*Responses to James Tully's "Deparochializing Political Theory and Beyond"**

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In their responses to James Tully's article "Deparochializing Political Theory and Beyond," Garrick Cooper, Charles W. Mills, Sudipta Kaviraj and Sor-hoon Tan engage with different aspects of Tully's "genuine dialogue." While they seem to concur with Tully on the urgency of deparochializing political theory, their responses bring to light salient issues which would have to be thought through in taking this project forward.

Keywords: Afro-modern political thought; Atlantic slavery; indigenous thought; parrhesia; postcolonialism

A Conversation with James Tully's "Deparochializing Political Theory and Beyond"

GARRICK COOPER
University of Canterbury, New Zealand (garrick.cooper@canterbury.ac.nz)

In this article, I respond to James Tully's discussion article "Deparochializing Political Theory and Beyond: A Dialogue Approach to Comparative Political Thought." I engage with his idea of a "genuine dialogue" and suggest that the establishment of a relationship is central to what constitutes a "genuine dialogue"—in particular recognition of the other as fully human. I also explore what Tully refers to as "deep attachments" and argue that such attachments are an example of Sartrean bad-faith, and move on to offer an indigenous example of "truth-seeking" as practiced.

Keywords: political theory; translations; genuine dialogue; deep attachments; existentialism; indigenous thought; Māori

In *Deparochializing Political Theory and Beyond: A Dialogue Approach to Comparative Political Thought* James Tully puts forward, what appears on the face of it, a humble request: to engage in a *genuine dialogue*. The request appears humble in the sense that it simply seems like a very human endeavour to communicate genuinely and to genuinely communicate. However, such a proposal becomes increasingly less humble and more elusive when resources and power are at stake, or in other words, when matters are political. Tully though temporarily suspends analyses of power to explore some of the psycho-cognitive challenges of achieving a *genuine dialogue* between and across political thought systems with the aim of generating "critical mutual understanding" (Tully 2016: 51). Further, he calls for *translations* of political thought that move beyond the linguistic to the phenomenological dimensions of dialogue. Notwithstanding some of the obstacles that he identifies in part two—in particular the discussion of "false" dialogues (*ibid.*: 53–5)—the premise then of his paper is that there is indeed a willingness and commitment to engage in a dialogue. To engage in a dialogue is to begin a relationship open to hitherto unexplored possibilities.

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Is it possible though that Tully's *genuine dialogue* is a contradiction or paradox? The word *genuine* comes from the Latin word *genuinus* meaning "native, natural, innate" which in turn comes from the root word *gignere* meaning "to beget".[1] To beget something signals that a set of forces and energy have been coalesced leading to the creation of something. "Natural" suggests that something would come into existence by itself, or free from an external or 'unnatural' intervention. An unnatural intervention often means human intervention. Think here for example of an animal documentary where an animal might be injured, and rather than humans intervening, the prevailing logic is 'to let nature take its course.' A dialogue here though demands human intervention otherwise you would just be talking to yourself, even if other humans were present. Perhaps then, dialogues if they are to be truly genuine, or at least not unnatural, are premised upon a relationship with, and commitment to, the other? Here, we return to Tully. Dialogical relationships are his central theme. These are not merely cognitive or intellectual exercises or exchanges, but matters of the heart and the stomach.[2] Through dialogues we give a little of ourselves to the other while simultaneously opening our hearts to the other and relationships form. Complicating things further however is that the new relationship is often mediated through and by our existing sets of relationships. A re-examination of our existing relationships in the context of a burgeoning new relationship is called for.

Genuine dialogues, for Tully have liberatory potential for participants, and can "[…] free each other partially from *deep attachments* to their worldviews" (Tully 2016: 65). To be free though is presented with the caveat "partially," and with the distinction between a "deep attachment" and being completely detached from those ideas. It is indeed difficult to imagine how one might completely detach from an idea once we have become conscious of that idea, let alone an idea that we have a significant investment politically. For Tully, attachments we have to ideas about the world can be both a barrier to and an enabler of understanding; in other words, they can serve both positive and negative functions. "Deep" attachments that convey a greater sense of certainty and completeness are more problematic for translations across political thought systems than simply "attachments," which conversely convey more tentativeness and incompleteness; in short, possibilities are kept alive.

Deep attachments have the effect of concealing something. To keep something concealed requires an effort, even if we are not always conscious of such efforts, nor of that which we conceal. Such an effort smacks of Sartrean bad-faith.[3] Gordon (2000: 75) states that "Bad faith is a lie to the self, one that involves an effort to hide from one's freedom."[4] The act of concealing something through deep attachments is bad faith because we are not willing to confront a reality over which we have no control over—the acceptance of which might require us to change. Deep attachments require less of a relationship with reality. Because they are hidden in our deepest recesses they are not readily accessible or available for reality's scrutiny. It takes courage to face reality.

Tully turns to Foucault's discussion of the ancient Greek idea of *parrhesia* and Gandhi's concept of *satyagraha* which he describes as the "intersubjective virtue of the courage of truthfulness" (Tully 2016: 65) to explore a more open relationship with reality in building dialogical relationships with one another. His proposal is put forward against a backdrop of human relationships a completely different sort, which are established through and perpetuated by patriarchies, aristocracies, colonialism and imperialism, and normative gender social roles and labour divisions. Under the logic of these regimes, the "other" is always lacking—not completely human, not completely a man, just not complete. This logic was famously diagnosed by Frantz Fanon in *Black Skins White Masks*.[5] The colonized black man and woman are always striving to be recognized as completely human. To be completely human was to acquire white language, white culture, and a white lover or partner. Whilst clearly the colonizer-colonized relationship is oppressive for the colonized, Fanon shows that it was also problematic for the colonizer, for their inability to imagine a being outside of a relationship was also characterized by an inability to see the other as fully human.[6]

Tully has a completely different relationship in mind which is indeed a radical departure from the Manichean master-slave relationship just described. He describes a relationship that is based on interdependence, where "Each participant needs the participation of all others" (Tully 2016: 65). The starting point is that each other is already fully human, and as such both have the full range of human

faculties; the ability to feel and experience emotions, to think deeply about the world in ways that are meaningful and efficacious. We have something to offer one another, as "parrhesiastic partners" in "truth-seeking" premised on an openness in how we engage with one another through listening, questioning and speaking.

