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The Gilley 'debate'*

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ABSTRACT

I suggest that the recent furore over Gilley's article on colonialism raises at least three distinct issues both within academia and the wider space of public debate. The first concerns the category of 'offence', who can be offended and by what. The second concerns the nature of colonialism, its contemporary understanding and why that remains politically controversial. The third concerns possible continuities between certain aspects of colonial rule and current forms of Western intervention in Africa. In each case I make some very tentative suggestions as to why one journal article attracted so much attention and antagonism.

In 2016 Professor Bruce Gilley, a tenured professor at Portland State University, published an article in the highly regarded journal *African Affairs* in which he suggested not only that the great Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe had, towards the end of his life, changed his mind somewhat about colonialism, coming to regard it in a more positive light, at least in the context of what had happened to his country since the end of colonial rule, but also that a more careful reading of Achebe's writing suggested that his assessment of colonialism had always been more nuanced than much of the commentary on him had been prepared to concede (Gilley 2016).

The article no doubt went through the usual procedures practiced by academic journals, seems (at least to me) persuasive enough and certainly occasioned no outraged protest or accusations of incompetence or poor scholarship. In 2017 Professor Gilley published an article in the equally respected journal *Third World Quarterly* whose title, 'The Case for Colonialism', suggested its main theme (Gilley 2018). This comprised three distinct points. First, that colonial rule had, at least to a substantial degree, been objectively beneficial in the territories in which it was practiced and second, that it had also been subjectively legitimate to the indigenous populations of

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those territories. Once these two points had been properly acknowledged in the face of maliciously motivated denials, it suggested, they provided the building blocks for a third argument that colonial modes of rule could and should be beneficially revived and practiced. The publication of this second article, unlike the first, prompted a torrent of denunciation, including two petitions, signed by thousands, calling for its retraction, as well as demands for apology, the revoking of Professor Gilley's doctorate and created something of a crisis for the journal which published it, along with its editor. The terms of much of this denunciation were, to say the least, extravagant and the journal, despite insisting that the proper academic protocols had been observed, withdrew the article on the grounds that its editor had been threatened by violence, a statement which still appears on its website (as of this writing).[1] The ferocity of the denunciations prompted some counter protests, notably a letter signed by some 80 (mostly senior) academics around the world, which asserted a fairly conventional argument for free academic speech (*Times* 2.12.2017).

While much of the denunciation of Gilley took a moral form much of it also dismissed his second article for its poor scholarship. But this charge seems more than a little disingenuous. If every article in an academic journal exhibiting poor scholarship prompted thousands of protests academic life would surely grind to a halt.[2] Perhaps this particular episode should be seen as just another, if overheated, academic squabble (it was not being hotly discussed in my local supermarket). Perhaps, but I want to suggest that the Gilley fracas does raise at least three issues (doubtless there are more) which resonate with tendencies in the wider public sphere, perhaps even as far as the supermarket. I shall approach these issues by way of a paradox or at least a puzzle, each of which I think deserves unpacking and reflection. The first concerns the tension between a number of positions, or at least slogans, which inspired the abhorrence at Gilley's article on colonialism and the, hitherto at least, standard conventions of academic institutions, particularly with regard to speech, but also the institutional practices that follow from that (contractual arrangements, disciplinary procedures and so on). The second concerns the fact (suggestion) that as colonialism becomes more historically remote and more difficult to generalise about, judgements concerning it, at least in certain contexts, become more politically polarising, even simple-minded. The third is that if (as I suspect) Gilley's greatest sin was to propose 'reviving colonialism', much of what is implied by that, admittedly excessively vague and confused formula, has informed the practise of Western states, 'international' agencies and Western NGOs for some decades, and further, much of what those organisations do is (almost certainly) supported by the vast majority of Gilley's critics.

OFFENCE

So was it all a storm in a teacup? A more relaxed attitude to academic discourse might suggest that, despite its somewhat genteel assessment of itself (and its public presentation) it is no stranger to very vigorous, even aggressive language.

