

COMPARATIVE POLITICAL THEORY:
WHAT IS IT, AND WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR?

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A welcome sign of our times, in my view, is the emergence of a new field of inquiry variously labeled “comparative” or “cross-cultural” political theory (or philosophy). The sign is welcome as an antidote to the widespread talk of a “clash of civilizations” and as a counter-move to the real-political evidence of inter-cultural confrontations and violent conflicts. For these and other reasons, people of good will are likely to applaud the new enterprise more or less intuitively or spontaneously—a reaction which itself merits applause. Yet, a new mode of inquiry cannot be entirely left to intuition or common sense. At least in the context of academic discussions, it is incumbent on us to go beyond vague hunches and to investigate the topic more carefully. So we need to ask, or I want to ask here a number of questions. First of all, what is comparative or cross-cultural political theorizing—an inquiry whose birth-pangs we are witnessing today? Next, at this auspicious moment of the birth of a new initiative, it also seems appropriate and timely to raise the “why?” question, the question of the origins and motivating factors of the inquiry. Finally, there is the normative question: What is the benefit or what is this type of inquiry good for? As we recall, it was above all Aristotle who has reminded us that everything has a “*telos*”, serves a purpose, or aims at some “good”—where the “good” is not necessarily something we can capture and appropriate but rather what lays claim to us. So again my final question: What is comparative political inquiry good for? Or what lays claim to us in this inquiry?

Before proceeding further, let me briefly sketch my understanding of cross-cultural or comparative political theory (whose contours will emerge more fully in subsequent discussions). By this term I mean a mode of theorizing which takes seriously the ongoing process of globalization which entails, among other things, the growing proximity and interpretation of cultures or the emergence of (what Marshall McLuhan has called) the “global village.” In contrast to hegemonic or imperialist modes of theorizing the term implies that the language or idiom of the emerging “village” (or global civil society) cannot be monopolized by one segment of its population. Differently put: shared meanings and practices—to the extent that this is possible—can only arise from the lateral interaction, negotiation, engagement, and contestation among different, historically grown cultural frameworks. This, in turn, means that the basic approach favored by comparative political theory is dialogical or “hermeneutical” (the latter term signifying reliance on mutual interpretation).ⁱ Given this orientation, practitioners of comparative theorizing necessarily have to be multilingual as well as trained in good translation practices—although the vast terrain of cross-cultural comparison imposes limits on the range of linguistic competence.ⁱⁱ Basically, practitioners need to steer a middle course between the stances of narrow area specialists and abstract generalists: while the former slight the “theoretical,” the latter miss the “comparative” component of comparative political theory.

1. Some Origins and Contemporary Motivations

There are many reasons supporting the turn to comparative political theory. One crucial factor (as mentioned) is globalization, the emergence of a truly global market and global systems of communication (internet, facebook, twitter etc.). These features all put pressure on Eurocentrism, Western-centrism, and other modes of parochialism; in the context of academic disciplines, they put pressure on traditional “canons” of research, that is, the habitually accepted

or else enforced boundaries of disciplines. To this extent, the move toward cross-cultural comparison involves a process of “de-canonization” or at least of a rethinking of canons. The dramas of our age have not failed to impact and transform academia. Although often shielded by ivory-tower conventions, many academic disciplines have been ready to follow and keep pace with the unfolding globalizing scenario. Without question, the leader in this respect was the discipline of anthropology, a field committed since its beginnings to far-flung ethnological and ethnographic studies. Ever since Edward Tylor’s work on “primitive cultures” and Malinowski’s journey to the Trobriand Islanders, hosts of cultural anthropologists have been eager to immerse themselves in the rich tapestry of cultural idioms and traditions around the globe. In exemplary fashion, methodological guideposts for these studies—above all the methods of field interviews and “hermeneutical” understanding—were articulated by a number of leading practitioners, including Clifford Geertz and Marshall Sahlins.ⁱⁱⁱ Building on these precedents, other human sciences were poised to follow suit, sometimes adding a more political edge. Under the impact of post-colonialism and the upsurge of global communications networks, new fields of academic inquiry have been launched, including the fields of “culture studies” and “post-colonial studies” dedicated to examining the interconnection and contestation between Western and non-Western societies in our time.^{iv} As one should not forget, broad cross-cultural perspectives have also been fostered for some time by practitioners of “religious studies,” sometimes yielding a rich harvest of inter-religious comparisons.^v

All these developments combined were bound to put pressure also on “political science,” an enterprise initially launched as a strictly Western (or American) discipline. The first upshot of this pressure was “comparative politics,” a subfield conducted along empirical lines and largely

wedded to Western conceptual models. Eventually, however, political theorists were placed under the same pressure and hence compelled to reconsider their own “canonical” attachments.

