1 Colonialism and governmentality

Since the work of Michel Foucault, the concept of governmentality has become central to understanding power not simply as repression, but as an epistemological (practical and discursive) phenomenon that normatively produces subjects. The chief concern of governmentality is to apply economy, which Foucault regards as 'a form of surveillance and control as attentive as that of the head of a family over his household and goods', to the maintenance of a healthy and productive population.[1] Enacted under the aegis of a series of institutions (the judiciary, the school and the family), discourses (medicine, criminal justice and demography) and procedures and analyses (surveys, statistics and regulations), what is distinctive about this form of power 'is not its relation to capitalism, but its point of application', which is the '*conditions* in which [the] body is to live and define its life' (emphasis in original).[2] In subjecting them to 'rational' principles governmentality seeks to foster an identification of interests, a 'contract between the technologies of domination of others and those of the self', that ensures that subjects are obliged to transform themselves in an 'improving direction' to do as they ought.[3] It thus serves to construct the normative regularities of civil society.

Although not a universal form of power – it emerged, as Foucault made clear, in European society at a specific time and then became

---

[1] Foucault, 'Governmentality', p. 102. Foucault defines governmentality as 'The ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target the population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security'. Foucault, 'Governmentality', p. 92.

[2] Scott, 'Colonial Governmentality', 201.

[3] M. Foucault, 'Technologies of the Self', p. 19. As Alan Hunt cogently elaborates, 'others' are governed through 'rationalized programmes, strategies, tactics and techniques directed towards acting upon [their] actions'. These include surveillance, constraint and coercion, all of which are aimed at stimulating the governance of the self through 'those voluntary practices by which people not only set for themselves rules of conduct, but seek to modify the social presentation of their selves' by acquiring certain socially visible behavioural characteristics. Hunt, *Governing Morals*, pp. 185, 155.

8

gradually more important – scholars of colonialism have traced the emergence of governmental power in colonial contexts through the projects of modernization initiated by colonial regimes.[4] Analyses of the operation of governmental power through localized theories and historically specific accounts, or projects, that focus on the particular technologies or sites through which colonial states sought to manage their populations, have demonstrated the ways in which physical exploitation was accompanied and followed by an epistemological one as colonial regimes, bringing with them new conceptions of space and time and new understandings of economy, society, history and progress, set about enumerating, demarcating, and classifying colonized peoples.[5] In doing so they sought to tame the unruliness of difference, delineate the unstable boundaries of rule between colonizers and colonized and facilitate the management of populations. Nationalist movements in turn appropriated governmentality in an effort to 'purify', 'strengthen' and reform their own societies to challenge the project of colonial modernity and make colonized subjects capable of self-rule.

Through exploring how a particular governmentalizing project, namely the regulation of the obscene, was transformed from a national project in Britain to a global and imperial one, and was then translated, reformulated and localized in India and Australia, this book aims to shed new light on the operation of governmentalities not only in colonial contexts, but in the West as well – and of how these shaped each other. Colonialism was not, as David Scott argues in his seminal article on colonial governmentality, a unitary project, which means that 'something called "*the* colonial state" cannot offer itself up as the iteration and reiteration of a single rationality' (emphasis in original). What is

---

[4] Foucault argues that the transformation from an understanding of power as repression to an understanding of it as a science of government, forged by the population (the object of analysis and manipulation), the government (the political means through which this manipulation is performed) and the economy (the field of action through which population and economy are connected), occurred in European states during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It was not until the nineteenth century that the two poles of biopower, discipline and governmentality, became connected in concrete ways and which, along with sovereignty, formed a triangulated balance of power. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*; and Tadros, 'Between Governance and Discipline', 91–2, 99.

[5] As Alan Hunt defines it, 'A "project" is a process of governance, practices directed towards the control of some other social agents, institutions, or other social entities'. All governmentalizing projects, according to Hunt, have five main components: agents (ranging from the state to voluntary bodies such moral reform organizations); a target (individuals – or sometimes entire populations or particular segments of those populations – whose behaviour is deemed in need of regulation); tactics or techniques (such as legal measures or the publication of guides to marriage or child-rearing); discourses (which are used in government documents, treatises, texts and so on); and a political context. Hunt, *Governing Morals*, p. 28.

therefore needed, according to Scott, is to explore 'the different political rationalities, different configurations of power, [which] took the stage in commanding positions' within 'the structures and projects that gave shape to the colonial enterprise as a whole'.[6] Such a proposal serves to highlight the temporaneous and localist nature of colonialism. However, in ignoring the connections and similarities *between* political rationalities in different colonial contexts it limits the possibility of generating new understandings of the particular *universalities* of colonial power.[7] Eluci-dating the connections between both the particular and the universal demands examining the historically differentiated political rationalities or differentiated structures and projects of rule in different *types* of colonies – particularly in exploitation and settler colonies, which because they are regarded as so dissimilar are rarely placed within the same analytical framework – and then comparing them to each other.[8]

Such a comparison also illustrates that while colonial regimes prided themselves on the successful adaptation, operation and transmission of governmental power even in the face of the malleability, subversion and transformation of concepts such as civility and morality, *perceptions* of the nature or functioning of colonial governmentality may in fact have played a more significant role in fashioning colonial modernities than the actual operation – however imperfect – of governmentality itself. For although regarded as universal, the concepts of civility and moral purity that sustained such regimes were in fact highly malleable and subject to constant critique, appropriation and subversion. As Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler rightly note, for colonized societies 'The intru-sion of European models into "private" domains did not necessarily reproduce bourgeois civility but gave rise to diverse efforts ... to find new and original ways for expressing ideals of a domestic domain, for demonstrating status, and indeed for showing that a man or a woman could be "modern" in a variety of ways'.[9] Such efforts led in turn to a constant redrawing of the boundaries between self and other, colonizer

---

[6] Scott, 'Colonial Governmentality', 197. Scott defines political rationalities as 'those historically constituted complexes of knowledge/power that give shape to colonial projects of political sovereignty' and that characterize 'those ways in which colonial power is organized as an activity designed to produce effects of rule'. Scott, 'Colonial Governmentality', 193.

[7] While I agree with Scott's aim of fracturing the universality of the concept of colonialism, such a concept is, however, meaningless unless it embodies *some* universals.

[8] Since there are seven different types of colonies, and multiple forms of colonialism often coexisted in the same colony, many other comparative possibilities also exist. See Osterhammel, *Colonialism*.

[9] Cooper and Stoler, 'Between Metropole and Colony', p. 32.

and colonized.[10] The boundaries defining European selves were also subject to continual reworking in colonial contexts. By the early twentieth century Australians could thus view themselves as morally – and hence racially – 'purer' than their Anglo-Indian counterparts, who were deemed to be so 'pigheaded and spoilt by the servility of the natives of India, that they are actually not fit to mix with white men'.[11]

Comparing different colonial contexts to each other illuminates, lastly, not only the continuities and discontinuities within colonialism, but the linkages between the local and the global. It therefore has broader implications for the study of imperial and colonial history, especially on the role of imperialism and colonialism in shaping global processes. Like its precursor world systems theory which, while placing colonies in a broader global context (namely the development of the capitalist world system), reduced them to a peripheral status and denied agency to the colonized, globalization theory threatens both to grant too great a transformative power to imperialism, and to veil the emergence of imperialism in new guises.[12] Moreover, as Peter Van der Veer argues, 'there is not a world-systemic teleology that connects imperialism of the past with globalisation in the postcolonial world today' – indeed, increasing global integration, rather than undermining the ethnic and religious divides wrought by imperialism, has instead served to magnify them.[13] In illustrating why some metropolitan discourses resonated in some colonies and others did not, or how notions of the modern were being played out, comparing governmentalizing projects in different colonial contexts thus offers insights into the nature of the relationship between imperialism, colonialism and globalization.

Rethinking colonial governmentality

While the notion of an all-embracing colonial governmentality that, in Homi Bhabha's famous phrase, 'appropriates, directs, and dominates its various spheres of activity' has for the most part been discarded by scholars of colonialism, governmentality continues to appear in such scholarship as a set of technologies that are effectively applied to a variety

[10] As Simon Gikandi observes, despite the considerable body of theory on the dialectic that exists between colonizer and colonized 'it has never been clear where the identity between colonizer and colonized ends and the difference between them begins'. Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness*, p. 2.

