

Critical Dialogue

War for Peace: Genealogies of a Violent Ideal in Western and Islamic Thought. By Murad Idris. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019. 352p. \$49.95 cloth.
doi:10.1017/S1537592719004857

— Jennifer Pitts, *University of Chicago*
jpitts@uchicago.edu

War for Peace assails what to many may seem an unimpeachable value. What could be wrong with the desire for peace? A lot, it turns out and, above all, with the idea that everyone must share this desire. Murad Idris's compelling study argues that peace operates as a coercive ideal, one we have to avow or risk making ourselves *personae non gratae*. In proposing that the very "grammar" of peace is coercive, Idris makes a provocative and contestable claim. Many readers in political theory and intellectual history will resist the idea that certain concepts carry built-in logics. But Idris mounts a powerful case through meticulous and imaginative readings of a series of 10 key thinkers, some treated in well-conceived pairings, others handled on their own because of their distinctive influence on ideas of war and peace: Plato, Al-Fārābī/Aquinas, Erasmus, Gentili/Grotius, Ibn Khaldūn/Hobbes, and Kant/Sayyid Qutb. Although the book's subtitle speaks of "Western and Islamic thought," Idris problematizes these categories, treats them as ideological formations, and shows how closely the binary itself has been bound to theories of peace. He writes epigrammatically: "Theorizations of peace draw maps of the universe" (p. 4); "peace is an ideal with enemies and antitheses" (p. 6); "Peace, power and violence travel as a constellation" (p. 314). And Idris takes great care with language, scrupulously giving the original (Greek, Latin, Arabic) for many words within quotations and tracking cognate concepts through texts in which such threads are lost in translation, as in a fascinating analysis of a passage in al-Fārābī that is dense with words sharing the root *j-m-*, indicating the idea of togetherness.

Idris mounts a three-pronged critique of the ideal of peace as "parasitic, provincial, and polemical." It is parasitic in that each formulation turns out to pair peace with other values—"insinuates"—whose connotations are indispensable in giving the ideal meaning and content. Much of the book's work tracks the emergence, accumulation, and reordering of insinuates of peace in political

thought from the pre-Socratics to the twentieth century, among them friendship, justice, order, law, concord, and civilization. Peace is provincial in that it is always presented as a universal ideal, even though its content is always (necessarily) particular and it tends to exclude certain others from its purview by framing them as inherently bellicose. It marks out zones of peace, hostility, and, importantly, pacification. Peace is polemical because it is deployed combatively against those supposedly warlike enemies and because it enables hostility. As the particular antagonisms that shaped a particular moment of peace's idealization are forgotten, its associated concepts come to seem internal to the very notion. In tracing a history of these accretions and forgettings, Idris restores specificity to the moments and authors in his story and a recognition of the contingencies that shaped their respective views of peace. At the same time, by attending to lines of influence and borrowing, he manages to narrate the history of a concept with considerable coherence over a long period and a diverse array of authors. The resulting balance between particularity and reverberation is one of the book's great pleasures and strengths.

Given the importance for so many later thinkers of Plato's treatment of war and peace in the *Laws*, Idris begins with a cogent analysis of the "discursive choreography" of that work. The *Laws* stages an encounter between competing conceptions of peace with their respective constellations of insinuates and, Idris argues, ultimately suggests the limitations of all of them. Many readers, from Aquinas and al-Fārābī to contemporary scholars, have read the Athenian Stranger as Plato's mouthpiece and presumed that his account of peace—as friendship within the city and a paramount value of human existence—was Plato's own. Idris more compellingly, and with a nod to Jill Frank's readings of Plato, argues that the dialogue invites readers to consider the closures and failings of the views set out by the various interlocutors. On this reading, peace is for Plato, as it is for Idris, not a supreme value but a problem and a question.

