Colonial Governmentality
Author(s): David Scott
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Colonial Governmentality

Maybe what is really important for our modernity—that is, for our present—is not so much the *étatisation* of society, as the "governmentalization" of the state.
—Michel Foucault[1]

David Scott

Within the modern world which has come into being, changes have taken place as the effect of dominant political power by which new possibilities are constructed and old ones destroyed. The changes do not reflect a simple expansion of the range of individual choice, but the creation of conditions in which only new (i.e. modern) choices can be made. The reason for this is that the changes involve the re-formation of subjectivities and the re-organization of social spaces in which subjects act and are acted upon. The modern state—imperial, colonial, post-colonial—has been crucial to these processes of construction/destruction.
—Talal Asad[2]

Reformulating the Question about Colonialism

The above remarks on modernity by the late Michel Foucault and Talal Asad mark out the problem-field in which the notes I assemble in the following pages are to be inserted. In these notes (and they are "notes" inasmuch as they are, in many ways, only the tentative explorations of a working paper), I wish to inquire into what appears to me a problem in the now considerably advanced discussion about colonialism—a problem that turns very much on the question of what is distinctive about the political rationality of forms of power, on the one hand, and on the other, on those transformations effected by *modern* power, the consequence of which is that the old, premodern possibilities are not only no longer conceptually approachable except in the languages of the modern, but are now no longer available as practical historical options. Stated baldly (and therefore at the risk of some simplification) the problem that animates these notes is the following: If it is the case, as many critics of colonialism now agree it is, that Europe has been too much at the center of our theoretical knowledges of the colonial and postcolonial world—and that, in virtue of this, these knowledges typically privilege the colonial state's autobiography, its cultural values, its presumption of an all-pervasive

and totalizing influence, its marginalization of resistance and the many local ways of incipient anticolonial refusal—what then is the *conceptual* level to be assigned to "Europe," understood not merely as a geographical space but as an apparatus of dominant power-effects? My question, it is easy to see, presupposes that the critique of European hegemony in the construction of knowledges about the non-European world—the so-called "decentering" of Europe—ought not to be confused (as I think it very often is) with programmatically ignoring Europe, as though by seeking to do so one would have resolved the problem of Eurocentrism.[3] My question presupposes, in other words, that there is a difference, and a consequential one, between the polemical dismissal of Europe and its conceptual repositioning, between the Fanonian rhetoric of forgetting Europe and an investigation in which those structures and rationalities through which Europe's colonial projects were organized come more prominently into view.[4] My question, in short, is aimed at interrupting that conceptual reformulation that seeks little more than an inversion of the colonial habit of deploying "Europe" as the universal subject of all history.

In recent years, a good deal of the discussion about colonialism has tended to center around colonialism's *attitude* toward the colonized and around the question of its *exclusionary* discourses and practices—whether these discourses and practices have to do with exclusion of the colonized from humanity (colonialism's racism), or their exclusion from the institutions of political sovereignty (colonialism's false liberalism). Thus, one strand of the critique of colonialist discourse, for instance, one which owes much to Edward Said's important work, *Orientalism*, has been centrally concerned with demonstrating how colonialist textuality works at the level of image and language to produce a distorted representation of the colonized. This strategy has sought to expose the devices through which the colonized have been denied voice, autonomy, and agency. Another strategy, less concerned with the rhetorical economy of texts and more with the institutional mechanisms of colonial dominance, has sought to show the hollow—indeed, the ideological—content of colonialism's claim to have introduced the colonies to liberal-democratic political principles, the principles of good and humane government, and thus to have enabled that modernizing transition from the "rule of force" to the "rule of law." It has been easy to demonstrate that these exalted liberal principles never entailed a political equality between colonizer and colonized.[5] In large measure, therefore, the critique of colonialist discourse has constituted itself as a kind of *writing back* at the West, as a critical practice of making visible, on the one hand, the internal economy of this discourse, as well as, on the other, the active resistances of the colonized.

Assuredly, these strategies have operated within different thematic domains, but what they both share, it seems to me, is the field of a general problematic in which what is at stake is the way colonialism as a practice of power works to include or exclude the colonized.

I should like to set this problematic aside and introduce in its place one that is not centrally concerned with whether or how power works to include or exclude portions of the colonized, and that in consequence is not concerned with the arrogance or even with the "epistemic violence" of colonialist discourse as such. The problematic with which I am concerned takes as its object what I shall call the *political rationalities* of colonial power. By this obviously Foucauldian formulation I shall mean those historically constituted complexes of knowledge/power that give shape to colonial projects of political sovereignty. A colonial political rationality characterizes those ways in which colonial power is organized as an activity designed to produce effects of rule. More specifically what I mean to illuminate are what I should like to call the *targets* of colonial power (that is, the point or points of power's application, the object or objects it aims at, and the means and instrumentalities it deploys in search of these targets, points, and objects); and the *field* of its operation (that is, the zone that it actively constructs for its functionality). What this reformulation of the question of colonialism is seeking to do, therefore, is to suggest a way of bringing into conceptual view, of bringing into critical thought, the problem of the formation of historically heterogeneous rationalities through which the political sovereignties of colonial rule were constructed and operated. Conceived in this way, it seems clear to me that the problem "Europe" for a critique of colonialism should be reposed. Because if, as I argue, what ought to be understood are the political rationalities of colonial power, then what now becomes important is not a "decentering" of Europe as such, but in fact a critical interrogation of the practices, modalities, and projects through which *the varied forms of Europe's insertion* into the lives of the colonized were constructed and organized.

In this paper, then, what interests me about the problem of colonialism in relation to the political forms of modernity is the emergence at a moment in colonialism's history of a form of power—that is, therefore, *a form of power not merely coincident with colonialism*—which was concerned above all with disabling old forms of life by systematically breaking down their conditions, and with constructing in their place new conditions so as to enable—indeed, so as to *oblige*—new forms of life to come into being. I am concerned with understanding colonial power in such a way that *this* transformation is brought into focus. For what is at stake in this transformation is not merely the notion of a "break" with the past, since after all such a notion is very familiar to us in the liberal and nationalist

narratives of modernization. What is at stake is *how this break is configured* and *what it is understood to consist in*. And where the stories of modernization conceive of this break as producing an expansion of the range of choice, the problematic with which I am concerned is interested in the reorganization of the terrain in which choice as such is possible, and the political rationality upon which that reorganization depended.

Reiterating then the provisional nature of my explorations, what I propose to do is the following: First, I will spell out some aspects of one recent argument about colonial power with a view to setting off the kinds of questions I think are important. Here, it should be clear that what I am attempting to do is to focus on the problem of power and the modern in their colonial career in such a way as to cast into relief the *conceptual level* at which they have often been thought out. Second, I discuss how the problem of modern power might more usefully be conceptualized for my purposes and why I think Foucault's notion of "governmentality," and the kind of investigation it wants to illuminate, might be helpful in this. Finally, I will attempt to rethink in these terms the story of the formation of modern colonial power in Sri Lanka.[6]

The Problem about Colonial Power

The thrust of my argument can be clarified if I set it off against a recent intervention, to which it is allied but with which it differs in certain, I think important, respects. Partha Chatterjee has criticized, and done so with considerable force, the liberal historiography of colonialism, which reproduces the view "that colonial rule was not really about colonial rule but something else."[7] He begins by posing the following questions:

> Does it serve any useful analytical purpose to make a distinction between the colonial state and the forms of the modern state? Or should we regard the colonial state as simply another specific form in which the modern state has generalized itself across the globe? If the latter is the case, then of course the specifically colonial form of the emergence of the institutions of the modern state would be of only incidental, or at best episodic, interest; it would not be a necessary part of the larger, and more important, historical narrative of modernity.[8]

In this formulation of the problem of colonial power, Chatterjee is concerned to mark a distinction between colonial and modern power, and to do so in such a way, moreover, that brings into focus the specificity of the former. In Chatterjee's view, unless we produce this conceptual distinction we shall be left with no recourse but to see the colonial as little more than an episode in modern, that is, *Europe's* history. We shall see in a

David Scott

moment why Chatterjee feels obliged to formulate the relation between colonialism and modernity in the way he does, that is, as a simple opposition. In my view, however, this formulation is not a conceptually adequate one. This is not because I think the question—What is the specificity of *colonial* power?—irrelevant, but because, as I shall try to suggest, I think that unless the formulation of that question is made to depend upon a prior reconstruction of the historically differentiated structures and projects of colonial rule (the discontinuities *within* the colonial, in other words), we run the risk of a too hasty homogenization of colonialism as a whole. In other words, my worry is that in formulating the question as he does (in a simple counterposition of colonial and modern), Chatterjee preempts an inquiry that would allow us to sort out those political rationalities that constituted colonialism in its *historically varied configurations*, and therefore of marking the modernity *of a turn* in the career of colonial power.

