

*Liberals and tyranny:  
Kant, Mill and Montesquieu*

*Reflections*

*Shiraz Dossa  
Department of Political Science  
St. Francis Xavier University  
NS*

*CPSA Conference, University of Victoria*

*June 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> 2013*

*Victoria, BC*

***DRAFT - NOT FOR CITATION OR QUOTATION***

### *Political theory*

In political theory's archive, *Pericles* is a mesmerizing presence. His funeral speech affirms Athens' flair for democracy. It inscribes the Athenian and Western disdain for *tyranny*, underlining its *difference* from Asia. Aristotle cast Asians as slavish by nature in his *Politics*. In Athens, claimed Pericles, power is vested in the "the whole people". In addition, Athenians are "free and tolerant"; in public affairs, they "keep to the law" (Thucydides 1972, p.145) This *jouissance* in Athens's genius is a recurring theme in the West. In Lacan's sense, it is agonizing and joyous. It is enjoyment and pain incurred for the lesser. Lacan adds that in this sense "jouissance is evil" (Lacan 1992, p. 227) It involves sublime suffering, the kind entailed in defusing "human rights" across the planet to the less savvy. The fate imposed on the superior. Kant, Mill and Montesquieu were master players.

This is the Athens which suffuses Arendt's political theory (Arendt 1959, p. 176) This was ground zero which licensed her political theory after the Nazi assault. But Plato (Socrates) disputes this version. His Pericles states that the "government of the Athenians is a democracy by name but it actually an aristocracy". The "few", not the "many" command power (Plato 1961, 238d, p. 190)). Rousseau agrees: "Athens was not really a democracy, but a very tyrannical aristocracy" (Ritter 1988, p. 63) Plato's and Rousseau's constructions are closer to Athenian reality. In Arendt's elegiac reading, the *polis* is pure in spirit; Arendt does not deny Athens' flaws. Her focus is the sensibility at play in ancient Athens (Dossa 2008). It is an affliction common to political theorizing. And liberal theory is equally complicit. The fissure that separates Pericles, Arendt and the liberals is deep: the latter's mythic quotient is excessive and essentially fictive. Liberal states ceaselessly subvert liberal values. The collusion of liberal citizens in destabilizing opposition is global. As Bourdieu notes, they succumb to "symbolic violence", the

“coercion which is set up only through the consent the dominated cannot fail to give (therefore to the domination) when their understanding of the situation and relation can only use instruments of knowledge they have in common with the dominator” (Bourdieu 2000, pp. 170-171) The posturing and militancy that accompanies liberal theory is unparalleled.

Its continuous *violence* envelops global discursive regimes. It structurally restricts, even precludes, criticism because “the notions or theses *with which* one argues”, the “suppositions of discussion remain undiscussed”. This “cunning of Imperialist Reason” and its “new global vulgate” command the intellect. (Bourdieu 1999) Its colonial racism has been severely criticised by US literary figures. Melville labelled it “the metaphysics of Indian-hating”. After their near annihilation: “Indian-hating still exists; and, no doubt, will continue to exist as Indians do” (Melville 1966, pp. 131-133) its authority and reach are now nearly universal. In the Muslim zone, “Indian-hating” has devoured nations, states, and cultures since 1991. It is the essence of the *war on terror* which has consumed millions of lives across Muslim Asia. Massive numbers of Afghans, Iraqis, , Libyans, Yemenis , Somalis and Pakistanis have been annihilated.

Yet little of this terror war is new aside from the rhetoric. From 1492, the “natives” globally have suffered relentless genocides after they were “discovered”. The fact is that the US “has never been exempt from fascism” which surfaces in the US and in US foreign policy in an American form: “No swastikas in an American fascism, but Stars and Stripes ... and Christian crosses. No fascist salute, but mass recitations of the pledge of allegiance” (Paxton 2005, pp. 49, 201-02). Indeed, the US state was founded with fascist methods. The literary critic Susan Sontag affirmed that Native Indians suffered a colossal “genocide” based on “the unquestioned ..... right of white Europeans to exterminate a resident ....coloured population to take over the continent”.

Contrary to *bien-pensant* liberals, Sontag argued that “Mozart . . .parliamentary government. . . .the emancipation of women . . . Kant, Marx. . . don’t redeem what this civilization has wrought upon the world”. The character of the settlers was the problem: “the white race *is* the cancer of human history; it is the white race and it alone- its ideologies and inventions – which eradicates autonomous civilizations, which has upset the ecological balance of the planet, which now threatens the very existence of life itself”. She was pilloried and vilified, but she never retracted her criticism. (Sontag 1967, pp. 51-58). It is worth noting that a few insiders concur that liberal theory is militant. For instance, Brian Barry asserts that the *liberal* “way of life is more admirable”; it creates men “superior to others”. He claims this even though liberal elites “burned” thousands “in a few seconds” in “Hiroshima and Nagasaki”. Indeed, he extols this “Faustian vision” (Barry 1973, pp.125-127). In liberal thought, such *aporias* and insincerity are the norm.

Jeremy Waldron defends a “robust” liberalism. He accepts that “religious” and “cultural” pluralism is problematic for liberals because “incommensurable” values will cause difficulties. Still, he posits the superiority of liberal values as self-evident. Waldron stipulates that liberals “must abandon any claim about the ‘neutrality’ of liberal politics”. In fact, “the liberal will have to concede that he has a great many more enemies (*real enemies – people who will suffer under a liberal dispensation*) than he has actually pretended to have”. Waldron’s candour unveils the innately illiberal bent of liberal theory. His focus on the “enemy” is especially worrying. It has the whiff of fascist politics and is indicative of their common affinities. (Waldron 1987, pp. 144 - 146). Carl Schmitt’s politics parallel Waldron’s on this question. Schmitt was justifiably wary of the *civilizing* and *humanitarian* missions of the liberal states. He was prescient in seeing that

they were colonial, violent, and exploitive ventures in conquest and subjugation. Calling them liberal missions won't hide their fascist provenance.

