-civil society as the domain of voluntary association and transaction.<sup>712</sup> In a similar vein, Hannah Arendt posited a genetic relationship between the accumulation of power and the accumulation of capital by construing nineteenth-century imperialism as the re-eruption of primitive accumulation.<sup>713</sup> Finally, Max Weber himself resorted to the idea of the primitive accumulation of power in explaining how the modern state acquired its signature feature, namely, the sovereign monopoly of legitimate violence.<sup>714</sup> What these formulations variously articulate is a constitutive link and perhaps even a structural analogy between, on the one hand, capitalism as

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<sup>712</sup> Partha Chatterjee, *The Lineages of Political Society: Studies in Postcolonial Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), and *Nation and Its Fragments*. Also see, Sanyal, *Rethinking Capitalist Development*.

<sup>713</sup> Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, part II.

<sup>714</sup> Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), pp. 329-41; H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 196-244. Also see Mara Loveman, “The Modern State and the Primitive Accumulation of Symbolic Power,” *American Journal of Sociology* 110 (2005): 1651-83.

an institutionalized system of exploitation of social labor and ecology, and on the other, organized political power of the modern state in its colonial and national variants.<sup>715</sup>

The historical examination presented here strongly suggests that the constitutive symbiosis between capitalist relations and political power has been more endemic and originary than Arendt and others conceived (others also including the classical theorists of imperialism, including Hobson, Hilferding, Lenin, and Luxemburg). As discussed in the first and second chapters, colonial states have been directly and indirectly active in the instatement of the capitalist networks as early as the seventeenth-century, not least because these networks promoted the consolidation of the modern state apparatus itself.<sup>716</sup> If we take seriously the ubiquity of political power in the global genealogy of capitalism, not only in the early modern period or the “classical” period of capitalist imperialism, but in our present moment where the putatively purest market strain of capitalism (neoliberalism) depends on the exercise of political power outside legal boundaries,<sup>717</sup> then we can no longer treat political power as exogenous to the supposedly non-political institutional order of capitalism. Theorizing extra-economic and extra-legal political coercion as integral to the genesis and maintenance of capitalist relations essentially *politicizes* the concept of “capital,” that is, recasts it as an inherently political concept.

Given that our contemporary reality is shaped more than anything by the dynamics of global capitalism (witness the fallout of the recent financial crisis), following the vector of “politicizing capital” and “historicizing the global” confronts us as an ever-urgent task, for which

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<sup>715</sup> James Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), and *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

<sup>716</sup> Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

<sup>717</sup> Aihwa Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

the historical investigation in the previous chapters offers a sort of groundwork.<sup>718</sup> Building on these grounds, the next step would be to develop the notion of the “political immanence of capital” as a theoretical viewpoint.

While there is a number of ways this could be achieved, one line of political theorization that appears particularly suited to the task is the theories of “constituent power,” which have been conceived and honed in the field of democratic theory. The question of the “founding” of a political order, the legitimacy of which necessarily originates outside its endogenous legal framework, can apply with equal force to the origins of capitalism as a historically determinate social formation.<sup>719</sup> What is brought into existence in this case is not a body politic but a specific set of social relations of reproduction, which nonetheless shares with the former a jagged process of founding punctuated by (to use Jason Frank’s felicitous term) “constituent moments.”<sup>720</sup> Earlier chapters of this study have selectively surveyed the historically discontinuous, locally sited, and globally networked constituent moments of global capital, ranging from the English enclosures to the slave-plantation complex, from the de-industrialization of India to settler colonialism in the Pacific. These instances of reconstruction and subordination of non-capitalist relations of social reproduction to the imperatives of power, profit, and accumulation give rise to profound questions of legitimacy, analogous to those explored by theories of political founding. This is because the three hinges of capital examined here, property, exchange, and labor are not

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<sup>718</sup> Eley, “Historicizing the Global.” Also see, Nitzan and Bichler, *Capital as Power*.

<sup>719</sup> Democratic founding as an explicit problem of political theory can be traced back to Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Social Contract*. Some prominent twentieth-century reappraisals of the problem include Carl Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985); Claude Lefort, *Democracy and Political Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988); John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); Jurgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse of Law and Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996); Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox* (London: Verso, 2000).

