CrossMark

This issue of *Modern Intellectual History* is respectfully dedicated to the memory of Sir C.A. Bayly (1945–2015) by the forum and journal editors. His long service on the journal's editorial board, like his multiple contributions to its pages (up to and including this issue's forum), helped globalize intellectual history in our time — a small part of the magisterial lifetime achievements of this pathbreaking scholar.

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FORUM: GLOBAL LIBERALISMS INTRODUCTION*

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The four essays in this collection address the history of liberalism outside Europe, at the same time as they reinscribe European liberalism in global contexts. They ask where, beyond Europe and the North Atlantic, has liberal thought flourished as a way to think about problems of state formation, political economy and social order? They take historical scholarship beyond territories that were formally "colonies" of Europe (or of Europeans) to centres of intellectual activity stimulated and challenged by the global circulation of Western liberalism: the Ottoman Empire, the kingdoms of East Asia, the colonial world, the revolutionary world. Their "global" character is less evident in their individual geographical reach, and more apparent in their individual contributions to the sum of what we know about the appearance of liberal ideas beyond their transatlantic intellectual streams. We have brought them together here in order to raise questions about both the limits of liberalism as a concept, and the conceptual frontiers of intellectual history.

What is liberalism, and what does a "global" perspective add to our answer? These essays step outside of the canonical elite anglophone (usually British) and secular tradition of political thought, exemplified by Alan Ryan's recent and, in its own way, admirable book *On Politics: A History of Political Thought from Herodotus to the Present*. A reader guided by the index entry "liberalism" is led to Ryan's lucid discussions of the texts and contexts of Plato, Hobbes, Rousseau, Burke, de Tocqueville, Dewey, Mill (James and John Stuart), Bentham, some

* The essays were first presented and discussed at a roundtable organized by the International History program at the University of Sydney to discuss Chris Bayly, *Recovering Liberties: Indian Thought in the Age of Liberalism and Empire* (Cambridge, 2012), which is itself conceived as a retelling and complement to Albert Hourani's 1962 classic *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*.

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Fascist thinkers, Schumpeter and Rawls. Ryan turns his attention beyond Europe and North America only when he includes Franz Fanon and Sayyid Qutb under the heading "radical anti-imperialism." Provoked by their sense of exclusion from the avowedly inclusive "advanced world," each professed apprehension about, and distaste for, liberal and secular visions of political order.[1] For Ryan it is Fanon and Qutb's anti-liberalism—their articulation of the "psychological and cultural animosities and deformations brought about by three centuries of European imperialism"—that qualifies them as political thinkers.[2] Ryan does not consider that some colonized peoples found the resources of their critical response to imperialism from within liberalism and that they might thus contribute to the global elaboration of liberalism.

By contrast, working with the global, the essays in this forum take up a theme that Frederic Cooper has developed in regard to francophone Africa: that subjects of colonial rule have mobilized the anti-colonial potential in political concepts of colonial provenance.[3] In *Recovering Liberties: Indian Thought in the Age of Liberalism and Empire*, Chris Bayly has similarly observed that "Indian intellectuals ... believed that they could rewrite the liberal discourse so as to strip it of its colonial features and to re-empower it as an indigenous ideology, but one still pointing towards universal progress."[4] Taking their practical historical cue from Bayly's argument and methodology in *Recovering Liberties*, each of the essays brought together here moves away from definitions that posit liberalism as "a heritage of abstract thought about human nature, agency, freedom, and value, and their bearing on the functions and origins of political and legal institutions."[5] Instead, they direct us towards the multivalent applied contexts which have given oxygen to that heritage. This is the methodological challenge of context posed by the Cambridge school pushed to new geographical, cultural, and intellectual limits in order to refurbish the spaces of liberalism, and the history of ideas.

Some answers to the question "what is liberalism" already encourage us to see it in historically situated terms. Bayly quotes the philosopher Raymond Geuss describing intellectual history and political thought as an "'amalgam of historically contingent' fragments of different ideologies."[6] His essay here picks up the Indian story after Independence, and focuses on "working politicians or

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1 Alan Ryan, *On Politics: A History of Political Thought from Herodotus to the Present* (London, 2012), 872.

2 Ibid., 878.

3 Frederic Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley, CA, 2005).

4 C. A. Bayly, *Recovering Liberties: Indian Thought in the Age of Liberalism and Empire* (Cambridge, 2012), 3–4.

5 Jeremy Waldron, "Liberalism," in E. Craig, ed., *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 5 (London, 1998), 598–9.

