The Colonization of the Imaginary in Mexico

Serge Gruzinski’s book on the role of the Church in the colonization of the imaginary in Mexico should be read in connection with Ashis Nandy’s article. In this important study, the author shows how the Church set out to use the emotions, the fear; the anguish of populations by instilling into their minds the concepts of sin and damnation. Ritual techniques such as confession and penitence led to the full assimilation of the Christian themes of salvation and redemption. For Gruzinski, although this colonization seldom succeeds in destroying the springs of indigenous creativity, it does succeed more than often in weaving indissoluble ties between indigenous cultures and the imported ones. See Suggested Readings.

feels that colonialism, by introducing modern structures into the barbaric world, would open up the non-West to the modern critical-analytic spirit.

Like the ‘hideous heathen god who refused to drink nectar except from the skulls of murdered men’, History, Karl Marx felt, would produce out of oppression, violence and cultural dislocation not merely new technological and social forces but also a new social consciousness in Asia and Africa. It would be critical in the sense in which the Western tradition of social criticism – from Vico to Marx – had been critical and it would be rational in the sense in which post-Cartesian Europe had been rational. The ahistorical primitives would one day, the expectation went, learn to see themselves as masters of nature and, hence, as masters of their own fate.

Many, many decades later, in the aftermath of that marvel of modern technology called the Second World War and perhaps that modern encounter of cultures called Vietnam, it has become obvious that the drive for mastery over men is not merely a by-product of a faulty political economy but also of a world-view which believes in the absolute superiority of the human over the non-human and the sub-human, the masculine over the feminine, the adult over the child, the historical over the ahistorical, and the modern or progressive over the traditional or the savage. It has become more and more apparent that genocides, eco-disasters and ethnicities are but the underside of corrupt sciences and psychopathic technologies wedded to new secular hierarchies, which have reduced major civilizations to the status of a set of empty rituals. The ancient forces of human greed and violence, one recognizes, have merely found a new legitimacy in anthropocentric doctrines of secular salvation, in the ideologies of progress, normality and hyper-masculinity, and in theories of cumulative growth of science and technology.

This awareness has not made everyone give up his theory of progress, but it has given confidence to a few to look askance at the old universalism within which the earlier critiques of colonialism were offered. It is now
The impact of pro-life rhetoric on the abortion debate has been significant and far-reaching. As a pro-life activist, I believe that it is crucial to understand the historical context and the strategies employed by the pro-life movement. In this essay, I will explore the evolution of the pro-life movement and its impact on society, focusing on the strategies used by pro-life advocates to influence public opinion and shape legislative policies.

The pro-life movement emerged in the late 20th century as a response to the growing acceptance of abortion as a legal and moral right. The movement was initially characterized by a focus on the individual rights of women and the sanctity of human life. As the movement gained momentum, it began to incorporate a broader range of strategies, including legal challenges, public education campaigns, and political activism.

One of the key strategies employed by pro-life activists has been the use of emotional appeals. By emphasizing the pain and suffering of the unborn child, pro-life advocates aim to evoke empathy and sympathy from the general public. This strategy has been particularly effective in mobilizing support among conservative and religious groups, who see abortion as a threat to traditional values.

Another strategy employed by the pro-life movement has been the use of legal challenges. Pro-life advocates have successfully challenged abortion laws in courts across the country, arguing that they violate the constitutional right to privacy. This has led to a series of landmark cases, including Roe v. Wade, which established the constitutional right to abortion.

The pro-life movement has also been successful in influencing legislative policies. Pro-life activists have worked closely with politicians to pass anti-abortion laws at the state and federal levels. These laws have limited access to abortion services, mandated that women receive certain information before undergoing an abortion, and required that women receive counseling before proceeding.

The pro-life movement has also faced significant opposition. Pro-choice activists argue that the right to abortion is a fundamental right that is guaranteed by the Constitution. They also argue that pro-life activists are using immoral and deceptive tactics to intimidate and coerce women into choosing abortion.

In conclusion, the pro-life movement has had a significant impact on the abortion debate. Its strategies have been effective in mobilizing support among certain groups, influencing legislative policies, and shaping public opinion. However, the movement has also faced significant opposition and criticism. The debate over abortion will continue to be a contentious issue, and it is important that we engage in a respectful and constructive dialogue to find a solution that is fair and just for all.

References:


Edward Said on a Teaching of Hugo of St Victor

To Gain the Independence and Detachment of Someone Whose Homeland is ‘Sweet’, but Whose Actual Condition Makes It Impossible to Recapture that Sweetness

Those people compelled by the system to play subordinate or imprisoning roles within it emerge as conscious antagonists, disrupting it, proposing claims, advancing arguments that dispute the totalitarian compulsions of the world market. Not everything can be bought off.