[11] *Parliamentary Debates: Commonwealth of Australia*, 6 December 1909, p. 7076.

[12] Ania Loomba *et al.*, 'Beyond What?', pp. 1–38.

[13] Van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters*, p. 11. For further insights into the relationship between globalization and ethno-religious divides in South Asia see Heath, 'Communalism, Globalization'.

of subjects in different contexts and time periods.[14] Yet modern power was not mapped as easily – nor as homogeneously – onto colonial contexts as the above framework implies.[15] There were, in fact, several key incongruities in the way governmental power operated in colonial contexts. To begin with, while colonial governmentality, like its Western form, developed as a means of managing population, of cultivating its resources and maintaining its health, colonial states tended to evince little actual interest in regulating the bodies of their subjects – at least of their indigenous subjects – in order to maintain a healthy and productive population. Simple financial expediency often undermined their desires to do so, as is clear in the reluctance of the state in British Malaya to introduce public health measures among prostitutes and the labouring population until it became clear that the cost of replacing labourers was greater than that of providing for their health care.[16] The fear of rousing indigenous opposition likewise played a role, although when colonial states had the will to undertake such regulatory projects these anxieties become noticeably less pressing.[17] The need to appear progressive while maintaining both indigenous and colonial structures of power arguably generated greater constraints, as is evident in the dilemmas faced by colonial states in managing sexual relations between European soldiers and indigenous women.[18] Since the class status of European soldiers purportedly rendered them incapable of self-control, colonial

[14] Bhabha, 'Difference, Discrimination', p. 154.

[15] This is not to argue that governmental power was mapped easily onto European contexts but rather to question its purported universalism. Moreover, as Nicholas Thomas argues, in overlooking Foucault's argument that governmentality is 'a historically specific, non-functionalist analysis of political knowledge', scholars of imperialism and colonialism often 'lapse into a reifying functionalism more reminiscent of some Marxist theory than Foucault'. Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture*, pp. 42–3.

[16] Manderson, 'Colonial Desires', 380. The health of British troops, on the other hand, remained of paramount importance to the colonial state. Racial factors also, of course, clearly played a role in generating such economic decision-making, as is evident in the British preference for building residential quarters outside and upwind of Indian towns rather than cleaning up what they perceived to be the filthiness of Indian urban spaces. Collingham, *Imperial Bodies*, p. 82.

[17] As David Arnold reveals in his study of British efforts to eradicate plague in late nineteenth-century India, when the call for intervention was pressing, in this case literally a matter of life or death (most notably for the British themselves), they were willing to override their fears of opposition to intervene in even the most intimate aspects of Indian bodies and lives. Arnold, *Colonizing the Body*, pp. 391–426.

[18] Thus, as Veena Das has argued in the case of the East India Company's efforts to regulate sati in the 1820s (both because it challenged the state's attempts to establish a monopoly over violence and because evidence of Indian 'barbarity' served to legitimize colonial power), such efforts, by lending support to *shastric* custom, instead led to the promotion of sati (predominantly in Bengal) and hence undermined attempts to fashion a colonial governmentality – which led the Company to resort to banning the practice in 1829. Das, 'Gender Studies', 64, 66. See also Mani, 'The Debate on *Sati*', pp. 88–126.

states regarded it as their responsibility, on the one hand, to provide them with 'clean' women to consort with, and on the other to prevent interracial liaisons in order to protect the purity and moral authority of the governing 'race'. State cooperation in indigenous regulatory projects, or the merging of indigenous and colonial projects, was one way out of some of these difficulties, as in the case of state involvement in the physical culture movement in Bengal in the late nineteenth century.[19]

Such problems demonstrate not only that the will to undertake governmentalizing projects was thus expedient and contingent, but that the maintenance of colonial structures of power, rather than of a healthy and productive population, was ultimately the chief concern of colonial authorities.[20] The Indian state's passage of numerous legislative enactments in the nineteenth century centring on women, for example, presents evidence of a state that encouraged female emancipation.[21] But while couched in the language of civilization and progress, such measures were instead a means of justifying colonial rule through contributing to the reinvention of Indian 'traditions', the denigration of Indian masculinities and the strengthening and refashioning of both colonial and indigenous patriarchies.[22] Women were thus merely the grounds on which the ideological struggle between colonial and indigenous elites was waged – and, for the colonial state, a means of intervening in matters pertaining to the personal realm while alleging that its intentions were otherwise.[23]

---

[19] Rosselli, 'The Self-Image', 137–41. The result of such selective disciplinary intervention, however, was that a set of institutions emerged to protect segments of the indigenous elite – more intimate details about whom, moreover, were often collected than would have been permissible in Europe – 'while the rest of the population was left to the more distanced normalisation of colonial government'. Legg, *Spaces of Colonialism*, p. 28.

[20] Ballhatchet, *Race, Sex*, p. 9. Thus in colonial Queensland, while legislation regulating contagious diseases was never applied to the indigenous population, the colony maintained legislation to regulate contagious diseases long after the rest of the British empire had abandoned such efforts out of fears that diseased Aboriginals would infect the white population – an example that illustrates, according to Philippa Levine, that 'Medical care in the colonies was aimed primarily at the British military and at resident colonists'. The brothel was in fact one of the few places in European colonies where the colonized (at least colonized women) were given access to medical care. Levine, 'Public Health', p. 165.

[21] Such enactments include the banning of widow immolation in 1829, the legalization of widow remarriage in 1856, the prohibition of female infanticide in 1870 and the raising of the age of consent from eight to twelve years in 1891.

[22] As Mrinalini Sinha contends, 'the official policy toward women was often contradictory in nature because it could seldom be divorced from the dictates of the colonial situation'. The dictates of the colonial situation, Sinha concludes, led the government to claim to be advocates of female emancipation while reinforcing the oppression of Indian women. Sinha, 'Gender and Imperialism', p. 219.

[23] Ashwini Tambe argues that, for the colonial state in India, 'appearing to hold back from matters relating to the personal realm and posing as a regime which honored local customs was merely politically expedient'. Tambe, 'Colluding Patriarchies', 589.

Such struggles between contending patriarchies demonstrate another incongruity in the operation of colonial governmentality, namely the difficulty of generating a confluence of interests between the governance of others and of the self. It is for this reason that colonial projects designed to regulate the bodies of the colonized were often more effective in regulating those of the colonizers. Rather than transforming Indian bodies to produce Macaulayesque versions of brown Englishmen, the project of Anglicization in early nineteenth-century India, for example, arguably had more of an impact on British bodily norms.[24] Similar effects are evident in settler colonies, as is clear in the case of the efforts of Australian feminists to transform Koori women into responsible and productive members of colonial society, which had a greater transformative impact on the nature of Australian feminism and on its understandings of the colonizing nature of Australian masculinities than on the behaviour of Koori women.[25] Such governmentalizing projects could likewise rebound back to imperial metropoles and transform European subjectivities.[26] Thus British attempts to put a stop to the practice of clitoridectomy in Kikuyu society in the 1920s not only served as a spur to Kikuyu nationalism (and with it a proliferation in the practice of clitoridectomy), but had a profound impact on the discussion of sexual matters in the public realm in Britain.[27]

In addition to fostering the self-governance of the colonizers, colonial governmentalizing projects and processes therefore often had an equal – and at times possibly greater – impact on the fashioning of that of the bourgeoisie in Europe. In the case of agitation by members of the European community in India over the 1883 Ilbert Bill, for example, which sought to amend the Code of Criminal Procedure to give Indian officials in the administrative service a degree of criminal jurisdiction

---

[24] Collingham, *Imperial Bodies*, p. 51. The project, according to Collingham, served to mark a 'shift from an open to a closed and regimented body'. Collingham, *Imperial Bodies*, p. 4.

[25] Lake, 'Colonised and Colonising', 377–86.

[26] Rather than being targeted at colonized populations, much of what is generally labelled 'colonial discourse' was actually directed at public opinion in imperial states. As John Mackenzie illustrates in his study of British imperial propaganda, such propaganda had a greater impact in 'creating for the British a world view which was central to their perceptions of themselves' than it did in transforming the world view of Britain's colonial subjects. Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, p. 2.