Nor can it be plausibly denied that different perspectives have always played an important role in shifting understandings of historical or contemporary social and political affairs. It can hardly be irrelevant that the author of, say, *The Stripping of the Altars* (Duffy 2005), a 'revisionist' work which made a huge impact on the understanding of pre-reformation England is a Catholic himself or that the author of *Clanship Commerce and the House of Stuart 1603–1788* (MacInnes 1996) is a Scot who, in that and subsequent work, made a notable contribution to the reformulation of Scottish history. Indeed in both these cases the authors might also be said to be writing history 'from below', making heard previously neglected, even repressed, voices. Neither of them, it might be added, minces his words. Duffy speaks of a pre-Reformation England that was 'hammered into oblivion in those terrible years' (Jefferies 2013: 691).[3] Professor MacInnes suggests that the aftermath of 1745 'was marked by a systematic state terrorism, characterised by genocidal intent verging on ethnic cleansing' (MacInnes 1996: 211).[4] Such tough-minded controversy and assertive, even forceful, polemic has long been thought to be rooted in an idea that universities should be spaces of unrestricted contestation and debate, a view of course, rooted in a wider development of Liberal thinking that promoted free speech as an essential part of human freedom and progress, perhaps especially appropriate in universities, but by no means to be restricted to them. This understanding, at least at the level of political rhetoric in liberal societies, has rested on a fairly robust assumption of maximal free speech rooted in a familiar pedigree of Milton, Locke and J.S. Mill, with the latter providing the most coherent account of the position founded on the harm principle.

It is fair to say that even in its more sophisticated versions this account has had its weaknesses. The prominent theorists clearly wavered themselves on a number of issues. Locke was perhaps arguing for freedom of worship rather than freedom of speech in the modern sense (Dunn 1991). Even Mill allows the individual 'must not make himself a nuisance to other people' and gestures rather vaguely towards 'offences against decency' (Mill 1964: 114, 153). In practise no liberal society really lives up to the most demanding forms of Mill's harm principle. Almost all of them place limits on free speech of one kind or another in deference to particular communities or cherished beliefs.[5] But in acknowledging these difficulties, it seems fair to make two points. Firstly, while academic discourse has frequently resounded to the battle of perspectives and strong language it has still operated within the protocols of academic freedom, which place a high value on evidence, reasoning and debate. At its best,

> the life of learning still has an exemplary morality to offer. Where else, save in other forms of academic inquiry, can we find the same scrupulous concern for truth, the same requirement that all propositions which are not self-evidently true should be documented, the same conviction that getting things right is more important than a quick fix, the same acceptance of the complexity of things and the same refusal to contemplate any dumbing down? And where

else is hard-won knowledge freely imparted, without hope of financial recompense? So long as these qualities remain in evidence, those who follow the life of learning have no reason to be ashamed of their calling. (Thomas 2001)

This is no doubt a tad idealistic (I confess to finding it rather moving when I first read it) but it is not wholly fanciful and is surely shared by many, if not most, people in academic life. Secondly, within the wider public sphere, while liberals have struggled to parlay abstract principles into social and political practice, that exercise has been taken seriously on the assumption that the onus rests on justifying restrictions of free speech and determining what these restrictions should be. It has been assumed that such restrictions should be carefully reflected on and calibrated and that if 'harm' comes to include a category of 'offence', needed to guide public censure of behaviour including speech, the use of such a category must carefully attend to such matters as the extent, duration and social value of the speech, the ease with which it can be avoided and the motives of the speaker, the number of persons who may be affected, and the general interests of the community (Feinberg 1985).

It is precisely this *prima facie* assumption of the value of free speech and the meticulous accounting for the circumstances in which it may be restricted that now seems to be under siege. Both in the public space and in academia, a whole cluster of notions and demands have emerged in recent years which insist on much more robust restrictions on free speech. It would seem that most of the publicly controversial cases have concerned religion, famously *The Satanic Verses* and the Danish cartoons but also the play *Behzti* by Sikh playwright Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti and *Jerry Springer: The Opera*. All of these generated litigation, demonstrations, in some cases even threats across state borders. And all concerned fairly easily graspable 'offence', involving religious figures or places central to the religion in question. But what is also quite striking about all these cases is that they did not, as it were, require that the offence be actually experienced. Experiencing the 'offence' need not involve actually reading the book, seeing the play and so on, but could be triggered by the 'bare knowledge' that the offensive material exists.[6] What generated much of the controversy in these cases is that the Liberal tradition has tended to be extremely reluctant to concede 'bare knowledge' as grounds for complaint, much less legal restriction.

