



Primitive Times

Shane Moran



PRIMITIVE TIMES

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CSSALL, Durban

South Africa

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First Edition

Imagination withdrew and returned to Africa ...
where Dutch and English profit by the Negro
millions, those hosts were stirred by vague
dreams of freedom. Peering beyond the whole
bulge of Africa, beyond cloud-spread Table
Mountain, I saw the Southern Ocean, black
with storms.

—Olaf Stapledon, *Star Maker*

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Preface

He's afraid, really afraid, of where a thought
like that, taken to its conclusion, might lead.

—Hans Fallada, *Alone in Berlin*

This is another book about resistance, this time resistance to reading. If intellectual freedom is a pre-condition of free speech and political freedom, then the texts we choose to read, or not to read, matter. Because the dream of academic responsibility involves reading texts carefully, giving an objective, detailed account of an argument evaluated on its own terms as well as by the standards of impartial judgement, it inevitably takes time. At a push, interpretation can be delegated to third party intermediaries—the soft underbelly of censorship—who are always keen to save us time.

Those with prior immunity to critical thinking prove useful. Those who believed they were the opposition, now thoroughly acquainted with fear, find themselves card carrying fellow travellers. Discursive, conceptual, and narrative devices are deployed in accordance with pre-determined strategy and verifiable outcomes. Self-replicating arguments have logical consequences that shape the terrain of struggle and call for countermeasures from multiple sources at multiple levels. Criticism by hearsay inevitably passes by way of dogmatic bickering over competing authorities only to arrive at the terminus of sectarianism. Which is not to say that pacific inclusiveness cannot also be part of the problem rather than the solution, and lead to a familiar destination.

Recall the protagonist of H.G. Wells's *The Sleeper Awakes* who finds himself in the year 2100 with 'this world of base servitude in hypertrophied cities' in the grip of a totalitarian conspiracy. He comes across a copy of *Heart of Darkness*, which he hasn't heard of before. Is he looking at a representation of primitive times or an image of the present? 'How long had he slept?' he asks himself.

Clair illuminated and fought and is everywhere in this text. My thanks to Tony Voss for his meticulous reading and encouragement, and to David Johnson who helped despite seeing much that he didn't like.

South Africa
August 2022

Introduction

“How far is our intellectual freedom here still ours only because, as a matter of fact, we are too discreet to exercise it?”

—H.G. Wells, *Star-Begotten. A Biological Fantasia*

Primitive Times aims to identify some of the roots of contemporary globalisation in the enlightenment legacy of human rights, colonialism, and imperialism. Fear of global enslavement under the boot of corporate masters, and pleas for a rational world order, are part of a tradition that can illuminate the present. To this end, the following pages address:

1. Colonial modernity, taking South Africa as privileged but unexceptional example in terms of economic development, apartheid, and human origins.
2. The discourse of human rights in the context of the transatlantic slave trade, and the model of human development underlying both the pro-slavery and the abolitionist arguments.
3. The philosophical elaboration of the concept of race and human development underlying the idea of the human race and the prospect of planetary colonisation.
4. The liberal rationale for imperialism and colonialism in terms of responsibility and development, and the place of South Africa in this financial and political nexus.
5. The impact of the Boer War, and South African colonialism and development in general, on H.G. Wells's representation of alien invasion and world government.
6. Recent scenarios concerned with global health security and genetic engineering that reassemble the infrastructure of the discourse of race in the process of claiming to save the human race.