All these hybrid counter-energies, at work in many fields, individuals and moments provide a community or culture made up of numerous anti-systemic hints and practices for collective human existence (and neither doctrines nor complete theories) that is not based on coercion or domination...

I find myself returning again and again to a hauntingly beautiful passage by Hugo of St Victor, a twelfth-century monk from Saxony:

It is, therefore, a source of great virtue for the practised mind to learn, bit by bit, first to change about in visible and transitory things, so that afterwards it may be able to leave them behind altogether: The person who finds his homeland sweet is still a tender beginner; he to whom every soil is as his native one is already strong; but he is perfect to whom the entire world is as a foreign place. The tender soul has fixed his love on one spot in the world; the strong person has extended his love to all places; the perfect man has extinguished his.

Erich Auerbach, the great German scholar who spent the years of World War Two as an exile in Turkey, cites this passage as a model for anyone — man and woman — wishing to transcend the restraints of imperial or national or provincial limits. Only through this attitude can a historian, for example, begin to grasp human experience and its written records in all their diversity and particularity; otherwise one would remain committed more to the exclusions and reactions of prejudice than to the negative freedom of real knowledge. But note that Hugo twice makes it clear that the ‘strong’ or ‘perfect’ person achieves independence and detachment by working through attachments, not by rejecting them. Exile is predicated on the existence of, love for, and a real bond with one’s native place; the universal truth of exile is not that one has lost that love or home, but that inherent in each is an unexpected, unwelcome loss. Regard experiences then as if they were about to disappear: what is it about them that anchors or roots them in reality? What would you save of them, what would you give up, what would you recover? To answer such questions you must have the independence and detachment of someone whose homeland is ‘sweet’, but whose actual condition makes it impossible to recapture that sweetness, and even less possible to derive satisfaction from substitutes furnished by illusion or dogma, whether deriving from pride in one’s heritage or from certainty about who we are.

No one today is purely one thing. Labels like Indian, or woman, or Muslim, or American are not more than starting-points, which it followed into actual experience for only a moment are quickly left behind. Imperialism consolidated the mixture of cultures and identities on a global scale. But its worse and most paradoxical gift was to allow people to believe that they were only, mainly, exclusively, white, or black, or Western, or Oriental. Yet just as human beings make their own history, they also make their cultures and ethnic identities. No one can deny the persisting continuities of long traditions, sustained habitations, national languages and cultural geographies, but there seems no reason except fear and prejudice to keep insisting on their separation and distinctiveness, as if that was all human life was about. Survival in fact is about the connections between things; in Eliot’s phrase, reality cannot be deprived of the ‘other echoes [that] inhabit the garden’. It is more rewarding — and more difficult — to think concretely and sympathetically, contrapuntally about others than only about ‘us’. But this also means not trying to rule others, not trying to classify them or put them in hierarchies, above all, not constantly reiterating how ‘our’ culture or country is number one (or not number one, for that matter). For the intellectual there is quite enough of value to do without that.

From Culture and Imperialism, Vintage Books, New York, 1994, pp. 335–6. (See Box on p. 178 for Edward Said.)

possible today to be anti-colonial in a way which is specified and promoted by the modern world-view as ‘proper’, ‘sane’ and ‘rational’. Even when in opposition, that dissent remains predictable and controlled. It is also possible today to opt for a non-West which itself is a construction of the West. One can then choose between being the Orientalist’s despot, to combine Karl Wittfogel with Edward Said, and the revolutionary’s loving subject, to combine Camus with George Orwell. And for those who do not like the choice, there is, of course, Cecil Rhodes’ and Rudyard Kipling’s noble, half-savage, half-child, compared to whom the much-hated Brown Sahibs seems more brown than sahib. Even in enmity these choices remain forms of homage to the victors. Let us not forget that the most violent denunciation of the West produced by Frantz Fanon is written in the elegant style of a Jean-Paul Sartre. The West has not merely produced modern colonialism; it informs most interpretations of colonialism. It colours even this interpretation of interpretation....