There is at least a family resemblance between the notion of offence in these cases and a raft of categories and practices which have become articulated in the academic world, more boisterously by (some) students but with clear support from (some) academics and indeed university administrations. These have included the removal of texts and symbols from university settings, the policy of 'safe spaces' and the provision of 'trigger warnings' in anticipation of certain texts or debates, practices of 'no-platforming' particular speakers or particular viewpoints, demands for the dismissal of academics on the grounds of their views and 'decolonising' the curriculum.[7] Underlying all these various demands and slogans is a concept of offence defined, not by relation to at

least some publicly accessible criteria, but by the putatively offended. 'The group which feels the hurt is the ultimate arbiter of whether a hurt has taken place' (Modood 1989: 284). This kind of offence is peremptory, persistent, even aggressive. It does not call for discussion or debate. Rather it demands, first, the acknowledgement of wrongdoing, that the perpetrator of the offence accept their responsibility and their guilt. But it demands, second, that the offence must not only be recanted but silenced, removed from the public space so that it may not offend again. Lastly, if the offence is deemed grave enough, the perpetrator must be punished.[8] This set of demands constitutes in effect a complete set of rules as to who may speak and what may be said. 'Decolonising the curriculum' exactly exemplifies this logic. It is not possible to disagree with or reject that project without risking offence. Nor is it necessary to know anything about colonialism, or even the curriculum, to demand its 'decolonisation', indeed any undergraduate can easily apply themselves to 'subverting the canon' and deploring the presence on reading lists of 'white male thinkers' (Mitra 2018). It is the presence that offends, not what is said or written. 'Decolonising the curriculum' is about silencing, not listening. No doubt at some universities this will be done with some sensitivity and respect for scholarship and debate. Elsewhere perhaps not.[9]

It is often suggested, particularly in the more alarmist accounts of these developments, that they are the work of student radicals or the imposition by state authorities in pursuit of various political agendas. Be that as it may, the ideas that shape such agendas must come from somewhere, and it is hard to avoid the conclusion that they come from within the academy itself and not always from the quarters conventionally labelled as on the Left. I would suggest that at least three ideas can be seen at work here. The first is nicely captured in a recent review article which points towards shifts in the understanding of toleration. 'Not so long ago, a unified chorus of scholars, politicians, and activists declared that the time had come to move "beyond" toleration' (Bejan 2018: 701). 'Mere' toleration was perhaps fit for Europe after the Reformation but is wholly unsuited to a global and diverse world. Rather, what is needed is recognition, and then active affirmation, of different cultures and lifestyles.[10] The second, perhaps more speculative, suggestion is Michel Foucault's reflection on power and its exercise. Power in the unitary sense, as understood in mainstream social science and normative theory does not really exist: 'what exists is an infinitely complex network of "micro-powers", of power relations that permeate every aspect of social life' and 'because "power" is multiple and ubiquitous, the struggle against it must be localised'(Sheridan 1980: 139). It is some such notion as this that surely underlay 'new liberation movements' around racial, gender and sexual equality. The virtual disappearance of much of the vocabulary of the 'old Left' ('the state', the 'ruling class', 'capitalism') suggests a third place where we might look, even if it is not often articulated by the protagonists of 'offence' themselves, namely the 'commodification' of higher education in at least some Western countries. This process drew on a whole series of liberal, if economistic, themes. That universities were/are

producer conspiracies, that their claims to tradition and autonomy were so much cant disguising unjustifiable privilege and so on. But the two key themes surely are the student as consumer and the university as a service industry. It was and is doubtless intended that students paying high fees would come to see themselves as consumers and who would thereby help produce 'efficiency' (Russell 1993). But there was nothing in this reconfiguration to prevent other 'wants' being demanded. For their part, universities are increasingly assessed (and funded) on the basis of student/(customer) satisfaction which, while it cannot (yet?) take the form of actually selling degrees, must hasten to satisfy every other demand.