Chatterjee's argument—carried out on the terrain of the historiography of colonial India—is perhaps most importantly directed not so much at older schools of blatantly colonialist historians as at more recent "revisionist" schools—and the so-called new Cambridge school in particular.[9] In his account of it, there are two parts to the revisionist argument. The first involves a periodizing distinction between earlier and later phases of colonial rule in which the crucial period of "transition" is roughly 1780–1830.[10] In the revisionist view, the earlier colonial regimes are argued to be largely "continuations" of prior indigenous regimes. So that what seems to be suggested is that colonialism, far from constituting a complete break with the past (as had hitherto been assumed by both colonialist and nationalist historians), can be shown to have an organic, internal connection to it. The second part of the revisionist argument turns on the assignment of "agency" in the establishment of empire. The revisionists, influenced by recent trends in historical writing (world-systems theory, for example), and not unaware of recent criticisms made by radical Third World scholars (regarding the question of *making* history), are explicitly concerned to show that contrary to the conventional colonialist view, Indians have always been the active subjects of their own history and not the mere passive victims of it. However, Chatterjee argues, their seemingly benevolent bestowal of agency only has the ironic effect of making the colonized the authors of their own domination, and so doing, safely deflects the force of anticolonial politics. On the whole, then, Chatterjee maintains that in this revisionist view, colonialism, as a distinctive formation, all but disappears. For what this view does, he says, is to "spirit away the violent intrusion of colonialism and make all of its features the innate property of an indigenous history."[11]

I would argue for an insistence upon a historicization of Europe's power, one that clarifies the distinctiveness of—and the transformation entailed in—the making of modern power in its colonial career.

It is evident, then, that Chatterjee poses these questions in order to take issue with a very prominent view in the contemporary historiography of colonial India. They are meant as a critique of the persistence into the present of an ideological *erasure* in liberal historiography by means of which the assumptions of universal history work to displace—indeed one might say, to *repress*—the specificity of colonial power. This is all very well. But, its polemical cash value aside, it is not clear to me why this kind of critical move need rely upon a conceptual opposition that makes colonialism a singular reiterated instance. It seems to me important to insist upon a certain kind of historicization of Europe's power, one that clarifies the distinctiveness of—and the transformation entailed in—the making of *modern* power in its colonial career. In my view, therefore, the distinction between earlier and later forms of colonial rule *is* a potentially useful one, though what is crucial for me in this distinction is the *kind* of elaboration of the structure and project of colonial power[12] it is made to turn on.

For Chatterjee, what is distinctive about colonial power is its deployment of what he calls a "rule of colonial difference," the rule or principle by which, across differently inflected ideological positions within the field of colonialist discourse, the colonized are represented as inferior, as radically Other. And in his view, "race" is the defining signifier of this rule of difference. It is "race," then, that marks the specificity of colonial power. As he puts it, "the more the logic of a modern regime of power pushed the processes of government in the direction of a rationalization of administration and the normalization of the objects of its rule, the more insistently did the issue of race come up to emphasize the specifically colonial character of British dominance in India."[13] But this very formulation itself (with its accent on temporality, and suggestive therefore of the historicity of the colonial) urges us to ask at least three questions. First, did this rule of difference operate *in the same way* across the entire length of colonial dominance? Or ought there to be a way of understanding this rule *in relation to* differently configured modes of organized power, different political rationalities, over the historical period of colonial dominance? Part of the point here is that as a classificatory signifier, what constituted race (and therefore what uses it was available for) altered between, say, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and, most importantly, within the latter. Second, if the rule of colonial difference is a rule of exclusion/inclusion (and all power may be said to operate through the construction of such a principle of difference), what are the specific power-effects of race? In other words, even if as a system of representation race can be shown to operate across the colonial period, what also needs to be understood and specified is when and through what kind of political rationality it becomes inserted into *subject-constituting* social practices, into the formation, that is to say, of certain kinds of

David Scott

"raced" subjectivities.[14] But third, to even assert that race can be said to characterize the othering practices of colonialist discourse as such, that is, in all its historical instantiations—is, to begin with, a very shortsighted claim. As a number of students of the European encounter with peoples in the New World in the sixteenth century have argued, for instance, it was not race but religion (or more properly, the lack of one) that constituted the discursive frame within which the difference of the non-European was conceived and represented.[15]

The crucial question, therefore, is not whether there is a difference between the colonial state and forms of the modern state in Europe, but how to impose an historicity on our understanding of the rationalities that organized the forms of the colonial state. This is because, in my view, something called "*the* colonial state" cannot offer itself up as the iteration and reiteration of a single political rationality. Rather, what is necessary to understand, it seems to me, is that within the structures and projects that gave shape to the colonial enterprise as a whole, there were discontinuities in which different political rationalities, different configurations of power, took the stage in commanding positions. To be sure, modern power in its colonial career may indeed have operated by "rules of difference" nonidentical with those in its European career. However, approaching this entails a prior understanding of the alteration that brings into being the distinctively "modern" in which this rule of difference was to produce its effects. So that, in my view, side by side with those questions in which the central problem about colonial power is whether or not and by what sign of difference power included or excluded portions of the native population, there is another set of questions. And these take the following form: In any historical instance, what does colonial power seek to organize and reorganize? In other words, what does colonial power take as the *target* upon which to work? Moreover, for what *project* does it require that target-object? And how does it go about securing it in order to realize its ends? In short, what in each instance is colonial power's *structure* and *project* as it inserts itself into—or more properly, as it *constitutes*—the domain of the colonial? These questions, it seems to me, do not deny the relevance of the idea of a rule of colonial difference, but frame its comprehension with a differently inflected problematic. And what is crucial to this problematic is historicizing European colonial rule in such a way as to distinguish different modes of organizing colonial power and the different political rationalities these modes depended upon. The important questions for me, in other words, have to do with the nature of the terrain available for the colonized to produce their responses, and thus with historicizing the structure and project of the colonial enterprise. For what is important to understand, as I shall try to outline in a moment, is that with the formation of the political rationality of the modern colonial state, not only the

rules of the political game but *the political game itself* changed;[16] not only the relation of forces between colonizer and colonized changed, but *the terrain of the political struggle itself*. And therefore, in my view, not only accommodation but resistance as well would have to articulate itself in relation to this comprehensively altered situation.

The Problem about Modern Power

In effect, then, not *less* Europe, but a differently configured one. Not a reified Europe, but a problematized one. The point is that an understanding of the non-Western world's modernities ought to be informed by a more nuanced and discerning understanding of Europe's pasts and its modernities, one especially attuned to "its peculiar historicity, the mobile powers that have constructed its structures, projects, and desires."[17] The reason for this is obviously not that the modernities of the non-Western world are somehow "derived" from Europe's and that *therefore* an understanding of the "original," as it were, would repay the effort. Rather, it is that those "structures, projects, and desires" of Europe generated changing ways of impacting the non-Western world, changing ways of imposing and maintaining rule over the colonized, and therefore changing terrains within which to respond. Now, needless to say, this is not the place to pursue an elaborate discussion of European modernities. But it is important to note, I think, that recently, and across a variety of intersecting theoretical discourses, the story of those modernities has been undergoing a quite considerable critical reexamination and revision. This has started to alter the picture we have of Europe's pasts in a manner that interrupts, indeed sweeps away, the consoling fable of the Enlightenment's long developmental march of reason and freedom.[18] What I should like to do here, however, is to foreground two distinctive features of the political rationality of modern power that have a special bearing on the problem of the colonial modern that I take up in the following section of this paper. Following on my earlier remarks on political rationality, the first of these features will have to do with the point of application of modern power; the second, with the field of its operation. My argument is that historicizing Europe by way of an attention to these features is indispensable for a more discriminating inquiry into the modernities of the colonial and postcolonial world because it will enable us to understand the specificty of the terrain—including, most crucially, the specificity of the apparatus of power—in relation to which the colonized constructed their own varied forms of response.