Conversely Charles Taylor is a congenial liberal. He respects *difference* and encourages it. The *enemy* locution is alien to his sensibility. Still, he thinks liberals shouldn't "claim complete cultural neutrality" inasmuch as "Western liberalism is ... an organic outgrowth of Christianity". It can't be agnostic and it has to take a stand. Thus Taylor's "hospitable" liberalism "is a fighting creed". Liberals will to "draw the line" somewhere. Yet the "other" citizens reject specific liberal values. Liberal sexual ethics trouble cultural communities. Many Muslims *choose* not to mimic liberal conduct. This constitutes a problem for Taylor. He feels compelled, as a Catholic/liberal to fight for his *liberal faith*. It is sensible, he feels, that "others" concede that "this is how we do things here". It's a bit "awkward" but crucial. It seems that Taylor is as militant as Barry and Waldron: liberal values have to prevail because they are superior. (Taylor 1994, pp. 62-63, *passim*)

Yet the whole truth is even worse. To *defend* liberal values is legitimate. Erasing non-liberal values is something else. Yet liberals continually initiate such attacks. It is not just a contest of intellectuals. Liberals utilise terror and violence to impose their will. Liberalism is a *warrior* creed. It is committed to conquest and domination. In the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno unravelled the liberal dynamic of capture and incarceration. The Enlightenment ethic was intrinsically imperial. It never delivered the emancipation it promised. An Enlightenment creed, liberalism shares its limitations. The Enlightenment is "as totalitarian as any system". It "dissolves the injustice of old inequality ... but perpetuates" new ones. Surreptitiously it undercuts the humanity and the dignity of the liberated.

Nietzsche unveiled the “dialectic of the enlightenment” as the logic “domination”. His critique exposed its zeal for mastery. In its own way fascism was invested in the Enlightenment and its lure of a new order. (Adorno and Horkheimer 1972, pp. 24, 44). Under the Nazi regime, liberal theory proved to be disastrous. It assumed that “unity among men had been established” and ended up serving as an “apologia for existing circumstances”. The liberal Jews faced the worst assaults. In fine, “the dialectical link between enlightenment and domination, and the dual relationship of progress to cruelty” ensured their lethal fate. Liberals and liberal theory colluded with Nazism and its founding of the new racial order. The truth is that the connivance of liberal states from 1933 when Hitler assumed power until 1942, yielded the holocausts that consumed over 20 million lives ( Slavs, Gypsies [Roma and Sinti], Jews) (Bauman 1991, p. x ). Nazism and Nazi mass murders were facilitated by liberal Europe, US, Canada and Australasia.

### ***Liberals and Jouissance***

#### ***Allegretto***

Lacanian *jouissance* fuses raw power and sexual frisson. Liberal theory is drenched with war fever and *jouissance*. Fevered sexuality is explicit in current liberal wars - a version of the American “pursuit of happiness”. The liberal landscape is suffused with “surplus *jouissance*” - excess pain and pleasure . Lacan reads it as the willed “ path toward death” of the self but also others. (Lacan 2007, pp. 18-19) In this fantastic *jouissance*, it is the chosen “enemy” who craves being killed. The cult of death is ensconced in liberal theory. *Jouissance* is its sublime and sensual face. Lacan labels it “phallic *jouissance*” and “symbolic *jouissance*”, which justifies liberal wars. (Fink 1995, pp. 106-107).

Via *jouissance*, liberal states craft the aura of the sacred, untouchable superiority. Killing, rape, torture occur at will *sans* punishment and penalty. The liberal havens, US *Abu Ghraib* prison, US *Bagram* detention base, and US *Guantanamo Bay* jail-camp epitomize liberal *Jouissance*. They specialized in abject humiliation; in torture, rape, abuse and murder. The penal complex instituted new Inquisitions and “scenes of orgy”. The Geneva Conventions were dismissed as extraneous. In *Guantanamo*, *jouissance* scaled new heights during interrogations. In one session a “female soldier stripped and ‘rubbed her breasts against’ the prisoner’s back, then put her hands in her pants and wiped “fake menstrual blood on the prisoner’s face”. US female interrogators engaged in “sexual touching”, “wore “provocative clothing” and used “fake menstrual blood” to “break” the Muslim prisoners. To critics like Susan Sontag this was “subliminally familiar from the S&M porn industry”. (Oliver 2007, pp. 26 -27, 24)

Liberal *jouissance* licences abject torture for the flimsiest of reasons. From Max Weber to Michael Walzer, via Machiavelli, liberal theorists have condoned torture. It is conceived as liberating, enlightening, civilizing or saving others. Thus torture’s currency is ensured in liberal states. Darius Rejali argues in his recent book *Torture and Democracy* (2008) that torture was intrinsic to liberal modernity. Yet it has not been abjured but recast as a necessary tool of the state. Thus torture and tyranny have sought refuge in state security and hypocrisy. As Rejali notes, “Instead of embracing the ideals of dignity and freedom, states have become cleverer in methods of oppression and deception”. (Horton 2008) Savvy liberal states are particularly guilty.