In Māori communities (indigenous people of New Zealand) we have a form of "truth-seeking" when negotiating where the body of a relative will be interred. When kin die outside of our tribal regions, we have a tradition of making a *tono tūpāpaku,* or a request for the deceased's remains, at the funeral so that they may be returned to their ancestral lands for burial. For Māori, death rites are seen as perhaps the most important of all. Over the last 30 years or so there have been a number of cases that have received significant national media attention in New Zealand; largely where the partner of the Māori deceased was a *Pākehā* (white person) and disputes arose over where the deceased would be finally laid to rest. Such cases are euphemistically referred to as 'body-snatching,' the implication being that bodies taken were done so without 'permission.' One recent case is still unresolved after nearly ten years.[7]

The term 'body-snatching' though implies a particular type of intent; that is, the body was going to be taken whether or not the immediate family acquiesced to the request. It implies that a request was more a violent demand. This despite the fact that *tono* are made quite regularly within Māori communities without any public furore. The request is read as having only one of two possible answers: 'yes, you may take the body' or 'no, you can't.' And just as likely, the intent of the request is read so that only an affirmative response to the request would be accepted. To be clear, there can be quite 'rigorous' debates arising from a *tono*, and the debates can go on for a very long time, particularly if the deceased was prominent. The intent of the *tono* was not to have the body returned necessarily. Rather it was to find out where the rightful resting place for the body was. The request does presuppose a view about that rightful resting place but not that it was the only rightful place. Even very 'rigorous' requests leave open possibilities, otherwise the request would be in bad-faith—by denying its premise—and also an example of a "false dialogue"; in which case the charade should be done away with and the body should just be 'snatched.' "Truth-seeking" here, which takes the form of speaking as faithfully possible about one's connections to the deceased, reciting genealogies, telling stories about the deceased and her or his deeds and wishes, but above all, looking for who would metaphorically *fight* for the body; the implication being that they would likely then look after the body once interred. The rightful resting place then was genuinely a negotiated outcome, and to be in good faith, all parties are required to make an earnest case while keeping open the possibility that their case might not be 'successful.' 'Success' here though is measured by both parties being assured that the deceased's body will be cared for and looked after for in death. Further, by both parties engaging in making a strong case to look after the dead body, they were also both honouring the deceased. Bonds between kin and in-laws are often reaffirmed and strengthened by *tono tūpāpaku.*

Bonds and relationships, can indeed be forged, tested and strengthened by the most rigorous of discussions. Dialogical relationships as set out by Tully with the purpose of "truth-seeking" have the potential to bring scrutiny to ideas that are located in our archaeological middens of thought. There may be treasures worthy of holding onto and there may just be the remnants of waste; yet all have the capacity to provide us with greater understanding of our thought systems and generate "critical mutual understanding." Tully's proposal should however come with a warning: genuine dialogues if they are to be truly transformative will require us to change, and change can be painful and traumatic, for some, more than others.

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[1]   ed. Robert Barnhart, *Chambers Dictionary of Etymology* (Edinburgh: Chambers Harrap Publishers Ltd, 2008), 428.

[2]   In Māori (indigenous people of New Zealand) thought, the pit of the stomach is where emotions reside and are manifest.

[3]   See Chapter 2 of Jean-Paul Sartre's *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, 47–70 (New York: Washington Square Press, 1956). Also see Lewis Gordon's *Bad Faith and Antiblack Racism* (New Jersey: Atlantic Press International, 1995). In particular, in this paper I draw from

Chapter 1 'A "Determined" Attitude That Involves Lying to Ourselves' (8–9) and Chapter 4 'The Elusiveness of Transcendence and the Comfort of Facticity' (16–18).

4   Lewis R. Gordon, _Existentia Africana: Understanding African Existential Thought_ (New York: Routledge, 2000).

5   Frantz Fanon, _Black Skin, White Masks_ (New York: Grove Press Inc, 1967).

6   Lewis R. Gordon, _Fanon and the Crisis of the European Man: An Essay on Philosophy and the Human Sciences_ (New York: Routledge, 1995).

7   See Carl Mika "Body-Snatching": Changes to Coroners' Legislation and Possible Māori Responses," _AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples_ 5, no. 1, (2009): 27–41, for a discussion on some recent cases and analysis of the New Zealand law dealing with the bodies of deceased.

Dialogues in Black and White

CHARLES W. MILLS

The Philosophy Program, CUNY Graduate Center, New York, USA (cmills3@gc.cuny.edu)

In my response to Tully's paper, I ask how, if at all, Tully's analyses of obstacles and suggestions for solutions would need modification for the special "comparative" case of a "white" dialogue with what is increasingly coming to be called the "Afro-modern political tradition." I briefly sketch the structural practices and processes that have shaped the white West and the "lifeworld" of its white citizens, and that in a sense have on principle ruled out a dialogical engagement with the black population.

Keywords: Afro-modern political tradition, Atlantic slavery, epistemic injustice, racism, white privilege

James Tully's essay is a very rich and thoughtful contribution to the project systematically initiated in recent decades of developing a comparative approach to political thought. He lists six obstacles likely to be encountered by such an enterprise and then sketches some ways that a dialogical approach may be able to overcome them. In these brief comments, which can be read in part as my own thinking out loud about these issues, I want to raise the question of how, if at all, his analyses of obstacles and suggestions for solutions would need modification for the special "comparative" case of a "white" dialogue with what is increasingly coming to be designated as "black," or, before that, "Negro" political thought).[1]

Afro-modern political thought fits awkwardly—when indeed it is noticed at all—into the standard taxonomies of mainstream ("white"/"Western") political theory. But this very awkwardness is what motivates my question. The way to think of this tradition is as the political theorizing of blacks in modernity (arguably these populations would not have *been* black before modernity), both in Africa and in the black diaspora to the Caribbean, the Americas, and Europe, grappling with systems of white domination, first in the forms of Atlantic racial slavery and European colonialism, and then in the forms of post-Emancipation and post-colonial regimes of continuing structural racial disadvantage. If this characterization seems unhelpfully abstract, try the ostensive route instead: just think of representative 18th and 19th century figures, such as Olaudah Equiano, Quobna Ottobah Cugoano, David Walker, and Frederick Douglass (abolitionists), or representative 20th century figures, such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, C.L.R. James, James Baldwin, Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, Malcolm X, and Steve Biko (anti-colonialists, anti-imperialists, anti-white-supremacists).