[27] Pederson, 'National Bodies', 647–80. Concerns with metropolitan sexuality often underlay such colonial regulatory efforts. As Antoinette Burton has argued in the case of one of the most widespread imperial campaigns of moral regulation in the nineteenth century, against the Contagious Diseases Acts, the real goal of abolitionists seeking to overturn colonial acts was the fear that they might be reimposed in Britain. Burton, 'The White Women's Burden', pp. 137–57.

over Europeans living in *mofussils*, or country areas, such agitation served to reinforce racial and gender hierarchies in Britain as well as India.[28] So too did efforts to manage bourgeois sexualities in colonial contexts. In addition to generating a profusion of discourses around pedagogy, parenting and child sexuality that sought to discipline the bourgeois body and distinguish it from both non-whites and poor whites, such efforts served to *produce* middle-class sensibilities.[29] Rather than simply being imported from Europe, such sensibilities were thus formed in European colonies and exported back to imperial metropoles – making the relationship between the production of colonial and European subjectivities one of 'mutual imbrication and contamination'.[30]

That colonial governmentality served to foster at least some identification of interests between colonizers and colonized is clear, however, in the fact that the colonized undertook their own governmentalizing projects. But they also drew upon indigenous traditions of self-subjection in fashioning such technologies.[31] In the case of Indian nationalist attempts to create an 'Indian therapeutics' based on indigenous cultural norms, for example, Western-educated elites combined indigenous forms of self-governance, such as the embodiment of 'femininity' (envisioned as asexual, self-sacrificing and nurturing) and the practice of *brahmacharya* (designed both to preserve sperm and to master control over the senses), with Western forms – evidence that indigenous populations sought not to *mimic* but rather to *transform* the terms of colonial governance.[32] Furthermore, while they often ostensibly sustained governmentalizing projects enacted by colonial states, indigenous elites

---

[28] Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity*, p. 42. The bill provoked a 'white mutiny' from members of the European community, who challenged it through an intersection of gender and racial ideologies that contrasted the supposed effeminacy of the Bengali *babu* with the 'manliness' of the Englishman. The role of white women, who made a rare foray into the public sphere in India to protest against the bill, posed a further challenge to those hierarchies, and led them to be reconfigured in new ways. Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity*, pp. 33–4.

[29] Stoler, *Race and the Education*, p. 99.

[30] Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness*, p. xviii. Colonies were thus ' "laboratories of modernity", in which recognizably modern conceptions of social discipline and culture were initially produced before being exported to European environments'. Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities*, p. xxii.

[31] As Nicholas Thomas argues in response to theories of the 'pervasive efficacy' of colonialism, such a contention 'excludes the possibility that "natives" often had relatively autonomous representations and agendas, that might have been deaf to the enunciations of colonialism, or not so captive to them that mimicry seemed a necessary capitulation'. Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture*, p. 57.

[32] Prakash, *Another Reason*, p. 145. In the process of this embracing of Indian difference, such a project also opened up Western medicine to revision and reformulation, and altered the relationship between the state and the society it sought to govern.

frequently deployed the language of colonial governmentality to critique colonial rule. Thus tribal leaders in Uganda managed to skilfully rework the colonial campaign to combat syphilis to both assert greater social and political control and condemn the British for exposing them to syphilis and undermining the strength and morality of their culture.[33] Although initially sharing the same ground, governmentalizing projects in the colonies could therefore often fragment and generate competing projects.[34]

Such incongruities demonstrate not only that colonial governmentality emerged in part in spite of, rather than from, the desires of colonial regimes, but that it was not simply, as Gyan Prakash argues, 'the tropicalization of its Western form, but rather ... its fundamental dislocation'.[35] There are three main reasons this is the case. The first is that, as Stephen Legg contends, 'colonial governments operated in a more intimate relationship with the violence of *sovereign* power' (emphasis in original), a relationship in which 'violence became the language of right and exception became the structure of sovereignty'.[36] While it is clear that exploitation colonies were virtually permanent states of exception, so too, although to different degrees, were settler colonies, which were not only shaped by foundational violence but perpetuated violence through legitimating forms (although these were largely targeted at particular populations) and through an imaginary embodied in the state. As in the case of exploitation colonies, settler colonies also, moreover, marked space through violence, rituals and 'the spatial insignia of sovereign power, such as boundaries, hierarchies, zones and cultural imaginaries'.[37]

---

[33] Tuck, 'Venereal Disease', pp. 191–204.

[34] Thus in the case of the battle over education in colonial India in the latter half of the nineteenth century, while the colonial government was initially happy to let Indians assume responsibility for opening schools and colleges in the belief that a Western-style education and new institutional structures would, as Partha Chatterjee asserts, 'correct the deficiencies in knowledge and character inherited by the students from their native culture', with the rise of Indian nationalism it sought instead to make the schoolroom an extension of the state. It failed, however, to do so, since 'education institutions, especially in Bengal, had by then largely passed into a disciplinary domain where the discursive forms of a specifically nationalist modernity were already in command'. However, since nationalists regarded such institutions as alien, as disseminating a foreign culture and morality, they sought to construct them as part of the 'inner' domain of the family. Education thus became a contestatory site for competing colonial and nationalist governmentalizing projects. Chatterjee, 'The Disciplines', pp. 11–12.

[35] Prakash, *Another Reason*, p. 125. Prakash likewise argues that the governing of colonized peoples 'as modern subjects required colonial knowledge and colonial regulation to function as self-knowledge and self-regulation', which was impossible under colonialism. Prakash, *Another Reason*, p. 127.

[36] Legg, *Spaces of Colonialism*, pp. 21, 22.

[37] Legg, *Spaces of Colonialism*, p. 22.

The second reason governmentality was dislocated in colonial contexts was the despotic nature of colonial rule, which made colonial states 'incapable of fulfilling the criterion of representativeness – the fundamental condition that makes modern power a matter of interiorized self-discipline, rather than external coercion'.[38] Since their primary concern was to increase the economic strength of the state and enhance the wealth of the colonial rulers, they did not consider population to be wealth. Rather than producing the 'citizen-individual' necessary for the tripartite sovereignty–discipline–government nexus to emerge, colonial regimes thus sought instead to create what Uma Kalpagam refers to as 'an individual who by being forced into a new sphere of commercial exchange would become the *Homo economicus* of the market economy'.[39]

Governmentality was also dislocated in colonial contexts, lastly, by the operation of what Partha Chatterjee has termed 'the rule of colonial difference', which in reproducing difference between the colonizers and colonized served to further undermine the generation of a confluence of interests between the governance of others and the governance of the self.[40] The rule of colonial difference meant that the attitude of colonial regimes towards the generation of such a confluence, or indeed towards the production of modern subjects, was in fact highly ambiguous since they needed to maximize economic exploitation without undermining colonial rule.[41] Colonial regimes negotiated this difficult problem by altering the relationship between the state and its subjects. As Mark Brown argues, while in the West the relationship between state and subject is marked by a progressive elaboration of the latter's civil, political and social rights, in colonial contexts virtue, rather than right, structured relations between state and subject.[42] The colonial subject

---

[38] Chatterjee, 'The Disciplines', p. 8.

[39] Kalpagam, 'Colonial Governmentality and the "Economy"', 420.

[40] Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*, p. 10. The rule of colonial difference meant, furthermore, that colonial discipline was forced 'to define the limits of its ambition through an orientalist discourse that blamed the [colonized] for the very measures required to police them'. Howell, 'Race, Space', 238–9.