COMPLEXITY

But what exactly is offensive? The religious cases cited earlier all concerned immediate, often visual, denigration of the core beliefs or places central to particular religious traditions, or at least could be easily construed as such.[11] On the face of it 'colonialism' in the broadest sense seems a most implausible candidate to be viewed in this way. Not only was it extraordinarily variable in form it is often extremely difficult to assess its consequences. There is of course no reason to downplay the considerable human cost that the imposition of colonial rule in the 19th century involved, the often gratuitous violence, the seizure of land, the imposition of forced labour and forced cultivation, the disruption of effective ways of living, of which Leopold's Congo was the most extreme example. But all these features have been extensively documented and in any case, at least until recent times, were so virtually ubiquitous in human history, that it is hard to see exactly how they can be grounds for 'offence'. The sheer diversity of colonialism then leaves much to be resolved. Such resolution encounters three sets of issues. Firstly, the dynamics of colonial rule were bewilderingly variable. Almost all the agents of colonialism, metropolitan states, colonial officials, missionaries, even business interests, saw themselves as bringing about change in Africa, but there were persistent arguments about how this was to be done. These arguments revolved around essentially two issues. The tension between order and change and the management of change itself. There were many facets to this. Even minimal order required revenue and one way colonial states looked for revenue was to encourage African participation in export production. But such encouragement could have all sorts of effects on communities which might have deleterious social consequences (Hopkins 1999: 221–2). Secondly, the insistence that colonies be financially self-sufficient along with the difficulties of developing sources of revenue meant a permanent and chronic shortage of resources that Sara Berry famously characterised as 'hegemony on a shoestring' (Berry 1992, 1993). These two constraints generated a third, namely that colonial rule in the day-to-day sense relied much more on negotiation and collaboration between the colonial state and African groups than the image of boundless colonial violence allows. In fact 'without

indigenous cooperation, whether voluntary or enforced, a mere handful of British officials could never have governed so many millions' (Burroughs 1999: 179).

The management of these tensions produced two rather different kinds of colonial rule. In the more conservative mode the maintenance of order was the overwhelming priority and often involved close relations with local intermediaries ('indirect rule') of a quasi-collaborative type and considerable reluctance to upset local social arrangements (this explains the periodic disinclination to interfere with domestic forms of slavery rather than the slave trade for example). Quite often this type of colonial rule went along with a rather nostalgic regard for elements of pre-industrial society and distaste for many features of contemporary British society, such as its commercialism and vulgarity. Indeed, within certain limits, some colonial officials showed considerable respect, even admiration, for 'their natives', particularly those thought to exemplify the qualities of honour, courage and manliness, while reserving considerable contempt both for external agents of change (such as missionaries) and within African societies themselves (the urban elites). On the other hand, a more progressive mode of colonial administration took shape, characterised by both a commitment to some notion of 'development', which clearly tracked metropolitan norms (wage labour, housing, welfare and family structures, education) and therefore involved confrontation with, or at least disapproval of, practices 'repugnant to civilisation' (female circumcision, polygamy, bride price, elaborate funeral ceremonies, widowhood practices). With this position came a more positive attitude towards the 'educated African', not necessarily in the sense of an entitlement to political independence, usually projected into a somewhat vague future, but in the sense of a potential citizen. Very roughly speaking over time the first of these tended to give way to the second, but they were always to some degree co-present.

A second persistent issue is the idea of a 'colonial legacy', intuitively appealing but on closer examination quite difficult to make sense of and about which there is little consensus.[12] The difficulties that attend this notion are legion. 'The obvious reason for the very wide dispersion of views about the role of colonialism is that it is very difficult to construct a convincing research design to examine its impact' (Heldring & Robinson 2012: 2). Not only are there the wide variations in the effect of colonialism, there is the vexed issue of what might have occurred without it (counterfactuals) which in turn generates a host of possibilities. Heldring and Robinson think that, for example, 'It seems plausible that even without the Scramble for Africa, the impact of missionaries would have been similar' (Heldring & Robinson 2012: 4). But of course, missionaries might have been driven out of Africa, or have given up, or any number of other possibilities. Heldring and Robinson also suggest that account needs to be taken of what happened in Africa after colonial rule, which is surely right, but introduces another layer of difficulties. Notwithstanding all of this there have been many such exercises, which have tended to concentrate on economic issues, state formation and ethnic diversity.