This study joins others in analysing the resurgence of earlier forms of domination which, if they ever truly went away, can provide some pointers to understanding the paralysing sense of inevitability felt by those struggling to analyse the present. In local, South African terms it stands with the contributors to Trevor Ngwane and Malehoko Tshoaedi's *The Fourth Industrial Revolution. A Sociological*

Critique (2021) and offers a philosophical and literary perspective. More generally, it looks to the work of those who have tried to discover what Hannah Arendt, in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, described as ‘the hidden mechanics’ behind ‘the mere process of disintegration [that] has become an irresistible temptation, not only because it has assumed the spurious grandeur of “historical necessity,” but also because everything outside it has begun to appear lifeless, bloodless, meaningless, and unreal’ (1951: xxvi).¹

My contribution is to focus on the historical and symbolic importance of South Africa in connection with these issues, and to draw lessons that might contribute to understanding the current situation. The topicality of the phrase ‘global apartheid’ to describe the process of globalisation that emerged after the fall of the Soviet Union—but whose contours were already discernible—provides the theoretical opening. As the rest of the world catches up with South African levels of inequality, the South Africanisation of the globe suggests that the former polecat of the world community may represent the future rather than the past.²

Unmoored from its native soil, the global ‘South-Africanisation of society’ (Gorz 1989: 151) denotes minority rule in international decision-making and implies a parallel between Bantustans and the poorer states in the world. It also suggests the utilisation of bioweapons.³ This is why the building blocks of separate development are relevant, as are the strategies used to defeat legislated apartheid. If “the Final Solution to the African problem” (Dick 1962: 30) is indeed becoming the planetary template, then the colonial and imperial precedents of this country might be usefully revisited.

The current situation can usefully be viewed through the lens of its colonial and imperial preconditions. Taking the long view, the course towards what we now call globalisation has been charted by predecessors making their own plea for a rational world order. For a relatively recent example, consider *The Great Analysis: A Plea for a Rational World Order* from 1912:

Year after year, decade after decade, have filled in for us the outlines drawn by Vasco da Gama and Columbus, Cabot, Magellan, and Cook. Great gulf-streams of migration have swept from Europe to every quarter of the globe where a weaker race invited expropriation. The process of expansion has led to many wars, to the boundless enrichment of certain classes of men, and to a very real increase in the resources and potentialities of life for all and sundry. But, while the political and economic aspects of the expansion have been amply studied and realized, we have as yet overlooked what may be called the spiritual significance of the great fact that we now know, in its whole extent, the planet we live in, and

can, and must, turn our attention to intensive knowledge and mastery of it. (Archer 1912: 55-56)

When the sense of planetary destiny is accompanied by alarms regarding direct bodily regulation, and economic and financial manipulation, the colonial paradigm presents itself as viable heuristic. The suspicion that the techniques of biopower developed in the laboratory of racism and technobureaucratic control identified by Arendt in chapter three of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* are the new normal is rife.⁴

While the paradoxical phrase *settlers at a distance* perhaps captures some of the invasiveness facilitated by modern technology, the hyperbolic *alien invasion* sharpens the sense of scale. After all, 'settler colonizers come to stay: invasion is a structure not an event' (Wolffe 2006: 388). Its weakness is that the identification of the alienness of the alienators as residing in their inhumanity hardly narrows down the field of candidates. If the precedent of what one colonial administrator termed 'the colonisation of Africa by alien races' provides a point of comparison for those feeling powerless, the threat of being 'exterminated in a business-like fashion' (Johnston 1899: 82) for non-compliance seems like hyperbole.⁵ Still, the reward for submission, being treated with 'patriarchal kindness and leniency' (82), feels familiar.

Only when the spectre of colonialism is supplemented by the conception of apartheid as developmental strategy rather than racist aberration does the debate regarding globalisation reveal aspects of our unfolding present and possible future.⁶ Although one might question, as I propose to do, whether 'debate' is really the correct word to describe the public use of reason prevalent today, it seems important to pursue the clarification of issues in a spirit of critical engagement. Those untroubled by the wasps of indecision will form their own circle.

Apartheid's mechanism of coercive complicity included economic, political psychological, bureaucratic, pedagogical, and biosecurity measures. The possibility that this network, rooted in colonial practices and knowledges, might return in a virulent form had been noted by the critics of globalisation I was reading. Is a colonial ideology geared to preserve the privileges of a minority by manipulating political representation and distorting information re-emerging?