[41] The distinction drawn by Mitchell Dean between what he terms 'governmental self-formation' (in which authorities attempt to shape the behaviour, desires, requirements, and capabilities of individuals) and 'ethical self-formation' (by which individuals endeavour to know and act on themselves) would appear to alleviate this tension. I agree, however, with Alan Hunt's contention that such a distinction serves to conflate morals and ethics and to assume that 'the external imposition of a moral code is mirrored in internal processes of self-formation' (a tendency Hunt rightly notes is also clear in Norbert Elias's account of the civilizing process and Émile Durkheim's of the 'moral order') – processes that in colonial contexts were often highly disparate. Hunt, *Governing Morals*, p. 16. See also Dean, '"A Social Structure"', 145–68 and *Governmentality*; Elias, *The Civilizing Process*; and Durkheim, *Moral Education.*

[42] Brown, '"That Heavy Machine"', 44–5.

was required, according to Brown, to be 'an agent of obligation before being a recipient of rights': to conform, in other words, to notions of morality, rationality, integrity, prudence and self-control without receiving counterpart rights.[43] For Brown the rule of colonial difference thus operated not through markers such as race, but through an ethical capacity ordered and defined through virtues.[44]

Yet although colonial regimes may have altered the relationship between the state and its subjects, they nonetheless opened up a space for the colonized to enter, critique and transform governmentalizing discourses and practices. For since the subjects brought into being by statistics, Western medicine and alien institutions were also located in indigenous knowledges and conditions, 'The colonization of the body had to operate as the care of the native body'.[45] Colonial regimes were thus forced to occupy two positions at the same time, namely both a Western and an indigenous one.[46] While generating tremendous tensions in the operation of colonial governmentality, since the colonized were viewed as incapable of self-governance, on the one hand, but on the other as being capable of being made 'self-governing in spite of their will' through the application of modern technologies, such duality also created a space for linking the state and the people.[47] This linkage was largely obscured, however, by the aesthetic of colonial governmentality – what Zahid Chaudhary, in his study of colonial photography, has termed the 'phantasmagoric aesthetic'. Such an aesthetic served to manage population through rendering the violence of colonial governmentality invisible by veiling existing social relations, in particular relations of production.[48] But it also served to make visible the self-estrangement and alienation wrought by colonial governmentality upon *both* the

---

[43] Brown, ' "That Heavy Machine" ', 46. As Veena Das contends, one of the benefits of administrative knowledge is that it did not 'have to address itself to the problems of the rights of people'. Das, 'Gender Studies', 59.

[44] Brown, ' "That Heavy Machine" ', 46. Such a concept helps to explain, furthermore, the seeming contradiction practised by the colonizers of 'high ethical standards accompanied by brutality'. Brown, ' "That Heavy Machine" ', 47.

[45] Prakash, *Another Reason*, p. 127.

[46] For the British the Indian body, according to Prakash, was 'a spectral body composed of unhygienic habits and superstitious beliefs upon which modern knowledge and tactics were to be applied in order to reform it and restore its health and well-being'. *Another Reason*, p. 128.

[47] Prakash, *Another Reason*, p. 143. Such a space was created, for Prakash, by the concept of population, which 'permitted the application of modern technologies on inhabitants who were otherwise seen as unfit for and incapable of reason and progress'. *Another Reason*, p. 144.

[48] Chaudhary, 'Phantasmagoric Aesthetics', 72. The violence of colonial governmentality penetrated colonized societies through the development of statistics and population management.

colonized (through objectifying and imposing 'foreignness' upon them) and the colonizers (through emphasizing their own foreignness and by generating a sense of superiority in the face of colonial difference) – and to undermine, in turn, the efforts of colonial governmentality to construct and maintain such categories.[49]

Yet while governmentality was clearly dislocated in a colony such as India, was this also the case in settler colonies, particularly those that were self-governing? The logic of colonial governmentality was clearly at work in regard to the relationship between settler states and their indigenous subjects, but what about the relationship between such states and their (white) citizen-subjects? Or between imperial states and their settler subjects? Although 'settlers left some of the most lasting legacies of colonialism', as Peter Pels acknowledges, the Australian historian Angela Wollacott justly contends that scholars 'have barely begun to supply the insights of post-colonial theory and critical colonial studies to Australia and other white settler colonies of the British and other European empires'.[50] It is in part the notorious difficulty of interpreting the nature of settler colonialism that has led to its virtual exclusion from postcolonial studies, including the work on colonial governmentality. But the emphasis on difference in postcolonial studies at the expense of explorations of similarity or congruity has also played a role, since it has served to preserve rather than undermine the binaries of colonialism (such as self/other, colonizer/colonized and modernity/tradition).[51] Because settlers were both subjects and citizens, colonizers and colonized, and were hence complicit in colonialism even in the face of the most strident resistance to it, such resistance could not be directed purely at an external object. It entailed, therefore, a division of the self.[52] Colonial binaries thus shed little light on the nature of settler societies' coloniality. It is precisely the *ambivalence* of settler colonialism that

---

[49] Chaudhary, 'Phantasmagoric Aesthetics', 99.

[50] Pels, 'The Anthropology of Colonialism', 173; and Wollacott, 'White Colonialism', p. 50. There have been numerous attempts since the publication of Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin's *The Empire Writes Back* to incorporate settler colonies more fully into the domain of postcolonial studies. Such attempts have made little impact, however, on the field as a whole, although the racial dynamics within settler societies (particularly relations between white settlers and indigenous populations) has drawn a considerable amount of attention from postcolonial scholars.

[51] Slemon, 'Unsettling the Empire', 33. This is not to argue for the abandonment of analyses of difference, particularly in regard to settler colonies. Indeed, as Lorenzo Veracini maintains, in light of the settler colonial trope of articulating their difference as new worlds divorced from corrupt old worlds such analyses are particularly pressing. See Veracini, 'Historylessness', 271–85.

[52] Slemon, 'Unsettling the Empire', 38, 39.

illustrates what Stephen Slemon terms 'the radical ambivalence of colonialism's middle ground'.[53]

The existence of such a 'middle ground' demonstrates that we cannot talk about colonial governmentality in the singular. Not only did different governmentalities exist in both exploitation and settler colonies, but *within* such colonies. The operation of the rule of colonial difference offers a case in point. While such a rule was clearly at work in settler attitudes towards indigenous subjects, it could also be argued that what we might term a 'rule of settler difference' operated in imperial attitudes towards settler subjects. As Lawrence Buell argues in his study of what he regards as 'the postcolonial anxiety' of nineteenth-century canonical American writers, which is evident in their efforts to 'define themselves over against the prior cultural hegemony of the former ruling power', such apprehension stemmed from British attitudes towards the thirteen colonies and later the United States (namely that American civilization lacked refinement, that it was unphilosophical, that it had no language and that Americans tended to irrationality).[54] The operation of such a 'rule of settler difference' leads Buell to make the daring claim that settler societies such as the thirteen colonies found cultural colonization harder to resist than colonies such as India, since although the former did not experience the degree of political and military domination exerted by the British in the latter, 'the extent of cultural colonization, from epistemology to aesthetics to dietetics, was much more comprehensive'.[55]

But whatever form governmentality took in different colonial contexts, it opened up spaces through which both imperial and colonial regimes could be critiqued and subverted. Moreover, attempts to prevent or alleviate the possibilities of subversion, such as the employment of virtue rather than right as a means of structuring relations between states and their subjects, were not only largely unsuccessful, they served to further undermine such regimes. The utilization of virtue as a means of cultivating what I would term, in contrast to Brown, *moral* rather than ethical subjectivities was arguably, in fact, the ultimate flaw of colonial

---

[53] Slemon, 'Unsettling the Empire', 34.
[54] Buell, 'Postcolonial Anxiety', p. 199.
[55] Buell, 'Postcolonial Anxiety', p. 199. Such cultural colonization, Buell insists, persisted in the literary–cultural sphere well beyond independence, which he believes helps to explain both the nature of American anxieties and America's transformation into an imperial power. He thus concludes that 'this continuum between colonial and imperial mentalities . . . seems inextricably bound up with its antecedent history, as the creation of a colonial project'. Buell, 'Postcolonial Anxiety', p. 213. For a more comprehensive overview of the nature of the postcoloniality of the United States see Stoler, 'Tense and Tender Ties', 829–65.

governmentalities.[56] Since what marks the relationship between virtue and rights in colonial contexts is not simply that virtue was used as a yardstick to measure rights – such a yardstick existed, for example, in Britain as well as its colonies – but that the *equation* between virtue and rights differed in both exploitation and, to a smaller extent, settler colonies, colonized peoples had to attain a higher standard of virtue in order to acquire lesser rights.[57] While this model does not appear to hold for settler colonies such as South Australia or New Zealand, which in the late nineteenth century extended rights to white settlers that were unavailable to British citizens (such as female suffrage), the right or ability to govern the self was, as we shall see, often deemed considerably more lacking in such contexts than in a conquest colony such as India. Furthermore, when Indians, Nigerians, or Australians *did* attain such virtue – when they were deemed, in other words, capable of governing the self – the falsity of the relationship between virtue and rights became evident, particularly in exploitation colonies, in which indigenous elites continued to be denied the right to self-government. The denial of such rights further undermined, therefore, the moral legitimacy of imperial and colonial regimes.