Yet they come to a bewildering variety of conclusions. Heldring and Robinson suggest that the effect of colonialism on economic development was largely negative, whereas Austin reaches rather different conclusions (Austin 2015). For every judgement that 'find[s] a negative relationship between British rule and the strength of national identification' (Ali *et al.* 2018: 26) there is another that suggests, 'In short, there is very little evidence that Africa's colonial legacy serves as an obstacle to national integration' (Robinson 2014: 731). New causal links continue to be proposed and investigated. British colonialism has been repeatedly denounced for encouraging tribalism, yet two scholars have recently suggested that British educational policy in Africa, with its emphasis on local languages and local teachers, encouraged numeracy and thereby economic growth (Baten & Cappelli 2016).

The third issue is that even in less causally ambitious accounts there are quite large gaps in the empirical literature which also make generalisation difficult. Much remains to be learned about, for example, colonial legal history, questions of taxation and money and the extent of African cooperation with colonial rule. So almost any assertion about colonial empire in one place can be countered by reference to another place. In one of the more level-headed commentaries on Gilley's article, the author bravely asserts that Gilley 'is right about a few things. For example African nationalists often did not have massive support, colonial rule ended the slave trade, and Africans participated in colonial rule' (Klein 2018: 39). This seems rather a lot to be right about but the main emphasis in Klein's article is on all the things Gilley is wrong about.[13] What does Gilley get wrong? 'Colonial rulers ignored famines, and actually did little for health and education' and they did little to train Africans in administration (Klein 2018: 39).[14] Well, as a very rough generalisation compressed into a sentence, yes – but really no. In Nyasaland, colonial officials actively intervened to prevent famine (McCracken 2012: 189) and it was often (modestly) modern transport infrastructure which made it possible. In the inter-war period a growing concern in Britain itself with infant and maternal mortality carried over into the empire. As a result, in at least some urban areas, maternal health showed rapid improvement. In the Lagos region, infant mortality rates dropped steadily from 296.3 deaths per thousand live births in 1919 to 134.1 in 1929, 127 in 1939, and 104 by 1949. Maternal health services were much in demand by Africans themselves, and by the time of independence, Nigeria had an impressive network of maternal health centres (Van Tol 2007). Even in settler colonies where arguably the African population was subject to greater exploitation, there is solid evidence of substantial improvements in welfare. While 130,000 Kenyans were treated in what were called 'native hospitals' in 1920, the number of patients had increased to 500,000 in 1936 and to one million by 1948. One recent study suggests that, in Kenya, 'progress in health care was substantial in the 1920–1970 period' (Moradi 2009: 744).'In British Africa, schools were largely run by missionaries', Klein says (Klein 2018: 45). Again broadly speaking true, except that a number of British colonial governors and officials were scathing about the quality of such schools and

made efforts to provide government-run alternatives. Over time, through the power of the purse and inspection, they subjected mission schools to increasing regulation.[15] The burden of these remarks is not of course to score points but to underline the real difficulty of generalising about colonialism.

Whatever we think about Gilley's article, then, the idea that colonialism can be summarised by reference to a gruesome picture of a Congolese peasant, a trite 'what if it happened to you' scenario, and the cheap trick of its 'tantamount to' [in this case] holocaust denial is absurd (Robinson 2017). But how then to account for the disjuncture between a vast body of work on colonialism which continues to show its complexity and the persistent condemnation of it as *nothing but* oppression and exploitation, if not genocide? It is hard to avoid the thought that the avoidance of complexity plays to a number of theoretical and political agendas. African governments have long found the idea of a colonial legacy a convenient rationale to account for a host of problems they have struggled with, from ethnic division to limited economic development. So of course have the many NGOs and some international organisations who claim to be essential in securing solutions to those problems. It also remains appealing in certain academic circles in the context of some current ideological agendas. So, for example (some) African views of homosexuality and gender equality that do not pass muster with current liberal norms can be explained as not the 'real' views of (some) Africans, but as somehow the fault of colonial rulers (Han & O'Mahoney 2018).[16] And not least the simple-minded view of colonialism resonates with a strong tendency in certain quarters for a politics that anathematises theories, institutions, practices, even whole societies, as 'racist' with all the opportunities that presents for endlessly searching for, and eradicating, that original sin.