My attempt to understand a context in which moral appeals (the future of humanity) entwine with a narrative of progress (technology as fate; economics as destiny), and where ruminations on world government intertwine with a

narrative of dehumanisation, aims to register and analyse what is often dismissed. If we are back (if ever we left it) to a world of wire pullers and conspirators, then we have little choice but to trace the lineage of this problematic.⁷ A self-reflexive approach attuned to one's own embeddedness in an unfolding context must also form part of the analysis. And the possibility that those sighting a connection between globalist trusteeship and late modern colonialisation are trapped in the past must also be addressed, not least because this accusation is often used to deflect and disable those “‘navigating this present great catastrophe’” (Wells 1940: 32). Understanding involves reflection on the process of interpretation.

If the title *Primitive Times* would seem to give away the game and pre-empt the conclusion it is well to recall Olive Schreiner's contention that ‘primitive times’ are distinguished by the virtues of ‘indomitable courage and a love of independence’ (1913: 240). How exactly those virtues play out in different contexts is another matter, and Schreiner suggests that they may not always be compatible with ‘impartiality of judgement.’ In what follows we will be concerned with tracking the process of interpretation and judgement.

The primitivism all too often accomplished by insistently warning about all-consuming barbarism and the necessity of avoiding it is difficult to ignore.⁸ It is not just that no type of politics, and not just the alarmist variety, manages to avoid this gesture and the compliance it garners for those making it. *Primitive Times* argues it is necessary to remain alert to the deflective effect of invoking the primitive in the form of the recidivist flagging of recidivism that all too frequently ensures its intensified presence.⁹ More specifically, accusations of racism call for interrogation when the compatibility of human rights and slavery is in the offing and renewed calls for ‘a vast and comprehensive campaign of enlightenment’ (Wolff 2021) are reissued.

Scrutinising the re-fabrication of earlier forms of domination which, if they ever truly went away, can provide some pointers to understanding the forces shaping the present.¹⁰ Concern with the capacity to resist is not limited to time and place, even if each situation makes its own demands and calls forth a singular response. Positing analogies, drawing parallels and divergences, constructing narratives, deploying images and discursive strategies—all form part of the imaginative response capable of sustaining resistance as much as they are marshalled to undermine it. As Klaus Schwab remarked: “‘In order to shape the future, you have first to imagine the future, you have to design the

future, and then you have to execute it,' he added" (in Hinchliffe 2021).¹¹ Engaging your imagination is what is at stake.

Primitive Times identifies the intersection of direct bodily domination associated with colonialism and the often (but not always) more diffuse and veiled financial machinations associated with liberal imperialism as indicative of late modern colonialisation. This is at once a project and a process that consciously and unconsciously weaves liberatory motifs from the past into new forms of domination.¹² Its present form calls for the revaluation of the forms that resistance to what H.G. Wells called "'pro-slavery rebellion'" (1941: 57) takes, its narratives and imagery, that are all too often dismissed as reductive and reactionary. Confronting the process of primitive accumulation that utilises the expropriation and legislation necessary to destroy other economic and social relations to make them productive for capital can throw up its own primitive reaction (see Coulthard 2014).

In this tangle of intentions and results, spotting the co-option of liberal discourse and global principles of human rights must now include reflective criticism of one's own interpretation of the current wave of fear and separation. The power of judgement, and the creation of a set of diverse stories or scenarios about how the future could evolve, are rooted in imagination. And imagination shapes the perspective through which we experience and judge. What Arendt called training 'one's imagination to go visiting' (1982: 43) can be a matter of life and death in an era of disinformation, lies and propaganda.¹³

As participants in the public and private use of reason, the bitter struggle to maintain the protocols of rational debate is a reminder of the fragility of reason often consigned to previous human catastrophes that saw the great mass of mankind 'reduced to the rank of slaves and cattle for the service of the few' (Godwin 1793: 727).¹⁴ The perennial question 'How could it have happened that people descended to such vindictive irrationality?' is now well and truly stripped of its insulating condescension. The sense of a hidden purpose behind apparently unconnected events, the scramble for evidence that is deflected or declared incredible, signals what Immanuel Kant called 'a presentiment [*Ahnung*] of our reason' (1790: 261). *Ahnung* can also be translated as suspicion or foreboding sensing the movement from conspiracy theory to conspiracy fact.

