Deparochializing Political Theory

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To Masato Kimura and Masahide Shibusawa

29. "In terms of long-range political vision, comparative political theorizing supports global democratic cooperation over oligarchic or imperial control and dialogical interaction over hegemonic unilateralism and monologue." Fred Dallmayr, "Beyond Monologue: For a Comparative Political Theory," *Perspectives on Politics* 2, no. 2 (2004): 254. See also Melissa S. Williams and Mark E. Warren, "A Democratic Case for Comparative Political Theory," *Political Theory* 42, no. 1 (2014): 26–57. James Tully and Melissa Williams explore the themes of dialogue and deliberative democracy in their respective contributions to this volume.
30. Another way to put this is to say that, because they study texts from different periods and in ways that are sensitive to their cultural contexts, courses on the history of political thought are already comparative. Andrew F. March, "What Is Comparative Political Theory?" *Review of Politics* 71, no. 4 (2009): 548.
31. Jay L. Garfield, *Engaging Buddhism: Why It Matters to Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).
32. One implication of distinguishing between modern and premodern political thought is that, if we define "we" from the standpoint of modernity, "they" are the premoderns rather than those living outside the West. On this point, see Loubna El Amine, "Beyond East and West: Reorienting Political Theory through the Prism of Modernity," *Perspectives on Politics* 14, no. 1 (2016): 102–120. But there is also an argument for continuity between the premodern and modern worlds. See, e.g., the essays in William Bain, ed., *The Medieval Foundations of International Relations* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

11

Why Globalize the Curriculum?

Duncan Ivison

11.1 INTRODUCTION

Why globalize the curriculum? I want to approach this question both from the perspective of a political theorist and also from that of a dean.[1] If that doesn't cause you to stop reading immediately, then what it means is that I consider not only the underlying questions in political theory but also the ways we might think about curricula in the humanities and social sciences more generally.

Let me say immediately that it is now pretty much standard for deans and university presidents to proclaim frequently and loudly that one of the most important ambitions for a truly successful university is to globalize their curriculum and student experience. There is hardly a university strategic plan that does not contain some kind of commitment of this kind. But what does it really mean? I am not so much interested here in the practical issues this raises for faculty and administrators – important as they are – but rather the underlying justifications for why we should globalize our curricula in the first place.

Let me first specify what I mean by "globalize." To globalize a curriculum means at least two things. First, it means to place a course of studies in a wider cultural, historical, political, and geographic context. And second, it means to design a curriculum in such a way that students are not only prepared for lives that will be shaped profoundly by events and processes beyond their immediate borders but also capable of

I am grateful to the participants in the original symposium at the University of Victoria where this paper was delivered and especially to Melissa Williams for the invitation to participate and her advice regarding subsequent drafts of this chapter.

critically reflecting upon their society's place in the world and the way their actions (both collectively and individually) are bound up with those of others beyond their borders in complex ways.

At a very general level then, to globalize a curriculum means to enlarge the frames of reference within which a particular set of topics or course of study – or indeed a canon – is situated, taught, reflected upon, and engaged with. Of course, the concept of "globalization" itself has a specific meaning and history. It is closely linked with processes of modernization and "civilization" that stretch back over many hundreds of years – and very highly contested processes at that. It is also closely linked with more recent discourses of interdependence and the idea of a "shared fate" or common vulnerabilities in light of new global flows and forces. So, as a concept, "globalization" gives rise to a series of particular historical, empirical, and normative resonances. And for this reason any serious attempt to globalize the curriculum – in this general sense – must mean something more than merely expanding the terms of reference within which a topic or canon is set. We might teach Australian or Canadian history now within a more global frame, but that doesn't mean simply telling the story of Australian colonialism (say) within the wider context of global imperial frameworks. It surely means also placing the very conceptual scheme within which we grasp the meaning of "Australia" or of colonialism into question in various ways. It is this particular idea – or set of ideas – I want to try and explore in more detail in this chapter. We need to presuppose *some* kind of conceptual scheme within which to locate our conversation about the nature of the question at hand. But if we are genuinely committed to globalizing our curricula, then how do we avoid presupposing exactly that which we are attempting to put into question in the first place?

