

On Colonialism - Postliterate - Medium

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From what I've seen, there is not really such a thing as a particularly barbaric people or a particularly benevolent one. In general, though there may be sects or small tribes which are more or less "ethical" than others, at a decent scale, it all kind of evens out.

What I mean to say with this is two things: (1) human ethics is not really influenced by the enforcement of any particular ethical code, good or bad, and (2) across these cultures and ethnicities, they each demonstrate decently equal levels of benevolence *and* immorality. In this sense, human good and bad are inescapable and instantly reproduce in a society even if most object to it — some may even justify it.

As an aside on ethical codes, many of them exist really as a sort of bourgeois morality, that is, a code made for the higher class. Orthodox Judaism, for all of the shit slung at it by progressives, at the level of ordinary families does not take some particularly barbaric or angelic form either. There are clearly examples of both, and many of the more esoteric or hyper-specific practices may be only known by Rabbis or higher authorities (at least historically.) In many ways, the realization of barbarism within foreign communities is the only possible way to see barbarism in societies due to the barbarism in one's own society being too familiar to be visible.

This, to me, is why the mainstream narratives on US colonialism are so strange. On the one hand, the racist right-wing declares indigenous American peoples barbarians who were graced by the gift of "civilization"

by the Europeans. On the other, many leftists fetishize the indigenous peoples as possessing some other-worldly quality lacking in European society and which makes them exceptionally angelic.

Both narratives seem absurd because indigenous Americans are merely people, and so possess neither some distinct barbarism nor some angelic quality. It is both true that they warred amongst each other and that they had a particular knowledge of the land and a distinct spirituality (dare I say they also experimented in democracy more readily than the Europeans.)

This is a much more powerful anti-colonial declaration than fetishism because it applies to *all* peoples and *particularly* because it can uphold itself without endless specific justifications. Simply because they are people, they don't deserve such a fate, not because they are particularly good people.

By making the discussion one about whether indigenous Americans were especially good or not, it makes human beings out to be objects which deserve colonialism *unless* they are especially good, and more importantly, it gives armaments to the arguments of fascists by allowing them to frame the discussion as "did they deserve it or not?" rather than a principled, uncompromising: "No. It is never justified."

On a final note, many continue to frame US colonialism as simply the result of power struggle, but more importantly, one which was righteous in decision. No, there is no righteousness in war.