How should we conceive of this tradition in relation to Tully's categories? It is certainly non-Western and "Other" insofar as it arises out of a radical structural subordination and corresponding "practices and places," a "lifeworld," that in its racialized phenomenology is very alien to the white experience of modernity. And this "otherness" is manifested in the general exclusion of such texts from the Western political canon, as established by histories and anthologies and introductory textbooks and defining book series of Western political thought.[2] Yet its ineluctably "contrapuntal" (Said) relationship with the West is undeniable, even for the Africans (ex-slaves Equiano and Cugoano, anti-apartheid activist Biko), and incontrovertibly for the African Americans (Walker, Douglass, Du Bois, Baldwin, X) and Afro-Caribbeans (Garvey, James, Césaire, Fanon), products of Western "civilization," values and norms, albeit in the racially dimorphized forms requisite for establishing and maintaining white settler, slave, and colonial societies. So there is an intimacy here which is far closer and more threateningly revealing in its reciprocally constitutive relationship than that between white settlers and indigenous peoples in, say, the Americas and Australia (where the Other is somewhere over in Indian Country and the Outback, or, later, the reservation

and the segregated community). Here the Other is simultaneously *physically right at hand* (in the slave quarters, in the white household, across the street that demarcates the beginnings of Darktown) and *psychically utterly remote*, denizens of a strange black world that must be policed but must not be truly understood, for the price of such knowledge would be too costly for a white world resting on its exploitation.

The question, then, is how Tully's identification of obstacles and strategies for deparochialization translate for this peculiar variety of "comparative" political dialogue. Consider, in this light, the six factors Tully lists as likely to interfere with genuine dialogue: pretense for strategic reasons; self-deception; projection of one's own tradition on to others; the silencing of critical elements within the tradition; secondary explanations that justify Western superiority; and fast-time pre-scripted processes. Nowhere does Tully highlight racism as an obstacle—perhaps he means it to be subsumed in one way or another under these other factors. But it is clearly going to affect all of them deeply given the enduringly degraded position blacks have occupied and continue to occupy in Western thought, linked (unlike any other group) to racial slavery in modernity, and tied in their origins to a continent traditionally "Dark" and without any contemporary national success stories comparable to, say, Asia.[3] Scholarly controversy continues over the correct periodization of racism, whether it is distinctively modern or whether it can be traced back to Aristotle's views on "natural slaves" in classical antiquity.[4] But even on the shorter periodization, blacks are singled out by their identification as "a slave race," and if pre-modern sources are conceded to play a contributory role, the Greco-Roman world's stigmatization of "Ethiopians" for their color (symbolically associated with death and the underworld) and medieval Christendom's categorization of them among the "monstrous races," demonic torturers of Christ, would further entrench this uniquely disrespected "racial" status.[5]

It will (originally) be less a matter of "pretense" or even "self-deception" undermining sincere dialogue, then, but *genuine* belief in black inferiority, whether biologically or culturally determined, with "projection" here *not* (as with at least some ethnoracial groups) being a matter of "sense-making" through assimilating the non-Western Other to the Western Self, but rather through locating the black Other in the familiar slot they have *always* occupied in this tradition, justified by a long history of "pre-scripted" "secondary explanations" that may vary in content but not in the basic diagnosis of fundamental inequality. This is not the Other one does not know and (in these relatively more enlightened times) is self-consciously aware one does not know, but the Other (as I emphasized) white Westerners are already confident that they *do* know, and have known for (at least) hundreds of years, with the categories and sense-making narratives to prove it.

Moreover, an additional obstacle to be overcome in this case is the vested interests at stake in such exchanges. From the black/Afro-modern perspective, the fundamental political demand motivating such dialogues (and resisted by whites accordingly) has always been racial justice and an end to white oppression, whether in the form of racial slavery, colonial rule, Jim Crow/apartheid, or a merely formal juridical equality disconnected from material equality (indeed, used to obfuscate and/or rationalize continuing material inequality). So as mentioned earlier, the oppositional black narrative is not an "external" political tradition but a radical contestation *within* the white tradition of its terms, frameworks, and self-conception—the story it is telling others and itself. In the United States, for example, that story sanitizes the history of indigenous expropriation and genocide, African slavery and post-bellum subordination. Race is made marginal to the polity and its political traditions when in fact race has been central.[6] A genuine dialogue would thus require an admission of the truth of this past, and an end to the claimed white "innocence" that thinkers like James Baldwin have diagnosed as so crucial to the white American character.[7] The hostile reaction to the "Black Lives Matter" movement (originally founded in 2013 to protest police killings of unarmed black people, though subsequently taking up much broader issues of racial injustice) underlines how many white Americans even today refuse to give up this mythology.[8] Similarly, in nominally post-apartheid South Africa, the "Rhodes Must Fall" student protests over continuing white privilege and colonial iconography in the country have stirred great antagonism among whites who feel they have already "done enough."[9] And apart from the moral and conceptual revolutions, the psychic transformation, that a thoroughgoing Self- and

Other-revisioning of this kind would mandate, old-fashioned material interests of formidable dimensions are involved also. For example, the black American case for reparations for slavery (originally) and (later) Jim Crow, first put forward after the Civil War and resurfacing repeatedly since then, would by some estimates carry a price tag of *trillions* of dollars.[10] So talk here is potentially not cheap at all, but carries the risk (for the white majority) of a radical disruption of the social order—as paradigmatic a set of factors as one could wish for what analytic philosophers term "motivated irrationality" in one's judgments and decision-making.

Tully's recommendation for overcoming these obstacles—deparochializing Western political theory through (first) reparochializing it in its local context—is also arguably interestingly transformed for the white/black dialogue. Here, as I have suggested, the "reparochialization," the self-conscious "grounding of tradition in practices and places," for which he calls, would in this case translate into an investigation of the extent to which the modern Western political tradition has historically been constructed in the context of Atlantic slavery and the corresponding derogation of blacks. Thus, it *already* has a set of racially dimorphic rules and norms for (mis)understanding their political demands. It is not at all that dialogue is being initiated for the first time, but that patterns of discourse have long been established in which structures of epistemic injustice, testimonial and hermeneutical[11] (the pre-emptively derogatory conception of blacks as incompetent knowers, the aprioristic dismissal as unworthy of being taken seriously of alternative "black" conceptual frameworks), are already integral to the architecture of Western modernity's political outlook. And of course the disciplines of the Western academy have been deeply implicated in these systemic misrepresentations also, as decades of postcolonial and anti-racist critique have demonstrated.