6 See Bayly, below in this issue, at n. 5.

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lawyers who did not produce canonical ideological statements as such." These applied contexts were specifically political and policy-oriented. He reminds us that liberal texts were contextualized in a pragmatic concern for the applied relevance of ideas (what the American pragmatists such as John Dewey thought of as the ultimate manner of intellectual engagement and purpose). Ian Coller's essay evokes an African pragmatic constitutionalism, while Maurizio Isabella describes the southern European liberals—in Portugal, Spain, Turin, Naples and Greece—who preferred "to steer clear of excessively abstract principles that paid little or no heed to concrete social and historical contexts."

In contemplating the social shards of a liberal past, the essays point to the importance of recovering empirical connections between individuals differently situated. Coller describes the London and Paris milieux of Hassuna D'Ghies and the friendship between D'Ghies and Bentham. Bayly, for his part, gives an account of an elite intellectual milieu, around Nehru, in India after Independence, each person drawing in different ways on liberal, Soviet and religious ideas of national development. Implicit in this transnational approach to intellectual history is the question to what extent are these intellectuals heirs to a transnational intellectual heritage (whether or not the actors themselves are aware of it)? It also returns us to the problem of whether such a heritage can be the endowment of colonial subjection. Coller deflates the notion that there is no genealogy of African liberalism to be recovered in the early nineteenth century, and then proceeds to establish the deep *longue durée* connection between the 1820s "African" moment and the Young Ottomans of the early twentieth century. Bayly shows us that-—contrary to the dominant historical view that the mid-twentieth century was simply a moment when Indian constitutional liberalism, and Nehru himself, gave way to socialism—it is possible to see connections between Nehru's socialism and the communitarian liberalism of the early twentieth-century intellectuals such as Hobson, Hobhouse, Green and Gokhale. For Isabella, southern European constitutionalists demonstrate the "markedly communitarian dimension of early liberal ideology." Tim Rowse questions whether the indigenous voice should be defined by its being outside liberalism as its suppressed "other." His biographical case studies show how indigenous intellectuals from North America and Australasia, and including a woman, drew on the stadism of the Enlightenment, and on the Christian promise of salvation, to claim "improvement" as their own project.

Significantly, whether the thinkers discussed in these four essays claimed to be "liberals" or to speak in the name of "liberalism" is not a question posed by Bayly, Coller, Isabella or Rowse. Instead, the strategy of a global history of liberalism, exemplified in their four essays, is one of attribution: to argue that some features of liberalism were present in the political thought of a certain time and milieu. This approach extends the scope of a global history of liberalism even further, to

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texts whose authors did not necessarily consider themselves liberals. It also raises the question that if liberalism has been porous to the intellectual traditions and material interests of the many different peoples who have found it useful, from the early nineteenth century to the early twentieth, then is liberalism so dispersed that it ceases to name even a "family of positions" and thus disappears as a meaningful object of historical inquiry?[7] Put another way, global history poses the risk of ideological amorphousness, *and* threatens to undo the universalist foundationalism that has sustained liberal codings of political and legal rights. We invite readers to judge whether the four essays published here have stretched liberalism into something shapeless.

In their various answers, implicit and extant, to the question "what is liberalism?" asked from a global, plural perspective, each of the essays here also extends the contours of the idea of a core universal liberalism. This returns us to one of the more illuminating recent formulations of the historical value of a global approach sensitive not only to geographical reach, but also to the tension between sameness and difference that underscores the mapping of a world beyond the Anglo-American/Western European: that thinking globally is the task not only of historians but also of historical actors whose "universalist" world view is the subjective basis of their action—their "fictive and applied forms of universalism."[8] Liberalism is shown to inhabit a world in which there are other universalisms, and their relationships—rivalry, sympathy, mutual distance—are matters for historical investigation. Coller's essay, for example, asks whether there was "African" thought in the liberal age. By tracking the life and thought of the Tripoli-born D'Ghies through the multilingual evidence of his extant writings and documents that connect him with Jeremy Bentham, among others, Coller's answer is yes, particularly since D'Ghies himself invoked an African context for the application of liberal political principles. Coller is careful to parse the changing contexts, meanings and significance of this idea of an African liberalism—whether as part of "the global moment of constitutional liberalism," or rethought as an Islamic liberalism, or a Tripoli- or North African-specific struggle for liberty. The result is the recovery of a lost genealogy of responses to the age of liberalism that were self-consciously, and problematically, named "African." As we hope the reader will see, the recovery of the thinking of Hassuna D'Ghies, or Native American Zitkala-Sa, or a more subtle Nehru, leads us into a fuller, more complicated understanding of the global history of ideas, away from its universalizing impetus, to a pluralist reading of *liberalisms*.

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7 Waldron, "Liberalism," 598–9.

