**What’s Wrong with Neo-Colonialism? The Case of Culture**
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1. Introduction
* Empirically, trade in cultural goods follows a pattern that can be described as “neo-colonial”
* But to call a pattern “neo-colonial” is to imply that it is wrong. What is wrong with patterns of unequal trade in cultural goods?
* Some deny that unequal cultural trade flows are wrong. Others say that such flows are wrong because over-reliance on cultural imports threatens cultural loss. We reject both these views.
* Instead, our thesis is that unequal cultural exchange is objectionable because it disrupts efforts to establish forms of mutual recognition that are crucial for global social equality.
1. Social equality and recognition
* To live as social equals is to respect others *as* equals and to share a commitment to building a social world together that reflects such a recognition. Social equality not inherently connected to the state; can extend across borders.
* Social equality involves recognition because (i) it is constituted by reciprocal attitudes and dispositions of respect; and (ii) it continually raises the question of who is to be included in the circle to whom these attitudes apply.
* Failures of recognition are typically connected with stereotypes and preconceptions associated with ascriptive social categories (race, gender, etc). When a social identity group is stereotypically seen as lacking important qualities and capacities, individuals identified with the group are regarded as unfit for a relationship of social quality.
* Those who traffic in stereotypes frequently offer what they take to be evidence for their generalizations, pointing to observable actions, practices, and achievements of the identity group in question and insisting that they see little evidence of the traits and qualities that mediate recognition as equals. E.g. colonizers point to various indicators of progress and civilization that the colonized society is said to lack: economic, religious, political, familial, etc.
* Our focus: countering negative stereotypes that stand in the way of recognition, by empowering the oppressed to engage in activities that they have independent reasons to value *and* that attract the recognition of others.
1. Cultural production as mediator of recognition
* Cultural production is an especially crucial mode of human activity that has mediated recognition. Historically, colonizers often justified the colonial project on the grounds that a lack of European culture demonstrated the inferiority of the colonized group.
* Thomas Macaulay’s 1835 “Minute on Indian Education”: “a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia…it is no exaggeration to say that all the historical information which has been collected from all the books written in the Sanskrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the most paltry abridgments used at preparatory schools in England.”
* Aimé Césaire’s 1959 speech at the International Congress of Black Artists and Writers: “Cultural creation, precisely because it is creation, … converts the colonized consumer into a creator. … it restores historic initiative to those whom it has been the mission of the colonial system to deprive”.
* Three arguments for the importance of cultural production as a mediator of recognition: (i) counter-example, (ii) co-production, (iii) cultural representation.

1. What’s wrong with neocolonial patterns of cultural exchange?
* Our argument: Patterns of unequal cultural exchange reinforce the denial of recognition of non-White and historically underprivileged peoples as equals, and thus undermine the goal of attaining global relations of social equality.
* Parallel between the wrong associated with unequal cultural exchange, and a crucial wrong-making feature of colonialism itself. A central reason why colonialism was wrong was that it established and expressed objectionable social hierarchies – above all, hierarchy between colonizer and colonized. Patterns of unequal cultural exchange are problematic because they frustrate efforts to transcend these hierarchies and replace them with sustainable global relations of social equality.
* Two broad policy implications –

(a) Dangers of free trade in cultural goods

(b) Legitimacy of concerns about cultural appropriation