Another related issue I want to consider is whether globalizing a curriculum requires it to become more *comparative* – especially as between Western and non-Western discourses and traditions or, perhaps more accurately, as between hegemonic and marginalized discourses. In other words, does globalizing the curriculum meaning embracing comparative political theory? In one sense, political theory has always been, at some level, comparative – between different historical epochs, ideologies, methodologies, conceptual schemes, and others. For many years, for example, the idea that the dominant idioms of contemporary normative political theory, and especially liberal political theory, ought to be challenged by and enriched by more marginalized discourses has been at the heart of the "Cambridge School" of the history of political thought. But

"comparative political theory" has an increasingly specific meaning and an increasingly distinctive set of theoretical and sometimes political commitments.[2] Fred Dallmayr, for example, links it to the possibility for a more genuine "universalism," insofar as it can bring non-Western perspectives to bear on debates about fundamental questions for humanity that have hitherto been missing, thus potentially depriving us of substantial and relevant ethical knowledge.[3] More critically, theorists such as James Tully and Roxanne Euben have linked the dominance of Western perspectives in contemporary philosophical debates to the imperial history and structure of global politics.[4] Thus, to be unaware of the extent to which "our" perspectives and practices not only exclude those of other cultures and traditions but, in many cases, involve imposing particular normative and practical frameworks upon them – even (perhaps especially) with the best of intentions – is a kind of moral and political failing, and not just an epistemological one.

Nothing in this chapter depends on accepting a strong thesis about the relevance and value of comparative political theory as a distinctive subdiscipline in the field. However, ultimately, I believe the justification for taking the history and structure of thinking of non-Western traditions and modes of argument seriously is that they are inevitably addressing fundamental questions about the terms and meaning of social cooperation, an undertaking that is one of the core activities of political theory proper. This means being able to grasp, as far as is possible, the complex nature of those systems of thought and practice – and not simply looking for a Kant in every culture, in Judith Butler's memorable phrase.[5] And it follows that there will likely remain deep moral and normative disagreements and misunderstandings even after extensive engagement, some of which may well be unbridgeable (though that will be a judgment that we may *arrive at*, not presuppose before setting off).

I will argue that there are three potential rationales for globalizing a curriculum. The first involves a kind of negative dialectic. The point of globalizing a curriculum is to challenge students to grasp what is particularly valuable or true about their own culture or civilization. The engagement with the other, in other words, is primarily an exercise of restoring cultural and intellectual confidence in values that are otherwise under attack from the very institutions and people who should be nourishing and defending them. Call this the *civilizational rationale*. The second rationale has to do with a claim about the purposes of undergraduate education and the need to prepare students for the world in which they will live, which we have already touched upon briefly. Call this the *global citizenship*

rationale. The third rationale is a variation on the second but focuses more closely on the nature of the engagement with the other that ought to take place within a curriculum. Here the emphasis is on standing back and putting the very idea of globalizing a curriculum into question in a way that moves the exercise closer to what we might call "deparochializing" or "provincializing" a curriculum. The underlying rationale here might be said to be one that justifies the globalization of our curricula as a means of *taking moral disagreement seriously* – including what we mean when we refer to the "moral," as well as the nature of the beliefs and concepts at issue in the encounter between different traditions and worldviews.

11.2 SAVING THE HUMANITIES FROM ITSELF

Let me turn to the first rationale, which is essentially a set of arguments for not globalizing the curriculum.

In his 2007 lament for the humanities – *Education's End: Why Our Colleges and Universities Have Given Up on the Meaning of Life*[6] (note the "our" is referring to American universities) – Anthony Kronman spends a considerable amount of time attacking what he sees as the profound danger of the link he draws between diversity, multiculturalism, and "constructivism." Diversity as a pedagogical value here includes the demand to open up the curriculum to more diverse perspectives and worldviews. In particular, he links this demand in the United States to the history of the civil rights movement and the issue of race. For Kronman, the belief that diversity is a pedagogical value "starts with race and with the claim that race is an important and appropriate criterion for the selection of texts and teaching methods."[7] The underlying rationale has to do with the premise that interpretive judgments are peculiarly responsive to a person's interests and values. The way we engage with philosophy or literature, therefore, depends on what is of interest and of value to a person, and learning proceeds best when these differences are brought out and conflicts among them made clear. For Kronman, among the dominant determinants to obsess humanities scholars over the last twenty years have been ethnicity, race, and gender. And so,

> [g]iven the pedagogical value of interpretive diversity and the particularly important role that race, gender and ethnicity play in the formation of a person's approach to a wide range of interpretive questions, it is educationally ... imperative ... that in fields like history and literature teaching materials be chosen ... with an eye to focusing attention on the ways in which these factors condition a person's interests and values and hence interpretive points of view.[8]

The problem with this approach, argues Kronman, is that ultimately it undermines and weakens the humanities, rather than enlarging and strengthening them. And this is because it becomes interwoven with two other dangerous ideas of our time – multiculturalism and "constructivism" – by which he means relativism. The main reason it does so has to do with the fundamental purpose of a liberal arts education:

> The humanities give young people the opportunity and encouragement to put themselves – their values and commitments – into a critical perspective. They help students gain some distance, incomplete though it must be, on their younger selves and get some greater traction in the enterprise of living the lives they mean to live and not just those in which they happen by accident to find themselves.[9]