8 A. G. Hopkins, "Interactions between the Universal and the Local," in Hopkins, ed., *Global History: Interactions between the Universal and the Local* (Basingstoke, 2006), 1–38, at 12.

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Each contribution in this forum also draws attention, then, to the embedded cultural determinism that has restrained the selection and reading of liberal texts and consideration of their contexts, namely long-held assumptions about who can be liberal, and what liberalism looked or looks like.[9] Although the history of liberalism has always had space for national diversity, historians have tended to restrict their attention to certain sources: the published text, the male European intellectual. In *Recovering Liberties*, Bayly features Indian liberals suffering the stereotypes of a retinue of intellectual historians who "variously described" them as mendicants, or collaborators, or self-seeking bourgeois individualists, or inauthentic "mimic" men. (These have their partners among female intellectuals, whose thinking has been marginalized in the canon of liberal thought on similar counts.) For Bayly, recovering and reinstating the place of non-traditional intellectuals in the lineage of liberalism requires navigating between essentialist or exceptionalist stereotypes, and suspending the reduction of the different to the same. For his part, Isabella's essay here turns our attention closer to the European home of liberalism studies, to the southern European setting of the age of revolutions, a region neglected by intellectual historians, he argues, because of cultural stereotypes rather than a lack of evidence of the significance of liberal thought. Once this marginal European site is included in the repertoire of liberalism, however, its secular underpinnings are suddenly subject to revision.

As importantly too, in each case explored here—the Indian, African, southern European, settler-society indigenous—religion is crucial for the purposes of legitimacy, or stability, or rhetorical strategy. This is a discovery that reinforces current scholarly interest in the persistence of religion through the Enlightenment and after in the "Western" world, and requires a radical rethinking of the ways in which liberalism itself became a significant idea. Accounts of the relationship between liberalism and religious world views may often turn out to be the familiar story of pragmatic compromise between the constitutional wishes of liberal intellectuals, the defence of ecclesiastical privilege and the popular suspicion of imposed secular political culture. However, another way that religion may figure, exemplified in the essays by Bayly and Isabella, is that when liberals turned to nation-building, they found that long-standing confessional identities significantly determined popular senses of nationhood and that in cultivating the moralities of liberal nationhood, liberals could draw (and needed to draw) on the moral codes propagated by established religion. As Isabella concludes, "rather than rejecting religion, liberals strove to find an accommodation between their values and revealed truth."

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9 As Duncan Bell has recently argued, the historiography of liberalism is profoundly implicated in the answer to this question. See Duncan Bell, "What Is Liberalism?", *Political Theory*, available at https://cambridge.academia.edu/DuncanBell, accessed 7 May 2014.

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Ultimately, under the auspices of "global history," the accounts of liberalisms published here confirm a transnational intellectual history, and—whether or not "liberalism" is the focus of inquiry—the diversity of approaches to transnational intellectual history. By expanding the cultural geography of the global field and its actors—even asking who counts as an intellectual—these essays attest to an expanded view of the conventional dimensions of the texts and contexts of intellectual history, through what Bayly has described as "dialogue between intellectual history and social history, without 'reducing' one to the other."[10] On the back of this social approach to the situated history of ideas and intellectuals, the historians featured here recover women's rights (as well as a woman intellectual), and religious rights as core precepts of liberalism. In Coller and Rowse's essays, liberalism is self-consciously extended to the concerns of liberal internationalism—whether D'Ghies's engagement of the value of international law (not only Bentham, but also Vattel) and the language of abolition, philanthropy, humanity, or Native American Zitkala-Sa's 1918 propositions made in the language of Wilsonian internationalism.

An important way in which liberalism may acquire (and be shown by the historian to have) transnational currency is when intellectuals in different regions and nations face common problems that can be understood and resolved in terms offered by liberal thought. We see examples of such problems in the four essays gathered here: whether problems of accommodating ethnic/confessional plurality within a nation state, problems of articulating popular sovereignty with respect for monarchy, problems of defining secular governmental authority in polities in which religious culture provided much social cohesion. Finally, there is the conviction held by some intellectuals that liberalism—as a universal ideology—is pertinent to every human situation and defines entitlements from which no human can rightly be excluded.

Narrated as a series of discursive conjunctures, a global history of *liberalisms* can identify a changing configuration of concepts and values, found in specifiable times and places, enunciated by particular individuals as visions of the problems and possibilities of peoples both colonizing and colonized. For the intellectual historian, a question that then keeps returning once a world of ideas has been opened up to historical exploration, is this: is there any turning back to the singular provincialism of a non-global history of liberalism?

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[10] Bayly, *Recovering Liberties.*

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