<sup>720</sup> Jason Frank, *Constituent Moments: Enacting the People in Postrevolutionary America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010). I should perhaps make the obvious point that constituent moments of global capitalism become observable historical phenomena only as viewed and reconstructed from the theoretical vantage point of the “political immanence of capital.”

just “economic” problems but the very core of how human life is organized, with irreducible and immanent relations of power and domination, inequality and subordination, resistance and struggle.<sup>721</sup> Yet the essentially extra-economic and extra-legal force of primitive accumulation that reconfigures this core cannot be referred to the capitalist economic system or the liberal juridical framework for its justification, precisely because it creates the very conditions of a capitalist economic system and does so precisely by violating liberal precepts.

In a certain sense, constituent moments in the global genealogy of capitalism are at the same time instances of ideological difficulty for liberalism, which invite metaphysical explanations. Illuminating in this vein, for instance, is Burke’s insistence to have Warren Hastings, whom he called the “great criminal [who] has the law in his hands,” tried at the bar of “natural, immutable and substantial justice” rather than by the British common law.<sup>722</sup> This insistence arguably indicates Burke’s perception that the socioeconomic transformation in India under the Company rule overflowed the boundaries of the British legal framework. The political violence that effectuated such transformation was at the order-founding and order-destroying level, and it could be captured and adjudicated only by the *political* power of the Parliament,

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<sup>721</sup> One way of fruitfully incorporating theories of constituent power into the analysis of capitalism is to go beyond primitive accumulation by theorizing it more capaciously. Once the conceptual core of primitive accumulation, namely, the notion of political power constitutive of capital is crystallized, it can be theoretically differentiated into instances of “capital-positing” and “capital-preserving” violence operating at different structural moments of capitalist reproduction. Such a move would not only cast into sharp relief the eruption of “capital-positing violence” at constituent moments of capital and the attendant conundrums of legitimacy. Perhaps more importantly, it would render discernible the quotidian operations of “capital-preserving violence,” which sublates and preserves, in the form of institutional frameworks and legal norms, the originary violence that establishes capitalist relations. In effect, the concept of “primitive accumulation,” with its overtones of historicism and the controversial baggage that it has collected since its coinage, would fall away like scaffolding, as its theoretical intension finds a more refined conceptual expression. The main inspiration behind this reformulation is Walter Benjamin’s reflections on “law-making” and “law-preserving” extralegal violence, which has found critical reiterations in Jacques Derrida and Giorgio Agamben’s works. See Walter Benjamin, “Critique of Violence” in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Peter Demetz (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1978); Jacques Derrida, “Force of Law” in *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, ed. Drucilla Cornell, Michael Rosenfeld, and David Gray Carlson (New York: Routledge, 1992); Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

<sup>722</sup> Edmund Burke, “Speech on Opening of Impeachment,” in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, ed. Paul Langford (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), Vol. VI, pp. 276, 290. It is perhaps no accident that Burke’s own explanation of British conquest and rule in India rested on “providence.”

wielded in the name of transcendental and substantive principles as opposed to positive or customary legal precepts. Likewise, when the “normal” conditions of capitalist reproduction threatened to implode in the colonies, Wakefield did not hesitate to call for the exercise of imperial executive fiat and “martial law” – that is, a state of exception<sup>723</sup> – for re-instating the specific politico-legal order in which production and exchange could conform to the dictates of capitalist civilization. Locke’s theoretical rendering of the private and exclusive appropriation of American lands was undergirded in the first and last instances by a theological authority that commanded men to labor and subdue the earth for the benefit of mankind.<sup>724</sup> In other words, at constituent moments of global capitalism one “appealed to heaven,” although the authority thus summoned did not have to be religious or metaphysical, such as God, natural law, or progress. As we have seen, when confronted by colonial primitive accumulation, all three authors invoked secular and immanent myths of universal agreement for capturing and domesticating this unruly political element: the universal tacit consent of mankind (Locke), the great primeval contract between generations (Burke), and the originary agreement of human beings to divide themselves into the owners of capital and wage laborers (Wakefield).