Pre-Socratic peace orations illustrate other insinuates of peace, in addition to friendship, that provide the context for Plato and that themselves have long afterlives in the career of the concept: agreement (so that difference threatens peace), security (peace is real only when everyone's security is assured), and self-restraint (true peace

obliges mutual goodwill). Association with distinct clusters of these insinuates leads the ideal of peace to do different sorts of political work for various authors and traditions. For early modern jurists such as Gentili and Grotius, the insinuate of law encourages the proliferation of the state form with its demand for certain kinds of enemies, namely other states. (The perpetration of violence by “empires that call themselves cities and states” [p. 259], as Idris puts it, is a preoccupation central to both our books, as is the violent process by which the state form proliferated.) These jurists used the aim of peace to justify harsh tactics that would force the enemy to come to terms quickly. They used law to narrow war’s legitimate subjects by casting certain combatants as pirates or lawless brigands, even as Grotius justified the waging of war by the Dutch East India Company (arguably more pirate than state). The insinuation of “civilization” with peace appears in Idris’s pairing of Ibn Khaldūn’s account of the desert nomad as both the origin and the enemy of the sedentary dynasty with Hobbes’s notion that peace enables “commodious living.” As Idris points out, Hobbes tied peace to many insinuates, among them justice, agreement, obedience, and complaisance. What results is a narrow conception of peace that demands a very particular sort of subject and subjectivity: fearful, private, in need of protection. With productive attention to the neglected settler-colonial aspect of Hobbes’s argument, Idris proposes that Hobbes elaborated his ideal of peace “through and against the Americas” and insinuated it “with a political economy that defines human activity through commerce, travel, and knowledge” (p. 235).

Civilization as an insinuate of peace threads through this history, along with the associated idea that civilized peace lovers have the authority and the duty to reform the warlike, and to wage war in order to do so. The correcting agent turns out to be a consistent perpetrator of war in the name of peace, but the “grammar” of the opposition between the peaceful and the warlike “cannot account for its own implication in practices of violence and war” (p. 73). Such a dynamic of corrective war appears in complex form in Erasmus, who merits a chapter to himself given his reputation as a thoroughgoing pacifist: this concept of corrective war is powerfully dismantled here, in part through analysis of the importance of Erasmus’s virulent anti-Ottomanism for his political thought. As Idris argues, Erasmus’s notion of peace troublingly insinuates unity and concord, demanding mutual understanding and banishing disagreement and difference. The same is not, it must be said, true for Kant, who recognized antagonism as an intrinsic and sometimes constructive force in human relations. And we might read the macabre joke about the peace of the graveyard that begins *Toward Perpetual Peace* as suggesting that Kant was more skeptical of the promises of peace than Idris’s reading of his “teleology of perpetual peace”

allows (p. 273). Idris reads Qutb as an insightful critic of Western imperialism whose response to imperial violence took the form of a kind of mirror to Kant’s. In both, peace is built up first within constituent units, then in a federation or bloc of lawful states. Qutb’s violent, global-policing peace looks, on this account, less like the distinctively Islamic phenomenon his reputation as the founder of radical Islamism suggests and more like an anticolonial variation on an old theme.

The choice of authors who all confirm the proposition that peace is a constitutively violent ideal may lead to the worry that Idris has cherry-picked his illustrations. Examples from traditions of nonviolence could have made for illuminating counterpoints to the claims made here, even if some might ultimately corroborate the book’s central argument. W. E. B. Du Bois’s lifelong, complex commitment to peace as a universal value was a direct outgrowth of his anti-imperialism and antiracism. Gandhi, in contrast, seems to have written remarkably rarely of peace, and then mostly critically for reasons like Idris’s own. (And though in conversation with both Western and Islamic thought, Gandhi arguably falls outside the scope of the book.) Idris might well disagree with accounts of Gandhian nonviolence as necessarily antipolitical: he himself proposes to remake peace “from a moral ideal into a political idea” (p. 321; compare Uday Mehta, “Gandhi and the Common Logic of War and Peace,” *Raritan* 30 [1], 2010). But an engagement with thinkers, whether Du Bois or Gandhi, or perhaps Leo Tolstoy, who apparently did not, like the 10 considered here, use peace to license violence, would alleviate the impression that Idris reads thinkers only a certain way: to root out the violence lurking in their ideas. Or perhaps he would find that violence lurks in their thinking too, which would be of a different sort of interest.