In the current context Kant is associated with the positive sense of ongoing movement towards a federal world state:

Although this political body exists for the present only in the roughest of outlines, it nonetheless seems as if a feeling is beginning to stir in all its members, each of which has an interest in maintaining the whole. And this encourages the hope that, after many revolutions, with all their transforming effects, the highest purpose of nature, a universal cosmopolitan existence, will at last be realized as the matrix within which all the original capacities of the human race may develop. (1784: 51)¹⁵

Hegel is associated with labelling the idea ‘that the human race should form a single state’ ‘a well-meaning thought’ (1817/18: #162, 303). There will always be sectional interests:

Kant had an idea for securing ‘perpetual peace’ by a League of Nations [*Staatenbund*: federation] to adjust every dispute. It was to be a power recognised by each individual state, and was to arbitrate in all cases of dissension in order to make it impossible for disputants to resort to war in order to settle them. This idea presupposes an accord between states; this would rest on moral or religious or other grounds and considerations, but in any case would always depend ultimately on a particular sovereign will and for that reason would remain infected with contingency.’ (Hegel 1821: #333, 213-214)

The terms of this debate have hardly shifted in two hundred years.¹⁶ And yet this philosophical footnote to history has taken on new life as the capacity of non-state actors to shape through technology the balance of global power is now a reality. If the book ending of the world government debate by the Kant/Hegel dyad is no longer credible because of changes in material conditions, the question of power they addressed has clearly not gone away. Geoffrey Bennington has noted that for Kant even approaching the world state is to move towards what is ‘necessarily despotic and as close as can be to collapse into the most violent state of nature’ (2017: 82-83).

The alacrity with which the discourses of humanism and progress are digested in the mist of misinformation and deflection suggests the need to revisit fundamental concepts and narratives.¹⁷ We confront what might be termed racial capitalism without race, except for the fact that the human race is integral to the claim to be committed to ‘a new collective and moral consciousness based on a shared sense of destiny’ (Schwab 2016: 134).¹⁸ That race and that destiny are shot through with colonial and imperial trappings.

A few words to explain the prominence of South Africa in what follows. Apart from biographical contingency—it is where I live and work—South Africa has risen to prominence as a synecdoche of bad globalisation. Human rights loom large in the South African ‘crucible of the racialised international

economic order’ (Hart and Padayachee 2013: 79) because of the notable importance of the narratives of progress and development in its history. Post-1994, the struggle to break the bonds of racial inequality have produced reflections on the legacy of colonialism and the nature of capitalism. Sombre assessments of the relationship between democracy and capitalism proliferate: ‘The arrival of “democracy” since 1994 in the form of black majority rule has seen an increase in economic inequality’ (56). Has the beacon of hope become a warning sign by which we might orient our grasp of the regressive tendencies at work now? ‘Maybe we’ll just go on and end up in a new apartheid nightmare.’ (Žižek 2015)

South Africa’s exemplarity in terms of what has been called ‘framing a context’ (Derrida 1988: 151) is difficult to deny. But that does not make it a determining model, even if as critical, historical, rhetorical, and ethico-political touchstone it does foreshadow a possible future, just as it distils a familiar past.¹⁹ Poised between emblem of congenital recidivism and weathered icon of hope and hopelessness, South Africa’s symbolic function often resembles a parable; of primitive colonial modernity, racism and its possible transcendence, and now premonitory globalisation in miniature. A vessel or container for a range of meanings, it forms the vehicle for analogical transport with a didactic and pedagogical purpose (see Derrida 1998: 102). At times it can seem as if South Africa, encrusted with the signifiers of colonialism, returns as the ghost ship of a state that will not go away.

Because of its well-documented distillation of colonialism and racial capitalism—which are by definition never purely local but rather of universal, i.e., moral, significance—globality and South Africa are entwined.²⁰ As Paul Gilroy remarked, ‘if the status of “race” can be transformed even in South Africa, the one place on earth where its salience for politics and government could not be denied’ (2000: 27), there is hope. South Africa, like other nations (*natio*), is bound up with questions of origin and destination.