States which are not liberal are equally complicit. Colonial mimicry is a familiar habit in the Global South and liberal precedents are routinely invoked as justifications. Yet old

Europe's terribly successful settler-colony, the USA, excels in denying its zeal for torture. The revelation that US troops tortured prisoners at Abu Ghraib led Secretary of Defence State Donald Rumsfeld to say "I'm not a lawyer but I know that it's not torture". (Oliver 2007, p. 26) This is nihilistic *jouissance* on speed - focussed on pleasure of torture/killing, on relishing the violent power trip; on enjoying humiliating and erasing "enemies". Its terror evokes Nazi terror against their selected "enemies". Like them, liberal "enemies" are not culpable. As Arendt said, "it is decisive that they are objectively innocent, that they are chosen regardless of what they may have or may not have done" (Arendt 1958, pp. 6-7). After 9/11 thousands of innocent Muslims have been jailed, tortured and abused, just as the innocent Jews herded into Nazi camps. The majority of prisoners in US camps are real *Semites* - Muslim Arabs. The *war on terror* is the real anti-Semitism, the real war on *Oriental Semites*. *Jouissance* is gratuitous liberal evil and this war is the acme of liberal *jouissance*. It is visible in Obama's "kill lists".

Current *liberal theory*, its *jouissance*, its fantasies, is derivative. The liberal sensibility, its attitudes and fetishes, even its absurdities, is parasitic. Its authority and *puissance* flow from the "analysis" and thoughts of the thinkers Kant, Mill and Montesquieu. The contours, themes, biases of current liberal theory and its foreign enemies is their patrimony. Kant, Mill and Montesquieu are the master players (MP). In crucial ways they were autistic, authoritarian and chauvinist. In their writings, they asserted their liberal wills on foreigners, outsiders, Orientals and justified ruling them. Simultaneously Kant, Mill and Montesquieu were *master signifiers* (MS) in Lacan's critical sense. As MS they lack intellectual legitimacy. They signify nothing by themselves. The claim to mastery is unsubstantiated and unauthenticated. They have no knowledge, no acumen. The master discourse is full of absurdities, fictions. In fact, the MS is a

“nonsensical signifier ....with no rhyme or reason”. But the “master must be obeyed.....because he or she says so” (Fink 1995, p.131).

The MS enjoys mastery by declaration. Lesser signifiers inject substance and legitimacy in the master discourse which is parasitic on the University discourse constituted by academics. In brief, the academics legitimize the master’s discourse and his claim to power. In liberal states, liberal theorists function as scions and disciples of the master signifiers. They condone, not challenge, the discourse. As Lacan stated, “philosophy...has always *served* the master, always placed itself in the service of rationalizing and propping up the master’s discourse” (Fink 1995, p. 132). Liberal theory does no less.

My claim here is that *tyranny* is intrinsic to *liberal theory*. And that a kind of *fascism* underlies liberalism. Aristotle distinguishes *despotism* and tyranny, which is constitutional and legitimate. Aristotle classified despotism as suitable for “servile”, “slavish” subjects. He was factually wrong about Asian attitudes. But he conceded that Asian tyranny functioned in the “common interest”. (Aristotle 1946, pp. 137-138, 111-115). Yet in liberal theory *despotism* is the model of rule: liberals rule others as masters rule slaves. Its cognate theory is fascism. The liberal mission has been distinctly fascist. The colonial archives leave no doubt about this.

My claim is that liberal theory is intrinsically indecent; its decency is an aberration. It is theoretically hostile to difference which is suspect in liberal eyes. It is an infantile delusion that liberal theory is generous and tolerant. Indecency is the liberal norm. The subversion of diversity and toleration by liberal states is no coincidence. It flows directly from liberal theory’s racial assumptions. Crucially they undercut “the nerve of liberalism” - “equal concern and respect” (Dworkin 1978 pp. 115, 125). Liberal practice thwarts liberal principles consistently: “*individualist*, in that it asserts the moral primacy of the person ....; *egalitarian*, inasmuch as it

confers on all men the same moral status .....; *universalist*, affirming the moral unity of the human species ...;” (Gray 1986, p. x). In practice liberal tyranny has been inseparable from fascism.

In fact fascism has continually had a cozy and respectable niche in liberal theory. It was blatant in the conquest of the Americas, the Orient and Africa; in the native Indian genocides and African enslavement. It is conspicuous in the liberal ‘war on terror’, in its wars on the new *enemy*: Muslims/Arabs. Its fascist élan lies in its desire to master and humiliate them. It is brazen in the violence and racism unleashed on natives. Sartre captures it incisively: “we must face up to the striptease our humanism”, our “chatter: liberty, equality, fraternity” followed by “filthy nigger, filthy Jew, filthy North Africans” the emblems of our “racist humanism” (Sartre 2006, pp. 169-170). George Mosse called this a “race war”, a “total war which [seems] to require a final solution”. *In nuce*, colonial wars were fascist wars.

Like liberal warriors, Nazi race warriors “borrowed liberally” from Christian Church “liturgy”. Hitler constantly used “Christian vocabulary” to sell Nazism (Mosse 1999 pp. xii- xv) Racism, which is central to fascism, is basic to liberalism. It is entrenched in Western philosophy and political theory. In universities these subjects are still taught as “white philosophy” and “white political philosophy”. (Mills 1997, pp. 1-3) This is unsurprising since liberal identity was crafted and finessed in the cauldron of colonialism. Liberal modernity’s racial obsession was never dissolved. And it continues to deny “its racialized history and its attendant histories of racist exclusions”. It declares “the moral irrelevance of race” but “all is race” for liberals (Goldberg 1993, pp. 6-7).

In 1950 Arendt sensed this but misread it. Whether “guaranteed by the laws of a ‘bourgeois’ government or a ‘communist’ state”, she insisted “freedom is freedom”. (Arendt

1972, p.221). Arendt took liberal freedom to be freedom. But on the Athenian canvas it was an un-public, even anti-public freedom. Arendt recognized that liberal “political philosophy was always ‘totalitarian’; it always assumed an identity of politics, economics and society” in which politics “served as the façade for private interests”. Likewise Nazism was the public face of private interests and fixations. Nazism’s rise meant “the subterranean stream of our history has finally come to the surface and usurped the dignity of our tradition” (Arendt 1958 pp. 336 and ix). Yet in the global South two centuries earlier, this “subterranean stream” had annihilated millions and assaulted the “dignity” of the survivors without injuring the Western tradition. It was then lauded without irony as the “civilizing mission”. Among liberal thinkers, “civilization-mongering” (Marx) is a cottage industry. Arendt was well aware of this.