Yet what was most problematic in fashioning a relationship between virtue and subjectivity was that it necessitated that the colonizers possess the moral legitimacy to hold themselves up as the yardstick by which the colonized could be judged. Although considerable attention has been devoted to attempts to regulate sexuality in European colonies, the broader socio-political implications of the operation of what Lenore Manderson terms the 'moral logic of colonialism', namely the sanctioning of acts, policies or behaviours that Europeans regarded as immoral, has received relatively little consideration. Such a logic functioned as a double bind, for while 'immoralities' such as prostitution or obscenity were sanctioned by the colonizers to uphold the moral–political order of colonialism, in doing so they ultimately undermined their claims to a superior morality – and with it the right, and ability, to govern. As Manderson demonstrates in her discussion of the colonial state's efforts to manage contagious diseases in Malaya, one of the most common arguments put forward to defend the sanctioning of prostitution was that 'morality was relative', since it is 'dependent on influences of climate,

---

[56] The two are, however, intimately related, since, as Valverde argues, the aim of moral reform, a particular discourse and practice of governmentality, 'is not so much to change behaviour as to generate certain ethical subjectivities that appear as inherently "moral"'. Valverde, 'Moral Capital', 186.

[57] Brown, '"That Heavy Machine"'. For an analysis of the relationship between virtue and rights in late-Victorian Britain, see Petrow, *Policing Morals*, pp. 7–27.

religious belief, education and the feeling of society'.[58] Prostitution was thus seen as inevitable, a 'necessary palliative' for a society that did not deem it immoral. Metropolitan intervention into the regulation of colonial sexualities, such as the forced repeal of the Contagious Diseases ordinances in Britain's colonies, was therefore viewed as evidence of 'an inappropriate English morality that failed to account for the realities of the social and sexual life of the people of the region'.[59] They regarded it, in short, as undermining the 'critical moral-imperial universe' necessary for colonialism to function, for in spite of ensuring that their troops were provided with ('clean') prostitutes, it was essential, as Philippa Levine argues, for the British to 'monopolize the moral ground' – which they did through declaring their colonial subjects uncivilized, amoral and effeminate.[60] But maintaining – or even obtaining – this ground was precarious, and they began to lose it increasingly from the last quarter of the nineteenth century onwards as Indians, Malays and Ugandans began to turn the tables against them and accuse them of failing to uphold the morality and civility with which they claimed the right to rule.[61] So too did Britain's settler colonies, which assessed their moral geography vis-à-vis that of the metropole and often found the latter wanting.[62] As testified by the emergence of colonial nationalisms, the moral legitimacy of colonialism was thus beginning to wane precisely at the moment when governmentality was coming into its own as a tool

---

[58] Contagious Diseases Regulation (Perak and Malay States), Copy of Correspondence relative to proposed introduction of Contagious Diseases Regulations in Perak or other Protected Malay States, cited in Manderson, 'Colonial Desires', 382. While, as Dane Kennedy rightly argues, the development of the concept of moral relativity in Britain in the late nineteenth century was a result of a growing consciousness of the non-Western world, such a concept was embraced much earlier by colonial officials faced with irrefutable evidence of its existence. Kennedy, *The Highly Civilized Man*, p. 207.

[59] Manderson, 'Colonial Desires', 381–2. Although attempts to regulate prostitution in Britain during the mid-nineteenth century had served to normalize prostitution and a double standard operated there vis-à-vis acceptable moral behaviour for men and women, evidence of colonial states' sanctioning of relative morality in British colonies was always vehemently opposed – even to the point, as Philippa Levine argues, of threatening the collapse of the British government in the 1890s, and of severely undermining that of its Indian counterpart. Levine, 'Rereading the 1890s', 585–612.

[60] Cited in Levine, 'Rereading the 1890s', 591, 603.

[61] Indian newspapers, Levine comments, 'were not shy about pointing to the flagrant prostitution on London's streets, to the bastardy rates in Britain, and . . . to the loutish behavior of English soldiers on Indian soil'. 'Rereading the 1890s', 605.

[62] As the Methodist preacher and South Australian parliamentarian John Carr argued in opposition to the introduction of contagious diseases legislation in South Australia, he had 'seen more immorality in certain streets of Liverpool in half an hour than he had seen or heard of during the whole of his sojourn in Adelaide', and he regarded the latter as 'one of the best-conducted cities in the world as far as police supervision, good order, and general morality were concerned'. Cited in Phillips, 'Imperialism and the Regulation', 349.

of governance – a result, in part, of the alienation wrought by colonial governmentality.

While the tendency of colonial discourse is to 'recast culture as a whole in terms of government', as Simon Gikandi argues, 'one of the most fascinating aspects of colonial rule was its uncanny generation of narratives that refused to fit into the hierarchies of colonial government and rule, narratives that dislocated the colonial project itself or called its central assumptions into question'.[63] The existence of such narratives implies that culture was, in fact, difficult to subject to governmental power in colonial contexts, an argument borne out by James C. Scott in his discussion of the ideologies, methods and tools of modern state-building. States, Scott argues, seek to transform population, space and nature through 'techne', or 'settled knowledge', which is organized into a set of 'systematic and impersonal rules . . . [that] facilitate the production of knowledge that can be readily assembled, comprehensively documented, and formally taught'.[64] The fashioning of formal order is dependent, however, on 'metis', or informal processes and local knowledges, which unlike techne is 'contextual and particular'.[65] The problem for states is that while they can partially create metis, they cannot maintain or control it. Since culture is part of the realm of metis, it is thus difficult to render it subject to techne, particularly in multilinguistic, multicultural contexts such as India in which the socio-cultural divisions between techne and metis were so acute. While 'culture' and 'colonial dominance' are thus mutually implicated, it is not possible, therefore, to reduce one to the other.[66]

Some aspects of culture, such as obscenity, are, however, even more impervious to techne than others. Because 'the best analogy for a society's stock of metis is its language', and obscenity is partly a linguistic problem, it was difficult to subject to governmental power in colonial contexts.[67] Moreover, since dirty words instilled ideas of pollution into aspects of sexuality far more than other forms of language, they thus broke down the boundaries mediating both language and sexuality, public and private, self and other, and home and empire. Attempts to regulate the obscene thus exposed the moral logic of colonialism even

[63] Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness*, p. xiii.
[64] Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, pp. 82, 320.
[65] Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, p. 320.
[66] 'The governmentalization of culture', as Nicholas Thomas argues, is not productive since 'colonial discourse cannot be construed as a unitary or stable archive in the fashion of a set of official statistics or reports'. Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture*, p. 46. For works that regard culture and government as virtually synonymous see, for example, Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*; and Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms*.
[67] Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, p. 332.

more effectively than efforts to regulate sexuality. While to fail to regulate European-language or imported publications threatened to 'corrupt' and 'pollute' both colonizers and colonized alike, to undertake their regulation served to highlight the 'impurity' and 'degeneracy' of the culture of the colonizers (or, in the case of settler colonies, of the imperial metropole). Such regulatory endeavours demonstrated that, furthermore, rather than 'uplifting' and 'purifying' indigenous societies – or, in the case of settler societies, 'strengthening' and 'protecting' the white 'race' – the colonizers were instead corrupting and polluting societies to which such forms of 'corruption' were either obscure or entirely unknown. Similar problems beset attempts to regulate indigenous publications. In exploitation colonies the moral logic of colonialism dictated that indigenous 'obscenities' should not, in fact, be regulated, and attempts to do so could thus be greeted with charges of both hypocrisy and moral prudery (particularly if non-indigenous-language matter was left untouched). Yet neglecting to regulate the cultures of the colonized also laid colonial states open to charges of failing to protect the racial strength and purity of their subjects and of thus, again, undermining the civilizing mission that they purported to uphold. Similar charges were made against imperial metropoles for failing to assist settler colonies to regulate obscenity within their borders. When it came to regulating the obscene, whatever the course taken, it thus served to undermine the moral legitimacy of the colonizers and/or imperial metropole – and with it, that of imperial/colonial rule.[68]