The more our interests and values are assumed to reflect immutable characteristics we inherit at birth, the less meaningful the pursuit of this freedom is likely to seem. The more a classroom resembles a "gathering of delegates speaking on behalf of the groups they represent," the less congenial a place it becomes to ask really serious questions about the meaning of life.[10] More to the point, embracing radical diversity in the classroom undermines the *very possibility* of imagining oneself as part of a practice of shared enquiry and common humanity, which are necessary conditions for not just cross-cultural understanding but a "shared investment" in pursuing the deepest and most important questions of value. The belief that interpretive judgments are "fixed" by characteristics like race or gender, and that the purpose of humanities scholarship is to bring these characteristics to light, undermines both of these conditions. Moreover, it is confused, as defenders of the diversity ideal and multiculturalism at the same time expect their students to embrace an underlying conception of political liberalism – of racial and cultural equality and global justice – that either renders all other philosophies presumptively suspect (e.g., Aristotle, Augustine, Calvin) or requires the kind of foundationalist justification eschewed by the easy relativism that is said to follow from the diversity ideal.[11]

Finally, Kronman sees an even more disturbing tendency in the contemporary humanities. This is the claim that we should think of the ideas and institutions of the West as of no greater value than any other civilization – that there should be a presumptive judgment of equality between the West and other civilizations. Here, Kronman is actually making two kinds of claims that are worth distinguishing. It's not that there aren't great works in non-Western civilizations from which we could learn, but, just as in the case of the West, they are connected and form an internally

continuous conversation that cannot simply be plucked out of context. As a result,

> the works and ideas of different civilizations can for the most part only be related externally, by setting them up as exhibits for an observer to admire ... They belong to different worlds of speech, each internally connected but, except in rare and interesting cases, only externally linked to the others. If there is to be a conversation in which these great works meet, and begin to quarrel or agree, it must be a conversation that the observer ... creates.[12]

Interestingly, Kronman suggests that the very desire to create such a new conversation is itself somewhat suspect – and not just because it's hard. The cost of doing so, he argues, is the "nurturance of a responsible connection to the past, which comes only with the experience of being brought into a conversation not of one's own making."[13] There are a number of fascinating moves in this sentence, but I shall focus on only one for now. Rootedness in an "embodied argument" (to borrow Alasdair MacIntyre's phrase) is a necessary condition for the kind of free enquiry that matters – that builds on the depth and richness of the tradition that comes before it, to take responsibility for that inheritance and the hard-won truths and insights it brings. So far so good. There is surely nothing in this that isn't true of other traditions and "embodied arguments." But Kronman then goes a step further:

> The emergent global civilization we inhabit today provides the motive for multiculturalism and gives it its plausibility ... The ideas and institutions that have the greatest prestige in this new global civilization, the ones that have the greatest influence on the individuals and communities striving to join it ... are all of Western origin ... The ideals of individual freedom and toleration; of democratic government; of respect for the rights of minorities and for human rights generally; a reliance on markets as a mechanism for the organization of economic life and a recognition of the need for markets to be regulated by a supervenient political authority; a reliance ... on the methods of bureaucratic administration ... an acceptance of the truths of modern science ... all these provide ... the existing foundations of political, social and economic life and where they do not, they are perceived as aspirational goals towards which everyone has the strongest moral and material reasons to strive.[14]

The West has done some terrible things in the name of these aspirations, Kronman admits, but this is no reason to impeach their authority, which rests on "transcendent foundations." Strong multiculturalism and the demand to globalize the curriculum in the sense of decentering or deparochializing the West deny these truths. In denying the priority of the West and its values, teachers of the humanities put themselves at odds with

what their students – deep down – supposedly already know to be true, given the "experiential and moral worlds" outside the classroom, and thus renders the apparently critical discussion within it one of "self-deception" and "disingenuous pretense."[15] This in turn generates a lack of confidence in the humanities more generally and further distances it from its main task – which is to pursue the "deepest questions," amongst which is the question of what living is for.

It might seem tiresome to summarize what seem like deeply implausible arguments about the state of the humanities today. But Kronman's argument is one that we find increasingly prominent in the public cultures of Canada, the United States, and Australia around debates concerning the globalization of curricula. It boils down to something like this: if globalizing the curriculum means embracing diversity as a pedagogical value, multiculturalism as a political ideal, and "constructivism" as a justificatory framework, then it means nothing less than the abandonment of Western civilization as we (ought) to know it.