Not that the South African variant of colonial development is exceptional, for as much as conditions here are unique, as are those of any context, they are also part of a pattern that can be isolated in its principles and operative conceptual and rhetorical modes. Invoking apartheid points to something verifiable, a known quantity, that promises to keep us to ‘the continuous coastline of experience:’ ‘a coastline that we cannot leave without venturing out onto a shoreless ocean, which, among always deceptive prospects, forces us in the end to abandon as hopeless all out troublesome and tedious efforts’

(Kant 1781: A396, 439). It is not the whole story, a story that is not over anyway, but it can throw into relief some of the essentials of the broader picture. Excavating other situations, other names and contexts, histories, would yield similar connections with their unique alignment and rhythm.

The shift from speaking of race to speaking of nations and respect for national differences and diversity—touting multinationalism rather than central control, plural democracy among a confederation of independent states—culminating in reform and self-determination is nothing new. On the contrary, South Africa shows that appeals to multi-community development and good neighbourliness are indicative of attempts to veil manipulation with decolonization. Are we in the midst of what Fredric Jameson has called ‘patently a guilt fantasy’ (2005: 265) of the beneficiaries of colonialism, or the cognitive mapping of a real threat—or both?²¹

Perhaps the unspoken lesson taken from apartheid is that it works, but not for the majority. Recall that profit rates did not decline during apartheid. In fact the South African investment portfolio on the London Stock Exchange increased from 2.0 per cent (1940s) to 3.3 percent (1950s) and 10.1 per cent (1960s). The overall average of 5.1 percent per year (1940-1969) indicates that from the metropolitan point of view of imperial capital, apartheid was profitable. Between 1940 and 1969 the Anglo-American Corporation returned 10.4 per cent annually to investors (see Rönnbäck and Broberg 2017). Racial coercion became an integral part of cost reduction and development from which the majority were supposed to benefit after the painful medicine had done its work. This is the story that emerges from the statistics that are ‘prerequisite to navigating, purposefully and with direction, the sea of quantities around us’ (Everett 2017: 23), told from a certain perspective, according to certain norms and presuppositions.

Global apartheid suggests total colonialism or world takeover, and the normalisation of alien invasion. South Africa headlines the roster of incrimination: ‘Beyond the specifics of South Africa, the term *apartheid* can be applied to the global order, that is, the so-called New World Order, and not simply as an effective metaphor’ (Harrison 2008: 24). The hope that apartheid ‘will be the name of something finally abolished, reduced to the state of term in disuse’, ‘the setting in the West of racism’ (Derrida 1983: 377, 379), is as yet unfulfilled. Apartheid as a negative resource goes some way to explaining why the subject of decolonisation as self-sufficiency (*autarkeia*) in an interconnected world has returned.²²

As the proper meaning of the world order, apartheid would therefore signify an all-encompassing internal colonialism and a global native problem. Was what Derrida in 1983 called ‘the heading and the cape to be rounded’—to see ‘South Africa beyond *apartheid*, South Africa in memory of *apartheid*’ (380)—merely prelude to the planetary act?²³

Built on colonialism, the rise of South African mining capital in the late nineteenth-century is often taken to be illustrative of the process of globalisation in its imperial phase. Recall the struggle between national capital and imperial capital that culminated in the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902; the undermining of African indigenous, non-capitalist, modes of production; the relative tenacity of Boer semi-feudal systems; the creation of a white and black proletariat, and the rise of an indigenous industrial bourgeoisie (see Bozzoli 1981).²⁴