War for Peace is largely a work of (highly original) interpretation and critique of the violent ideal of peace, whose unsettling portrait it draws through these 10 figures. Idris does sketch alternatives such as indifference, disengagement, and truce; the last is, precisely in his view, “peace without insinuates” (p. 268), although the idea of truce has its own imperial history, as Lauren Benton argued in her 2019 Toynbee Prize lecture at the American Historical Association. I would have welcomed Idris’s reflections on peace in comparison to other political concepts for a sense of what it is about peace that makes it constitutively coercive, although such speculation might have taken him beyond the careful analysis that is one of the book’s great virtues. He suggests several responses without directly answering the question. Perhaps because peace is an ideal; but then do all ideals (justice, equality) operate similarly? Perhaps because peace is an inherently negative concept—the mere absence of war—and therefore empty and hard to sustain without those insinuates? Or perhaps he believes these logics are simply particular to

peace, but then others share these features (“civilization” is similarly polemical and provincial). Idris notes carefully that, although the logics he traces are “internal to idealizations of peace” as we find them in the history of political thought, they are not “inherent in the idea” (p. 318). Indeed it is precisely by recognizing the recurrence of these logics, he proposes, that we might come to think about peace differently by prying it free from insinuates like civilization, universality, and security. In the end, Idris does not oppose peace in any form but rather advocates a “more modest peace” (p. 321). Resurrecting the notion of truce—particular, temporary, unstable, fraught with mistrust—from the purgatory into which it has been cast by traditions that glorified perpetual and universal peace is inspired and productive, even if truce proves, in the end, as treacherous a concept as peace.

Response to Jennifer Pitts’s review of *War for Peace: Genealogies of a Violent Ideal in Western and Islamic Thought*

doi:10.1017/S1537592719004845

— Murad Idris

I am grateful to Jennifer Pitts for her thoughtful engagement and important questions. *War for Peace* was written as a genealogy of the moralities of peace. I wanted to *unmask* how peace, as a moral ideal, is implicated in violence, dispossession, and global asymmetries. The book examines the discursive structures and logics by which certain groups today are *compelled to speak* their commitment to peace and their desire for it; in a global, racialized hierarchy of lives, peace-loving signals humanity, and the demand indexes *dehumanization*. This Nietzschean-Foucauldian frame is fundamental to how I understand the book. It is different from the right to criticize peace, coercive speech, and social inclusion/incivility, which arguably entails a liberal frame.

Peace, power, and violence travel as a constellation. *War for Peace* assembled a set of thinkers, from Plato to Kant and Qutb, who cite each other and some version of the claim that “war is for the sake of peace.” As a genealogy of a morality, rather than, for example, an exhaustive intellectual history or an assessment of the simple proposition “peace is/is not violent,” the book aimed to demonstrate the unacknowledged, persistent, and importantly dynamic ways in which peace blurs into war and “war for peace” is reiterated. More basically, these are 10 canonical thinkers in political theory, fundamental to the discipline’s culturalized (and periodized) choreography of difference surrounding “Islam” and “the West,” war and peace. The book’s structure takes up the field’s investments in this canon in order to undo the interpretive orthodoxies and illuminate the cultural politics (and, yes, the violence) surrounding its texts and contexts.

War for Peace tracked “three long compulsions that have constituted peace as a morality,” which “should lead us to be less sanguine than contemporary critics might wish to be about how easy and straightforward it may be for the ideal of ‘peace’ to exit or overcome the framework of war” (pp. 7–8). My aim was not to exhaust the range of peace’s political (or nonpolitical) deployments and discursive registers; there are indeed many other formations, structures, and legacies. Pitts notes that *War for Peace* does not examine Du Bois, Gandhi, Tolstoy, or traditions of nonviolence (the last involves a different set of questions, including the politics of *who* produces, mobilizes, and consumes nonviolence’s traditions; see pp. xix n24, 8; also Mehta, “Gandhi and the Common Logic of War and Peace,” p. 149). It also does not examine Black Lives Matter theorist-activists, Palestinian resistance, or Turkish civil rights activists. But theorizing “peace” across these thinkers and contemporary movements is not free of violence or outside power. Different and complex as each is, they draw attention to, rather than deflect, the politics and violence of “peace” (as when Du Bois writes that global peace and its racialized hierarchy depends on extraction from colonies to fuel empires’ wars [“Colonies and Peace”] or that white invocations of peace shield the institutions of war that exploit everyone else [*Darkwater*]). My book invites readers to attend to the productivity and specificity of peace, whether in these thinkers and movements or elsewhere, without deflecting attention from moralized constellations of violence. To treat Du Bois or Gandhi otherwise risks treating them as ambassadors of purity and apolitical morality and peace as a concept outside of politics, as Fanon, Said, and Benjamin might point out, in their own way.