As Talal Asad has suggested, modern power is distinctive not so much for its relation to capitalism, as varieties of modernization theory

would have it, nor for the social and institutional differentiation that expands the possibility for individual freedom.[19] Rather, modern power is distinctive for its *point of application*. And the point of application of modern power is not so much the body of the sovereign's subject (we are all familiar with the stunning image of Michel Foucault's "body of the condemned")[20] as the *conditions* in which that body is to live and define its life. This is of course because of modern power's relation to Enlightenment reason. As we know, the Enlightenment belief in progress rested on an idea of reason which was irreconcilably opposed to forms of understanding and action that depended upon what is called superstition and prejudice. For these, the argument went, disabled individual rational judgment and encouraged timidity and fear, thereby leaving people in blind obedience to the capricious tyranny of despots and priests. However, the emancipation from this moral slavery and the eradication of benighted ignorance could not be carried out by the mere alteration of a few false notions and the superficial tinkering with behaviors. Rather, what was required was, first, their fundamental uprooting by means of a broad attack on the *conditions* that were understood to produce them, and second, their systematic *replacement* by the inducement of new conditions based on clear, sound, and rational principles.[21]

At the end of the eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth, this view was engaged in an argument with an older way of thinking perhaps best exemplified in the "traditionalist" thought of Edmund Burke. For Burke, as he asserted nowhere more viscerally than in the *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, the institutions of political society were not to be understood by means of a handful of abstract maxims regarding the general nature of society as such. These institutions, being the product of the accumulation of generations of specific experience built up slowly over the course of uncountable years, changing and adjusting as contingencies warranted, could only be judged with reference to this immemorial usage, with reference, that is, to custom. Which is not to say that Burke was hostile to reform as such—he was hostile only to what he considered a dogmatic, arrogant, and dangerous spirit of reform which believed that by the application of a priori principles a society which had existed time out of mind could be suddenly, irrevocably, pulled down and constructed anew in conformity with reason.[22] To this, of course, Enlightenment reason responded with confident scorn. For on the view it advanced—and one sees this, for instance, as much in Jeremy Bentham's early work, *A Fragment on Government*, published more than a decade and a half before Burke's *Reflections*, as in Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*, which was a response to it—reason, seeing as it did into the very nature of things, had a prescriptive and an aggressively programmatic mission, the accomplishment of which entailed striking uncompromisingly at the presumed foun-

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dation of error.[23] This, then, is the first distinctive feature of modern power that needs to be foregrounded. And it is in this sense too—the sense of an alteration of grounds, of fundamental bases—that it is important to speak of the modern as forming a *break* with what went before, a break beyond which there is no return, and in which what comes after can only be read in, a break beyond which read through, and read against the categories of the modern. This is the point, I think, that Zygmunt Bauman is urging in the following passage regarding the inauguration of the modern:

> This world which preceded the bifurcation into order and chaos we find difficult to describe in its own terms. We try to grasp it mostly with the help of negations: we tell ourselves what that world was not, what it did not contain, what it was unaware of. That world would hardly have recognized itself in our descriptions. It would not understand what we are talking about. It would not survive such understandings. The moment of understanding would be (and it was) the sign of its approaching death. And of the birth of modernity.[24]

At the same time, if modern power is concerned with disabling non-modern forms of life by dismantling their conditions, then its aim in putting in place new and different conditions is above all to produce governing-effects on conduct. Modern power seeks to arrange and rearrange these conditions (conditions at once discursive and nondiscursive) so as to oblige subjects to transform themselves in a certain, that is, *improving*, direction. And if this is so, if the government of conduct is the distinctive strategic end of modern power, then the decisive (which is *not* to say the only) locus of its operation is the new domain of "civil society." The idea of civil society, now enjoying something of a revival, belongs of course to an old, premodern tradition of political thought, reaching back at least to Aristotle's *Politics*.[25] In its modern career, however (that is, roughly since those remarkable moral philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment like Adam Ferguson whose *Essay on the History of Civil Society* appeared in 1767), it has come to mark off a domain separate and distinct from the state. In other words, the modern concept of civil society amounted to an attempt to think the emerging forms of relation that were organized by new regularities, new forms of skeptical knowledge, new grounds for judgment, and new communicative technologies—the emerging forms of a relation that signal, in short, "the rise of the social," as Hannah Arendt aptly called it.[26]

This is, of course, the great theme of Jürgen Habermas's early work, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*.[27] It will be recalled that what Habermas is concerned to do in this now much discussed book is to provide an historical and sociological account of the emergence—and

subsequent decomposition—of a domain distinctive, even constitutive, of the European modern: the bourgeois "public sphere."[28] This public sphere emerges in the eighteenth century as a product of new commercial relationships that involve a traffic in commodities and news—and indeed in news as a kind of commodity. It forms a component of that wider realm of civil society that is establishing itself at the same time as a corollary of the depersonalized state, and as the realm of commodity exchange and social labor governed by its own regularities in such a way that what is effected is a convergence between private interest and public good. The public sphere, Habermas argues, is preeminently that sphere in which private individuals come together as a public to make use of their reason as the ground of critical authority and judgment. However, since for Habermas this story of the public sphere of civil society is by and large a chapter in the progressive emancipation of an enlightened domain of unrestricted and rational discussion of matters of general interest (and, importantly, of the contemporary threat to that progress in the widespread advance of technocratic consciousness), it still reads like the familiar improving story of modernization.[29] And therefore, sociologically rich as it may seem as an historical account, what gets elided from its comprehension of modernity is of course *power*—power understood not as the antithesis of freedom and reason (in which freedom emerges as a product of the progressive rationalization of power), but power as the general name of a relation in which differential effects of one action upon another are produced. More specifically, what gets elided is the emergence of a new—that is, *modern*—political rationality in which power works not *in spite of* but *through* the construction of the space of free social exchange, and *through* the construction of a subjectivity normatively experienced as the source of free will and rational, autonomous agency. It is this idea of a form of power, not merely traversing the domain of the social, but constructing the normative (i.e., enabling/constraining) regularities that positively constitute civil society, that Michel Foucault tries to conceptualize in his work on "governmentality."[30]

In some of his later lectures at the Collège de France and elsewhere (in a period in which, as we know, the entire *History of Sexuality* project was being rethought),[31] Foucault devoted a good deal of attention to the theme of modern political power—its rationality, its sources, its character, its targets—constructing a story as much historical as historiographical, as much substantive as critical.[32] Part of the point of this work is to invite us to rethink the story told by liberalism and Marxism alike, according to which the state is the privileged site of an immense and magical power standing in opposition to a civil society imagined as the absence of power and the fulfillment of freedom.[33] What interests Foucault is the emergence in early modern Europe of a new form of political rationality which

combines simultaneously two seemingly contradictory modalities of power: one, totalizing and centralizing, the other individualizing and normalizing.[34] This form of political rationality he calls "governmental" rationality or "governmentality." "How to govern oneself, how to be governed, how to govern others, by whom the people will accept being governed, how to become the best possible governor—all these problems," writes Foucault, "in their multiplicity and intensity, seem to me to be characteristic of the sixteenth century, which lies, to put it schematically, at the crossroads of two processes: the one which, shattering the structures of feudalism, leads to the establishment of the great territorial, administrative and colonial states; and that totally different movement which, with the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, raises the issue of how one must be spiritually ruled and led on this earth in order to achieve eternal salvation."[35] In his account, the first threshold of this governmental form of political rationality is that complex early modern ensemble of power known as mercantilism. However, while there emerge in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries systematic disciplinary techniques for working upon latent individual capacities and reconstructing individual behaviors,[36] and the institution of "police" for the detailed regulation of order and the maintenance of good conduct in the community,[37] mercantilism by and large remains within the objectives of an older political rationality, that of "sovereignty." This is because the problem of politics remains above all the preservation and strengthening of the state, the enhancement of the prince's wealth and power against his military and commercial rivals through the conquest, colonization, and exploitation of the non-European world. It is in fact only with the emergence of "population" as an object of political calculation at the end of the eighteenth century that there comes into being the historical conditions for the displacement of the problematic of sovereignty by "government."