The laudable goal Tully describes of "trying to understand the other in the terms and ways of their own tradition" is thus reflexively complicated here by the fact that this (Afro-modern) tradition is in a sense *itself part of* the Western tradition, seeking to use Western values and ideals of freedom and equality, of liberal modernity, to condemn their racially restricted incarnations—and in that way forcing an unwelcome transparency and self-knowledge about how that white tradition has historically actually been constructed.[12] Thus to recognize in its full implications that "traditions are grounded in practices" would mean acknowledging the set of racist practices and structures that have shaped the white West and the "lifeworld" of its white citizens, and that in a sense have *on principle* ruled out "deep listening, openness, receptivity, empathy" and any genuine desire for "dialogues of reciprocal elucidation" with the black population. The problem is not a "translation" from a different language or, even more demandingly, a set of political "texts" not recognizable as such by the Western canon. Rather the problem is an unwillingness to read texts written in straightforward English (and other colonially inculcated languages of the mother country), adopting formats and using a political vocabulary generally *completely* recognizable from the European originals on which they are often modeled, but which are saying things whose truth cannot be admitted.

In sum, a deparochializing political dialogue with the stranger across the ocean to find out what they know is demanding enough. But a deparochializing political dialogue with the black stranger (and simultaneous familiar) in your own back yard may be too terrifying to undertake because you already know that they know what you don't want to know.

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1   See, for example (moving successively backwards in time): Robert Gooding-Williams, *In the Shadow of Du Bois: Afro-Modern Political Thought in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009); Michael Dawson, *Black Visions: The Roots of Contemporary African-American Political Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); ed. Howard M. Brotz, *Negro Social and Political Thought, 1850–1920* (New York: Basic Books, 1996).

2   For documentation, see my "Decolonizing Western Political Philosophy," *New Political Science* 37, no. 1, (March 2015): 1–24.

3   Winthrop D. Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550–1812* (New York: Norton, 1977); Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995).

4   Compare the periodizations offered by George M. Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Classics, 2015) and Benjamin Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

5   Debra Higgs Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, & Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).

6   Rogers M. Smith, *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997).

7   James Baldwin, *Collected Essays* (New York: Library of America, 1998).

8   Keaanga-Yamahtta, *From BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016).

9   Francis B. Nyamnjoh, *Rhodes Must Fall: Nibbling at Resilient Colonialism in South Africa* (Kindle Edition, Langaa RPCIG, July 3, 2016).

10   ed. Michael Martin and Marilyn Yaquinto, *Redress for Historical Injustices in the United States: On Reparations for Slavery, Jim Crow, and Their Legacies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

11   See Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

12   For Afro-descendant populations in the West, it has been most obviously strategic to try to use the normative frameworks of Western modernity to condemn black subordination by the West (as at least nominally in violation of these ideals). However, a deeper critique would seek to recover pre-colonial African traditions that might offer the conceptual and normative resources to challenge these frameworks (such as liberalism) themselves. Thanks to the reviewer for pointing out that this alternative strategy, albeit more naturally adopted in Africa rather than in the African diaspora, needs to be mentioned also.

A Response to James Tully's 'De-parochializing Political Theory'

SUDIPTA KAVIRAJ
Columbia University, USA (sk2828@columbia.edu)

This paper agrees with Tully's diagnosis that Western political theory needs to be de-parochialized; it also accepts the proposals Tully suggests for transforming its present universalist and hegemonic form to one that engages in true conversation between traditions. It seeks to add an argument to those proposals. Western theory already exists in a double form: because its conceptual resources are used by non-Western thinkers to resolve historically different problems. It suggests that the manner in which colonialism disrupts traditions should be examined more closely. But it concludes by agreeing with Tully's about conversations conducted in a true spirit of parrhesia.

Keywords: Political theory, philosophical traditions, colonialism and historical ruptures, lateral elaboration, parrhesia.

It is hard in a short note to do justice to James Tully's masterly analysis of the problem of "de-parochializing" the discipline that we collectively practice—'political theory.' It is rare to see something so interesting, analytically acute and epistemically generous as Tully's piece on the nature and limits of political theory.[1] It deserves an equally detailed, respectful and thoughtful response. In this preliminary note, I shall state two kinds of positions: my agreement with most of his claims and my differences. I shall conclude by reiterating from my side the need for parrhesia. The shared premise is that we all speak historically, from horizons of experience, analysis and expectations that are marked by their peculiar locatedness and limitedness.

I share James Tully's methodological and philosophical preferences to a very large extent. I agree that we should use and extend methodological principles advanced by the Cambridge school in thinking historically about the nature of political theory. But I also think that historicist ideas are radicalized particularly in Gadamer's work; and some of his ideas about true conversation are especially relevant for our concerns. Despite the obvious technical differences between German historicism and Anglo-American analytical philosophy, there is serious overlap of concerns regarding the nature of historicity. I think historicity has a paradoxical effect of both parochializing and de-parochializing political theory. It regards all political thinking as situated and parochial; but by placing them in adjacency, it also makes for the possibility of translation, and what I shall call *lateral elaboration*.[2]

Tully's paper presents a set of deep reflections on the *ethics* and *pragmatics* of a reconceived, genuinely cosmopolitan conception of political theory. The two sets of questions on which he thinks profoundly are the problems generated by the power asymmetry between different traditions of thought, and the ways in which a true conversation can be generated between them. Tully reflects deeply about what to do to avoid plausible but simplistic notions of fraudulent dialogue—where other points of view are taken through a hasty and degrading initial translation, where the purpose is strategic dominance. I particularly appreciate Tully's sensitive critique of the negative effects of these spurious exchanges. These I term the problems of ethics of conversation. But Tully also clearly and correctly recognizes that the problems of mutual lack of understanding do not stem only from an asymmetry of *intellectual power*. Quite apart from problems of power asymmetry, there are genuine and intractable problems of *pragmatics*—i.e., the purely intellectual difficulties of understanding forms of thought which come out of histories and historically formed languages that are entirely unfamiliar. Interestingly, the longer these traditions have existed in their separate and relevant histories, and the more intricately these have been elaborated, the harder it becomes for an outsider to break into them for a serious understanding.