The point raised above speaks directly to the status of extra-legal power in liberal political philosophy and government, a subject that has received growing scholarly attention in recent years. One prominent example is the theory of executive power or “prerogative” in Locke’s political philosophy. The interrogation of Locke’s ideas on prerogative has yielded several distinct yet convergent interpretations. Some scholars have shown that Locke reserved a

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<sup>723</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), and *State of Exception*.

<sup>724</sup> More broadly, the very adjective “natural” in the early modern natural law theories bore the imprint of the impulse to discover metaphysical premises for adjudicating property claims in the New World, in which the civil and customary laws of the Old World could not arbitrate between the incommensurable socioeconomic orders of the Native Americans and the Europeans.

pivotal place for the sovereign executive power, bound by no law but prudence, to combat the unforeseen exigencies threatening the security of the commonwealth.<sup>725</sup> The form of the Lockean prerogative has been characterized as fundamentally extra-constitutional and “natural,” and it has even been argued that the prince who wields of prerogative is accorded demi-Godly features in Locke’s discourse.<sup>726</sup> Consequently, one finds the element of quasi-theological, sovereign power inscribed in one of the formative moments of liberalism as the indispensable foundation of liberalism’s rule-governed framework. The historical grounds on which liberalism and capitalism have been co-articulated would be particularly conducive to unearthing these foundations.

Opening the analysis of capitalism to questions of constituent power and its metaphysical expressions problematizes the putative secularism of the domain of the economy. The corollary of bringing capitalism within the ambit of political theology is to rethink political economy as a species of political theory. Training this perspective on the history of political economy sensitizes us to substantive moral values in the name of which political power has been exercised to constitute capitalist social relations, such that property, exchange, and labor are categorically redefined and remade as private property, commodity exchange, and free labor.

This dynamic is nowhere more clearly observable than in the terrain of colonial capitalism. The absence (or denial) of a shared legal or customary framework with the colonized left the colonizers with no recourse but to their own substantive moral values in accounting for the force they employed, in other words, in referring the extra-legal violence of colonial conquest, dispossession, and bondage back to a purportedly universal theological or secular legal order. Political economy as a field of knowledge and a rationale of government incubated within

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<sup>725</sup> Hampsher-Monk and Zimmerman, “Liberal Constitutionalism.”

<sup>726</sup> Corbett, “Extraconstitutionality of Lockean Prerogative”; Fatovic, *Outside the Law*, chap. 2 These analyses amounts to a refutation of Carl Schmitt’s indictment of liberalism for excluding the element of sovereign decision, which he argued constitutes the extra-legal condition of the legal order. Schmitt, *Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, and *Political Theology*.

this context, which means that it has questions of power and coercion, historical difference and alternatives, and legality and legitimacy inscribed in its genetic code. Conceiving of political economy as political theory, therefore, also posits as an object of inquiry the institutional and discursive strategies through which these political questions have been removed from the analysis of capitalism such that political economy has morphed into a morally sanitary, technical field of “economics,” and capitalism has been christened as “global economy.”

### ***Prehistory of Liberalism***

Another major avenue of political theorization that emerges from this study extends to Foucauldian analyses of biopolitics and governmentality by addressing a lacuna in Foucault’s brilliant account of liberalism as a mode of governing capitalism. An emphasis on colonialism and primitive accumulation in the genealogy of capitalism illuminates the illiberal historical conditions (or the “prehistory”) of liberalism as a modern philosophy of rule, a rationality of government, and a configuration of power relations.

Foucault’s analysis of liberalism has gained salience with the publication in English of his *College de France Lectures*.<sup>727</sup> In these lectures, Foucault offers a genealogy of liberalism as a specific modality of governing populations and resources and explicates the entanglement of biopolitics with the formation of capitalist relations of production.<sup>728</sup> Foucault uses the term “governmentality” to refer to the characteristically liberal modality of power relations in capitalist society, which are relayed through “security apparatuses” and discourses of political economy. This political constellation is “liberal” by virtue of its reliance on “freedom” and

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<sup>727</sup> Michel Foucault, *“Society Must Be Defended”: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76* (New York: Picador, 2003), *Security, Territory, Population, and Birth of Biopolitics*. See especially the special issue of *Theory, Culture & Society* 26 (2009) for a broad range of appraisals and reflections on Foucault’s lectures.