However, for now, let me point to at least two major problems with this analysis. First, there is obviously a deep problem with the way Kronman links diversity, multiculturalism, and relativism into a kind of seamless whole. This ignores the vast literature in contemporary political theory over the past twenty years that has provided a rich array of different justifications of diversity and multiculturalism that do not rely on the philosophical moves Kronman laments. The claim that multiculturalism, for example, leads necessarily to relativism, that it entails locking individuals into ethnic and racial identities, is simply false.[16] No project that seeks to globalize the curriculum in which diversity is indeed taken as a pedagogical value need accept the premises (or conclusions) that Kronman asserts flow from engaging with diversity and multiculturalism in the classroom.

More important, however, is what we might call the sheer complacency of Kronman's account of the relation between the cultural and political power of the West and the social, political, and economic costs that have resulted in the course of its development over the past 400 years or more. The material inequalities imposed by colonization were justified by and helped entrench attitudes of civilizational superiority and condescension that rendered non-Western peoples subordinate and reduced their own internal diversity to monocultural stereotypes. Even when this reduction was not necessarily informed by a sense of civilizational superiority, it locked "the Orient" or Indigenous peoples into a kind of exotic gallery at which "we," in the West, were meant to gaze in wonder. What is crucial

about these aspects of the development of the West, to speak very generally, is that they feature prominently – always in complex ways, and often in a critical vein – within many of the canonical texts that inform the very conversation Kronman is so concerned to preserve. The very idea of a canon, after all, locates these texts in a particular field of relations of power that is important to understand and place in appropriate literary, historical, cultural, and social contexts – something that the pioneering work of a wide range of scholars from the mid- to late-twentieth century has done, including Michel Foucault, Edward Said, Carole Pateman, and Quentin Skinner, among others. Grasping the complex relations between canonical texts and the various contexts in which they were written, deployed, responded to, and written over is essential to this tradition of work and, I would argue, to the practice of the humanities more generally. Whatever else globalizing our curricula might mean, it surely involves trying to make sense of these features of the canonical texts we place at the center of our curricula. I should say immediately that it doesn't follow that context is everything, pace Kronman. One of the deep lessons we learn from the contextualist turn in both the history of political thought and philosophy is that context does not *in itself* dissolve conceptual problems away or render philosophy redundant (despite what some enthusiastic Wittgensteinians might say). But it does loosen the reifications and rigidities of extant theoretical traditions, opening the way, potentially, for conceptual and theoretical innovation.

11.3 GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

The second rationale for globalizing the curriculum is what I shall call the *global citizenship* rationale. It is perhaps the most common that we find among university presidents and deans, and not only amongst this particular caste. The basic idea here is that since universities are in the business of educating the young, and also preparing them for productive careers beyond the university, providing them with the skills to navigate our increasingly globalized world requires a more globalized curriculum. Such a concern is sometimes framed in terms of the sheer ignorance of the young about the world they live in. Apparently, young people in the United States between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four have the least amount of general knowledge about geography and international matters as compared with their counterparts in other countries in just about every pertinent survey. At this level of generality, it probably shouldn't be *that* surprising that young Americans display such characteristics (and the same studies show that Canadian and Australian students are not much better), especially given the role the United States continues to play as a global superpower. Living so close to the center of social and economic power generates its share of cultural and historical blind spots, however much America's hegemonic status may be faltering.

As a practical problem of helping young people navigate a world that will be even more diverse and multicultural than ever before, this rationale tends to produce perfectly sensible, though perhaps rather banal, prescriptions. Derek Bok, the former president of Harvard University, summarizes it very well: "Colleges have the responsibility to try and remove such ignorance and prepare their students adequately for lives increasingly affected by events beyond their borders . . . [They] must be prepared to work effectively in and with foreign countries and cultures,"

> as well as think critically about their country's role in global affairs.[17] This not only helps students understand other places but also provides a comparative, critical perspective to their own. And so universities ought to compel their students to spend more time on exchange in different countries, study a language other than English, learn more about international relations, more about the customs and cultures of other nations, more about different social and political systems, more about the world's great religions, more about their country's role in global affairs – and generally take more courses with the word "global" in the title.

The global citizenship rationale has also been framed in a more philosophical way. Martha Nussbaum, for example, has justified cosmopolitan education as part of what it means to cultivate the appropriate sense of "humanity" at the heart of a truly liberal arts education. She describes a mythical student named Anna, a graduate of a large state university in the Midwest of the United States, and summarizes what she thinks she ought to know, having taken up a new assignment in Beijing, twelve years after graduation:

> She needs to know how Chinese people think about work (and not to assume there is just one way); she needs to know how cooperative networks are formed, and what misunderstandings might arise in interaction between Chinese and American workers. Knowledge of recent Chinese history is important, since the disruptions of the Cultural Revolution still shape workers' attitudes. Anna also needs to consider her response to the recent policy of urging women to return to the home, and the associated practices of laying off women first. This means she should know something about Chinese gender relations, both in the Confucian tradition and more recently . . . She certainly needs a more general view of human rights, and about to what extent it is either legitimate or wise to criticize another nation's way of life . . . It will also mean being able to keep her bearings even when she knows that the society around her will not accept her view . . . The real-life