1   Theoretical Traditions from Other Cultures

I think the present or recent history of Western political thought is not confined to the West. Although I largely follow the contextual methods of the Cambridge historians, I think historicist thinking demands a general registration of connection between the history of theory and the historical sociology of modernity. 'Contextual reading' of political theory would then mean following the tracks of political theory in its relation to the sociological history of modernity in different locations. Through complex processes of emulation and colonization, Western political thought is now also in the hands of non-Westerners. Of course, that does not cancel out the West as the possessors of this political thought; but they are not the sole possessors. Political agents and thinkers in the non-Western world, like Gandhi and Tagore, but more directly Mao, Nehru, Fanon or Senghor, face their non-Western futures through its resources. So, Western political theory already exists in a *double* form—inside and outside the West. In the second form, it faces futures which are largely separate and different. The great advantage of Wittgenstein's theory of meaning-in-use is that it allows us to recognize these uses as also producing historically legitimate meanings. I think any real history of Western political theory today must also acknowledge this strange extended geography of its meanings.[3]

I have argued elsewhere that any structure of theory is obliged to develop new arguments and concepts once it is forced to confront problems that are different from those of its origins. Theories of all the major forces of modernity, its segmental constituent processes—capitalist industrialization of economies, 'secularization' of religions, emergence of democracies in other regions of the world—all impose conditions upon those who think theoretically to develop *lateral* elaborations of the original theories.[4] These should not be seen as illegitimate attachments, but as historically necessary extensions which shift the axes of the theories themselves. This is the same logic as the one that underlay Tocqueville's attempt to analyze democracy in America. A true theory of democracy was one which placed theoretical examination of distinct historical instances side by side, rather than 'legislate' general processes which are then found to happen nowhere. The view from nowhere is at least historically an untenable idea. I think theories of modernity must also submit to this process of necessary pluralization. What we grandly call 'modernity,' is not a historical process that creates identical outcomes in all societies, but historically and locally specific ones. If that is true, then theorizing modernity must also mean theorizing modernities in the plural.[5]

2   The Wholeness of Traditions: Wholeness of the Western Tradition

As a result of this process of lateral extension of Western theory to other, stranger histories, this theory gets stretched—but, remarkably, in a way that is just the opposite of what we can call 'generalization'—it is through a lateral extension of 'parochializations' to use Tully's term.

I have probably two disagreements with Tully about the question of traditions: both about the unity of the Western tradition, and those of other cultures. Tully introduces a number of qualifications against a coarse understanding of what any tradition is. But I believe the picture of a Western tradition which consistently privileges a foundationalist architecture of theorizing starting from Socrates, which means Plato, seems to me exaggerated. Undoubtedly, that constitutes a major, perhaps even dominant, strand of what Western philosophy sees as the fundamental mode of the activity called 'theory.' But that is by no means the single exclusive mode. After Plato, in significant reaction, Aristotle offers not merely a different theory of politics, but a different view of what the theory of political life should be. All through the history of Western philosophy, one can see a contrapuntal movement of thinking that accepts the situatedness of starting points rather than their abstraction from all situations. Even in premodern times the 'view from nowhere' had both its enthusiasts and sceptics. After the rise of modern historicism, certainly after the complex and contradictory intervention by Hegel, the argument that all human experience and

consequently knowledge is situated, if not parochial, has been a constantly evolving philosophical strand—from which both of us evidently draw heavily. Consequently, the foundationalist impulse in Western thought has been resisted by historicist forms of reasoning.

I also think that there is a demonstrable sense in which there is a Western tradition, but its singularity exists at a level that is more abstract than the theoretical or doctrinal. It is a truism, as Tully notes, that there is a multiplicity of political thought within any 'single' tradition; "traditions are ongoing dialogues among its members." Without contesting this view, I wish to extend a hypothesis that sometimes the diversity within a tradition is of a different order. The singularity of Islamic thought or Hindu thought cannot be grasped if we do not make an even more radical move. The singularity of a tradition is often at the level of the *structure* in the peculiar sense in which structural linguists use that idea: it is a set of resources which are commonly used by members of a tradition. But we have to make the idea of resources itself more specific, as 'resources' can mean many different types of things. The resources which form the singularity of a tradition are rarely like a single doctrine or a small number of them: it is better to liken them to something like a structure, an alphabet-like limited collection of elements which its users use in various combinations and recombinations to produce the doctrines they require. Like Hinduism or Islam, Western political theory shows a structural-alphabetical rather than doctrinal-theoretical unity.

3   Singularity of the Indian Tradition

A second point on which I tend to think somewhat differently is on the exclusiveness of traditions, and their mutual relationship of otherness. Tully's reflections seem to draw on the example of indigenous peoples in settler colonial histories. If we think of another paradigmatic situation of colonialism, like India, our analysis of traditions and effects of colonialism would have follow a somewhat different path. Traditions are grounded in practices in places and times; but some peculiar experiences of modernity strangely disrupt the assumed unity of space. Tradition—thoughts through which we think[6]—can assume very strange and curiously disrupted forms in a world marked by the effective-history of colonialism. What is *my* tradition? It seems that the unproblematic answer to this question would be that I come from an Indian tradition. To which Tully would like to relate in a mode of parrhesic respect. But given that Gadamerian definition—which we can hardly contest—my 'real' intellectual tradition has very little to do with Indian philosophy. When I think about theoretical questions in politics, I am trained to think through the definitional 'theoretical' form of thinking that Tully associates with the Western political thinking. My thinking is full of concepts, and strings of argument drawn from works of Hobbes, Hegel, Marx and recent writers like Heidegger and Foucault. There is hardly any Indian thinker who could slip through this unbroken phalanx of Western figures to infiltrate my thinking at least formally—in a way I can recognize. Can this be true? Of course, our tradition is a combination of location and history—space and time markers. Ordinarily, in case of the Western theorists location and history coincide and reinforce each other. A tradition is a *paramparā*, an uninterrupted chain of handing over ideas, which must, contrary to our intuition, start with the immediate predecessor, and through him go to a series of others in an unbroken chain of memory. The handing over of ideas does not work that way with me at all. Colonialism disrupted that chain profoundly and decisively: our history is divided into a long past which stretches through thousands of years and a short past which stretches over barely two centuries; but they are aligned in such a way that the short, immediate past obstructs, screens, puts beyond my reach the longer, non-immediate past. By disrupting our Indic systems of knowledge, above everything else, the short history has turned me into a product of European colonialism, who lives in India but knows much more about Hobbes than about Kautilya, thinks of temporality much more through Hegel than through the *kālasamuddeśa* of Bhartrhari's *Vākyapadīya*. The short past stands irremovably in the way of the long past.