According to William Freund ‘[i]mperialism itself was not a sufficient condition’ (2019: 4) to explain the racial politics developed in South Africa. The developmental state retained the capacity to ‘defy the logic of market forces which may constrain structural transformation’ (4). Structural transformation along capitalist lines was not synonymous with capitalism, or at least not capitalist dogma regarding the free market. Not because racism overdetermined the normal functioning of capitalism—although that did happen—but because the goal of development entailed defying and holding up or constraining market forces in the interest of sustaining market forces. Economic prosperity and survival were understood to depend on such principled, transformative moments which included ‘[k]eeping the ship afloat in the eyes of foreign investors was always a priority’ (Freund 2021: 183). Whether such *development* amounted to *progress* depended largely on one’s position within the process.²⁵

When world government is proffered as apex developmental state, South Africa’s colonial, apartheid, and post-apartheid narrative provides a workable template of parallels and analogies. Dispossession and market dependence, the imperialist strategy of undermining indigenous (national) production abroad, and the corporatisation of liberation in favour of global corporations—all form a familiar scenario as ‘settler colonialism enacts itself as settler imperialism at this crucial moment in history when everything appears to be headed towards collapse’ (Byrd 2011: ix).

For example, the concept of racial capitalism that emerged in the early 1970s to criticise the shortcomings of liberal opposition to apartheid becomes

a useful model for grasping the processes at work (see Legassick and Hemson 1976). South African liberals—and beyond South Africa Henry Kissinger, The World Bank and the IMF—argued that racism and apartheid were a distortion of normal capitalism.²⁶ Freed from its ideological straitjacket, South Africa would follow a path of competitive, market-driven development in which inequality would not be primarily determined by race. Dissenting critics warned that such a transition would simply replace one racial elite with another, and reinforce the dynamic of capitalist extraction which would be dominated and controlled by foreign interests. In such a state of dependency, sovereignty and executive power reside elsewhere.

The argument that racist ideology, and the political forms of racial discrimination, were a consequence of capitalist development and not a toxic supplement rejects the idea that race and racism are the final determinant. Recent work on colonial and imperial logics has confirmed and extended this insight (see Lowe 2015; and Brown 2014). Rather, the lesson to draw from the segregation and division of the working class on a racial basis is that, whether explicitly appealing to racial identification or not, progressive politics and economic policies can employ techniques of division that further increase domination by foreign capital. Or, since capital no longer needs a national home, perhaps we should say simply global capital (or just capital) is the means of enforcing dependency. Where are we in the light of our present criticism of existing arrangements and of other remembered utopian aspirations that cannot be reduced to a single paradigm?

Recall Olaf Stapledon's vision of the situation after the Euro-American war: 'The planet was now a delicately organized economic unit, and big business in all lands was emphatically contemptuous of patriotism' (1930: 43). Following war between America and China over diminishing fossil fuels the first World State emerged with improved living conditions but workers reduced to slaves under the tutelage of a fusion of religion and science.

Notes

¹ 'Earlier colonialists came by boats to "the new world" and expanded their empires by building railroads, farms and infrastructure. Today's colonialists are digital; they implement communication infrastructures such as social media in order to harvest data and turn it into money.' (Lehohla 2018) See Milanovic (2019); and Green (2021). 'The technologies of modernity—as in both mechanics and knowledges, including the application of instrumental

reason—were defined through colonial relations in all the ways that have become familiar.’ (Kenny 2021: 143)

² Timothy Mitchell comments on the existence of a universal process (modernity, capitalism, globalisation): ‘In fact it may have been at the level of the colony rather than the metropolitan power that this territorial framing of an economy was first possible’ (2002: 3, 6).

³ Wouter Basson: “‘I must confirm that the structure of the project [South Africa’s Chemical and Biological Warfare Programme] was based on the U.S. system. That’s where we learnt the most.”’ (quoted in Washington 2006: 356)

⁴ ‘It has always been about the goal of implementing a global biosecurity plan and a transhumanist control grid that, if allowed to come to fruition, would signify the end of the human species.’ (Skripac 2021: 28)

⁵ Johnston’s *The Colonization of Africa by Alien Races* (1899) was published the year after H.G. Wells’s *The War of the Worlds*, which originally appeared in serialised form in 1897.

⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre: ‘The first characteristic of these [colonialist] norms, is that the subhumanity of the *indigène* is not an objectively detectable fact, but a value to be maintained. And super-exploitation ... is a categorical imperative: “Act in such a way that you always treat the *indigène* as an inessential means and never as an end”.’ (quoted in Arthur 2010: 143)

⁷ Are we moving ‘towards a society in which the possessors shall remain possessed, the dispossessed shall remain dispossessed, in which the mass of men shall still work for the advantage of a few, and in which those few shall still enjoy the surplus values produced by labour, but in which the special evils of insecurity and insufficiency, in the main the product of freedom, have been eliminated by the destruction of freedom’ (Belloc 1912: 126-7)?.

⁸ ‘The zenith of human prosperity seemed to have been reached in the superficial and frivolous sense of the word. For the last fifty years, the final establishment of the great Asiatic-American-European confederacy, and its indisputable supremacy over what was still left, here and there, in Oceania and central Africa of barbarous tribes incapable of assimilation, had habituated all the nations, now converted into provinces, to the delights of universal and henceforth inviolable peace. It had required not less than 150 years of war fare to arrive at this wonderful result.’ (Tarde 1905: 23)

⁹ ‘Race making—the construction of race as a way to rationalize global inequalities—also creates a basis for global collective action.’ (Mullings 2008: 11) That such a situation is not unprecedented can be verified by consulting Bernays (1928: 20). For an antidote see Freeman and Kagarlitsky (2004: 29); Jameson (2005: 384–392); Satia (2008); and Losurdo (2002: 790), to note only a few of the most recent studies.

¹⁰ ‘If you were to approach those millions of families now living at a wage, with the proposal for a contract of service for life, guaranteeing them employment at what each regarded as his usual full wage, how many would refuse? Such a contract would, of course, involve a loss of freedom: a life-contract of the kind is, to be accurate, no contract at all. It is the negation of contract and the acceptance of status. It would lay the man that undertook it under an obligation of forced labour, coterminous and coincident with his power to labour. It would be a permanent renunciation of his right (if such a right exists) to the surplus values created by his labour. If we ask ourselves how many men, or rather how many families, would prefer freedom (with its accompaniments of certain insecurity and possible insufficiency) to such a life-contract, no one can deny that the answer is: “Very few would refuse it.” That is the key

to the whole matter. What proportion would refuse it no one can determine; but I say that even as a voluntary offer, and not as a compulsory obligation, a contract of this sort which would for the future destroy contract and re-erect status of a servile sort would be thought a boon by the mass of the proletariat to-day.' (Belloc 1912: 140-41) H.G. Wells's protagonist in *The Sleeper Awakes*: 'He wakes up to find himself the puppet of a conspiracy of highly intellectual men in a world which is a practical realisation of Mr. Belloc's nightmare of the Servile State' (1921: np.).

¹¹ 'At issue in war is the *capacity to resist*, understood by Clausewitz as the sum of material means along with the moral will to resist the enemy. War, whether offensive or defensive, is oriented towards compromising or resisting any attempt to compromise the capacity to resist.' (Caygill 2013: 16)

¹² 'Today, we see a resurgence of liberal arguments for empire ... that is, a variety of arguments in favour of the use of force for transformative political projects (across borders). While some advocates of empire evoke British precedents, even without direct analogies, in an important sense, contemporary imperial forms work in the shadow of the specifically modern reconstitution of modern empire that took shape in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.' (Karuna 2010: 187).

¹³ 'We live on the verge of dictatorship ... becoming the puppets of propaganda. For the press seems to have given up the fight for freedom of thought and expression, so as to survive financially.' (Mutloatse 1980: 4)

¹⁴ 'But the hushing of the criticism of honest opponents is a dangerous thing. It leads some of the best of the critics to unfortunate silence and paralysis of effort, and others to burst into speech so passionately and intemperately as to lose listeners. Honest and earnest criticism from those whose interests are most nearly touched,—criticism of writers by readers—this is the soul of democracy and the safeguard of modern society.' (Du Bois 1903: 45-46) See also Yagisawa et al. (2021); and Jureidini and McHenry (2022).