I want to draw out two distinctions in Foucault's conceptualization of the political rationality of government. The first is between sovereignty and government, the second between discipline and government. Within the political rationality of sovereignty, individuals are dependent upon the absolute authority of the prince; they are subjects of, and subject to, his power and protection. Here law is deployed as an instrumentality, a direct means toward the primary political end of commanding obedience. On the other hand, says Foucault, with government "it is a question not of imposing law on men, but of disposing things: that is to say, of employing tactics rather than laws, and even of using laws themselves as tactics to arrange things in such a way that, through a certain number of means, such and such ends may be achieved."[38] That is to say, with the political rationality of government it is a question, as that preeminent "governmentalist" Jeremy Bentham had suggested, of artificially so arranging things that people, following only their own self-interest, *will do as they*

ought.[39] And if with sovereignty, the relation between ruler and ruled is such that power reaches out like an extension of the arm of the prince himself, announcing itself periodically with unambiguous ceremony, with government, on the other hand, governor and governed are thrown into a new and different relation, one which is not merely the product of the expanded capacity of the state apparatus, but of the emergence of a new field for producing effects of power—the new, self-regulating field of the social. It is here that the new problem of government (of which the specific problem of the state is now but one component) is articulated. For it is here, by the arrangement and disposition of the instrumentalities and institutions that sustain it—public opinion, private property, the division of labor, the market, the judiciary—that the tendency towards the identification of interests operates to ensure that the new rights-bearing and self-governing subjects do as they ought.[40]

Foucault's discussion of discipline—to turn now to the second distinction I want to focus on—belongs to a period in his work when he was elaborating the "micro-technology" of power. Disciplinary power typically operates at the micro-level, and through technologies and apparatuses. Specifically, discipline has to do with habituating the mind or body to a particular activity. It does this by systematically working upon mental or physical capacities and building these up into discrete abilities by the continual repetition of complex actions broken down into simple operations. The rationality of government operates differently. Whereas discipline is concerned to actively work upon subjects (the intellectual discipline of school, or the bodily discipline of the workhouse or factory, or the social discipline imposed by police), government does not regulate in this kind of detail. As James Tully has lucidly suggested, for writers of the late eighteenth century, the most striking feature of commercial society was the seeming self-sustaining character of its basic institutions. This they attributed to the division of labor and specialization. "In virtue of being caught up in the practices of division of labor in economic, political, and military life," Tully writes, "individuals were constrained to behave in ways which—willy-nilly and unintentionally—led to the overall improvement and growth of these societies. In addition, individuals constrained to act in this way would gradually become 'polished,' 'disciplined,' 'civilized,' and 'pacific.' If behavior within the causal constraints of divisions of labor within commercial society explained the growth of European society, then the regulation and governance of every area of life in the seventeenth century could be seen as unnecessary."[41] Now to be sure, between the Whig protagonists of the *natural* identification of interests and the Benthamite theorists of the *artificial* identification of interests, there was disagreement regarding the degree of coordination these autonomous governmental processes required, but they were all agreed, as Tully says, on their existence and their effects.

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political rationality

that constituted it.

The important point about these distinctions, tentative and overlapping as they may be, is that here as elsewhere, Foucault is engaged in outlining the sources of the modern form of political rationality as well as in interrupting those political histories in which the object is taken to be a singular evolving reason for which each instance is but the reiteration of an identical functionality. It seems to me that the *kind* of investigation Foucault undertakes (in however sketchy and incomplete a manner, and with however narrow a geographical focus) encourages those of us interested in the problem of the specific effects of colonialism on the forms of life of the colonized to historicize European rule in a way that brings into focus the political rationalities in relation to which this rule was effected. For of course the colonial enterprise spans precisely these centuries in which there are significant alterations and discontinuities in European conceptions and practices of political power. Again, the point here is not the banal one that the forms of the state in Europe are simply replicated in the colonies (and that therefore one need only inquire into the former to grasp the latter). The point rather is that in order to understand the project of colonial power *at any given historical moment* one has to understand the character of the political rationality that constituted it. And what is crucial to such an understanding is not what the attitude of the colonizer was toward the colonized, nor whether colonialism excluded or included natives as such. Rather, what is crucial is trying to discern colonial power's point of application, its target, and the discursive and nondiscursive fields it sought to encompass.

Governing Colonial Conduct

The general line of my argument should now be clear enough. Critically rethinking the problem about the modern in its relation to the colonial ought to entail displacing the modernization narrative such that not only can modernity no longer appear to us as the normalized *telos* of a developmental process, *but consequently* colonialism can no longer seem to consist in the mere historical reiteration of a single political rationality whose effects can be adequately assessed in terms of the "more or less" of force, freedom, or reason. And in such a refigured narrative, the formation of colonial modernity would have to appear as a discontinuity in the organization of colonial rule characterized by the emergence of a distinctive political rationality—that is, a colonial governmentality—in which power comes to be directed at the destruction and reconstruction of colonial space so as to produce not so much extractive-effects on colonial bodies as governing-effects on colonial conduct.

Part of the point I am making here is the one made many years ago by

David Scott

Eric Stokes in his classic work, *The English Utilitarians and India*. Readers of that book will recall that its argument turns on a significant if subtle distinction between two historically successive moments in the insertion of English political ideas into colonial rule in India, moments linked to the alteration of the raison d'être of colonial rule effected by the Industrial Revolution, the Reform movement, and Evangelicalism. The first moment is associated with the names of Cornwallis and Munro and their reforms in Bengal and Madras respectively; and the second with those of the liberals, Evangelicals, and Utilitarians. In Stokes's account, the important difference between these moments does not have to do with the mere adoption of English political ideas as such—the rule of law, for example, or the fundamental concept of private property rights in land. Rather, the important difference has to do with the *spirit* and *target* of the colonial power whose ends they participated in, that is, the colonial *project* into which these were inserted. Corwallis's and Munro's reforms were of course far from identical—quite the contrary. But inserted as they were into the mercantilist colonial project of tributary extraction, they were, as Stokes puts it, essentially "defensive" and "conservative," power seeking to make changes as expediency and experience dictated. The liberal and Utilitarian reforms, on the other hand, were inserted into a colonial project in which the mercantilist end of the aggrandizement of the state was being displaced, as one nineteenth-century writer put it, by the "surer foundation" of a "dominion over the wants of the universe."[42] Colonial power came to depend, not merely upon inserting English ideas here and there, but upon *the systematic redefinition and transformation of the terrain on which the life of the colonized was lived*. It became, in short, "revolutionary," inasmuch as, guided by abstract, universal principles regarding the supposed relation between moral conditions and moral character, it now saw as integral to its task the rational possibility of so altering those conditions as to fundamentally alter that character in an improving direction. And with the assumption of this project, colonial power came to be, as Stokes so acutely puts it, "consciously directed upon Indian *society* itself."[43] It is, it seems to me, in the discerning articulation of this transformation in the *structure* and *project* of colonial power that the whole genius of Stokes's book lies. What his book does not do, however, is to elucidate the principle of the new political rationality that required and indeed constructed the domain of "society itself."[44]

I now wish to turn briefly to one historical instance, that of Sri Lanka, and to the story of the making of its colonial modernity. What interests me here, I should emphasize, is not by any means a full historical account, but an attempt to shift the conceptual *register* or alter the narrative *frame* in which such an account of modernity might be resituated.