Yet, this constitutes only part or half of the argument. A second part of a tradition is *location*: and my location is India. An unalterable feature of that location is its stubborn irreducible Indianness. India is

not a place, a location where European history has begun to happen. Colonialism brought India into the orbit of European power and the imperial economy: but its Indianness was not erased. What happened in the Indian economy, polity and society were not similar to what happened in the metropole: India and Britain were divided by their colonial connection. Colonialism produced industrialization in Britain, de-industrialization in India, wealth in Britain, poverty in the colony, democracy in Britain, authoritarian government in India. Location therefore annulled the equivalence of history. Colonialism certainly connected India and Britain in the same structure, but the nature of that structure was purely contradictory: it produced opposite results/outcomes at its two ends, two different histories. Location therefore grounds me in Indian fact, history in an irreducible fashion—precisely because of colonialism. There was a great fallacy at the heart of the Macaulayan project: even if Indians became in every respect similar to Englishmen, colonialism did not allow an equivalence of experience between the two groups. Even with the intellectual formation of Englishmen, educated Indians remained marooned inside the despair of Indian colonial history. My tradition then becomes Indian in a strange revenge of history: because of my experience. The Indianness of modern Indian thought draws its Indianness, its historically Indian identity not from drawing on the thinking of its long past, but from experience of the short one. Modern Indian thought, to which I am a successor, is not Indian because it thinks through concepts drawn from premodern Indian theory or philosophy—through *Arthaśāstra* or *Manusmṛti* or the *Dābistan*; it is Indian rather because it is forced to bend the concepts learnt from Locke and Mill to interpret and express the colonial experience of Indian history. It is this history which makes the thought Indian, not its past philosophical heritage.

In a great paradox, colonialism invaded the history of various peoples in irreducibly different ways: it reduced Africans to slavery, it forced American indigenous people to the brink of extinction, it disrupted the history of colonies like India. In some ways, the indigenous peoples, by refusing submission, and accepting marginalization, retained their whole traditions. Societies like India, through an utterly different experience of colonial subordination experienced a total rupture with their past: they became people without access to their own history. Unlike in other contexts, in countries subjected to European colonialism the usual link between the lifeworld and epistemic practices got severed. So the dialogue is an interesting one—between the unruptured self of the Western tradition and the ruptured self of the others. In this particular dialogue, we have to set up the question of the self and the other in quite different ways.[7]

4   Contradictions

I believe that much of the world of modernity which we inhabit is contradictory in Marx's sense: two or more sides are required make a structure work; but they do not have a shared, or identical experience. Capitalism, colonialism and the structure of the world political order all share this general character. Asymmetric power connects various agents—groups and individuals—ineluctably within large global structures. Globalization has extended the scope of asymmetric connections of this kind in an unprecedented fashion. It is here that Tully's argument has the greatest force. First, we need a global agreement, produced through conversation, that although the order is asymmetric and evidently unjust, the conflicts of interest need to be settled through less than violent exchange, partly because violence makes likely the victory of the forces that have power, not of causes that are just. If, then, we decide to deal with such questions through dialogue, all the conditions Tully lays down for a true, rather than a false conversation, apply. The tensions and afflictions of the globalized world require a deliberate choice between violence in its various forms and true conversation. Such conversations are not easy; and historically they have been spurned often—for example, on ending colonialism or apartheid. But the world must recognize that there is in fact no other way than through dialogue of this particularly difficult kind.

I have one worry regarding the argument Tully presents. If we recognize that boundaries between intellectual cultures are always crossed, and cultures—i.e., particular agents of individuals or groups—often learn from practices of other societies, especially in matters of subjection or injustice, then the argument

that one society should not try to "impose" its political forms on others has to be modified. In egregious instances of injustice—like the practice of caste or subjection of women—Indian groups used the ideas of democracy and modern freedom to fight and eventually undermine internal oppression. We should be careful not to provide ammunition to authoritarian rulers who claim that democratic government is a Western form, and therefore should not be 'imposed' on other cultures which are intrinsically unsuited to these practices.[8]

There is one point on which I see a potential conflict between the two principles advanced by Tully's paper—in both cases quite correctly. Western political theorists must of course extend the principle of charity to statements or arguments from other cultures, and desist from either the worst possible reading of an idea they find unfamiliar. Or an instant judgement of the culture as irrational or inferior. It is also true, on the other hand, that when thinking about other cultures we must recognize them as internally segmented, and try to side with those who are treated unjustly. These two principles can evidently come into conflict in particular cases. It is not uncommon to come across cases where a practice like caste would be defended by practitioners of a culture as part of their tradition, and any proposal for change would be undermined as imposition of criteria from the dominant Western culture. In dealing with cultures that are not marked by stark internal inequality—like indigenous peoples who were displaced by settler colonialism, this problem does not arise starkly. But in the encounter between the culture of modernity, which is undoubtedly Western in origin and other cultures, often this is the critically significant problem. Demand for more freedom for women, or emancipatory impulses from lower castes can be condemned as servile imitativeness of the dominant culture of the West. This is not to say that that Tully's two principles are discretely untenable: or that when we face this kind of choice we are necessarily paralyzed in our judgement. Perhaps the reasonable thing is to say that these conflicts are matters of judgement—in the sense that it is hard to find an invariable rule that can be applied to these conflicts of principles.

In the modern world, several critical processes demonstrate this global character. Capitalism as an economic force, democracy as a political imaginary, and alterations in religious life show a bewildering plurality of forms, outcomes and constellations. Political theory in a general sense is an indispensable resource for making sense of these patterns of modern life forms. When these are theorized parochially, they have to be placed adjacently—not to find underlying uniformities, but historical pluralities. Each serious attempt at theorizing these life worlds would require lateral elaboration.

But these are in the nature of additions to the dialogical project Tully has outlined: his own arguments can be extended to cover the examples that I have presented.

5   Parrhesia

In conclusion, Tully's essay is a remarkably generative invitation to collective thinking, and non-invasive intellectual exchange. In recent Indian history we have a remarkable example of the practice of both aspects of parrhesia. Gandhi and Tagore had fundamental disagreements in the 1920s about Gandhi's statement that a devastating earthquake was God's punishment for 'our' practice of untouchability. Tagore sought Gandhi's permission before he made his public statement of disagreement. And Gandhi stressed that precisely because of their respect for each other, they must conduct that disagreement in public.[9] This fits exactly the rules of true conversation Tully has set out. And his statements should be criticized or questioned in an answering spirit of parrhesia. If we think differently, it would be wrong not to set it out with utmost clarity; but it would also be wrong, because of the respect that we owe him, not to apologize first, before we say we disagree. Tully's paper is an invitation to start a new parrhesic dialogue on the nature and limits of political theory. I hope all those who practice this discipline would respond to his unusual invitation to think about its fundamental character.