### *Kant*

Kant is crucial here. His liberal credentials are impeccable: his commitment to freedom, autonomy, rationality and subjectivity is absolute. Reading him is instructive and unnerving. His syntax is imperious and his attitude militant. Kant lectures, coerces, declares the truth. On the Sublime for instance, he leaves no space for dissent and criticism. Who and what is evil is obvious to him; as a rule it is the non-European. Kant’s sensibility is tyrannical, and it pleads for tyranny over those cast as evil. It is usually implicit but evident. The “civilised” can behave badly but the others, the lesser, excel in evil. Kant condemns the “vices of savagery” in the “wide wastes of northwestern America” and the “perpetual war” between two Indian tribes which “has no other aim than mere slaughter”.

Kant accepts this claim by an English traveller (Kant 1998 pp. 56-57). Indeed travel lit was Kant’s source on foreign affairs and non- Europeans. He taught such “knowledge” in his

lectures. It assured his standing as an expert on race and culture. Real evidence counted for little. Kant was a leading “authority” on racial hierarchy. But he was ignorant and ill-informed about these matters. It is peculiar that a major philosopher postulates such views as sound and sensible. Kant was not familiar with things beyond *Konigsberg*. He had no credible knowledge of human beings outside his birthplace. Yet he pontificated on *human* nature, human history and human evil with authority - especially Muslim evil and the Muslim threat. (Almond 2010, Ch 2).

Kant’s case is stunning in light of his defence of Enlightenment. He failed to abide by the maxims he stipulated in that famous essay. His assertions on native Indians and others fit his own definition of “immaturity”, “laziness and cowardice”. What he “knows” is anecdotal and impressionistic; his suppliers were European adventurers, travellers and tourists. Yet like the “dumb cattle” he condemns, he laps it up and installs it in his moral theory. Kant takes these accounts as evidence of the superiority of Europeans. The enlightened Kant seems to be as unwise as the unenlightened citizens he criticises (Kant 1959 p. 85). Kant recurrently offers ill-informed judgements on non-Europeans. Accusing or lecturing brown and black folks has never been a problem for liberals. Kant was a consummate practitioner of this white art. It is a common, ubiquitous habit even across the West. Illiteracies and falsehoods still taint liberal discourse. The academics have been leading offenders. Fittingly Etienne Balibar calls this “academic racism”. The university theorizes the views of the “racist community” in which it lives and serves. It is crucial that “we inquire into the function of the theory-building of academic racism” (Balibar 1991, pp. 18-19). Is it surprising that liberals profess chauvinism in universities?

Kant called Christianity a “pure moral religion”. It was thus a superior faith. He distinguished it from classical “ignorant” Judaism; he insisted that it began “as a total

abandonment of the Judaism ... grounded on an entirely new principle". Judaism excludes "the whole human race" and is "hostile to all other people". The fact that Jews are "treated with hostility" is not abnormal. ( Kant 1998, pp. 130-133 ). Kant's comments on Jews in Europe are prejudicial (1798). He calls them "Palestinians" who had "earned a not unfounded reputation of being cheaters" even though "it is strange to think of a *nation* of cheaters". Kant assumes falsely that Jews constituted a *nation*. He sees them as foreigners and, wrongly, as Palestinians (Kant 2006, p. 100 fn) The Jews in question are *Ashkenazis*, European converts to Judaism, and his fellow citizens. None would have had ethnic or cultural links to Palestine. Kant was retelling a favourite Christian story: the myth of Jewish exile. The Romans never exiled entire peoples. Christians chose to believe it as evidence of God's punishment for their rejection of Jesus. It was absorbed by Jews and it became central to Zionism and the Zionist claim that Jews were finally "returning" to Palestine. The consequences of this myth for the Arabs and Arab Jews in Palestine and the Middle East have been disastrous ( Sand 2009 Ch. 3) (Yuval 2006 ) ( Pappé 2006)

Occasionally Kant was critical of un-Christian conduct by Christians. He opposed the "Crusades" of the Western Christians; their "bloodthirsty hatreds" had led them to "depopulate another portion of the world" (Kant 1998 p. 135). And he praised Judaism's "enthusiasm" and Islam's "pride". But he saw Islam, like Judaism, as a lesser faith. On Arabs he was both positive and dismissive. Arabs were Oriental nobility, "generous and genuine" but "unbridled" and "unruly". Kant saw Orientals as inferior to Europeans, intellectually and aesthetically. In comparative terms, Muslims fare slightly better than Jews. Kant still calls Islam "Mohammedanism" which is false and offensive. Muslims don't follow Muhammad; they believe in Allah (God) ( Battersby 2007 pp. 70 - 81) Kant's stance is authoritative but the

lacunae in what he knows are appalling. His prejudices are absurd and vulgar. It is hard to reconcile Kant's brilliance with his abundant illiteracy.

Kant failed to see that his biases contradicted his ethics. His zeal for "perpetual peace", for cosmopolitanism, for rationality, was radically undercut by his prejudices. Yet this realization and this criticism are inadequate. For Kant is not just biased but robustly racist: whites are superior in every respect. Kant sees non-whites as inferior and beyond remedy. It is Euro-Whites only who comprise the highest species of humanity. The rest are compellingly inferior and superfluous in nature's scheme. Defective and minimally rational, they require tutelage and supervision by their superiors. It is unsurprising that Kant justifies *colonialism* and *slavery* with facility despite his fleeting critical comments on both. (Bernasconi 2002; Bernasconi 2011).