Comparing colonialisms: the political rationalities of governmental rule

In spite of the fact that comparable political rationalities operated in both settler and exploitation colonies in which race and sex served as markers of inclusion and exclusion, the personal was linked to the political, and the cultivation of the self was allied to that of the body politic, exploitation colonies such as India and settler colonies such as Australia are rarely placed within the same analytical framework thanks to their differing political and economic histories and development. While exploitation colonies are regarded as a more common form of colonialism, one in which land, natural resources and labour were appropriated by colonial powers and subjected to indirect control through a 'thin white line' of administrators, soldiers, merchants and

---

[68] For insights into how obscenity continues to undermine postcolonial regimes, at least in Africa, see Mbembe, *On the Postcolony.*

missionaries, settler colonies are viewed as distinct because they were characterized by larger-scale European settlement, the development of more complex political and economic infrastructures and the attainment of political independence from their metropoles.[69] Yet as Penny Edwards argues, the 'bifurcation between "settler" colonialism and its hypothetical antithesis – the presumed conundrum of a colonialism without settlers', is more artificial than real, 'a legacy of colonial mapping which still structures much contemporary thinking, both within and without academe'.[70] Part of the reason for the ongoing predominance of this binary, according to Edwards, is the varying terms that were used to describe Europeans in different colonial contexts. In a context such as Australia, Europeans were referred to as 'settlers' as a means of claiming the land, fixing their location and securing identities that were destabilized through migration and colonization – by, in essence, their mobility (a factor that the language of 'settlement' sought to deny through defining Europeans, in contrast to the indigenous inhabitants, as civilizing, settled and sedentary). In spite of patterns of long-term settlement, Europeans in India, on the other hand, were referred to by terms such as 'Anglo-Indians', 'Domiciled Europeans', or 'half-castes', terms 'which allowed distinctions between class, race and, perhaps most importantly, mobility' but which, like the term 'settler', were highly contested and variable concepts.[71] For Edwards there is, in fact, little to distinguish settler from non-settler colonialism apart from 'differences in demographic scale and in timing', since what united all colonial populations was 'a common, elemental preoccupation with making a home on foreign land'.[72]

While Edwards elides some of the very real differences in hierarchy and power in settler versus exploitation colonies she is right to question the continued prevalence of colonial mapping in shaping contemporary understandings of colonialism, particularly in relation to settler colonies. As Daiva Stasiulis and Nira Yuval-Davis contend, it is necessary to resist

---

[69] Stasiulis and Yuval-Davis, 'Introduction', p. 3.

[70] Edwards, 'On Home Ground'. It does so, according to Edwards, through 'an assumed moral hierarchy of colonization, where "settler colonies" occupy the abyss and "non-settler colonies" have somehow secured an unspoken moral high-ground' (para. 53).

[71] Edwards, 'On Home Ground', paras. 11, 5.

[72] Edwards, 'On Home Ground', para. 53. Such different types of colonies as Australia and India were also, of course, tied together via empire. Since the East India Company had a monopoly on trade in the Pacific up to 1833, as Beverley Kingston argues, 'the fortunes of Australia were linked with those of India' from its very founding. Moreover, 'A vast network of imperial connections in government, administration, the army, the church, the law, education, and enterprise, extended from India to the Australian colonies' until well into the twentieth century. Kingston, 'The Taste of India', p. 36.

'drawing an unambiguous line of demarcation between settler and other (colonial, post-colonial or metropolitan) societies' because 'circuits of power are vastly more complicated both globally and in specific locations than any binary division allows'.[73] Australia offers a case in point, for while in contrast to a colony such as India (which until its independence from British rule was subject to a system of autocratic government by alien rulers) the Australian colonies had achieved self-governance by the mid-nineteenth century and by 1901 had federated to form a new nation-state, Australia nonetheless remained a colonial society. An Australian cultural ethos had come into being by the late nineteenth century but Australian culture, as Stephen Alomes has argued, actually became 'more colonial at the very moment of national self discovery and self confidence'. Moreover, although imperial sentiment actually peaked in the interwar period, Australian culture remained predominantly Anglo-Celtic until at least the 1950s.[74] The Australian government was in fact so reluctant to sever imperial ties that it did not ratify the 1931 Statute of Westminster, which accorded independence to Britain's dominions, until the Second World War.[75] This is not to say that the relationship between Australia and its imperial metropole was not often a contentious one. Indeed, although they were linked together in what Frank Mort refers to as a 'puritan sexual diaspora', demarcating the boundaries of 'whiteness' between Australians and Britons was often as fraught as that between settlers and the indigenous population.[76] Unlike the case of the former, delineating the borders between the latter remains, however, an ongoing process. The continued colonial dispossession of its Aboriginal population means that Australia has yet, in fact, to fully sever itself from its colonial past, rendering it 'Caught in that liminal, always undecided state between a colonial past and a postcolonial future'.[77]

---

[73] Stasiulis and Yuval-Davis, 'Introduction', p. 3.

[74] Alomes puts forward a number of arguments to explain why this was the case, but the most important was undoubtedly the growing interconnectedness of the empire. Alomes, 'Australian Nationalism', 324.

[75] Although the Commonwealth finally acceded to the statute in 1942, the individual Australian states were not formally severed from Britain until 1986. Considerable doubt also remains as to the pervasiveness of an Australian cultural ethos from the late nineteenth century, since, as Martyn Lyons and Lucy Taksa have revealed, most Australians favoured reading the works of British authors over those of their Australian counterparts up to the Second World War. Hudson and Sharp, *Australian Independence*; and Lyons and Taksa, *Australian Readers Remember*, ch. 4. See also Davison, 'Sydney and the Bush', 191–209; Stewart, 'Journalism and the World of the Writer', pp. 174–93; Nesbit, 'Literary Nationalism'; and White, *Inventing Australia*.

[76] Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities*, p. xviii.

[77] Curthoys, 'Identity Crisis', 166.

What, then, were the political rationalities that shaped the emergence and operation of governmental power in Australia? The first was the timing of Australia's nationalist movement. While by the early twentieth century the 'good' citizen had been conceptualized as the healthy citizen in all Western contexts, in Australia this was also the period of concerted nation- and citizen-formation – at least of 'white' Australian bodies.[78] Thus while the Federation Conferences of the 1880s and 1890s sought to delineate the political boundaries of the new nation-state, a corresponding string of Australasian sanitary conferences sought to demarcate the hygienic boundaries, notably through the elaboration of a federal quarantine system to keep pollutants (both physical and moral) outside its borders. The power of quarantine, which was used to keep not only undesirable bodies out of the Commonwealth but also, as we shall see, 'obscene' publications, was in fact the only public health power granted to the federal government.[79] Questions of health and hygiene therefore became deeply imbricated in the formation of Australian national identity.

The second factor shaping the political rationality of governmental power as it developed in Australia was Australia's geography, and the role it played in fashioning 'whiteness'. Not only was Australia a 'European' nation moored in the 'East', but with an 8,000 mile coastline it had the most porous and unpoliceable border in the world. But that geography also gave Australia an immense advantage in attempting to create a new, model society through protecting it from contamination, and not just from those forms of contagion that were perceived to emanate from Asia. Indeed, the 'tyranny of distance', as Geoffrey Blainey has memorably phrased it, while creating a 'gap between geographical and cultural-historical codes of belonging' in Australia, also enabled Australia to 'protect' itself from the diseases, impurities and corruptions of the 'Old World' as well, including those of the 'mother' country.[80] For the problem for Australia was that it was not a 'geographical expression' – all those within the boundary of the nation-state were not citizens, and all those outside were not foreigners.[81] The national quarantine line, which was also the border of the new nation-state, thus served to produce Australia as a geo-body.[82] While British ethnic identification actually increased in Australia in the late nineteenth century, quarantine became a knowledge-practice through which Australia was

---

[78] Bashford, *Imperial Hygiene*, p. 117.
[79] All other health powers were left to the states.
[80] Blainey, *The Tyranny of Distance*; and Curthoys, 'Feminism, Citizenship', 20.
[81] Rosecrance, 'The Radical Culture of Australia', p. 293.
[82] Bashford, *Imperial Hygiene*, p. 116.

imagined and a means of protecting the 'uncontaminated' island nation from threats to its purity, including, by the First World War, threats to its whiteness by the 'morally unhygienic and contaminating Briton'.[83]