1   John Dunn, *Western Political Theory in the Face of the Future* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1979) was a remarkable early attempt to ask some similar questions—from inside the discourse of Western theory.

2   I have argued this in "Marxism and Postcolonial Thinking," forthcoming in *Constellations*.

3   Dunn's book acknowledged this squarely.

4   I think lateral extensions and elaborations have happened in history earlier: a striking example is the way Islamic thinkers after the eighth century adopted Greek philosophical arguments but deployed them to entirely different Islamic purposes.

5   For a more detailed argument, Sudipta Kaviraj, "Outline of a Revisionist Theory of Modernity," *European Journal of Sociology* 46, no. 3, (2005): 497–526.

6   Which is a simple translation of Gadamer's argument.

7   Some recent works have started to think about these questions in Indian discussions: for a remarkable contribution to a similar debate, see Prathama Banerjee, Aditya Nigam and Rakesh Pandey, "The Work of Theory," *Economic and Political Weekly* 51, no. 37, (2016).

8   Lee Kuan Yew famously appealed to unidentified Asian values in defence of authoritarianism: in many similar cases, authoritarian rulers have tried to taint democracy as part of colonialism.

9   ed. Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, *The Mahatma and the Poet* (National Book Trust, New Delhi, 1997) compiles the correspondence and the relevant writings by Gandhi and Tagore.

Whose Tradition? Which Practices?

Sor-hoon Tan
National University of Singapore (phitansh@nus.edu.sg)

My response to Tully's article suggests that before introducing students in Asia to comparative political thought, including texts from Asian traditions in Political Theory or Philosophy courses, their education needs to first engage in the critical practice of questioning their own "background horizon of disclosure." The background horizon of disclosure that needs questioning certainly is not simply constituted by Asian traditions; despite westernized education, it is also not entirely western, insofar as the society they live in continues to be Asian in various ways, and the adopted western institutions and modes of thought have been modified in practice and interaction with local traditions.

Keywords: Asian political thought, Confucianism, democracy, genuine dialogue, parochialism

If being parochial means valuing only the knowledge of one's tradition, then many Asian universities are not parochial; their students study western political theory, sometimes, but not always, together with Asian political thought; and more often than not, it is not Asian traditions that take precedence. This is hardly surprising given that many Asian universities have adopted western models of education and employ faculty members from Europe and North America; even local faculty members probably have received their graduate training in the West. Furthermore, tertiary education is seen as a stepping stone to profitable careers—universities are therefore expected to equip students with western-centric knowledge and skills that will make them competitive in the global economy.

What should one do when faced with Asian students who accept western political theory as universal knowledge, excel in such education, and resent or would resent being required to study Asian political thought? Not only do these students feel little sense of ownership for Asian traditions, if they think about it at all, but they also assume that these are obsolete pre-modern ways of thought and living that their parents have already rejected, and that they are better off without. Paternalistically imposing curricula including Asian political thought could do more harm than good insofar as one's objective is to help them appreciate Asian traditions, whether as their own or as (by now) an alien tradition. Telling them they should study those texts and value their teachings because their ancestors created them is not likely to work. Attempting to present those traditions as valuable by the epistemic (and other) standards such students are familiar with would perpetuate the epistemic injustice highlighted in works arguing for decolonizing and de-imperializing political theory and other western-as-universal knowledge, which are in many ways similar to the de-parochializing project (Tully 2016: 5).[1]

The article suggests that before introducing students to comparative political thought, including texts from Asian traditions in Political Theory or Philosophy courses, their education needs to first engage in the critical practice of questioning their own "background horizon of disclosure" (*ibid.*: 3). Were the students completely westernized, the approach to de-parochializing or decolonizing their study of politics might not differ from teaching students in western societies insofar as their "horizon of disclosure" is similarly western. However, the situation is often more complicated. Even when they think of themselves as no different from their American or British counterparts, these students are not as westernized as they think and they live in societies that are still Asian, from daily habits and social practices, traditional beliefs and values, to religions, however westernized in their adoption of modern technology, consumption of western cultural products, such as fashion or movies, and participation in the global capitalist economy. The background horizon of disclosure that needs questioning certainly is not simply constituted by Asian traditions; but despite the westernized education, it is also not entirely western, insofar as the society they live in continues to be Asian in various ways, and the adopted western institutions and modes of thought have been modified in practice and interaction with local traditions. For example, in Singapore, laws inherited from the British colonial government governed the validity of marriages and the legal rights of

parties involved, but young Chinese couples getting married often solemnize and celebrate their marriages with traditional Chinese marriage ceremonies (and sometimes together with a Christian church ceremony). Furthermore, their married life would likely be governed by expectations and values derived from traditional Chinese thinking, and not just western ideas of marital relations. Whereas it is normal for western societies to be western (whatever that means in particular terms depending on specific localities, for example, American or Scottish), the western aspects of Asian societies are often the result of colonialism, and if the background horizon of disclosure for students has been westernized, its legitimacy is questionable.

Acknowledging the continued presence of Asian traditions despite westernization, and viewing the "meeting of East and West" positively, do not mean that one therefore understands both traditions or the products of their encounter; the problem of projecting over or interpreting one in terms of the other (*ibid.*) does not disappear just because both traditions contribute to the current way of life of a society. When one's experience combines relatively westernized formal education with participation in traditional practices and informal learning of one's ancestral culture, the assumption that one already inhabits and could move uninhibitedly between both traditions underestimates the difficulties of understanding, and therefore could prove to be an obstacle to understanding, including self-understanding. The virtue of humility that aids learning points instead to the need to carry out genuine dialogue two-fold: a) one with western traditions as an Asian trying to understand better western political thought, even after years of study, because it is embedded in traditions that do not have their roots in the society one currently resides in; b) another with Asian traditions as the recipient of a westernized education who has participated in practices that still bear the legacy of Asian traditions but who no longer experiences them in the same way they were experienced traditionally.

The above generalization of "Asian societies" and "Asian traditions" is justified to the extent that westernization has been a common experience (despite diversity in actual forms and degree) that has caused varied disruptions to traditions in various societies in this extensive region. Closer scrutiny of the encounter between Chinese traditions—Confucianism in particular—and western political thought could further reveal the complexity of decentering western political theory in China and the Chinese diaspora. China's modernization had caused so much damage to Confucianism, which was once definitive of the Chinese way of life, from personal cultivation to political institutions, that some have declared Confucianism dead, reduced to a "wandering spirit."[2] This obituary may seem too hasty in view of the revivals of interest in Confucianism, including its political thought, both in and outside China—but the fact that we speak of "revivals" testifies to how much has been lost. While much of Chinese family and social life may still bear the marks of Confucian influence to different extents, the political institutions that purported to realize Confucian political thought have been dismantled and rejected as relics of imperial autocracy. This disruption raises questions about whether Confucian political thought is still embedded in political practice in Chinese societies, or whether we could only seek it in Confucian texts.