It is bizarre but Kant *was* obsessed with whiteness. He told his students that "humanity is at its greatest perfection in the race of whites. The yellow Indians have meagre talent. The Negroes are far below them and the lowest point is the [native] American peoples". Kant declared that the "white race possesses all motivating forces and talents in itself" (Bernasconi 2002). In contrast blacks had severe deficits including their colour. Kant insisted that being black was "clear proof that what he said was stupid" (Kant 2003 *Sublime* p. 113). Kant saw no need to cite evidence, analysis or argument as he did in his *Critiques*. On racial issues, he vented his illiteracy fully. Kant repeats these claims many times in his writings. It is crucial to note that he never abandoned his racist convictions contrary to a few suggestions that he did. Kant took time to slam the German Roma (Gypsies) as well.

The Nazis eventually followed in Kant's footsteps: they targeted the Roma (Gypsies) and donned the mantle of white Aryans. In the Weimar era, Germans colonised and enslaved blacks

in South West Africa and by 1910 perpetrated their first genocide. They instituted fascist rule in their colony and virtually wiped out the Herero tribe in their first holocaust. The Nazi genocide of Gypsies, Jews and Slavs was the second holocaust this time on European soil and whose victims were “white”. As Simone Weil noted in 1943 “Hitlerism consists in the application by Germany to the European continent, and the white race generally, of colonial methods of conquest and domination”. It was apparent to the Czech victims of the Nazis that “No European people have ever been subjected to such a regime”. (Weil 1943, pp. 199-203)

Kant declined to oppose or condemn black slavery. In fact he blamed blacks for enslaving blacks, not the white enslavers and traffickers. Kant did not fault the planners and beneficiaries of the slave trade ((Bernasconi 2011, pp. 302 - 303 ). Kant’s notes, *Reflexionen*, ramp up his racist views substantially. Kant says all races are doomed “except for the white”. It seems that nature decrees that “waste” be eliminated. Kant takes this in stride. The lesser races will be ruled and dominated by the “whites”. Kant appears to advocate fascist tyranny (despotism). Kant, a critic concludes, did “conceive” of the “non-white races as unsalvageable waste, a mistake” (Larrimore 1999, p. 118, passim).

On race wars the liberal/fascist parallels are no coincidence. The Nazis’ “final solution” was modelled on the liberal American genocide of the native Indians. (Finkelstein 1995 pp. 90-94). As Todorov notes, this was “the greatest genocide in human history”. (Todorov 1984, p. 5)

### ***Mill***

Mill was a wilful colonialist. He backed the conquest of non-whites. He called them “barbarians”; he prescribed “Despotism” for them and labelled it “legitimate”. Mill offered no evidence. He held this view for 33 years as Examiner at the English East India Company. He

never revised it. He even opposed “internal self-government” for India and resigned from the Company in 1858 when it rejected his advice. Mill never doubted that “barbarians” were not ready for self-rule. It never occurred to this him to question England’s right to rule India. Nor did it occur to him that his notion of “benevolent despotism” was disingenuous. Colonialism was about mastery. Mill never objected to tyranny for lesser, darker races. “Social tyranny” England worried him, not Britain’s colonial despotisms.

( Mill 1956, pp. 14, 7); (Goldberg 2002 pp. 64).

Kant and Mill presupposed a racial hierarchy. Like Kant, Mill assumed the superiority of Euro-whites. They subscribed to the civilization/barbarian binary. They did not doubt the legality and validity of white rule over non-whites. Like Kant, Mill was a committed racist. Yet Mill is not pegged as a racist. Mill was a canny performer. *On Liberty* ensured Mill’s reputation. It is a clean performance. A biased comment of China is the exception. Like Kant, he declares that China had been static “for thousands of years”. If the Chinese “are ever to be further improved, it must be by foreigners”. (Mill 1962, p. 87) *On Liberty* is his joyous *jouissance*; Mill in full *burka*. His essay *A Few Words on Non-Intervention* published in the same year is wholly different. It is a combative Kantian speech act. Mill lets the mask fall and reveals the colonialist’s chutzpah. Mill’s *full Monty* one might say.

Mill defends intervention by liberal states in the affairs of the lesser races as both rational ethical. Mill concedes that an “aggressive war” for an idea, territory or revenue is “criminal”. But a war is still “permissible” in the absence of attacks or threats to ensure national security. As Mill sees it, “barbarous” nations pose a threat because they are unwilling to “obey rules”. Military intervention is thus justified. In addition, they deserve to be “conquered and held in subjection by foreigners’ for their own “benefit”. For them, “independence” can only be

“impediments” to growth and “development” since “their minds are not capable of so great an effort”. The barbarous nations, predictably, are *non-white*. Mill absurdly cites Algeria and India as illustrations.

Mill rebukes critics of the French/English “violations of the law of nations”. He insists that “barbarians have no rights as nation”. The critics are thus applying the “wrong principle”. France and England, Mill asserts, had to “conquer them” because of the threat posed to their security. Plus Algeria and India had to be “civilized”. The colonizers had just one choice: “despotism”. It was imperative for them to become “masters of the country”. Mill’s logic is *colonial* and *fascist*. Mill protected the lesser race in the same sense as Francisco de Vitoria defended native Indians. Todorov notes that “under cover of international law based on reciprocity, [Vitoria] supplies a legal basis to the wars of colonization”. (Todorov 1984 pp. 149-150). For Mill, intervening in “civilized nations” of “Christian Europe” was not a consideration. They were fully capable in every way. It was insulting to even contemplate interfering in their lives.

Mill asserted that free states “may possess dependencies, acquired either by conquest or by colonization; and our own is the greatest instance of the kind in modern history”. The colonies of England’s “populations of her own blood and language”, he argued, like America, Australia and Canada, were entitled to “representative government” (Mill 1862 pp. 336-337); (Mill 1963 pp. 376- 381). Others like India were “at a great distance from that state”. Mill pushed for despotism with full racial vigour. “Self-rule only for colonies of the European race”; the others lacked “civilization”. What was good for them was “vigorous despotism” by “civilized people”, by the English. Mill insisted that “the only choice the case admits is a choice of despotisms” and “native despotism” was worse.