In the writings of colonialist and nationalist historians alike, the story

of Sri Lanka's insertion into the regime of British colonialism has been told and retold through a familiar set of events and a familiar narrative plot. That story is generally told as a succession of three episodes that chart a progressive journey of transition from the medieval to the modern.[45] The first episode in this transition to the modern (1796–1802) is the brief story of the capture of the maritime provinces of the island from the Dutch, its unsettled fate as a colony during the Anglo-French War, and its mismanagement at the hands of the Madras administration of the English East India Company. The second episode (1802–1832) takes the story from the beginnings of Crown Colony status and plots the early building-up of the apparatuses of the colonial state, the political resolution of the problem of territorial integrity with the ceding of the Kandyan Kingdom, the construction of the institutions of civil and judicial administration, the growth of plantation agriculture, and the development of the infrastructure of communication in roads and bridges and canals and post. In the overall economy of the colonialist and nationalist narratives, these first two episodes form a sort of backdrop: they enumerate the cumulative improvements that will culminate in the third episode, which tells the story of that watershed of reform when the recommendations of Commissioners W. M. G. Colebrooke and C. H. Cameron were implemented, and when modernity, a mere glimmer until now, burst in upon the colony.[46]

In the story of the formation of Sri Lanka's modernity, the reforms known historiographically as the Colebrooke-Cameron Reforms establish the definitive moment of the break with the "medieval" or "feudal" past. As we know, these reforms were far-reaching and comprehensive: they led to the unification of the administration of the island, the establishment of Executive and Legislative Councils, judicial reform, and the development of capitalist agriculture, modern means of communication, education, and the press. Emphasizing the progressivist direction of the transition made possible by the reforms, G. C. Mendis—the first modern professional (and liberal-nationalist) Sri Lankan historian—wrote as follows in his "Introduction" to *The Colebrooke-Cameron Papers*: "[T]he reforms recommended by Colebrooke and Cameron have contributed greatly to the advancement of Ceylon. They have turned the course of the history of Ceylon in a modern direction and enabled Ceylon to fall in line in many ways with modern developments and ultimately to attain to the stage to which it has risen today as an equal member of the Commonwealth of Nations."[47] In this kind of account, therefore, the Colebrooke-Cameron Reforms form the crucial moment in an approved journey of progress in which modernity and the nation are linked stages of attainment.

My problem with this story is not the proposition of a "break" as such, the idea of a "discontinuity" that inaugurates the modern, but rather

with the progressivist plot into which the modernization narrative inserts it. Because, working as it does through the familiar counterpositioning of power and freedom (the modern as the rationalization of power), what it invites us to suppose is the unfolding trajectory of the teleological path of a single political rationality. And in so doing what it masks is the nature of the transformation that the modern seeks to induce, and the new political rationality by which it seeks to accomplish this. If, however, we take the important point about colonial power to be its structure, its project, and its target, then a different sort of story ought to be told about the formation of Sri Lanka's colonial career, one whose principal axis is the displacement of one kind of political rationality—that of mercantilism or sovereignty—by another—that of governmentality. In this view, colonial power in Sri Lanka between 1796 and 1832 will be understood to be largely organized around the mercantilist rationality of sovereignty. The principal object of this colonial project was the extraction of tribute for the security and aggrandizement of the State and Crown. In marking off this period, the crucial point is not the degree of oppressiveness or corruption of colonial officials (as in the period of East India Company administration), nor even the steady, incremental rationalization and humanizing of absolutist-autocratic colonial rule (as during the early phase of Crown Colony administration). Therefore, the increase or decrease of the level of taxation, or the variety of things taxed, may have been more or less oppressive; the officials who collected revenues may have been more or less corrupt; forms of forced labor may have been administered in such a way as to have been more or less onerous. But none of this changes the *point of application of power*. Power deployed through this form of political rationality is directed principally at the points of extraction of wealth. This is because tributary power was largely concerned to ensure that bodies knew their place, that they obeyed when commanded, but it did not need to work on reorganizing the conduct or habits of subjects themselves. What is important about sovereignty from the point of view of the modern, then, is that on this strategy of rule, the "lives" of the colonized population—their "local habits," their "ancient tenures," their "distinctions" and "religious observations"—were not a significant variable in the colonial calculus (at least so long as they did not interfere with the immediate business of extraction). And what is crucial about the Colebrooke-Cameron Reforms is that now, with their implementation, colonial power came to depend precisely upon the systematic attempt to intervene at the level of what Stokes called "society itself."

To understand the new political rationality that was now about to displace the old, what is necessary is to open up the Colebrooke-Cameron recommendations for reform to a *reading* that, partial though it will necessarily be, aims to make visible the altered project of colonial power. I

would suggest that the configuration of that project of colonial power—the new target it aimed at bringing within its reach, the new knowledges it depended upon, the new technologies it sought to deploy, the new domains it needed to construct as the field of its operations—can be discerned if we inquire into the kinds of effects that Colebrooke and Cameron sought to produce in each of three domains whose systematic reform they recommended. These domains—that of government, the economy, and the judiciary—which they marked out (or rather, which were marked out for them in their "Instructions" from the Earl of Bathurst)[48] as preeminently warranting attention, were of course domains which the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were constructing as distinct if integrated, each with its own level of rationality, its own laws of motion, and its own corresponding sciences. They were, moreover, precisely those domains which the political rationality of governmental power sought at once to *construct* and *work through* in order to induce its improving effects on colonial conduct.

In his report on the administration of government, W. M. G. Colebrooke, for the most part a Whig liberal, vigorously opposed the absolute and autocratic control exercised by the Governor. It hindered, he maintained, the development of commerce, the movement of voluntary labor, and the development of a press. In its place Colebrooke recommended the formation of executive and legislative councils (the latter of which would admit native representation) to limit the arbitrary power of the Governor. Much of this was argued in relation to the principle of the "natural" rights of the people. The people, said Colebrooke, "are entitled to expect that their interests and wishes may be attended to, and their rights protected; and although the ignorance and prejudice which still prevail generally throughout the country may preclude the adoption of their views upon all subjects, it would be consistent with the policy of a liberal government that they should have an opportunity of freely communicating their opinions of the effects of the legislative changes that may be proposed."[49] But we ought, I think, to avoid reading this claim from within the narrative of the progress of democratic principles and institutions, and not only for the obvious reason that native members (who only began sitting in 1835) were nominated rather than elected, and had no control of Government expenditure. The crucial point here is not whether natives were included or excluded so much as *the introduction of a new game of politics* that the colonized would (eventually) be obliged to play if they were to be counted as political. And one of the things the new game of politics came to depend upon was the construction of a legally instituted space where legally defined subjects could exercise rights, however limited those might have been.

This is why Colebrooke is concerned with the creation of the instrumentalities and technologies of "public opinion"—specifically, those great Whig principles, an English education and a free press. The old form of the colonial state had no need of "public opinion" because then colonial power did not depend upon the productivity and consumption of an improving public. On the other hand, what the new form of the colonial state required was not self-aggrandizement, but a form of power that could exercise a "dominion over the wants of the universe." What it needed, therefore was to seek to produce the conditions of self-interest or desire in which these wants would tend to be of certain kinds and not others. Or to put it another way: if the new form of colonial power depended upon the idea of the identification of interests, it was necessary to provide the means of inducing an understanding of what those interests were. And for this a press that would be involved in the diffusion of useful knowledges (and with the criticism of ignorant and prejudicial ones) was indispensable.

> The very limited operation of these presses [i.e., those run by the government and the missionary societies] has tended to check the progress of moral and intellectual improvement; and in those parts of the country where there is little intercourse with Europeans the ignorance and prejudices of the people have been perpetuated, and have greatly tended to obstruct the improvement of the country and the amelioration of its institutions.[50]

At the same time, there is another reason besides the direct effect on the moral conduct of people whose want of intercourse with Europeans was the source of the perpetuation of their prejudices. The institutionalization of the public use of reason, in Colebrooke's view, would in turn also have an effect on the government of the state itself.