<sup>728</sup> Foucault hints at this connection *in passim* in his earlier work. See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (New York: Pantheon, 1978), and *Discipline and Punish*.

“efficiency” as both ideologies of power and techniques of government.<sup>729</sup> Socioeconomic complexity, movement of people, circulation of things, proliferation of the productive powers of society, and a careful management (as opposed to crude planning) of social dynamism define the objectives of the liberal mode of government. Put summarily, in governmentality, the liberal self-image of capitalism finds its practical representation.

Foucault’s penetrating analysis of the liberal micropolitics of capitalism rests on a specific theory of subjectivity. The operability of liberalism as a modality of governing capitalism presupposes that individual behavior yields itself to prediction, in other words, that individuals react to circumstantial change in a manner so as to yield statistically estimable aggregate effects. Socially predominant motives of behavior should be of an order (a minimum common denominator beyond contextual and individual particularities) that generates systematic and probabilistic patterns of causal relations. Expressed differently, motives for behavior must take the form of “incentives,” that is, interests that animate individual behavior which are already embedded in quantifiable models of causation, calculi of probability, and fields of manipulability. In Foucault’s words, the subject through which liberal governmentality can operate is *homo oeconomicus*, or the “subject of incentives,” a person who “accepts reality” and responds to it in ways that can be prefigured in a probabilistic paradigm.<sup>730</sup>

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<sup>729</sup> Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, p. 18. First, liberal governmentality targets efficiency by establishing institutions that ensure a minimum level of predictability in behavior and its effects. It thereby reduces what the discipline of economics labels “transaction costs” and facilitates the multiplication of economic and social transactions between persons. Secondly, governmental power engenders freedom by creating legal and institutional spaces that enable individuals to engage in a variety of social and economic enterprises. Instead of intruding into transactions between individuals, it secures the conditions under which individuals can pursue their perceived “interests.” In other words, unlike the sovereign-judicial power that proscribes, demands obedience, and exerts itself on the *body*, and unlike the normalizing-disciplinary power that prescribes, polices, and lays claim to the *soul*, apparatuses of security function by conditioning the environment, laying down the “rules of the game,” calibrating the incentive structures, and thus work indirectly at the level of *behavior*. “Production of freedom,” rather than the negative circumscription of its expanse, is the familiar Foucauldian critique of the repressive hypothesis applied to the liberal preoccupation with freedom.

<sup>730</sup> Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics*, pp. 269-70

The problem with this explication is that while liberal government of capitalism depends on the subject of incentives for its efficacy, the origins of this subject cannot be explained with reference to the liberal apparatus itself. Governmentality abandons the aspiration for directly dictating individual interests in favor of indirectly managing them through institutional manipulation. This “liberal” attitude to governing people therefore depends on other, logically prior forms of power for the production of subjects who have “rational,” predictable and governable interests. The same attitude also presupposes multiple and, from a liberal perspective, irrational and ungovernable forms of individual and collective subjectivity. One catches fleeting gestures at this problematic in Foucault’s lectures, for instance, when he invokes a notion of “people” as “those who, refusing to be the population, disrupt the system.”<sup>731</sup> Later, he remarks “the individual becomes governmentalizable, that power gets a hold on him to the extent, and only to the extent, that he is a *homo oeconomicus*.”<sup>732</sup>

Unfortunately, missing from Foucault’s account are the socioeconomic transformations and political mechanisms through which “people” are reconstituted as “population” and the individual is governmentalized *qua homo oeconomicus*. Put bluntly, the historical conditions of possibility of liberalism are left out. I believe this is because the origins of *homo oeconomicus* and population (and therefore the enabling parameters of governmentality) belong to the “prehistory of liberalism,” which remains outside the purview of Foucault’s analysis.