Current contending interpretations of Confucian political thought bring the tradition in which it is embedded into the foreground, even as societies that could claim a Confucian legacy reflect on its value and relevance to their future. Recent theories of "Confucian constitutional order" and "Confucian meritocracy" challenge western theories of democracy and attempt to de-center western theory both by introducing Confucian thought into the discourse of which models of governance are best for contemporary societies, the scope ranging from all societies to only China itself, and by rejecting the superiority of western political ideals and values.[3] They reverse the previous modernization discourse that vilified Confucianism as an obstacle to good government, which was understood as liberal democracy. That such interpretations contradict western understanding and judgment is however no guarantee that they understand or present Confucian thought without the distorting influence of western thought, if the rejection is premised on western terms and definitions of problems. For example, the concepts of meritocracy and constitutional order are as western as concepts such as democracy. Interpretations of how the Confucian model of government is superior to democracy may be still measured through criteria from the western political discourse.

As members of the tradition "accept, question, negotiate, and modify" (*ibid*.: 8) Confucianism, whether in carrying on or reviving the Confucian tradition, genuine dialogues among members of the tradition, whose interpretations of the tradition disagree, are as important as they are between them and members of other traditions. It would perhaps be easier to engage in genuine dialogues of reciprocal elucidation if one's motivation were purely a scholarly pursuit of understanding (or truth). However, insofar as the discourse of comparative political theory is relevant to solving real problems today, the conversations cannot be unaffected by participants' experiences and diagnoses of problems that most demand the attention of engaged political theory. Those who are more impressed by the problems besieging countries that claim to be liberal democracies understandably would strongly resist any attempt to reinterpret or modify the Confucian tradition in a democratic direction; instead they would seek alternatives in the tradition that would better serve Confucian societies. In contrast, those who are more worried by oppressive political practices historically associated with Confucianism, even if cultural pride favors revival of the tradition, would be more anxious to ensure more liberal, more democratic understandings of the tradition, on the assumption that these are less likely to be oppressive.

Could the interpretive issues be settled by refocusing on the insight that "traditions are grounded in practices and places" (section 5)? Due to the cultural disruptions of their political history during the twentieth century, among Asian societies that have at various times been labelled "Confucian"—the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, even South Korea—it is debatable if their political institutions and practices could be considered "Confucian." One criterion is continuity with past institutions and practices from a time when a society was Confucian (that is, before western influence); another is the presence of Confucian features in existing institutions and practices even if these have been modelled after western political systems. In the latter case, whether an institution is Confucian would depend on one's interpretation of Confucianism. In the former case, few can claim continuity with the society's Confucian past (perhaps only South Korea has a strong claim). Even if such continuity is present, the weight to be given to such institutions and practices in interpreting the tradition will still be contested due to the critical attitudes many present members of these societies have towards past political institutions and practices, which they would argue are in various aspects distortions and malpractices rather than embodiments of Confucianism.

While I find the article extremely enlightening and even inspiring, I am still struggling to understand how genuine dialogues might be carried out in the above circumstances. There is no doubt that practices and attitudes recommended in the sections on deep listening and non-attachment, empathy and interdependency, reciprocal elucidation and transformation are edifying whenever one seeks to understand another—be it someone from within one's tradition (tenuous as it might be to identify that) or someone from another tradition. However, it seems that the practices and places, the lifeworld, that one might assume some tradition to be grounded in might not be easily identifiable, and any grounding might prove to be less firm than supposed.

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[1]   Page number of references to Professor Tully's article is given in text.

[2]   In the 1980s, Yu Yingshi used this metaphor of *youhun* 游魂 to describe the fate of Confucianism: no longer relevant to lives of ordinary Chinese people, and separated from the obsolete imperial political system that was once seen as its vehicle of actualization, it existed only in intellectual discourses, a disembodied soul without a body. Yu Yingshi, "Predicament of Modern Confucianism (*Xiandai Ruxue de Kunjing* 现代儒学的困境)," in *Macro-perspectives on the Development of Confucianism* (*Ruxue Fazhan de Hongguan Toushi* 儒学发展的宏观透视), ed. Du Weiming (Taipei: Zhengzhong, 1997), 32.

[3]   Jiang Qing, Daniel Bell *et al*, *A Confucian Constitutional Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); ed. Daniel Bell and Chenyang Li, *The East Asian Challenge for Democracy: Political Meritocracy in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

Garrick Cooper is a Senior Lecturer in Aotahi School of Māori and Indigenous Studies at the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand. His research is concerned with decoloniality, and the borders between indigenous and non-indigenous knowledge systems, highlighting critical ontological dimensions of indigenous knowledge systems.

Charles W. Mills is Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at the CUNY Graduate Center. He works in the general area of oppositional political theory, with a particular focus on race. He is the author of numerous journal articles and book chapters, and six books: *The Racial Contract* (1997); *Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race* (1998); *From Class to Race: Essays in White Marxism and Black Radicalism* (2003); *Contract and Domination* (with Carole Pateman) (2007); *Radical Theory, Caribbean Reality* (2010); and *Black Rights/White Wrongs: The Critique of Racial Liberalism* (2017).

Sudipta Kaviraj teaches Indian politics and intellectual history at Columbia University. His research interests are in political theory, historical sociology of the Indian state, and modern Indian literature.

Sor-hoon Tan teaches Philosophy at the National University of Singapore. She is author of *Confucian Democracy: A Deweyan Reconstruction*, and editor of *Bloomsbury Research Handbook of Chinese Philosophy Methodologies*, and *Challenging Citizenship: Group Membership and Cultural Identity in a Global Age*. She co-edited *The Moral Circle and the Self*; *Filial Piety in Chinese Thought and History*; *Democracy as Culture*; *Feminist Encounters with Confucius*. Her articles have appeared in publications such as the *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, *Journal of Value Inquiry*, *Political Theory*, *Philosophy East and West*, *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, *International Philosophical Quarterly*, *Asian Philosophy*, and various collections on Chinese and Comparative Philosophy.