¹⁵ 'So *philosophical chiliarism*, which hopes for a state of perpetual peace based on a federation of nations united in a world republic, is universally derided as sheer fantasy as much as *theological chiliarism*, which waits for the complete moral improvement of the human race.' (Kant 1793: 81)

¹⁶ 'It may be said with perfect truth that, if we would only realize it, a "new planet" has "swum into our ken"—the planet on which we live. It is given us to subjugate and fashion to our uses; and before we can rationally subjugate it in fact, it is clear that we must subjugate it in thought, must envelop it, so to speak, in organizing intelligence.' (Archer 1912: 58)

¹⁷ 'This is the beginning of a great "conspiracy trial" and we are expecting more people to be arrested ... They are also adopting a new technique now of just arresting a person and alleging a breach of some law. Then they keep you in jail on the ground that they are investigating, and refuse bail.' (Joseph Gaobakwe Matthews in Hirson 1988: 83, 92) See Merrett (1994; and Merrett nd.) for the South African template; and Bugg (2014) for another historical precedent.

¹⁸ See Wells's ironic and deadly serious depiction of commitment to 'one world state, working together, building up and up' in the context of the story of the Tower of Babel: "Behold the people is one" (1940: 39, 37).

¹⁹ "Yes," resumed the younger stranger after a moment's interval. "Two nations; between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts, and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different

planets; who are formed by a different breeding, are fed by a different food, are ordered by different manners, and are not governed by the same laws.” “You speak of ... THE RICH AND THE POOR.” (Disraeli 1845: 68-69, 174) See Mbeki (1998).

²⁰ “The struggle for the liberation of the people of South Africa has always had a global significance.” (Magubane 1986: 23)

²¹ “By now it should be clear that COVID-19 is, essentially, a symptom of financial capital running amok. More broadly, it is a symptom of a world that is no longer able to reproduce itself by profiting from human labour, thus relying on a contemporary logic of perpetual *monetary doping*. While the structural shrinking of the work based economy inflates the finance sector, the latter’s volatility can only be contained through global emergencies, mass propaganda and the tyranny of biosecurity.” (Vighi 2021) See Roth (2021) and Elliot (2022) on the massive transfer of wealth upwards that we are living through in what some wit has described as a *covet*, rather than a COVID, epidemic.

²² “If ‘[d]isintegration of the existing world economic system is order of the day,’ then ‘[d]e-colonisation is not merely a movement against political dependence; it is turned against economic dependence as well.’ (Bonn 1934: 847, 846) See also McKinley (2017: 48-49).

²³ “When it became clear that no attempt would be made to end discrimination, Karellen gave his warning. It merely named a date and time-no more ... All that happened was that as the sun passed the meridian at Cape Town it went out. There remained visible merely a pale, purple ghost, giving no heat or light. Somehow, out in space, the light of the sun had been polarized by two crossed fields so that no radiation could pass. The area affected was five hundred kilometres across, and perfectly circular. The demonstration lasted thirty minutes. It was sufficient; the next day the Government of South Africa announced that full civil rights would be restored to the white minority.” (Clarke 1953: 12-13) See Visser (1993); Boyce (1999); McClintock and Nixon (1986: 141-142); and Evans (2017).

²⁴ In the wake of the First World War, under the title “Milestones to Armageddon,” Winston Churchill dated ‘the beginning of these violent times in our country from the Jameson Raid, in 1896’ (1923: 20). See also Schreuder and Butler (2002).

²⁵ “The condition of stable equilibrium implied in the very idea of world-order can never be attained until the process of expansion is completed; and it is precisely because the end of that process, however far off, is now within measurable distance, that we can begin seriously to think of a world-order.” (Archer 1912: 49)

²⁶ “Since the Industrial Revolution, modern prosperity has spread from its European birthplace to many corners of the world ... the effect of barriers to the spread of prosperity has diminished in the age of globalisation.” (Spolaore and Wacziarg 2017: 51, 58)

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