That Australia was able to erect such a powerful quarantine barrier to protect its 'purity' was thanks to the final key factor distinguishing the political rationality that fashioned governmental power in Australia. This was the fact that the state obtained legal hegemony there earlier than it did in many other colonial contexts, at least in New South Wales, the oldest of Australia's six colonies.[84] As Lauren Benton has argued, multicentric legal systems within imperial and colonial polities, in which the state is one among many legal authorities, were replaced during the course of the nineteenth century with state-centred legal authorities in which states sought (although did not always attain) dominance over other legal authorities. Although the timing of such a shift varied in different colonial contexts, in each case the 'jockeying over alternative visions of the plural legal order contributed to the formation of the colonial state as an arbiter of internal boundaries'.[85] Benton argues that in New South Wales conflicts over the legal rights of emancipists coincided in the 1830s with a redefinition of Aborigines as colonial legal subjects rather than as members of a separate community, which marked a shift from a policy of legal pluralism to one of state hegemony.[86] The fact that, as George Nadel has argued, Australian nationalism is 'ethical' rather than political, a result of the elaboration of an Australian nationhood before the existence of an Australian state, also contributed to an instrumental view of the state, in which the purpose of the state was envisioned as that of imposing an ulterior unity on the nation.[87] This also led to a conception of the state as 'collective power at the service of individualistic "rights"', which diminished opposition to the

---

[83] Bashford, *Imperial Hygiene*, p. 139; and Day, *Contraband and Controversy*, pp. 73–4.

[84] Studying law is important for understanding the nature of governmental power since, as Victor Tadros claims, 'Law operates as a field through which techniques of governance can intervene in the disciplinary network', although 'by connecting itself to both of the poles of bio-power law, in justifying itself . . . [law] masks the need of each of these forms of power to legitimate themselves'. Tadros, 'Between Governance and Discipline', 79.

[85] Benton, *Law and Colonial Cultures*, p. 23.

[86] Benton, *Law and Colonial Cultures*, p. 184. Such a shift was brought about, Benton illustrates, through the struggles of emancipists to secure the legal and political rights of other whites, which entailed an emphasis on the cultural gulf between whites and Aborigines. But the state also secured legal hegemony in New South Wales earlier than was the case in India thanks to the perceived nature of the relationship between settlers and the land in settler colonies, in which the land was viewed as a purported historyless *terra nullius* unframed by social relations. This led the founders of political orders in settler colonies to 'see themselves carrying an inherent and unprecedented sovereignty'. Veracini, 'Historylessness', 274.

[87] Nadel, *Australia's Colonial Culture*, p. 273.

reliance of the 'individual' upon state power.[88] State hegemony coupled with an instrumentalist view of the state meant that the state assumed an early responsibility for policing Australia's 'whiteness'. Thus although the governmentalization of the colonial state in the late nineteenth century led to the 'quantification, distribution and administration of an indigenous white "settler" population' and the production of 'new kinds of subjects for rule', the elaboration of a system of quarantine at a time when such methods of containment were being abandoned as medically and morally ineffective elsewhere reveals that the biopolitical state did not have faith in the self-governing capacities of its citizens.[89] This meant that while governmental technologies were increasingly adopted to fashion pure, clean and moral Australian bodies from the late nineteenth century onwards, sovereign and disciplinary rather than governmental power continued to predominate.

The political rationality surrounding the development of governmental power in India in the late nineteenth century was more complex. As an exploitation rather than a settler colony, India was not, of course, self-governing – indeed, although the emergence of India's nationalist movement was roughly coterminous with Australia's, India did not become a nation-state until half a century after Australia. Indians were, however, gradually incorporated into the governing process from the 1860s onwards, and while India was undoubtedly culturally colonized, the cultural differences dividing rulers and ruled, in addition to the colonial state's abnegation of interference in the socio-cultural realm, meant that, pace Buell, Indian culture was arguably *less* colonized than its Australian counterpart.[90] Moreover, the institution of a hegemonic state took much longer to evolve in colonial India and remained subject to greater contestation than in Australia.

For the early East India Company state the role of governance was inconsequential. The techniques of government were gradually instituted with the acquisition of the administration of police, justice and revenue, and by the early nineteenth century regular and centralized forms of administration began to evolve and the state began to stake

---

[88] Hancock, *Australia*, p. 62.
[89] Bashford, *Imperial Hygiene*, pp. 34, 118. By 'governmentalization' I am referring both to 'those discourses and practices whereby something comes to be regarded as a suitable object to be governed, and . . . the means of governing through a complex of more or less rationalized programmes, strategies, tactics and techniques directed towards acting upon the actions of others'. Hunt, *Governing Morals*, p. 185.
[90] Although an Australian cultural ethos had come into being by the late nineteenth century, Australian culture was still, nonetheless, a derivative culture. India, on the other hand, could lay claim to an ancient culture, a multitude of indigenous languages and a rich literary heritage.

claims to its legal hegemony.[91] But it was not until the second half of the nineteenth century, following the transferral of the governance of India from the Company to the crown, that legal and political control became more firmly established (through such measures as increasing control over criminal law, an intensification of supervision of policing and tighter control of 'frontier' areas), administrative procedures became more systematized, the project of knowing India 'scientifically' was launched (through such means as censuses, surveys, anthropological studies and so on), and population became the chief concern of the state.[92] Unlike in Australia, the attainment of state legal hegemony thus coincided with the governmentalization of the colonial state as it sought, through statistical methods, to enumerate, classify and demarcate population. In the process new categories were delineated, and while categories such as caste and tribe continued to remain obdurate in their differences, they 'rendered it possible to conceive of narratives and counter-narratives of modernity and progress, and in so doing brought "India" within the discursive fold of universal science and universal history'.[93]

But although the unruliness of difference was to some extent tamed, the political rationalities of colonial rule meant that the implementation of colonial governmentality in India nonetheless played out very differently from the way it did in Australia. To begin with, the state was subject to greater contestation than it was in Australia. In the case of law, for example, the attainment of state legal hegemony in the second half of the nineteenth century led to state hegemony in the realm of political economy but not in that of moral economy.[94] Moreover, in the process of translating British legal norms into the Indian colonial context, of absorbing Indian law into modern British law and marking a shift from status to contract, those norms were subject to opposition, re-negotiation and transformation.[95] Such processes produced an Indian

---

[91] Kalpagam, 'The Colonial State and Statistical Knowledge', 150.

[92] Benton, *Law and Colonial Cultures*, p. 150. Kalpagam argues that while the desire to know India scientifically first emerged in the eighteenth century, population was not the main focus of concern until the late nineteenth. Such a shift can be explained in part through the changes brought about by the 1857 Revolt. Arguably more important, however, was the changing nature of India's political economy from a focus on revenue collection to the production of raw materials and a market for British goods during the course of the nineteenth century. Kalpagam, 'The Colonial State', 49.

[93] Kalpagam, 'The Colonial State', 49.

[94] As Nicholas Dirks illustrates in his study of the impact of the Permanent Settlement on southern India, while the political import of the gift of property declined as a result of the legal redefinition of property relations, the moral economy did not. Dirks, 'From Little Kingdom', pp. 175–208.

[95] For transformations in Indian law see Galanter, *Law and Society*; and Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms*.

legal order that, according to Benton, was 'idiosyncratic', in which the state actually promoted 'a kind of Indian exceptionalism that exaggerated distinctions between India's written legal traditions and other non-western legal systems'.[96] Unlike in Australia, therefore, the legal order in India continued to remain plural, and while religious difference was its organizing principle, such boundaries were fragile and impermeable in the face of other categories (particularly gender and ethnicity) and groups (such as state officials, Westernized elites and so on).[97]

Secondly, the state's interest in and ability to regulate population in colonial India was more limited than that of the state in Australia. Colonialism may have justified itself as a civilizing tool, but in reality the state had no interest in fashioning moral colonial subjects – namely those who were 'civilized' and thus capable of self-governance – beyond the needs of political and administrative economy. This is because, unlike in Australia, the governmental state in India was not engaged in the task of nation-building and of hence assuring the strength and purity of the Indian 'race', although it evinced such concerns when it came to policing whiteness and in delineating those Indian groups amenable to British rule. The state's promise post-1857 to refrain from imposing its own notions of universal reason in the socio-cultural realm and its subsequent abrogation of the realm of personal law, while ostensibly a measure of appeasement, served in fact to further the interests of the colonial state and enabled it to focus on sites of intervention that served to advance colonial rule (leaving Indians, crucially, to engage in their own projects of social and moral reform). Such intervention not only fostered unforeseen transformations in the Indian socio-cultural realm, but put the impetus on Indians to *make* the state intervene in the socio-political realm. The accordance of relative autonomy to Indians to establish their own socio-cultural boundaries while denying them political power meant that, as Tanika Sarkar has presciently argued, 'the community – if it had any hegemonic aspirations – was forced to constantly explain itself'.[98] It did so through the public sphere, which Indian groups used to pressure the colonial state to intervene in the socio-cultural realm of Indian society and enact regulatory projects on their behalf.