> Anna had only a small part of this preparation . . . for the shock of discovering that other places treated as natural what she found strange, and as strange what she found natural. Her imaginative capacity to enter into the lives of people of other nations had been blunted by lack of practice.[18]

Of course, it can't be that any university course or degree could fully prepare Anna with all the knowledge and nous that Nussbaum describes here. How would Anna have known she would end up in China anyway? And maybe she'll only be there for a couple of more years and move on to Mumbai. Still, like Bok, Nussbaum thinks there are some practical things universities should do: students should be compelled to gain some understanding of the major world religions; they should study at least one non-Western culture "in some depth"; they should master a foreign language to a level of proficiency that enables them to read a newspaper or watch television in that language; and American students, in particular, should understand the achievements and sufferings of African-Americans.

Anyone who teaches and works at a university understands just how difficult it would be to design a curriculum that did all of these things, as well as accommodate the other elements of a liberal arts curriculum we normally aspire to include. To be fair, Nussbaum spends some time exploring the different ways in which a curriculum can be globalized in the appropriate way, ranging from specific sets of electives, to fully integrated global or multicultural programs, team-taught by groups of faculty drawn from different disciplines.[19] There are many examples at my own university (and no doubt yours) that go some way in trying to provide that kind of experience for students. But it is a difficult thing to deliver at the scale required for large public universities, at least, and requires skills on the part of academic faculty that are sometimes hard to find.

But my main interest is more in the underlying rationale for what Nussbaum refers to as the "classical defence" of a liberal education, which includes this call for the globalization of the curriculum. Her key claim is that there is a need for the cultivation of "empathetic interpretation" on the part of students. The argument goes something like this: People from diverse backgrounds can often struggle to recognize each other as fellow citizens in the community of reason. This is in part because the claims that people make and the actions informed by those claims, rest on intentions, motivations, and commitments shaped in light of particular cultural, historical, social, and political contexts. To understand these intentions and motivations requires work. It requires the "would-be world citizen" to become a "sensitive and empathetic interpreter" and to cultivate their capacity for "sympathetic imagination."[20]

There is a question here about exactly what kind of curriculum would promote the kind of empathetic and sympathetic interpretation Nussbaum is calling for. It might well be one that is globalized, in the sense of being inclusive of non-Western texts and sources, but it might well be one that sticks very closely to the existing Western canon. For there are all kinds of ways in which elements of that canon that could arguably promote sympathetic and empathetic interpretation, even if they do not engage directly with non-Western texts. Although Nussbaum seems to suggest that non-Western texts are *necessary* for cultivating empathetic understanding – and her writings on Tagore are one practical example – at the same time she also seems to move in a very different direction. Nussbaum links what she calls the Stoic origins of the one "truly great and truly common" form of cosmopolitanism to fundamental moral values of justice – which she traces from the Stoics through to Paine, Kant, Smith, Emerson, and Thoreau and as structurally analogous to what we find in Tagore, who sought to meld Bengali and Western cosmopolitanism. The Greek and Roman origins of cosmopolitanism are "essential resources for democratic citizenship,"[21] argues Nussbaum, and should be at the core of today's higher education.

But how empathetic or sympathetic can this mode of interpretation be if it starts from the particular set of normative commitments described by Nussbaum? On the one hand, you might think that the ideal of democratic citizenship she describes is true, and thus truth is on the side of the liberal and secular ideal within which it is framed, and that a full grasp of that ideal provides philosophical proof against "fundamental commitments" that are in opposition to or in tension with those liberal values. However comforting – and however much many of those liberal cosmopolitan values might be ones I share – this gets us nowhere. There is no philosophical argument, on its own, that can establish their superiority or objectivity over those who reject them such that they are *compelled* to accept them as true. The whole point of democratic citizenship is to find a way to cooperate when the grounds for agreement based on fundamental commitments – at least in the first instance – is absent.