Peace, often contrasted with the truce, colonizes time. The truce, as “peace without insinuates,” is temporally finite and does not sanitize other ideas. All this is crucial for my suggestion of the truce (p. 319) as one of three suppressed formulations embedded in the provincial, polemical, and parasitical. These are not moral alternatives to violence or solutions to war. They are not pure. They may take violent forms. They are not outside politics or even killing. Benton’s discussion illustrates my point. To answer Pitts’s question whether peace, its idealization, or form is the problem, I do not think there is an original sin. Like other moral ideals, it is not outside power and violence.

My point is precisely that peace today is considered the source and site of moralization, liberalism’s ideal of ideals, whose valuation is at odds with the work its invocation does in the world, precisely because it is not treated as a *political* concept but as a human desire and moral ideal.

War for Peace takes aim at a number of orthodoxies. I tried to dismantle both the status of peace and its canonical thinkers (including readings of Kant that treat his ambivalences, humor, or second thoughts as anticolonial critique rather than reflecting empire’s operations). Given what I

outline throughout the book about the operations of peace disciplinarily and globally, this is the book that needed writing, not one that demands nonviolence or celebrates an alternative peace and thereby obscures its imbrication with violence and war. To adapt Nietzsche, the moralization of peace is soaked in blood—and for a very long time.

Boundaries of the International: Law and Empire. By Jennifer Pitts. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018. 304p. \$46.50 cloth.
doi:10.1017/S1537592719004948

— Murad Idris, *University of Virginia*
idris@virginia.edu

Jennifer Pitts's *Boundaries of the International* is an excellent study of law and empire in European political thought across the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. Meticulously researched and elegantly structured, it should quickly become a standard text on the politics of law, international political theory, global intellectual history, and the critical history of international law. It will also appeal to scholars interested in Islam in European thought and the racialized genealogies of the international.

Pitts compellingly demonstrates how the law of nations' Eurocentric universalism and exceptionalism facilitated empire. The book maps the historical debates about the scope of international law and community, as well as the rationales for and implications of its inclusions and exclusions. It scrutinizes the principles, prejudices, and practices that interlocutors treated as authoritative or criticized as hypocritical. Building on postcolonial critiques and the work of C. H. Alexandrowicz (1902–75)—whose essays Pitts edited with David Armitage in a volume titled *The Law of Nations in Global History* (2017)—she undoes the conventional European-triumphalist narrative about the gradual inclusion of Europe's others into its laws; in fact, *that* is the exceptionalist, developmentalist, racialized discourse that Pitts historicizes and provincializes, starting with its myth of an egalitarian order of equal states. The book is both a history of our global present, in which law reentrenches and conceals asymmetries of power, and an attempt to indicate paths not taken.

Pitts highlights, especially in the introduction and the epilogue, that the frame of inclusion/exclusion—of formal recognition and mere standing—misses the fundamental, structural global asymmetries of power between European empires and the Global South. At stake are the *terms of inclusion/exclusion*, or how both can facilitate domination (pp. 9–10). The narrative weaves these threads into a rich tapestry, with three recurring patterns: as a political discourse, Pitts argues, the law served to justify empire, obscure empire, and critique empire (pp. 3–4, 190–91). Pitts aims to recover the critiques as

resources, or—at risk of overextending the metaphor—as threads in a different color that interrupt the dominant pattern or even trace a counter-pattern from this same fabric.

Chapter 2 begins at the margins, distilling the Ottoman Empire's role as the “defining marginal case” (p. 28) in European thought. Pitts focuses on “oriental despotism,” its relationship to Paul Rycout's ambivalence about the Turk, its formulation in Montesquieu's systemization, and the early orientalist Anquetil-Duperron's criticisms of the category. Subsequent chapters, arranged chronologically, tend to share this structure, surveying thinkers who exemplify strategies that justify and obscure empire and then turning to dissenting voices. The contrasts bring into sharp relief the blatant civilizationalism and racialization of dominant Eurocentric formulations. At the same time, this arc can make the critics look better than they might on their own.

Chapter 3, on Emer de Vattel's universalism, illuminates his elisions of empire, his ambiguities and ambivalences about the law of nations' scope, and his Eurocentric unevenness, most notably in his treatment of Muslim sites and sources. Vattel is a recurring thread, elegantly binding the book; when thinkers in the next chapters appealed to his *Droit des gens*, its ambiguities became productive in contradictory directions. Chapter 4, on “critical legal universalism” in the late eighteenth century, analyzes Warren Hastings's vision of hierarchically arranged worlds, in contrast to the views of Edmund Burke and English judge William Scott. Burke and Scott, Pitts argues, championed an alternative universalism, one that treats the law of nations as binding on Europeans in their conduct abroad, does not impose European norms on others, and recognizes (parts of) the extra-European world as having sovereignty and laws that obligate Europeans.