The first differentia of colonialism is a state of mind in the colonizers and the colonized, a colonial consciousness which includes the sometimes unrealizable wish to make economic and political profits from the colonies, but other elements too. The political economy of colonization is of course
important, but the crudity and inanity of colonialism are principally expressed in the sphere of psychology, and, to the extent the variables used to describe the states of mind under colonialism have themselves become politicized since the entry of modern colonialism on the world scene, in the sphere of political psychology. The following will explore some of these psychological contours of colonialism in the rulers and the ruled and try to define colonialism as a shared culture which may not always begin with the establishment of alien rule in a society and end with the departure of the alien rulers from the colony. The example I shall use will be that of India, where a colonial political economy began to operate seventy-five years before the full-blown ideology of British imperialism became dominant, and where thirty-five years after the formal ending of the Raj, the ideology of colonialism is still triumphant in many sectors of life.

Such disjunctions between politics and culture became possible because it is only partly true that a colonial situation produces a theory of imperialism to justify itself. Colonialism is also a psychological state rooted in earlier forms of social consciousness in both the colonizers and the colonized. It represents a certain cultural continuity and carries a certain cultural baggage.

First, it includes codes which both the rulers and the ruled can share. The main function of these codes is to alter the original cultural priorities on both sides and bring to the centre of the colonial culture subcultures previously recessive or subordinate in the two confronting cultures. Concurrently, the codes remove from the centre of each of the cultures subcultures previously salient in them. It is these fresh priorities which explain why some of the most impressive colonial systems have been built by societies ideologically committed to open political systems, liberalism and intellectual pluralism. That this split parallels a basic contradiction within the modern scientific-rational world-view, which, while trying to remain rational within its confines, has consistently refused to be rational vis-à-vis other traditions of knowledge after acquiring world dominance, is only the other side of the same explanation.1 It also explains why colonialism never seems to end with formal political freedom. As a state of mind, colonialism is an indigenous process released by external forces. Its sources lie deep in the minds of the rulers and the ruled. Perhaps that which begins in the minds of men must also end in the minds of men.

Second, the culture of colonialism presumes a particular style of managing dissent. Obviously, a colonial system perpetuates itself by inducing the colonized, through socio-economic and psychological rewards and punishments, to accept new social norms and cognitive categories. But these outer incentives and disincentives are invariably noticed and challenged: they become the overt indicators of oppression and dominance. More dangerous and permanent are the inner rewards and punishments, the secondary psychological gains and losses from suffering and submission under colonialism. They are almost always unconscious and almost always ignored. Particularly strong is the inner resistance to recognizing the ultimate violence which colonialism does to its victims, namely that it creates a culture in which the ruled are constantly tempted to fight their rulers within the psychological limits set by the latter. It is not an accident that the specific variants of the concepts with which many anti-colonial movements in our times have worked have often been the products of the imperial culture itself, and, even in opposition, these movements have paid homage to their respective cultural origins. I have in mind not only the overt Apollonian codes of Western liberalism that have often motivated the elites of the colonized societies but also their covert Dionysian counterparts in the concepts of statecraft, everyday politics, effective political methods and utopias which have guided revolutionary movements against colonialism....

Crucial to this cultural co-optation was the process psychoanalysis calls identification with the aggressor. In any oppressive situation, the process became the flip side of the theory of progress, an ontogenetic legitimacy for an ego defence often used by a normal child in an environment of childhood dependency to confront inescapable dominance by physically more powerful adults enjoying total legitimacy. In the colonial culture, identification with the aggressor bound the rulers and the ruled in an unbreakable dyadic relationship. The Raj saw the Indians as crypto-barbarians who needed to further civilize themselves. It saw British rule as an agent of progress and as a mission. Many Indians in turn saw their salvation in becoming more like the British, in friendship or in enmity. They may not have fully shared the British idea of the martial races – the hyper-masculine, manifestly courageous, superbly loyal Indian castes and subcultures mirroring the British middle-class sexual stereotypes – but they did resurrect the ideology of the martial races latent in the traditional Indian concept of statecraft and gave the idea a new centrality....

In such a culture, colonialism was not seen as an absolute evil. For the subjects, it was a product of one's own emasculation and defeat in legitimate power politics. For the rulers, colonial exploitation was an incidental and regrettable by-product of a philosophy of life that was in harmony with superior forms of political and economic organization. This was the consensus the rulers of India sought, consciously or unconsciously. They could not successfully rule a continent-sized polity while believing themselves to be moral cripples. They had to build bulwarks against a possible sense of guilt produced by a disjunction between their actions and what were till then, in terms of important norms of their own culture, 'true' values. On the other hand, their subjects could not collaborate on a long-term basis unless they had some acceptance of the ideology of the system, either as players or as counterplayers. This is the only way they could preserve a minimum of self-esteem in a situation of unavoidable injustice.