I have three concerns with Nussbaum's account. First, she presupposes an enormous amount of what has to be established in genuine dialogue with others. If the rationale for globalizing the curriculum is to identify those texts and traditions that will conform to what we already know to be the best account of cosmopolitan citizenship, then it's not clear how much work empathetic interpretation is really doing. Second, and relatedly, it isn't clear exactly how Nussbaum thinks reading and engaging with non-Western texts, for example, actually cultivates empathetic

interpretation or sympathetic imagination. One could argue that the skills and disposition to read empathetically can be developed in a range of ways that don't involve reading Tagore or Iqbal. It's not that Nussbaum's mythical "Anna" shouldn't have been required to read more Chinese history or feminist theory, or learn a bit of Mandarin as an undergraduate, but rather that a liberal arts curriculum should give her the skills to keep learning long after she leaves university. She should have the foundational skills, in other words, and a breadth of learning that allow her to adapt to new circumstances, as well as possessing the critical skills to question some of her basic preconceptions about China, gender relations, and the justification of human rights she now finds herself having to think about. Finally, we might wonder how any curriculum could actually deliver what Anna seems to need: Nussbaum explores various models across a range of public and private universities, but all of them struggle with striking the right balance between avoiding the worst kind of "sampling" of world cultures that offers only a thin veneer of comparative study and the attempt to truly globalize their curricula, which requires enormous work on the part of faculty and staff. At the end, she seems to suggest that perhaps the best we can do is require students to study at least one country in some depth, in such a way as to highlight common misconceptions and parochialisms that many people have when they first encounter another culture or society.

11.4 TAKING MORAL DISAGREEMENT SERIOUSLY

The final rationale for globalizing the curriculum hinges on the idea of taking moral disagreement seriously. It too places an emphasis on the need to cultivate empathetic interpretation and sympathetic imagination, but it also seeks to put some of the very terms that frame discussions like Nussbaum's into critical perspective. So by "moral disagreement" here I don't presuppose what we mean by the "moral" – it might well include the kinds of things moral philosophers in Western philosophy tend to be concerned about (the conflict between rights and duties; between impartiality and partiality; between different conceptions of the good, etc.), but it could include other things as well. Different traditions of political thought, for example, will situate what we think of the "moral" in different ways, against a background of particular discourses and frameworks, and part of the task is to understand both within and across traditions how this shapes moral and political claims. Importantly, as I mentioned in Section 11.2, traditions are also differentially situated in

relation to each other as a result of historical and geopolitical forces. This returns us to a point I made in our discussion of Kronman. The forces of globalization and modernization have shaped the world's traditions in complex ways, such that it is difficult to talk about there being a single response to modernization or a single mode of moral and political thinking that all people everywhere are becoming oriented toward. And so, wherever people are reflecting on the nature of those practices acting on them – whether forms of political rule, clerical rule, social and cultural conventions and norms, transnational forces, etc. – there will be different ways of understanding those forces and the various practical and theoretical responses to them. This will inevitably broaden the range of "texts" that we might think of as relevant in coming to grips with a particular disagreement or engagement between holders of different worldviews or in the study of moral and political thought more generally.

By taking moral disagreement seriously, I mean at least three things. First, that we are oriented in such a way that we don't simply reduce differences between traditions to an easy relativism, which drains the relevance of engagement and disagreement in the first place. Second, and at the other extreme perhaps, that we don't reduce difference to reified civilizational claims that are impervious to critical reflection, contestation, and engagement and that make individuals and groups seemingly prisoners of various "scripts" of modernity (and anti-modernity). And third, that we come at these differences and disagreements wherever possible through direct engagement with the relevant traditions within which and against which the various conceptual moves and claims are played out. In other words, that not all disagreement (and indeed conflict) between different peoples or traditions is reducible to unrevisable cultural, moral, or religious features; but nor that all such conflict is essentially political and economic in form – that all disagreements can best be explained as a manifestation of capitalism, on the one hand, or anticolonial resentment and resistance on the other. No reductionism in either direction.

The kind of orientation I am describing here can be found in the work of Bernard Williams. Williams famously criticized what he called "Ethical theory" – by which he meant comprehensive ethical theories such as utilitarianism or Kantianism – for suggesting that there are moral principles that could be justified in ways that stood entirely outside of someone's fundamental projects or commitments and indeed could be called upon to adjudicate between them.[22] But even for Williams, that didn't mean those fundamental commitments were impervious to critical reflection. We can hold on to the idea of there being fundamental commitments, rooted in

complex traditions, but it doesn't follow they are literally impossible to give up or change. The point is to understand the extent to which there would be a genuine *cost* to the believer or member of that group in giving those commitments up – as putting into question some crucial aspect of who they imagine themselves to be. People can indeed reflect critically on these commitments and reason about them to varying extents. One of the points of taking moral disagreement seriously is to try and understand the nature of these kinds of commitments from the perspective of the agents themselves, rather than assume either that history makes one kind of outcome inevitable or that there is nothing more to be said about it. But it is also to be willing to put one's own perspective and identity into question: to be willing to reflect critically on the analogous commitments or beliefs within one's own tradition that might be thrown into relief through a deep engagement with others.