Despite the desire of the colonial state in India to choose specific sites of intervention, colonial governmentality therefore produced or served to facilitate outcomes that had not been intended, such as the production

---

[96] Such a separation was reinforced, according to Benton, by the systems of colonial governance in which the India Office was isolated from that of the Colonial Office. Benton, *Law and Colonial Cultures*, p. 152.

[97] Benton, *Law and Colonial Cultures*, p. 162.

[98] Sarkar, *Hindu Wife*, p. 231.

of an Indian public sphere and, more significantly, Indian nationalism.[99] This leads us to the third key distinction between the political rationalities of governmental power in India and Australia, namely the linkage between state hegemony and nationalism. While in the Australian case nationalism emerged after the attainment of state hegemony but before the formal construction of a nation-state, in India nationalism was produced by the governmentalizing practices deployed in an effort to attain that hegemony – by, in other words, all of the statistical, enumerative, administrative and technological means through which India was made known and thus imagined.[100] Since Indian nationalists (as well as social reformers of many stripes) sought to enact their own governmentalizing projects to delineate the boundaries of the Indian 'race' and nation and to improve their 'strength' and 'purity', the project of colonial governmentality became more fragmented than its Australian counterpart as the state attempted to implement particular governmentalizing projects and Indian groups endeavoured to undertake their own, which they sought to implement in part through the state. The state thus became a battleground for competing projects.

The state resisted undertaking such projects in part because it lacked sufficient legibility in regard to Indian society, as well as the economic means to acquire it. But more imperative was that governmentality requires a confluence of interests between rulers and ruled, and in the Indian context this was more frequently lacking than in Australia. More troubling from the perspective of the colonial state was that Indian governmentalizing projects were often contrary to its interests, for in the process of fostering the strength and purity of Indians they often undermined those of the British. For the British, who established embodied legitimacy through the cultivation of a self-disciplined, bureaucratic body, the governance of the self became reified as a means of establishing distance between the bodies of the colonizers and those of the colonized,

---

[99] The Indian public sphere, as Uma Kalpagam has argued, was produced in part by the statistical practices of colonial governmentality, since Indian newspapers routinely documented and debated the transactions of the imperial and provincial governments. According to Kalpagam 'Governance thus entered the public discourse in a new way inviting the various publics to a "public use of reason"'. Gyan Prakash makes a similar argument about the relationship between governmentality and Indian nationalism, namely that 'the struggle for the nation was at once both a product of colonial modernity and an attempt to steer it in a different direction'. For Benedict Anderson the genealogies of *all* colonial nationalist movements should in fact 'be traced to the imaginings of the colonial state'. Kalpagam, 'The Colonial State', 52; Prakash, *Another Reason*, p. 179; and Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 163.

[100] Although understandings of the origins of Indian nationalism have largely shifted from an emphasis on the role of Western education and British constitutional initiatives to a focus on drives to transform the inner or 'spiritual' realm of Indian society to protect it from the depredations of colonialism, the role of the state remains paramount. See, for example, Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism*; and Chatterjee, *The Nation*.

and of ultimately *undermining* the self-governing capacities of Indians.[101] The role of the body as a basis for social categorization and distinction could be destabilized, furthermore, through the cultivation of physical strength or other techniques of self-rule through which ethnic and even racial lines could be subsumed and the body thus rendered a site of resistance.[102] Considerable efforts were therefore directed at preventing Indians from developing such a body through imposing 'Indian' codes of behaviour on them and punishing transgressions against these. The prestige of the British body was further shored up through the adoption of aristocratic rather than middle-class sensibilities that permitted the gaze of outsiders to intrude into the realm of the private.[103] Since the legitimacy of the body of the colonizer needed to be maintained at the expense of enhancing the self-regulatory abilities of the colonized, colonial governmentality in India thus generated a tension between the legitimacy of the body of the colonizer and that of the colonial state.[104]

But it was also possible for the colonial state in India to abdicate responsibility for fashioning self-governing subjects because, unlike its Australian counterpart, it actually had more faith in the ability of its subjects to regulate themselves. Since by the late nineteenth century colonialism had already intervened in India in the spheres of government, the economy and the judiciary – the spheres that, according to David Scott, 'the political rationality of governmental power sought at once to *construct* and *work through* in order to induce its improving effects on colonial conduct' (emphasis in original) – then a direct intervention on the part of the state was no longer necessary for governmentality to achieve its improving effects on the conduct of Indian bodies.[105] This

---

[101] The body was always subject to greater contestation in India than in other colonial contexts because Anglo-Indian bodies lacked embodied legitimacy, particularly for Hindus, for whom they were ritually impure. But Anglo-Indian bodies also lacked legitimacy in the eyes of the 'home' country, and hence there was a tension evident from the beginning of British rule as to whether Indian or Anglo-Indian society was in greater need of 'civilizing'. Collingham, *Imperial Bodies*, p. 78.

[102] Budd, *The Sculpture Machine*, pp. 85–93.

[103] Collingham argues that, unlike in Britain, among Anglo-Indians the bathroom and bedroom did not develop into private spaces, which, through the use of body servants, was a means of maintaining prestige. *Imperial Bodies*, p. 143.

[104] The complexity of this dilemma is evident in the treatment of European prostitutes in colonial contexts such as India, where their 'whiteness' ensured that, unlike indigenous prostitutes or their counterparts in Europe, they were to some extent 'rehabilitated'. See Levine, 'The White Slave Trade', 140.

[105] Scott, 'Colonial Governmentality', 208. Although governmental power had also intervened in such spheres in Australia, the complications of colonial Indian body politics – including both the role played by virtue and the fact that the state was not engaged in upholding Indian bodily purity – led, ironically, to the belief that state intervention in Indian bodily regulation was no longer necessary.

was evident in the implementation of a host of moral and social reform projects from the late nineteenth century onwards. While these often worked against the interests of the state, they illustrated that the political rationality of governmental power had made the production of moral colonial subjects, individuals such as Mohandas Gandhi, possible.[106] It was not until the Indian project of nation-building began to be implemented *through* the state, from the 1920s onwards, that Indians started to conceive of *themselves* in governmental terms as incapable of self-governance, and the state thus began to assume greater responsibility for regulating their behaviour.

An examination of the operation of colonial governmentality in two distinct contexts thus illustrates that self-government is not synonymous with governance of the self, and that government as a form of power can be *perceived* to operate more effectively in states that are not self-governing than in those that are. A focus on governmental power thus illustrates the importance, as Saurabh Dube warns, of both 'guard[ing] against fetishizing the state as a mere panoply of institutions and policies, [as] a locus of abstract power', *and* against 'lyrically portray[ing] communities and traditions as outside the realms of disciplinary imaginings and state power'.[107] Only by looking at the structure of power within and around the colonial state in all of its manifestations, by focusing on governmentality in different colonial contexts and by comparing these different governmentalizing processes to each other, can we gain a clear understanding of how colonialism functioned.[108]

---

[106] For Gandhi the reformation of sexuality was necessary for India to obtain national liberation.

[107] Dube, *Untouchable Pasts*, p. xiii.

[108] In challenging such concepts, we must be wary, however, of inadvertently re-affirming them. Modern techniques of governing are generally assumed to have been introduced in colonial contexts by the colonizers and later adopted by the colonized – part of the epistemological conquest carried out by colonial states through new institutions, a shift in knowledge content and new methods of knowing. While it is important to ask, with Uma Kalpagam, how it is that 'modern' knowledge acquired 'its legitimacy and its universal character', it is equally important to illustrate what techniques may have emerged prior to or independent of colonialism. Kalpagam, 'The Colonial State', 39, 43.