Mill offers a consummate theory of despotism. He favours domination of “natives”. He has no qualms about it. Mill’s justification is both race-based and racist. On occasion Mill did oppose injustice; he did so on utilitarian reasons. He opposed slavery because it caused pain and eroded liberty. His criticism of Carlyle on slavery was strictly utilitarian. Yet Mill was not less racist than Carlyle. They only differed in style: Carlyle was “bald and vicious”, Mill “polite and effete”. (Goldberg 2002, pp. 64-65, 71) Mill advocated the “planetary despotism of the West” with Britain in command. Like Benjamin Franklin, Mill saw “purely white people” as the “highest form” of the human race. Mill envisaged “Anglo-Saxon” rule as the best for mankind. Little wonder then that he defended colonial conquest of non-whites. In Mill’s view, Orientals - Indians and Chinese – were incapable of self-rule. In the absence of “foreign” intervention, they were doomed to a “stationary” existence. (Losurdo 2011, pp. 246-247).

In brief, Mill never abandoned his *liberal* fascism. Like Kant he assumed the superiority of whites. Like Kant he defended white supremacy. Like Kant’s, his tolerance was a façade. Like Kant’s, his cosmopolitanism was conditional and anaemic. And like Kant, Mill was a savvy player. He fell back on culture to legitimise global white rule. He rejected the racial inferiority thesis. His liberalism lies in his congenial justification of the racial order. Mill does not reject racism or racial rule. In fact his liberal theory authorises them (Mill 1861, pp. 336 – 348).

### ***Montesquieu***

Un-savvy academics have rushed in to lionize Montesquieu. He has been described as “*the greatest political philosopher of the liberal tradition*” and “*the most profoundly cosmopolitan spirit that has ever walked the earth*”. (Pangle 1993, p. 85). This is wildly absurd and illiterate. Montesquieu was nothing of the sort. He is a much lesser figure than Mill and

Kant and hardly a philosopher. On race, slavery and the Orient his influence on Kant was deleterious. Mill's racial views build on Montesquieu's and Kant's. The "theoretical use he made of them" warrant scrutiny. Montesquieu, after all, was the envoy of the "prejudices of Christian Europeans of his class" (Richter 1977, pp. 32-33). Indeed of all European classes. Montesquieu's "*cosmopolitanism*" is tenuous and devious. He has been misjudged as a lover of liberty *tout court*. He misread and miscast despotism as a Muslim construction. Montesquieu in fact concocted the fiction of *Oriental Despotism*.

In Montesquieu's time "monarchies of Northern Europe" were the absolute tyrannies. Montesquieu initiated the "historical inversions" that "Eastern regimes were now despotisms" (Springborg 1987 pp. 21-22). Montesquieu was far from the liberal, sensitive admirer of the Orient. He was a clever Orientalist convinced of the superiority the West. The Orient for him was just extended exotic terrain. It was not the equal of the West spiritually or humanly. Indeed deficits in the Orient and in the Oriental soul justified Western colonialism. Montesquieu was the forerunner of *liberal humanitarian intervention* in the Muslim Orient. Saving brown women from brown men was a leading passion with him. In Libya and other places in Asia Montesquieu's script is still authoritative for faux Western liberators.

In his *Persian Letters* and *The Spirit of the Laws*, he leaves no doubt on this score. Montesquieu, in varied assertions, crafts the Oriental despot. In a critic's incisive distillate, his "fantasy of Oriental despotism" does not "correspond to any Asian reality". It has little to with Montesquieu's imagined "subjects who abase themselves ...their utter de-individualization ...summary executions, tortures, mutilations ... sexual lust...endless copulations". Like other European fantasists Montesquieu concocts a world that is "politically insane, rationally untenable, economically catastrophic, morally outrageous, and monstrous in any human terms".

Montesquieu fashions the classic evil other. In current discourse, he is the Muslim menace: terrorist, liberty-killer, Jew-hater. In a crucial sense, our liberal humanitarians are scions of Montesquieu. (Grosrichard 1998, pp. xii – xiii).

The fiction of Oriental despotism is hollow. Montesquieu has no evidence to back it up. He constructs it with his delusions about the Oriental spirit. The senselessness of the project is visible on various levels. Why is fear basic to Oriental Despotism? How is it different from Machiavellian fear in *The Prince*? Montesquieu offers no clarity. His depends on traveller accounts and he is gullible and uncritical. He accepts their biases with facility. Montesquieu “relied heavily” on Sir Paul Ricaut, an English diplomat in Turkey, who was “unrelievedly hostile towards the religion, manners morals, and statement of his hosts”. Indeed, Ricaut never “bothered to hide his hatred of Islam”. From Jean Chardin, a jeweller, who lived in Persia for 15 years, Montesquieu absorbed the fatuities that “generosity was unknown in the East” and Persians thrived on “fear” (Young 1978 pp. 392 – 405).

Voltaire excoriated Montesquieu’s “absurd” thesis: “It is erroneous to believe that any human authority exists in the world which is in every respect despotic” there never has been, and there never will be” (Grosrichard 1998, p. 37). Montesquieu’s Oriental despotism is a myth, a crude “caricature”. (Young 1978). His chic *Persian Letters* (PL) is a fraud which will incense the cognoscenti. PL is in no sense Persian. Persia never had a state *harem* of concubines like Ottoman Turkey. Secluding women from unrelated males is a common Muslim practice. Called *purdah*, it has nothing to do with concubines. In PL Usbek and Rica are not Persian names. A Shi’ite state since 1500, Persia has no Sultans or eunuchs in the service of harems. Securitized and restructured Montesquieu -esque absurdities on Iran, Iranians and Shi’ism are delivered daily by the bucolic journalists and academics in the West.