This returns us to the question at hand: How could one cultivate such a disposition in students and the citizens they are and will become? Does globalizing the curriculum have a role to play in cultivating such a disposition? If the logic of the rationale I am exploring in this section seems to lead to a case for broadening the curriculum in such a way that students can begin to learn to take moral disagreement seriously, then what kind of approach should we take? In reflecting on this question I found myself returning to the last pages of Charles Taylor's now-famous essay on the "The Politics of Recognition."[23] Toward the end of that essay, he addresses the question of what his overall analysis of the demand for recognition – which he interprets in relation to the "politics of equal dignity" – means for education. The demand for equal recognition here is translated into a demand for the recognition of the equal *value* of other cultures: not merely to allow them to survive, or for their survival to count as an appropriate political goal on the part of communities, but to acknowledge their equal *worth* and thus justify a radical reshaping of university and school curricula.[24] On the one hand, this is justified along the lines similar to other demands for equal recognition. Enlarging and changing the curriculum is essential in order to give due recognition to the previously excluded as a means of redressing the harm caused by non-recognition and misrecognition. The underlying premise of this argument, Taylor argues, is that we owe equal respect to all cultures. The reproach to the designers of traditional curricula is that "the judgments of worth on which these latter were supposedly based were in fact corrupt, were marred by narrowness or insensitivity or ... a desire to downgrade the excluded."[25] Absent these distorting factors, true judgments of value of different works would place all cultures (or at least, those that have "animated whole societies over some considerable stretch of time"[26]) more or less on equal footing.

In his usual thoughtful way, Taylor notes that although there is "something valid in this presumption," it is by no means unproblematic. It constitutes a kind of "leap of faith."[27] The validity of the claim has to be demonstrated in the actual study of the culture, here invoked in terms of Taylor's well-known account of the development of new languages or "vocabularies" of comparison through which to articulate these contrasts. Unless something like this happens, the preemptive demand for judgments of worth can become paradoxically homogenizing. It implies we already have the standards to make the judgments, when in fact the formation of those judgments is work still to be done. And it is hard work indeed. So, in the end, Taylor grounds the presumption of equal worth in a general claim that cultures that have provided a horizon of meaning for large numbers of human beings over a long period of time are "almost certain to have something that deserves our admiration and respect."[28]

I believe something like this presumption is part of what it means to take disagreement seriously. However, there are a number of dangers with this approach, which I want to note before concluding.

The first danger, as Taylor well knows, is that resting the grounds for equal respect of cultures on the basis that they will contain things that deserve our admiration and respect can slide into a kind of preemptive contempt for those that apparently are unlikely to provide such a payoff. One move to guard against this is to say we owe this kind of respect as a matter of *right*, but this simply begs the question. On what grounds are they owed this right? And is it a kind of claim best expressed in the language of rights to begin with? Who is the corresponding holder of the appropriate duties, and in what sense are they enforceable? Another move is to say that since "our" community is one in which many different peoples and cultures reside (whether by "our" we mean a particular political community or some kind of global cosmopolitan community), there is no need to base respect for Indigenous or Islamic cultures, for instance, on the claim that they will inevitably have something important to teach us. The fact that they are part of "us" means that to not extend such respect is to directly harm them in various ways.[29] This raises important questions about the nature of identity and cosmopolitan value that I do not have the space to consider here. However, it is important that whatever else globalizing the curriculum might mean, it should not encourage complacency about who "we" are when we invoke conceptions of political community, either on the part of

our own society or those with whom we are apparently trying to engage or understand.

And this leads to a third danger: if we ground the rationale for globalizing our curricula mainly on what we think "others" have to teach "us," then we risk falling into some of the quandaries we have explored in this chapter. First, we risk orienting ourselves to focus on looking for what we already take to be valuable in other cultures. We can't help but be oriented by our own values, beliefs, and traditions in these contexts, but the danger is that they become reified as opposed to challenged and stretched by our encounter with the complexity of different traditions. Second, we risk complacency about the epistemological and normative reach of our values across different cultures, as well as about their history and practical manifestation on the ground.

The only real safeguard against these dangers is to ensure, that whenever we are making claims about "our" values or "their" beliefs, we are also paying close attention to the historical and practical contexts within which those beliefs and values manifest themselves and become motivating. Joseph Carens has argued that although it is a truism that values and principles are always mediated by social and political institutions, sometimes certain groups get all the mediation and very little of the principle.[30] This doesn't mean abandoning concept making and the justification of principles as a worthy object of philosophical and theoretical activity. But it does mean always appreciating the extent to which those activities always occur in historical and institutional contexts. It might not be that our belief in any particular set of values is undermined in doing so. However, grasping the ways in which values do "work" in the world can shape and reframe our understanding and justification of them in various ways. The challenge then is to think about how our curricula in political theory – and in the humanities more generally – might help, practically, to engender an orientation that takes moral disagreement as seriously as the traditions within which the different interlocutors are embedded.