When such a cultural consensus grows, the main threat to the colonizers is bound to become the latent fear that the colonized will reject the consensus
and, instead of trying to redeem their 'masculinity' by becoming the counter-
players of the rulers according to the established rules, will discover an alter-
native frame of reference within which the oppressed do not seem weak,
degraded and distorted men trying to break the monopoly of the rulers on a
fixed quantity of machismo. If this happens, the colonizers begin to live with
the fear that the subjects might begin to see their rulers as morally and
culturally inferior, and feed this information back to the rulers. Colonialism
minus a civilizational mission is no colonialism at all. It handicaps the
colonizer much more than it handicaps the colonized.

GANDHI: THE UNCOLONIZED MIND

Gandhi was one of the few who successfully articulated in politics the
consciousness which had remained untamed by British rule in India. He
transformed the debate on Indian hypocrisy into a simultaneous text on Brit-
ish self-doubt. In spite of his occasionally strident moralism, he recognized
that once the hegemony of a theory of imperialism without winners and
losers was established, imperialism had lost out on cognitive, in addition to
ethical, grounds. To the Kiplings this was a threat. They liked to see coloni-
Alism as a moral statement on the superiority of some cultures and inferiority
of others. For this reason, they were even willing to accept that some had
the right to speak of the superiority of Indian culture over the Western.
Cultural relativism by itself is not incompatible with imperialism, as long as
one's culture's categories are backed by political, economic and technological
power.

Gandhi queer the pitch on two planes. He admitted that colonialism
was a moral issue and took the battle to Kipling's home ground by judging
colonialism by Christian values and declaring it to be an absolute evil. On
the second plane he made his 'odd' cognitive assessment of the gains and
losses from colonialism a part of his critique of modernity and found the
British wanting in both ethics and rationality. This threatened the internal
legitimacy of the ruling culture by splitting open the private wound of every
Kipling and quasi-Kipling to whom rulership was a means of hiding one's
moral self in the name of the higher morality of history, in turn seen as an
embodiment of human rationality. A naive French imperialist once said in
the context of Africa, 'I know that I must take pride in my blood. When a
superior man ceases to believe himself, he actually ceases to be superior ...When
a superior race ceases to believe itself a chosen race, it actually ceases to be
a chosen race.'

In this respect, he differed from the other anti-Kiplings to whom coloni-
Alism was a moral statement. The final morality to them, too, was 'history',
and the immorality of colonialism for them, too, was mitigated by the
historical role of colonialism as an instrument of progress. Either through a
cultural renaissance set off by the impact of a more vigorous culture (as many
of the nineteenth-century social and religious reformers in India and recent
modernists in our times have described it) or through the growth of modern
capitalism on the way to the full-blown liberalism or communism (à la
utilitarianism and Karl Marx), the modern idea of history has implicitly
accepted the cultural superiority — or at least the more advanced cultural state — of the
colonizing power. It has thus endorsed one of the major axioms of the colonial
theory the Kiplings advanced. As against this, Gandhi reaffirmed an
autonomous world-view which refused to separate facts from values and
refused to see colonialism as an immoral pathway to a valued state of being.
Instead of meeting the Western criterion of a true antagonist, he endorsed
the non-modern Indian reading of the modern West as one of the many
possible lifestyles, which had, unfortunately for both the West and India,
become cancerous by virtue of its disproportionate power and spread.

NOTES

1. On this other contradiction, see Paul Feyerabend, Science in a Free Society, NLB,
London, 1978. In the context of India and China this point emerges clearly from
Claude Alvares, Homo Faber: Technology and Culture in India, China and the West, 1500–
1722, Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1979. See also Ashis Nandy, 'Science, Authori-
tarianism and Culture: On the Scope and Limits of Isolation Outside the Clinic', M.N.
Roy Memorial Lecture, 1980, Seminar, May 1981; and Shiv Visvanathan, 'Science and
the sense of Other', paper written for the colloquium on New Ideologies for Science
and Technology, Lokayan Project 1982, Delhi, mimeograph.

2. I have briefly dealt with this in my 'Oppression and Human Liberation: Towards
A Third World Utopia', in Tradition, Tolerance and Utopias, Oxford University Press,
On this theme see the sensitive writing of Albert Memmi, The Colonizer and the Colonized.


4. Among Indians, elements of such an awareness can be found for example in
Bharm, Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, Calcutta, 1945–8; Bankimchandra Chatterji, Rasa-
suti, Vols 1 and 2, Sahitya Samad, Calcutta, 1958 (see especially 'Anandamati', pp.
715–889); Swami Vivekananda, Prayag O Pashyatya, Advaite Ashrama, Almora, 1898; and
1951.