> In a political point of view [he wrote] the unrestricted operation of the colonial press would have a direct tendency to promote good government in the island, and to diminish the influence of those classes who are interested in upholding the ignorant prejudices of the people, and who retain them in servile dependence on themselves.[51]

By creating a rational public the press would promote good government. So that not only was public opinion dependent upon the liberal government of the state, but the state was also dependent upon the play of a reasoned public opinion. In other words, a more public circulation of reason would serve to undermine and break down the supports of native knowledges, to disqualify them. It would, in effect, help to put in place a public sphere in which only certain kinds of knowledges and not others could circulate with any efficacy; a sphere in which fluency in these knowledges (in

part determined by the ability to point out the unreason in the old) would be a condition of participation; and in which participation would be the only rational and legal way of exercising influence in what now counted as politics.[52]

By the early nineteenth century, "economy," no longer understood at the level of "family" but, as Foucault suggests, on the biopolitical level of "population," was becoming a distinctive domain of reforming intervention articulated through the emergence of the new science of political economy—"the governmental discourse of the modern world," as Denis Meuret puts it (echoing Adam Smith's famous characterization of political economy as "a branch of the science of the statesman or legislator").[53] This was because in that representation of "economy" that Smith's *Wealth of Nations* did so much to establish, a new relation was being constructed between the state, economy, and that comprehensive new domain of the social in which "the principle of population" operated. "The emergence of political economy," Meuret suggests a bit later, "is inseparable from the movement by which, in the eighteenth century, the public, which in the seventeenth century was still only an object of discourse, begins to intervene as an explicit actor in an intellectual debate for which it was, at the same time, the stage."[54] It was only to be expected then that Colebrooke would seek to interrupt and transform the existing relation between economy and the state, that relation that had been constructed through the idea of the state's responsibility for commercial strength. His design, of course, was to introduce conditions for the development of private property, market relations, and capitalist agriculture. Colebrooke particularly objected to the government's mercantilist monopolies of cinnamon and salt. They were, he said, "injurious to commerce and to the influx and accumulation of capital."[55] And most particularly it is why he objected to the system of "compulsory service" known as rājakāriya upon which these monopolies rested. Indeed, both in his general report and in the special report on "compulsory services," rājakāriya appears as a sort of key to the structure of the old society. Colebrooke objected to rājakāriya on several grounds. Principally it was, he said, "unfavorable to agricultural industry and improvement,"[56] insofar as it prevented people from attending continuously to their own cultivation and hindered the development of a free market in labor. Colebrooke also believed that it exposed the people to undue hardships because of the manner of its administration. Moreover, he argued, it rested on and worked to maintain "absurd distinctions" based on race and caste. Again, this ought not to be read as the rationalization of the economy, the break up of "feudal" forms of economic relation. Rather, it ought to be read as a concern to introduce the conditions for a new order of social power wherein conduct was enabled and disabled by the automatic regulation of free exchanges.

In order to create these new conditions—what amounted in fact to new social and legal conditions of property and labor, the new social and legal space of the desiring subject—colonial power had to direct itself both at breaking down those "ancient usages" that irrationally connected people to obligations of service (those in fact that it had itself formerly used); and, through the construction of a notion of rights, to shift the site of agency such that it came to be assigned to the private sphere of an individuality regulated not by the personal discretionary demands of a sovereign extracting tribute but by the internal volitional agency of free will. In other words, the new order of private landownership and market relations that was to be promoted required that new habits of social discipline be acquired by the native population, in particular, the improving habit of industry. Now the native would be obliged to learn the new relation between temporality and voluntary productiveness, but not by the old forms of authority and hierarchy that rājakāriya entailed, those principally based on caste. For now the only principles of economic authority and distinction to be allowed were those defined by the abstract and self-regulating demands of the market, which operated not on such aggregates as caste but on individuals responding only to the rational or natural pressure of want and self-interest. Here, in short, was a new organization of social power in which the division of labor and the exchange mechanism of the market were to operate in such a fashion as to oblige a progressive desire for industry, regularity, and individual accomplishment.

Though Utilitarians considered public opinion and schooling important for effecting a progressive improvement in human conduct, for them it was that the scientifically arranged technologies of the legal and judicial establishments were most fundamental to this endeavor. And here, in Bentham's juridical theory, the task of arriving at that identity of interests which was requisite for a harmonious society could not be left to the spontaneous working of Adam Smith's hidden hand, but rather depended upon a calculus of pleasures and pains artificially established by the legislator and the magistrate.[57] Charles Hay Cameron—"ultimately the last disciple of Jeremy Bentham," as Sir Leslie Stephen called him, and who was charged with reporting on the judicial establishments in Ceylon—was a legal scholar keenly preoccupied with this Benthamite principle of inducing desired effects on conduct by a careful and economic weighting of rewards and punishments.[58] In his meticulously systematic report, he repeatedly returned to this theme. In Cameron's view, moreover, Ceylon was an especially favorable field for experimenting with legal reform because, unlike India (where he would work alongside Macaulay on the Penal Code some four years later),[59] "the courts of justice in that island, and the forms of their procedure are, without exception, the creations of the British Government, and have not in the eyes of the natives anything

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of the sanctity of religion or of antiquity."[60] There was therefore little to fear in disabling existing practices since, in this view, they were neither deeply entrenched nor legitimized by religion. And so, with the cheerful expectation of wonderful improvements that characterized liberalism in the first blush of its youth, he declared that: "A fairer field than the island of Ceylon can never be presented to a legislator for the establishment of a system of judicature and procedure, of which the sole end is the attainment of cheap and expeditious justice."[61]

In the opening paragraph of his report, Cameron set down the rationale for what was to follow (some twenty-five sets of recommendations in all). "The condition of the native inhabitants of the Island of Ceylon," he wrote, "imposes upon a government which has their improvement at heart, the necessity not only of providing cheap and accessible judicatures for the relief of those who have suffered injury, and the punishment of those who have inflicted it, but also of guarding with peculiar anxiety against the danger that the judicatures themselves should be employed as the means of perpetrating that injustice which it is the object of their institution to prevent."[62] The precise "danger" which provoked this "peculiar anxiety" stemmed from the colonial view that in Ceylon the "restraints" on "bad passions" were "deficient to such a degree" that "each individual owes nearly all the security he enjoys to the protection of the law."[63] "The disregard of an oath," he lamented, "and of truth in general among the natives is notorious; not less so is their readiness to gratify their malignant passions through the medium of vexatious litigation."[64] This gave to the legislator of colonial reform a responsibility far greater than would be the case in Europe, simply because the stakes of moral improvement were greater. Unlike Europe, where the moral disposition was such as did not require so many artificial constraints, in Ceylon the natives had to be met at every turn with devices and measures which constrained them against immoral conduct.

> The truth is, that the administration of justice to natives is of far more importance than its administration to Europeans, because they are so much less disposed to do justice to each other voluntarily; and I know of no instrument so powerful for gradually inducing upon them habits of honesty and sincerity as a judicial establishment, by which fraud and falsehood may be exposed to the greatest possible risk of detection and punishment.[65]

A colonial difference, in Chatterjee's sense, is quite evidently at work here. But again, this seems to me less significant than the fact that what the rationality of colonial power is doing is inscribing a new authoritative game of justice into the colonized space, one which the colonized could accept or resist, but to whose rules they would have to respond.

One site for inducing these effects on colonial conduct was the court-room itself, particularly the jury system. A jury system had been introduced by Chief Justice Sir Alexander Johnston by the Charter of 1810. Cameron, who like most Utilitarians was generally not well disposed toward juries (seeing them as cumbrous and wasteful),[66] felt that in the special case of Ceylon it was a useful, indeed indispensable, institution. "I attended nearly all the trials by jury which took place while I was in the island," he wrote, "and the impression on my mind is, that an institution in the nature of a jury is the best school in which the minds of the natives can be disciplined for the discharge of public duties."[67] The jury was *exemplary* of a certain arrangement whose aim was to constrain the native's behavior in a certain direction. As with the school proper, crucial to the working of this technology was the overseeing "eye" of the European: the courtroom was to produce the effect of a panopticon. "The juror performs his functions under the eye of an European judge," Cameron continued, "and of the European and Indian public, and in circumstances which almost preclude the possibility of bribery or intimidation."[68] The point, in other words, was to establish a regulatory technique that would reach down to the very "motives" of the native and not only constrain or induce him to alter them but also encourage him to appreciate the alteration. Moreover, governmental rationality sought to organize things such that the native was made to work upon himself; he was now conceived of as a productive agent. "In such a situation he has very little motive to do wrong, and he yet feels and learns to appreciate the consciousness of rectitude. The importance which he justly attaches to the office renders it agreeable to him; and he not only pays great attention to the proceedings, but for the most part takes an active part in them."[69]

In my view, then, the Colebrooke-Cameron Reforms ought to be inserted into an altogether different problematic about the modern than the one into which it has been inserted by the modernization story. If in that story the Reforms mark a great leap forward in the march of rationality, progress, and freedom, in the story I want to tell they signal the reconfiguration of colonial power, its redistribution and redeployment in relation to new targets, new forms of knowledge, and new technologies, and its production of new effects of order and subjectivity. Summing up the project of the Reforms, G. C. Mendis, that consummate liberal-nationalist historian, remarked: "Thus both Colebrooke and Cameron believed that the bond between Britain and Ceylon could be maintained not by retaining British ascendancy in Government but by sharing power with the people, by giving them offices of trust, maintaining good relations between Europeans and Ceylonese and imparting justice equally to all both rich and poor."[70] However, what Mendis reads here as a democratization of power, as the generosity of a liberal British colonialism yielding

a measure of autonomy to the natives, I would read rather as a *transformation* of power, as colonial power adopting a different strategy, and working on and through different targets. In this view, the Colebrooke-Cameron Reforms are significant in that they displaced the old mercantile politics of territorial expansion, and introduced into the colonial state a new politics—a politics in which power was now directed at the conditions of social life rather than the producers of social wealth, in which power was now to operate in such a way as to produce not so much extractive-effects on colonial bodies as governing-effects on colonial conduct. For what was at stake in the governmental redefinition and reordering of the colonial world was, to paraphrase Jeremy Bentham once more, the design of institutions so that, following only their own self-interest, natives would do what they ought.