NOTES

1. At the time of writing, I was Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Sydney.
2. For a trenchant discussion to which I am indebted, see Andrew March, "What Is Comparative Political Theory?," *Review of Politics* 71, no. 4 (2009): 531–565.

3. Fred Dallmayr, "Beyond Monologue: For a Comparative Political Theory," *Perspectives on Politics* 2, no. 2 (2004): 249–257.
4. Roxanne Euben, "Contingent Borders, Syncretic Perspectives: Globalization, Political Theory, and Islamizing Knowledge," *International Studies Review* 4, no. 1 (2002): 23–48; James Tully, *Public Philosophy in a New Key*, vol. 2, *Imperialism and Civic Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
5. Judith Butler, "Universality in Culture," in Martha C. Nussbaum with respondents, *For Love of Country*, ed. Joshua Cohen (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 52. See also Leigh Jenco, "Histories of Thought and Comparative Political Theory: The Curious Thesis of the 'Chinese Origins of Western Knowledge,' 1860–1895," *Political Theory* 42, no. 6 (2014): 658–681.
6. Anthony Kronman, *Education's End: Why Universities Have Given Up on the Meaning of Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007).
7. Ibid., 149.
8. Ibid., 143.
9. Ibid., 147.
10. Ibid., 151.
11. For a more recent version of this kind of argument, this time from the left, see Mark Lilla, *The Once and Future Liberal: After Identity Politics* (New York: Harper, 2017).
12. Kronman, *Education's End*, 168.
13. Ibid., 169.
14. Ibid., 173.
15. Ibid., 178–179.
16. For an excellent collection of essays that addresses these claims in depth, see Anthony Laden and David Owen, eds., *Multiculturalism and Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); see also Duncan Ivison, ed., *The Ashgate Research Companion to Multiculturalism* (New York: Routledge, 2010).
17. Derek Bok, *Our Underachieving Colleges* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 226.
18. Martha Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 50–51.
19. Ibid., 66ff.
20. Ibid., 63.
21. Ibid., 53.
22. Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986); and, more recently, *In the Beginning Was the Deed* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); Akeel Bilgrami has drawn interestingly on Williams's work when discussing related issues in "What Is a Muslim? Fundamental Commitment and Cultural Identity," *Critical Inquiry* 18, no. 4 (1992): 826–828.
23. Charles Taylor et al., *Multiculturalism and the "The Politics of Recognition"* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).
24. Ibid., 64ff.
25. Ibid., 66.

26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid., 72.
29. See Susan Wolf's commentary in ibid., 80–82.
30. See Joseph Carens, *Culture, Citizenship, and Community: A Contextual Exploration of Justice as Evenhandedness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Index

Introductory Note

References such as '178–179' indicate (not necessarily continuous) discussion of a topic across a range of pages. Wherever possible in the case of topics with many references, these have either been divided into sub-topics or only the most significant discussions of the topic are listed. Because the entire work is about 'deparochialization', the use of this term (and certain others which occur constantly throughout the book) as an entry point has been minimized. Information will be found under the corresponding detailed topics.

ability, 47–48, 51, 66, 158, 209, 244
academic conventions, 64, 123
academic disciplines, 2, 18, 76, 85–86, 236, 246, 263
action-guiding validity, 206
active participation, 108, 131, 156
activism, 102, 114
adaptations, innovative, 129, 133
administrative discretion, 191–192
admiration, 133–134, 287
agents, 125, 149, 206–207, 221, 286
  collective, 28, 149
  rational autonomous, 166, 167
ahistorical approaches, 94
Al-Ghazali, 261, 262
allegiances, 138, 141, 239
alternative modernities, 204, 221
alternatives, 64–65, 67, 85, 86, 114
ambiguity, 212, 242
ambitions, 62, 65, 66–68, 70–71, 106, 208, 211, 273
ambivalence, 242–243
Analects, 236, 256
analytic philosophy, 13, 80, 84, 152, 240, 245
ancestors, 80, 267
ancient Greeks, 17, 140, 231–232, 244, 255, 267
ancient thought, 6, 13, 17–18, 132, 231, 234
Angle, Stephen C., 9, 79, 160
Anglophone academia, 67, 69, 79–80, 82, 85, 263
An-Na'im, Abdullahi Ahmed, 155–156, 168
anthropologists, 35, 38, 41, 63, 80, 239
anti-West sentiments, 136–138
appointments, 184, 186–188, 195
Arabs, 79, 261
arbitrariness, 153–154
area studies, 77–78, 82, 263
Arendt, Hannah, 30, 36, 205, 240, 244, 257–258
aristocracy, 99, 101, 154, 176–177
Aristotle, 33, 231–232, 234, 238, 240–242, 244, 256, 259
aspirations, 8, 278
assets, 106, 114