The perspective of colonial capitalism developed in this study is particularly well suited for addressing this lacuna. For a foray into the prehistory of liberalism directs us back to the

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<sup>731</sup> Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, p. 44. The “people” mentioned by Foucault should be understood not as the omnipotent subject of national sovereignty but as the politically ambiguous notion of the “common” folk, variously referred to as the unruly multitude, the laboring poor, and the “many-headed hydra.” See Giorgio Agamben, “What is a People?” in *Means Without End: Notes on Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2004), and *Commonwealth* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, Harvard University Press, 2009); Rediker and Linebaugh, *Many-Headed Hydra*.

<sup>732</sup> Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics*, p. 252.

sovereign and disciplinary forms of power as the violent and intrusive preconditions of liberal security apparatuses. A focus on primitive accumulation would illuminate the historical affinity between sovereign and disciplinary power on the one hand, and the constitutive violence behind capitalist relations, on the other.<sup>733</sup> It can highlight the constituent moments of capital as the obliteration of the “strange multiplicity” of alternative livelihoods, and the coercion of men and women into accepting a historically specific, capitalist social reality.<sup>734</sup> This inquiry would compound the role of primitive accumulation in fashioning the subject of liberalism as a political philosophy (the subject of rights) by the construction of the subject of liberalism as a modality of government (the subject of incentives).

We have seen the quasi-theological expression of originary accumulation in Locke’s theory of property, which captured and advocated the historic reorientation of social reproduction away from subsistence and towards accumulation. The extralegal process of land enclosures on both shores of the Atlantic, combined with slave codes and vagrancy laws that criminalized “idleness,” crafted enterprising and laboring subjects, or “possessive” and “utilizable” individuals.<sup>735</sup> Our analysis of Burke has illustrated the distinct colonial manifestations of the problem of “an ungovernable people.”<sup>736</sup> Unhinged from the sovereign-disciplinary apparatus of the metropole, unruly possessive individuals at the imperial frontier wrought havoc in India. Correspondingly, Burke called for the reassertion of sovereign power

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<sup>733</sup> See Sanyal, *Rethinking Capitalist Development*, pp. 120-27.

<sup>734</sup> Tully, *Strange Multiplicity*.

<sup>735</sup> For Locke’s condoning of slavery and his stiff advocacy of anti-vagrancy laws and labor discipline, see *The Fundamental Constitutions of the Carolinas* and *Draft of a Representation, Containing a Scheme for Methods for the Employment of the Poor*, both reproduced in *Locke: Political Essays*, ed. Mark Goldie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

<sup>736</sup> For the early modern problems of governing “people” as referenced above and the corollary deployment of public and criminal law as a method for government, see John Brewer and John Styles (eds.), *An Ungovernable People: The English and Their Law in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1980). The place of criminal law in eighteenth-century conceptions of civil society and in concomitant agendas of fashioning rational subjects respectful of private property and state authority is explored in Douglas Hay, Peter Linebaugh, John .G. Rule, E. P. Thompson, Cal Winslow, *Albion’s Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Verso, 2011); Linebaugh, *London Hanged*.

and disciplinary control over the East India Company by way of punishing the culprits, reforming the Indian administration, and imposing parliamentary supervision over its activities.<sup>737</sup> Wakefield's concerns with colonial settlements shows how utilizable individuals, once they spread over colonial lands, ceased to be utilizable for purposes of capital accumulation and escaped government by the liberal rationality of political economy. While Wakefield was at pains to keep his policy proposals close to the parameters of the market (sufficient price) and consent (voluntary emigration), he did not shirk from recommending imperial states of exception ("law-martial of a man-of-war") for reinstating the conditions of governmentality in the colonies and legitimating these exceptions by recourse to ideals of civilization.