Montesquieu offensively calls the harem *seraglio* (animal cage in Italian). The Ottoman *harem* on which PL seems to be based was a palace in Istanbul. Culturally Usbek and Rica don't talk or behave like Persians or Muslims. In general they mouth the prejudices of the author. They criticise "Persian" culture, praise Euro-Christian practices and talk mostly about eunuchs, concubines, torture, abuse and betrayal. See for instance Letters 102 and 103. As Iranian (female) academic specialist writes "even the harems were rarely the dens of idleness and iniquity imagined by Westerners" (Keddie 2006 p. 31, 292 – 297). Letter 143 slams Jews and Muslims and adds insult to injury by asserting that both believe in "occult powers" and "magic spells". In 1754 Montesquieu conceded that *Persian Letters* reflected its author's Christian culture and bias. (Montesquieu 1973, p. 284).

The thesis of *Oriental Despotism* is based on a *fantasy* of the Persian seraglio and its putative structure of power. Montesquieu's illiteracy accounts for his assertions that fear, corruption, torture, lust, envy, jealousy constituted the essence of life in the harem are baseless. This is the product of his lurid imagination. No such Persian harem or its practices ever existed. Montesquieu's wisdom about Persian politics, ethics and culture is specious. Yet his reputation as leading theorist in the Western tradition is intact. The execrable *Persian Letters* is studied respectfully in political theory courses. It is absurdly depicted by academic buffoons as evidence of his liberal humanism and decency. This is as scandalous as the liberal academic failure to confront racism in Mill and Kant.

*The Spirit of the Laws* justifies conquest and occupation. Montesquieu backs war for state survival but leaves it undefined. "Conquest" is a "necessary, legitimate and unfortunate right" which includes "servitude" of the conquered. War is bad but essential for self-preservation. On justice Montesquieu offers Machiavellian realism and clichés. His intellectual and analytic

weakness is striking. On slavery he is far worse. He condemns it but he defends black slavery. He calls blacks “savages or barbarians”. They lack industry and the arts. Apparently there is a “right of slavery”. It was the “surest way to convert” blacks to Christianity. Montesquieu offers no objection. He exudes a surreal racism. Isn’t it absurd to “feel sorry” for folks “black from head to toe”? Saying that these people are men” would mean that “we ourselves were not Christians” (Montesquieu 1989 pp. 138 – 142; 248 – 250).

Montesquieu asserts that “petty spirits exaggerate too much the injustice done the Africans”. He sees injustice and tyranny for the lesser races as fitting. He calls Islam (illiterately) the Mohammedan religion; he declares that it is not a “true religion” like Christianity. Unlike Christianity, he claims falsely, Islam “speaks only with the sword”. The Crusades presumably did not occur. He tacitly rejects Islam and calls for its supersession by liberal Christians. ( Montesquieu 1998 pp. 250, 61, 462). Occasionally, he realizes that Islam curbs tyranny. Like Kant and Mill, Montesquieu is engaged in *jouissance* on the backs of Muslims (and blacks). It is a form of colonising evil (as seen earlier) outfitted as salvific deliverance for lesser, inferior races. *Jouissance* involves both joy and pain. It is liberal (secular) and Christian (scared). His fleeting criticism of colonialism lacks cogency. Montesquieu’s assertions legitimise European imperialism.

Liberals warriors like Michael Ignatieff and Paul Berman with their fantasies about Islamic “death cults”, “nihilism” and “Islamofascism”, are the progeny of Kant, Mill and Montesquieu. It is no accident that they are the principal pushers of the “war on terror”. Michael Walzer is equally complicit in this war. A zealous backer of Israel, his close “friends” include his fellow liberal and Zionist Martin Peretz. Walzer sees Palestinians as the “enemy”, not the Israeli occupiers of Palestine. Walzer blames Islamic “hatred”, not the colonial

subjugation of Palestinians for their bitterness and anger. ( Walzer 2006; Slater 2007; Walzer 2007). Martin Peretz is in a class by himself. He lacks Walzer's savvy.

A professor of politics at Harvard and chief editor of the *The New Republic* (TNR), Peretz became the leading traducer of Muslims/Arabs. He hates Islam and Palestinians with exuberance. He loves Israel unconditionally. His record of anti- Arab, anti- Muslim prejudice is unblemished. In 2010 Peretz penned his worst Islamophobic tirade. He asserted that "Muslim life is cheap", adding "most notably to Muslims". Peretz queried "whether I need honour these people and pretend that they are worthy of the privileges of the First Amendment when I have in my gut the sense that they will abuse it". (TNR September 4, 2010) Arguing with Peretz's "gut" would be as senseless as disputing a Nazi's conviction that Jews were subhuman vermin or disputing Kant's and Mill's conviction that whites were racially superior.

In 2007, Spencer Ackerman, a TNR writer, wrote in his Blog that "Everyone who works at TNR knows Marty is racist.... isn't really fond of Arabs... ..Don't make me tell stories". (Greenwald 2007) Few liberals have condemned Peretz or the terror inflicted by liberal states. In Kant, Mill and Montesquieu, liberals find succour for their militancy and callous *jouissance*. Yet the truth about global terror in this century is still hidden. As the Italian political theorist Daniel Zolo notes "the primary, if not exclusive, source of international terrorism is the excessive power of the new, highly civilized 'cannibals', who are white, Christian and Western" (Zolo 2009 p. 137).