Conclusion

To sum up, I have been trying to urge an approach to colonialism in which *Europe* is historicized, historicized in such a way as to bring into focus the differentials in the political rationalities through which its colonial projects were constructed. Europe, between the early modern sixteenth and the late modern nineteenth centuries, was an arena of profound alterations in the languages of the political—the concepts that it depended upon, the technologies that enabled it, the institutional sites through which it operated, the structures that guaranteed it, and the kind of subjectivities it required.[71] How these languages in turn altered the construction of the colonial project—that is, how colonial spaces were constructed as such and organized and inserted into this project as products of these changing rationalities, is still I think very poorly understood. Among these political rationalities, the modern is crucial in large part because it remains, if in a tenuous and embattled way, our postcolonial present.

In the colonial world the problem of *modern* power turned on the politico-ethical project of producing subjects and governing their conduct. What this required was the concerted attempt to alter the political and social worlds of the colonized, an attempt to transform and redefine the very conditions of the desiring subject. The political problem of modern colonial power was therefore not merely to contain resistance and encourage accommodation but to seek to ensure that *both* could *only* be defined in relation to the categories and structures of modern political rationalities. This is what Charles Trevelyan urged when he wrote in the late 1830s, at a time when liberalism was still aggressively optimistic, that whereas independence for India was inevitable it would come in one of

two ways: reform or revolution. "The only means at our disposal for pre-venting [revolution] and securing [reform]," he said, "is to set the natives on a process of European improvement, to which they are already suffi-ciently inclined. They will then cease to desire and aim at independence *on the old Indian footing*."[72] It seems to me that if we are to more ade-quately grasp the lineaments of our postcolonial modernity, what we ought to try to map more precisely is the political rationality through which this old footing was systematically displaced by a new one, such that the old would now only be imaginable along paths that belong to new, always already transformed sets of coordinates, concepts, and assumptions.

Notes

1. Michel Foucault, "Governmentality," in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, ed. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 103.

2. Talad Asad, "Conscripts of Western Civilization," in *Dialectical Anthro-pology: Essays in Honor of Stanley Diamond*, vol. 1, *Civilization in Crisis*, ed. Christine Gailey (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1992), 337. My great-est debt in this paper is to this most instructive little essay.

3. For one recent and interesting attempt to grapple with this problem, see Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for 'Indian' Pasts?" *Representations* 37 (1992):1–26. As will be evident from what follows, I do not entirely share his diagnosis of the problem of Europe, or the solution he provides.

4. We all recall those stirring closing passages of Frantz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Penguin, 1967), 251, in which he exhorts us to "Leave this Europe where they are never done talking about Man, yet murder men every-where they find them, at the corner of every one of their own streets, in all the corners of the globe." Part of the point I want to make is the obvious one that the politics of our critique of colonialist discourse cannot be the same as it was for Fanon.

5. One significant articulation of this argument is to be found in Ranajit Guha's celebrated essay, "Dominance without Hegemony and its Historiogra-phy," in *Subaltern Studies VI: Writings in South Asian History and Society*, ed. Ranajit Guha (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), 275–76.

6. This essay was completed before Nicholas Thomas's recent book, *Colo-nialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), came to my attention, and as a result I am unable to ade-quately position it in relation to my own argument. That Thomas and I share some concerns will be quite evident. He is concerned, as he says, with an "his-

toricization of colonialism" (19), with a more "nuanced understanding of the plurality of colonial endeavours" (20). However, it seems to me that Thomas shares with many others—and *not* with me—that conceptual problematic in which the overriding concern is determining the nature of colonialism's *attitude* toward the colonized. My view, once again, is that we ought to give up this preoccupation.

7. Partha Chatterjee, "The Colonial State," in *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Post-Colonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 14.

8. Ibid.

9. See for example, Burton Stein, "State Formation and Economy Reconsidered," *Modern Asian Studies* 19 (1985): 387–413; Frank Perlin, "State Formation Reconsidered," *Modern Asian Studies* 19 (1985): 415–80; David Washbrook, "Progress and Problems: South Asian Economic and Social History, c. 1720–1860," *Modern Asian Studies* 22 (1988): 57–96; and Christopher Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), and *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780–1830* (London: Longman, 1989).

10. Vincent Harlow, of course, argued that this was the period in which there emerged a "new imperial system" or second British Empire. See "The New Imperial System, 1783–1815," in *The Cambridge History of the British Empire,* vol. 2, *The Growth of the New Empire, 1783–1870,* ed. J. Holland Rose, A. P. Newton, and E. A. Benians (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940).

11. Chatterjee, "The Colonial State," 32.

12. For a recent work that employs such a distinction between different political rationalities within a colonial period, see Timothy Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

13. Chatterjee, "The Colonial State," 19.

14. Students of colonial plantation slavery in the Americas will perhaps be more keenly aware of the vicissitudes of race as a signifier of difference. See Thomas Gossett, *Race: The History of an Idea in America,* rev. ed. (New York: Schocken, 1987), though even here the concern is exclusively with the classificatory and representational side of the question. For a useful discussion of aspects of the transformation of the concept in the nineteenth century, see George W. Stocking, Jr., *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).

15. See, for example, Michael Ryan, "Assimilating New Worlds in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 23 (1981): 519–38; Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492–1797* (New York: Methuen, 1986); Anthony Pagden, *European Encounters with the New World: From Renaissance to Romanticism* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993). For an interesting attempt to sketch the discontinuities in European discourses of the other between the Renaissance and the emergence of modern professional anthropology, see Bernard McGrane, *Beyond Anthropology: Society and the Other* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).

16. I take this metaphor from J. C. Heesterman. See, "Was there an Indian Reaction? Western Expansion in Indian Perspective," in *Expansion and Reaction,* ed. H. L. Wesseling (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 1978), 52. Also cited in John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 189.

17. Talal Asad, "Introduction," in *Genealogies of Religion: Disciplines and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 23–24.

18. One might think, in this regard, of a work such as Zygmunt Bauman's excellent *Legislators and Interpreters* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989).

19. See Asad, "Conscripts of Western Civilization," 337.

20. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1979).

21. Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1951). Of course, in this sense, the Evangelicals were also but children of the Enlightenment. See Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989 [orig. 1959]), 33.

22. For a very acute discussion of this aspect of Burke's thought see J. G. A. Pocock, "Burke and the Ancient Constitution: A Problem in the History of Ideas," in *Politics, Language, and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); and Elie Halévy, *The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism,* trans. Mary Morris (New York: MacMillan, 1928), 155–81. And for a discussion of the importance of the kind of thinking represented by Burke's "traditionalism" for the colonial project in India, see Stokes, *The English Utilitarians,* 8–25.

23. In England, in the second decade of the nineteenth century, when the movement for Parliamentary reform was gathering pace after the long period of war and political reaction, there emerged a distinction between "Radical Reformers" and "Moderate Reformers"—between "those who wished to alter the constitution in accordance with some grand general sweeping plan" and "those who were content with partial alterations, applicable to what they deemed particular grievances." Halévy, *Philosophic Radicalism,* 261. More generally, see also Asa Briggs, *The Age of Improvement, 1783 to 1867* (London: Longman, 1979).

24. Zygmunt Bauman, "Modernity and Ambivalence," *Theory, Culture & Society* 7 (1990): 163.

25. For useful discussions of the concept of civil society, see John Keane, "Despotism and Democracy: The Origins and Development of the Distinction between Civil Society and the State 1750–1850," in *Civil Society and the State: New European Perspectives,* ed. John Keane (London: Verso, 1988); and Adam Seligman, *The Idea of Civil Society* (New York: Free, 1992).

26. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 38–58.

27. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere,* trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989). This early work (first published in German in 1962) has recently begun to exercise an impressive influence on re-examinations of the Enlightenment and modernity. See, for instance, Joan Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988); Roger Chartier, *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution,* trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1991); and Mary Jacobs, *Living the Enlightenment: Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth Century Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

28. For a discussion, see Craig Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992).

29. In some sense, Habermas's later work has constituted an attempt to for-

mulate a theory of modernity that is less susceptible to this kind of criticism. See Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communication Action*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Polity, 1991–92).

30. See Colin Gordon, "Governmental Rationality: An Introduction," and Graham Burchell, "Peculiar Interests: Civil Society and Governing 'The System of Natural Liberty'," in *The Foucault Effect*, ed. Graham Burchell et al.

31. For a discussion, see Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault*, trans. Betsy Wing (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), and James Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault* (London: HarperCollins, 1993).

32. See, for example, "*Omnes et Singulatim*: Towards a Criticism of Political Reason," *Tanner Lectures on Human Values* 2 (1981): 225–54; "The Political Technology of Individuals." In Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick H. Hutton, eds., *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* (Amherst: University of Massachussetts Press, 1988); and "Governmentality," in *The Foucault Effect*, eds. Graham Burchell et al.

33. See Foucault, "Governmentality," 103.

34. In a phrase, *omnes et singulatim*, all and each. See, Foucault, "*Omnes et Singulatim*."

35. Foucault, "Governmentality," 87–88.

36. See James Tully, "Governing Conduct," in *An Approach to Political Philosophy: Locke in Contexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). Tully's thesis is that between the Reformation and the Enlightenment there emerges a new practice of governing conduct. "This mode of governance links together probabilistic and voluntaristic forms of knowledge with a range of techniques related to each other by a complex of references to juridical practices. Its aim is to reform conduct: to explain and then deconstruct settled ways of mental and physical behavior, and to produce and then govern new forms of habitual conduct in belief and action. Finally, this way of subjection, of conducting the self and others, both posits and serves to bring about a very specific form of subjectivity: a subject who is calculating and calculable, from the perspective of the probabilistic knowledge and practices; and the sovereign bearer of rights and duties, subject to and of law from the voluntaristic perspective. The whole ensemble of knowledge, techniques, habitual activity, and subjection I will provisionally call the juridical government" (179).

37. See Gerhard Oestreich, *Neostoicism and the Early Modern State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), especially chapters 2, 4, 9, and 15.

38. Foucault, "Governmentality," 95.

39. See Jeremy Bentham, *A Fragment on Government* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988 [orig. 1776]).

40. See Asad, "Conscripts of Western Civilization," 336.

41. James Tully, "After the Macpherson Thesis," in *Approach to Political Philosophy*, 92.

42. Quoted in Stokes, *The English Utilitarians*, 43.

43. Stokes, *The English Utilitarians*, 27, my emphasis.

44. Compare in this regard, Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt*.

45. In more or less explicit terms this is the case from the colonialist history of Sir James Emerson Tennent, *Ceylon*, vol. 2. (Colombo: Tisara Prakasakayo, 1977 [orig. 1859]); to the nationalist history of G. C. Mendis, *Ceylon under the British* (Colombo: Colombo Apothecaries' Co., Ltd., 1944); Colvin R. de Silva, *Ceylon under the British Occupation, 1795–1832*, 2 vols. (Colombo: Colombo

Apothecaries' Co., Ltd., 1941–1942); and most recently, K. M. de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).

46. For the circumstances that brought the Commission of Inquiry to Ceylon in 1829, see G. C. Mendis, "Introduction," *The Colebrooke-Cameron Papers: Documents on British Colonial Policy in Ceylon, 1796–1833,* 2 vols., selected and edited by G. C. Mendis (London: Oxford University Press, 1956). See also Vijaya Samaraweera, "The Colebrooke-Cameron Reforms," *University of Ceylon History of Ceylon,* vol. 3 (Colombo: University of Ceylon Press, 1973). The Papers were published in a period of great nationalist debate, indeed in a year—1956—of tremendous political significance for Sinhala Buddhist nationalism since it witnessed the electoral victory of the Mahajana Eksath Peramuna led by S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike's Sri Lanka Freedom Party.

47. *Colebrooke-Cameron Papers,* vol. 1, lxiv. For a discussion of Mendis see K. M. de Silva, "History and Historians in Twentieth Century Sri Lanka—the G. C. Mendis Memorial Lecture," *Sri Lanka Journal of the Social Sciences* 1 (1978): 1–12. I am grateful, too, to Sita Pieris, Mendis's daughter, for discussing some aspects of her father's career with me.

48. See "Instructions to the Commissioners of Inquiry," *Colebrooke-Cameron Papers,* vol. 1, 4–8.

49. Ibid., 56.

50. Ibid., 75.

51. Ibid.

52. For an important—because critical—discussion of the place of "public opinion" in the formation of liberal political theory, see Carl Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy,* trans. Ellen Kennedy (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988 [orig. 1923]).

53. See Denis Meuret, "A Political Genealogy of Political Economy," *Economy and Society* 17 (1988): 227. And for a more general discussion of Adam Smith in relation to the emerging science of the political in Edinburgh in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, see Donald Winch, "The System of the North: Dugald Stewart and his Pupils," in *That Noble Science of Politics: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Intellectual History,* ed. Stefan Collini, Donald Winch, and John Burrow (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

54. Meuret, "A Political Genealogy," 228.

55. *Colebrooke-Cameron Papers,* vol. 1, 51.

56. Ibid.

57. For a discussion of this aspect of Bentham's thought in relation to Adam Smith, see Halévy, *Philosophic Radicalism,* 89–120.

58. Quoted in Stokes, *The English Utilitarians,* 223. Sir Leslie Stephen was, of course, the first great memorializer of the Utilitarians. It is perhaps not altogether irrelevant to recall that this last Benthamite is in fact buried in Sri Lanka to which he returned in 1875 at the age of eighty to take up the life of a planter. For some details see Mendis, *Colebrooke-Cameron Papers,* vol. 1, xxxii–xxxiiin.

59. A curious—or, perhaps, not so curious—couple if one recalls both the rivalry and the kinship, the divergences as well as the convergences, between philosophic Whigs like Macaulay and philosophic Radicals like Cameron in the first half of the nineteeth century. The dispute between James Mill and Macaulay over the best approach to the "noble science of politics" is, of course, one of the most memorable and most instructive exchanges around emerging liberal conceptions of good government. On this relation in general see Donald Winch,

"The Cause of Good Government: Philosophic Whigs versus Philosophic Radicals," in *That Noble Science of Politics*, ed. Stefan Collini, Donald Winch, and John Burrow.

60. *Colebrooke-Cameron Papers*, vol. 1, 164.

61. Ibid., 165.

62. Ibid., 121.

63. Ibid.

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid., 136.

66. This institution, which was "the pride of English liberalism," the Utilitarians held in contempt. See Halévy, *Philosophic Radicalism*, 256, 375, 400.

67. Colebrooke-Cameron Papers, vol. 1, 146.

68. Ibid.

69. Ibid., 146–47. It is well to note that Cameron's advocacy of the jury system also stemmed from considerations of the conduct of the European judges: "It is invaluable, I think, everywhere; but in our Indian possessions, it is . . . the only check and the only stimulus which can be applied to a judge placed in a situation remote from a European public, and necessarily almost insensible to the opinion of the native public, with whom he does not associate" (168).

70. Ibid., xlii. See also his "The Evolution of a Ceylonese Nation—The Attainment of Independence in 1948 and the Conflicts that Arose from 1956," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (Ceylon Branch), n.s. 11 (1967): 1–22. I am grateful to Anoma Pieris for bringing this late lecture of her grandfather's to my attention.

71. See Anthony Pagden's edited volume, *The Languages of Political Theory in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

72. Quoted in Stokes, *The English Utilitarians*, 47. In Sri Lanka as in India, colonial liberalism would grow more authoritarian, more paternalistic, and more racist in the latter half of the nineteenth century. See de Silva, *History of Sri Lanka*, chap. 23.