Colonial primitive accumulation can therefore provide a theoretical index to the experimental attempts to craft governable subjects that are at once inculcated with work discipline and enterprising spirit, and eminently governable through the management of freedom.<sup>738</sup> The net I have cast in this study captures only a handful of instances in the genealogy of coercive subjectification that lies behind liberal capitalism. Other scholars have examined the role of spectacular executions, witch-hunts, torture, forcible transportation, and bondage in this genealogy.<sup>739</sup> There remain great swathes to be explored in the "prehistory of liberalism," where sovereign and disciplinary force were put to breaking individual and social bodies before they could be reassembled into liberal subjects animated by rational interests. Such explorations

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<sup>737</sup> Burke's proposed measures were to varying forms and degrees implemented through the Cornwallis reforms and, most tellingly, complemented by a colonial disciplinary-pedagogical apparatus. Founded in 1806, the East India Company College became the crucible where the East India Corps, instructed in political economy by Thomas Malthus and revered as the epitome of bureaucratic probity and administrative professionalism, would be forged.

<sup>738</sup> The theoretical vision that informs such experiments is particularly salient in political economy and pedagogical tracts in the seventeenth century, which targeted the idleness, profligacy, and vice of the poor and the rich alike. See chapters 2 and 4 in this study for some reflections and secondary literature.

<sup>739</sup> Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*; Rediker, et al. (eds) *Many Middle Passages*; Hay, et al., *Albion's Fatal Tree*; Linebaugh, *London Hanged*; Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.

would help unpack the triangle of sovereignty-discipline-governmentality and reveal the specific configurations of possibility, operability, and legitimacy between the three modalities of power.

In conclusion, a promising, if audacious, line of theorizing the “politics of capitalism” would syncretically draw upon Foucault’s refined analysis of the micropolitics of capitalism and governmentality, a heterodox Marxian perspective on colonial capitalism and primitive accumulation, and political theories of founding attuned to logics of constituent power and attendant ethico-political problems of legitimization. A framework thus pieced together would not be seamless, but it would generate political insight, theoretical innovation, and scholarly exchange. The promise of such syncretism is reflected in original and controversial works of political theory that have recently explored the intersection of biopolitics and sovereign violence, subjectivity and capitalist reproduction, and colonialism and governmentality.<sup>740</sup>

Situating capitalism squarely in the field of political theory and treating capital as an inherently political concept calls for a critical rethinking of the history of cardinal notions of political reflection, including freedom, equality, rights, domination, violence, sovereignty, and legitimacy. Similarly, recasting political economy as a species of political theory requires scrutinizing such apparently self-evident categories of empirical inquiry as property, rule of law, civil society, development, and welfare. Taken together, these theoretical revisions promise a new vantage for constructing a history of the present. Most significantly, a colonial and political conception of capitalism can shine new light on the composite discourses of economic development and global governance that circulate in the current global constellation. Financial hubs of “global cities” amidst zones of austerity in Europe and North America, authoritarian

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<sup>740</sup> Outstanding works in this vein are Agamben’s *Homo Sacer*, and Hardt and Negri’s trilogy of *Empire*, *Multitude*, and *Commonwealth*. Less well-known but worth attention are two attempts to synthesize Marx’s theory of social relations of production and Foucault’s theory of disciplinary power and subjectification. See Jason Read, *The Micro-Politics of Capital: Marx and the Prehistory of the Present* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), and Richard Marsden, *The Nature of Capital: Marx after Foucault* (London: Routledge, 1999).

industrial capitalism in China, and massive offshore land acquisitions for commercial agriculture and mining in Africa and Latin America connect capital accumulation to new forms of expropriation and exploitation.<sup>741</sup> These political economic dynamics and the plethora of social struggles and insurgencies they trigger, from the Occupy movement in the US to the Arab Spring in North Africa, from the landless peasant movement in Brazil to rural revolt in China, make it an ever urgent task to break the compartmentalization between political theory, political economy, and social critique.

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<sup>741</sup> Saskia Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Stefan Halper, *Beijing Consensus: How China's Authoritarian Model Will Dominate the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Basic Books, 2010); Klaus Deininger and Derek Byerlee, *Rising Global Interest in Farmland: Can It Yield Sustainable and Equitable Benefits?* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2011); Annelies Zoomers, "Globalization and the Foreignization of Space: The Seven Processes Driving the Current Global Land Grab," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 37 (2010): 429-47.

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