CIVILISING MISSIONS?

Perhaps the most controversial aspect of the Gilley argument was the suggestion that the historical record supported the view that colonialism could, to good effect, be revived. More specifically, that good governance should be replaced by a (revived) colonial governance. What this seems to mean is that first, that it would be necessary to borrow from a country's colonial past and second, it would require the involvement of outside agencies in key sectors so as to bolster a capacity for effective self-government. But Gilley's formulations here are, to say the least, excessively loose. He plainly does not mean colonial governance in any reasonably precise sense, say the reappointment of colonial governors or district officers, or the revival of forced labour or cultivation. What he actually means is those parts of 'colonial governance' that would meet with approval by contemporary mainstream opinion or indeed, as he points out, what many African governments attempted to retain after independence, that is, roughly speaking, a combination of practical skills and more or less uncorrupt administration. This tends to underplay the time factor, because there were periods of colonial rule when practical skills, other than dominating

people, were somewhat absent and administration left much to be desired.[17] The second confusion is to suggest, that in addition to 'reclaiming the colonial trajectory' there is a second way to revive colonialism, 'to recolonise some areas'. On closer examination, this is in fact no different from the 'first way' and is again not 'recolonising' in any reasonably precise sense. Rather, it is more of the same, that is various ways of bolstering weak states through such devices as the temporary secondment of officials, the operation of state agencies by foreign managers, temporary controls or vetoes over financial powers, fixed allocations of resources to various social welfare activities and so on.

The puzzle here is that, despite Gilley giving the impression this is all tremendously novel, it has been going on at least since the end of the Cold War. To be fair, he discusses some of it but he ignores or underplays quite a lot as well. Even in the realm of the state and sovereignty there is much more he might have mentioned: the direct interference in bureaucratic appointments by the multilateral institutions and their attempts to create 'reform coalitions', and the direction of resources to bureaucratic 'enclaves' particularly in finance departments and legal agencies (Williams & Young 2013). What he tends to ignore however prompts a second puzzle. This is the huge parallel engagement of NGOs in Africa in projects not only in the narrower sense of governance and state reform, but also in the wider one of relations between African states and their citizens. Western NGOS have waged campaigns for Western military intervention in Africa, they have used 'international' institutions to demonise some African political groupings and laud others, they have deployed 'human rights' to block or impede African government policies, they have demanded that African states criminalise (or decriminalise) certain social practices. In sum, they have invested much effort in pursuing a liberal project in Africa (Young 2018). While much of this, or at least its legitimation is new, the parallels with the colonial period can hardly be denied. What else is 'peace enforcement' but the 'savage wars of peace'? What else are 'civil society strategies' but the African 'middle class' or the 'detribalised African'? What is 'hybridity' but 'indirect rule'? What are 'traditional harmful practices' but 'backward customs', as aggressively denounced once by British officials and missionaries in Kenya and Sudan as they are by Western NGOs now? Yet all this effort attracts considerable support from British (and Western) academia, sections of the political class (not only on the Left) and of the British (and Western) press. Whole institutes in British universities are dependent on DFID funding. British academics are required to demonstrate 'impact' which roughly means produce what pleases Her Majesty's Government. The British (and Western) press repeatedly demands 'intervention' to deal with some or other African issue. The irony is that these are exactly the places where Gilley's most vociferous critics are located. How to explain this? Perhaps the historical record may be helpful here. From the mid-1870s to the mid-1890s, British missionaries in East Africa practiced a kind of '"unofficial empire", which in many ways incorporated an evangelical-humanitarian vision of Christian civilisation' (Bridges 2008: 44). They did not see themselves as ruling Africans, indeed in many