Chapters 5 and 6, on the first and second halves of the nineteenth century, respectively, discuss the eventual displacement of Vattel as an authority, the rise of positivism and professionalization of international law, and the development of historicism. These chapters showcase permutations of the scope of law, including arguments for pluralism and reciprocity, and others based on civilizationist historicism and racialized developmentalism. They draw out how European exceptionalism and universalism blended to give international law a triumphalist European origin and universal authority over all others.

The book brings together critical international law, global intellectual history, and political theory. It shows, powerfully and devastatingly, how permutations of the international justified dispossession, naturalized subjugation, and constituted Europe's others asymmetrically, including in some legally pluralistic iterations. Its historical, geographic, and ideological range is impressive. In a short but fundamental section in chapter 5, Pitts

discusses how the Chinese official Lin Zexu and the Algerian intellectual Hamdan Khodja appealed to Vattel in order to challenge European abuses (pp. 137–41). Her discussions of Khodja and Lin model the importance of foregrounding power when turning to extra-European contexts and sources: these intellectuals' (unsuccessful) deployments of Vattel paint a fuller global picture of legal discourse's structural weaponization, the perpetual belatedness of the colony, and global asymmetries in discourses about global asymmetry.

The use of Vattel as a structuring device is compelling. It illustrates how a canonized text exceeds its context and haunts later discourses—simultaneously the site and content of disagreement—and how the historical productivity of reinterpretations depends on the text's own elisions and which parts readers emphasize. Pitts tracks *who* can successfully cite which texts authoritatively. By the time that Khodja cites Vattel, he is too late; Europeans no longer treat Vattel as an authority (p. 145). The colonial structure of knowledge is striking and resonates with what others have described as the present's own epistemic structures of belatedness. Once concepts and frameworks are deployed in the Global South and by minoritized populations, the metropole's elite will have conveniently moved on or decentered that framework. The rules continuously change to reentrench asymmetry.

In light of such asymmetries, I want to pull a few threads surrounding the historical critiques that *Boundaries* carefully reconstructs. This is both to extend Pitts's acknowledgments of some critiques' limits and double-edges (pp. 5, 115, 179), including that some were “not necessarily anti-imperial” (p. 95) or justified alternative imperial forms (p. 98), and to reflect on the work that critiques can or cannot do—from exposing empire to obscuring it, from staging resistance to deflecting it.

The first critic whom Pitts recovers is Anquetil-Duperron. She notes that his *Législation orientale* “had little impact in its day, and Anquetil's profound critique of European provincialism and racism and their connection to abuses of power were largely forgotten” (p. 65). But Anquetil-Duperron's criticism of Europeans, which proceeded by insisting on Asians' lawfulness, interpreting Qur'anic verses, and shaming Europeans for hypocrisy, was *internal* to orientalism as a discursive field or modality. Orientalism, after all, simultaneously served to work out European identity and constitute a structure of knowledge-authority about the Orient based on Europeans' observations and ancient texts. Although his orientalism was more cosmopolitan than demonizing, the critique's position of articulation might not be easy to separate from or abstract into a technique. I do not mean that sources of critique should be untainted (which we agree is not what is at stake [p. 27]), but that interpretive location matters—not just interpretive posture.

Pitts persuasively argues that Anquetil-Duperron and Burke adopt a posture of interpretive generosity (pp. 8, 60) by reading (at least some) non-Europeans “*as if*” they are obeying the law of nations, thereby emphasizing continuity and presenting them in familiar terms (pp. 67, 106–7). Here, she warns that this posture is assimilationist and refuses to acknowledge difference (or be challenged by it—perhaps it betrays a will to have already known). The extent to which the *as-if* and generosity are a critical resource, for who, and toward which ends, remains a question. I worry that the powerful just as easily either suspend disbelief to act *as-if* or not, choose to interpret generously or not. After all, when Khodja modeled interpretive generosity for his European interlocutors, they simply dismissed him as a fanatic and deceitful Muslim (p. 141); it is also unclear how far European interpretive generosity would have taken Algerian independence.