## **References**

- Almond, Ian, *History of Islam in German Thought* (New York: Routledge, 2010)
- Arendt, Hannah, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Meridian Books, 1958)
- Arendt, Hannah, *The Human Condition* ( New York: Anchor Books, 1959)
- Arendt, Hannah, *Crises of the Republic* (New York: HBJ, 1972)
- Aristotle, *Politics* (ed. Earnest Barker) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946)
- Balibar, Etienne, *Race, Nation, Class* ( London: Verso, 1991)
- Barry, Brian, *The Liberal Theory of Justice* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973)
- Battersby, Christine, *The Sublime, Terror and Human Difference* (London: Routledge, 2007)
- Bauman, Zygmunt, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991)
- Bernasconi, Robert, “Kant as an Unfamiliar Source of Racism” in *Philosophers on Race* (Eds. Julie K. Ward and Tommy L. Lott) (Blackwell: Oxford, 2002), 145 - 166
- Bernasconi, Robert, “Kant’s Third Thoughts on Race” in *Reading Kant’s Geography* (Eds. Stuart Elden and Eduardo Mendieta) (New York: Suny Press 2011), 292 – 318.
- Bourdieu, Pierre and Wacquant, Loic, “On the Cunning of Imperialist Reason” in *Theory, Culture and Society* ( Vol. 16, No. 1, 1999)
- Bourdieu, Pierre, *Pascalian Meditations* (Stanford: Stanford University Pres, 2000)
- Dossa, Shiraz, *The Public Realm and the Public Self: The Political Theory of Hannah Arendt* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008)
- Dworkin, Ronald, “Liberalism” in *Public & Private Morality* (Ed. Stuart Hampshire) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978)
- Fink, Bruce, *The Lacanian Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995)
- Finkelstein, Norman, *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict* (London: Verso, 1995)

- Goldberg, David Theo, *The Racial State* (Blackwell: Oxford, 2002)
- Goldberg, David Theo, *Racist Culture* ( Blackwell: Oxford, 1993)
- Greenwald, Glenn, “The Meaning of Marty Peretz”, *Salon.com*, January 26, 2007.
- Grossrichard, Alain, *The Sultan’s Court* ( London: Verso 1998)
- Horkheimer, Max and Adorno, Theodor W., *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*
- Horton, Scott, “Six Questions for Darius Rejali (Torture and Democracy)” in Harper’s Magazine (Febuary 23, 2008)
- Kant, Immanuel, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime* (Berkeley :University of California Press, 2003)
- Kant, Immanuel, *Anthropology From a Pragmatic Point of View* ( Ed. Robert Louden) (Cambridge: University Press, 2006)
- Kant, Immanuel, *Religion within the Bounds of Mere Reason* (Ed. Allen Wood) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)
- Keddie, Nikki, *Modern Iran* ( New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006)
- Lacan, Jacques, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (NewYork: Norton, 1992)
- Lacan, Jacques, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Norton, 2007)
- Larimore, Mark, “Sublime Waste: Kant on the Destiny of ‘Races’” in *Civilization and Oppression* (Ed. Catherine Wilson) ( Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1999)
- Losurdo, Domenico, *Liberalism: A Counter-History* (London: Verso, 2011)
- Melville, Herman, *The Confidence Man* (New York: Airmont, 1966)
- Mill, John Stuart, *On Liberty* ( Ed. Currin V. Shields) ( Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956)
- Mill, John Stuart Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1962)
- Mill, John Stuart, “A Few Words on Non-Intervention” in *Essays on Politics and Culture* (Ed. Gertrude Himmelfarb) (New York: Anchor Books, 1963)
- Mills, Charles W., *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997)

- Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws* (Ed. Anne Cohler) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989)
- Montesquieu, *Persian Letters* (Harmondsworth (UK): Penguin Classics, 1973)
- Mosse, George L., *The Fascist Revolution* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1999)
- Oliver, Kelly, *Women As Weapons of War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007)
- Pangle, Thomas, *The Ennobling of Democracy* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press)
- Pappe, Ilan, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2006)
- Paxton, Robert, *The Anatomy of Fascism*, (New York, 2004, p. 259 n. 81
- Plato, *Menexenus* in Plato (Collected Dialogues) (eds. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns) (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961)
- Richter, Melvin, *The Political Theory of Montesquieu* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977)
- Ritter, Alan (Ed.), *Rousseau's Political Writings* (New York: Norton, 1988)
- Sand, Shlomo, *The Invention of the Jewish People* (London: Verso, 2009)
- Sartre, Jean-Paul, *Colonialism and Neo-Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 2006)
- Slater, Jerome, "On Michael Walzer, Gaza and the Lebanon War" in *Dissent* (Winter 2007)
- Sontag, Susan, "What's Happening to America (A Symposium)" in *Partisan Review* (Winter 1967, Volume XXXIV, Number 1) (Rutgers University, New Jersey), pp 51-58.
- Springborg, Patricia, "The Contractual State" in *History of Political Thought* (Vol. VIII, No. 3 Winter 1987)
- Taylor, Charles, "The Politics of Recognition" in *Multiculturalism* (Ed. Amy Guttmann) (Princeton: Princeton University, 1994)
- Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p. 145
- Todorov, Tzvetan, *The Conquest of America* (New York: Harper Perennia, 1984)
- Waldron, Jeremy, "The Theoretical Foundations of Liberalism" in *The Philosophical Quarterly* (Volume 37, No. 147, April 1987)

Walzer, Michael, “The Ethics of Battle”, *The New Republic*, July 31, 2006.

Walzer, Michael, “Response to Jerome Slater” in *Dissent* (Winter 2007).

Weil, Simone, “East and West: Thoughts on the Colonial Problem” in Simone Weil, *Selected Essays* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962)

Young, David, “Montesquieu’s View of Despotism and His use of Travel Literature” in *The Review of Politics* (Vol. 40, No. 3 July 1978) , 392 – 405.

Yuval, Israel J, “The Myth of the Jewish Exile From The Land of Israel” in *Common Knowledge* (Vol 12, No. 1, Winter 2006)

Zolo, Daniel, *Victor’s Justice* (London: Verso, 2009)