ways they adapted themselves to the circumstances they encountered. Nor did they expect or welcome aid from the British government. But they most certainly did see themselves as extending 'civilisation', as much by the construction of infrastructure as by the communication of ideas. It was indeed precisely this absence of a European state in his proposals that enabled Leopold II to deceive so many about his intentions. His plans, 'attracted missionaries because they seemed to offer an overarching international organisation in place of competing European governments, to provide basic law and order while transport facilities were put in place' (Bridges 2008: 51–2). These aspirations were, of course, overtaken by the British and German annexations of the 1890s. But even with the completion of the 'scramble for Africa', similar concerns were expressed in more theoretically sophisticated form. Prominent among such theorists was J.A. Hobson, whose famous text *Imperialism* published in 1902, formed the basis of many critical views of that phenomenon including Lenin's. But as various commentators have pointed out, this critical stance on imperialism as practised did not exclude qualified support for a 'sane imperialism', meaning both a form of tutelage over 'backward races' as well as an insistence on access to their natural resources. The qualifications were that the tutelage must benefit both humanity in general as well as the local population, and that such tutelage ideally be directed by an international agency. The 'radical moral defect' of existing imperialism was its assertion of national self-interest, which could only be overcome by international oversight (Long 2005).

The differences between these two historical episodes are self-evident, as is the distance between them and our own time: the marginalisation of Christian belief from public life, the disappearance of vaguely evolutionist themes from contemporary thinking, the intellectual bankruptcy of categories of 'race'. But the similarities are surely compelling and are deeply rooted in the Liberal imagination. The East African missionaries 'did believe that it was their task to reorder African religion, politics, society, and economy in ways decided by them and for a good as defined by them' (Bridges 2008: 46). So did Hobson, and so, even if with less explicit arrogance, do contemporary liberals. So, one rather suspects, does Gilley. But his somewhat vague references to 'colonial governance' and his calls for Western countries to 'become colonial again' were perhaps ill-chosen. Had he chosen his words more carefully, his second article might have been no more controversial than the first.

NOTES

1. See for example Dabashi (2017). Professor Dabashi's intellectual toolkit includes such coolly analytical terms as 'bourgeois hogwash'.

2. Nor is all poor scholarship restricted to the humanities and social sciences.

3. This article usefully illustrates the issue of religious allegiance in historical perspectives on these matters.

4. For a different view see Richards (2008: 52–3). Richards suggests that the writing of the history of the Highlands is marked by 'typical vituperation' (p. xiii).

5. Much recent historical research has emphasised the rather fraught development of ideas and practices of 'toleration'. For a review of this work which is also sensitive to contemporary theoretical debate see Collins (2009).

6. For a discussion of some of the conceptual and related legal issues around this notion in a non-religious context see Jones (2017).

7. For copious examples of these dreary episodes see Whittington (2018).

8. In certain contexts demands may be made for compensation or 'reparations' but I leave that on one side here.

9. At the recent African Studies Association UK conference a South African academic assured her audience that a young student on a university campus wearing a t-shirt bearing the legend 'fuck white people' was to be understood as raising the issue of 'epistemic injustice'. Perhaps that clarification could have been added to the reverse of the t-shirt?

10. Pertinent here would be Taylor (1994) and Galeotti (2002).

11. There are of course secular equivalents, flag burning for example.

12. For a careful survey of the idea and much pertinent literature see Wiener (2013).

13. There is something rather *Life of Brian*-ish about some of the commentary on Gilley. Cf. 'It is true that during their colonial rule, the British, French, Portuguese, Spanish, and Dutch built railways, expanded education systems, improved healthcare, created systems of taxation, and outlined basic governance infrastructure'. <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/case-against-case-colonialism>.

14. To be fair Klein tacks a little in the body of his article.

15. See the discussion of Achimota school in the Gold Coast in Prior (2013) and chapters on education in Hodge *et al.* (2016).

16. Thus recently Han & O'Mahoney (2018). The full argument is a little more nuanced but the authors repeatedly state that disapproving attitudes towards homosexuality in Africa are a legacy of British colonial rule (pp. 99, 105, 106).

17. Nonetheless the point is worth making. See Barton (2004: Appendix A) which reproduces a letter from President Nyerere almost pleading with colonial officials to stay on in Tanzania.

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