Second, and relatedly, a number of the critiques across the book are at the register of moral character or attitude: to deny that non-Europeans have law, to call them fanatics or uncivilized, or to impose European laws on them is, some critics say, presumptuous, arrogant, self-serving, bigoted, hypocritical, and deceitful. This form of critique does not fully congeal with Pitts's own more direct and compelling description of “a capitalist world system” that bound “European metropolises and extra-European states and societies” in “a profoundly asymmetrical process, with international law playing an important role in justifying and stabilizing inequalities of wealth and military power.” One must confront “an imperial global order” and “the role of domination in the history of international law” (pp. 14, 191). Put differently, some of the critiques are, like Pitts's, about domination, power asymmetries, naturalized racializations, capitalism, and structures of law and empire; other critiques, in foregrounding attitude, sensibility, or moral character, can serve to obscure the structure of empire by reinforcing the sense that shaming the powerful can end oppression.

Finally, if some critiques and resources conceal or even sustain empire while others, perhaps like Khodja on Algerian independence and indigenous politics, expose and oppose it, it is necessary to further distinguish between their deployments. On the one hand, the book's final list of thinkers who offer “resources for critique and frameworks for envisioning greater justice and equity” successfully showcases a vast range of periods and arguments: “Anquetil-Duperron to Hamdan Khodja and Henry Stanley, to C. H. Alexandrowicz and Mohammed Bedjaoui” (p. 191). At the same time, their different critiques represent nonequivalent resources and situated orientations toward power and oppression. As resources, they authorize different political projects. Some of these critiques, then, enable not just critical but perhaps more

directly structurally transformative and decolonial politics, in which the law can be made into an instrument for another purpose—namely, resistance.

Response to Murad Idris's review of *Boundaries of the International: Law and Empire*

doi:10.1017/S153759271900495X

— Jennifer Pitts

I am deeply grateful to Murad Idris for his generous and searching review of *Boundaries of the International*, and especially for his reflections on the importance of the differently situated nature of the critiques of international law I canvass in the book. Idris displays his characteristic way with words in the review. “Legal discourse’s structural weaponization” and “global asymmetries in discourses about global asymmetry” get to the heart of what I hoped to convey in my too cursory examination of responses by figures such as Hamdan Khodja and Lin Zexu to the legal languages used to justify their countries’ subjugation to European imperial power. The rules have indeed constantly changed to reinforce asymmetry.

Idris is also right to note that by proposing differently situated thinkers as a set of critical resources, I did not address how, “as resources,” they might “authorize different political projects,” with some offering critiques and others active resistance to imperial domination. I take this point to heart and offer here what amounts to a provisional response. His claim might be read as an assertion that only authors of a particular (anti- or postcolonial) identity are in a position to contribute to resistance; or it might be to say that critics’ ideas are invariably shaped by their relation to structures of power, so that we should not be surprised to find the limitations I noted among the early European critics, with their privileged, sometimes even interested, relations to European imperial power. The latter reading certainly seems right; I am less sure about the former, given

the myriad ways in which texts speak to and are taken up by readers in new contexts, as in C. L. R. James’s famous vignette of Toussaint L’Ouverture reading “over and over again” the passage in Raynal’s *History of the Two Indies*: “A courageous chief only is wanted. Where is he?” Further, wherever the critics’ location, it is worth noting that the audiences of these critiques were generally in the imperial metropole. Hamdan Khodja, as much as Anquetil-Duperron, shaped his arguments to appeal to a French audience to whose preconceptions and partialities both were alert, for instance by deploying tropes of “backwardness” but insisting that urban elites like himself, not European rulers, should be the ones to civilize the Algerian hinterland.

Idris’s related point that two distinct sorts of critique, ethical and structural, jostle together in the history I narrate is likewise astute. This point gets to an issue central to the critical history of international law and political thought of the sort I attempt in much of my work, namely the vexed relationship between structural dynamics of the capitalist world system and the conceptual and normative arguments that agents acting within (replicating, challenging) these structures rely on to navigate them, to make sense of their own actions and the world around them, and to interact with others. Although some lines of criticism may indeed emphasize the vices—presumption, bigotry, hypocrisy — associated with imperialism, the critics I discuss generally conjoin such arguments with more structural ones, as in Burke’s various arguments that global empires were by their nature (distance, nonaccountability to the governed) inclined to abuses of power. Attention to both is arguably necessary given that structures shape the self-understandings and ultimately the actions of the agents who perpetuate them and are likewise enabled and shaped by those self-conceptions.