2. *Philosophical Sources of Inspiration*

When turning to political theory, a certain peculiarity needs to be noted. Although attentive to some of the motivations discussed so far, political theorists are ultimately bound to be persuaded only by properly theoretical arguments, chiefly by arguments provided by recent and contemporary philosophy. As it happens, 20th-century European and Anglo-American philosophy is replete with guideposts pointing in the direction of a more cross-cultural orientation, that is, an opening of the “West” toward the “rest.” Prominent among these guideposts are the so-called “linguistic turn” (the turn from ego consciousness to language) associated with Ludwig Wittgenstein and a host of subsequent philosophers; “phenomenology” (the study of the meaning of phenomena) launched by Edmund Husserl; “hermeneutics” (interpretation theory) as formulated by Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur; and facets of “pragmatism” and postmodern “deconstruction” (both aiming at the critique of traditional metaphysical premises) from John Dewey to Jacques Derrida. What is common to these different orientations is a certain dissatisfaction with modern Western metaphysics, especially its pronounced egocentrism (stylized in Descartes’ *ego cogito*) and its corollary of Eurocentrism.

Sometimes all the mentioned sea-changes converge in a philosophical work—which, in my view, is preeminently true of the work of Martin Heidegger. The very starting point of Heidegger’s philosophy—his formulation of human existence as “being-in-the-world”—places him at odds with Cartesian metaphysics by inserting the “thinking ego” immediately into a world-context composed of societies, fellow-beings, and nature. The method adopted in his *Being and Time* was explicitly described as a “hermeneutical phenomenology,” that is, as an

interpretive study of human world-experience. Over the years, his intellectual trajectory was marked by growing concern with the wider world-context, now taking the form of globalization, and with the role of language in cross-cultural understanding. After the Second World War Heidegger collaborated with a Chinese scholar in the translation (not completed) of the *Tao Te Ching*. Subsequent decades saw him preoccupied with the progressive “Europeanization” or standardization of the globe under the aegis of Western technology. In response, his writings urged a new “planetary thinking” which, though nurtured by local cultural idioms, would transcend hostile parochialisms through dialogical engagement.^{vi}

Heidegger’s initiative was pursued and fleshed out by his student and associate Hans-Georg Gadamer, probably the leading philosopher of “dialogue” in recent times. Gadamer’s accent from the beginning was on hermeneutics, that is, the endeavor to gain understanding through an intensive dialogue or encounter between reader and text, between self and other, between indigenous traditions and alien life-forms. Truth or insight, from this vantage, cannot be garnered by a retreat into neutral spectatorship or a “view from nowhere,” but only through a concrete existential engagement—an engagement where familiar assumptions (pre-judgments or “pre-judices”) are brought to bear, and allowed to be tested, against unfamiliar perspectives and practices in a shared search for meaning. This approach was famously outlined in Gadamer’s *Truth and Method* which presented interpretation no longer as an optional academic methodology for some disciplines (like theology or history) but as constitutive ingredient of human existence and human inquiry as such. The more concrete cross-cultural and multicultural implications of this view were subsequently developed in a number of writings, especially in a volume titled *The Legacy of Europe* which sought to extricate Europe (or the West) from the

straitjacket of “Eurocentrism,” presenting it instead as the emblem of multicultural diversity ready for new learning experiences in a globalizing age.^{vii}

As it happens, Heidegger’s and Gadamer’s teachings have been well received and creatively re-interpreted by numerous thinkers in East Asia, India, and the Muslim world. A good example of creative reception is the Indian philosopher J. L. Mehta. Raised in India and trained initially at Banares Hindu University, Mehta later spent considerable time in Europe and America where he gained a thorough knowledge of Western philosophy, and especially of the works of Heidegger and Gadamer. Repeatedly, he acknowledged the significance of their thought—not for the sake of passive imitation but of creative renewal. As he wrote at one time: “For all non-Western civilizations, however decrepit or wounded, Heidegger’s thinking brings hope, at this moment of world history, by making them see that . . . they are now free to think for themselves, in their own fashion.”^{viii} For Mehta, as for his Western mentors, the task of contemporary philosophy, especially “planetary philosophy,” was neither to discard all indigenous traditions in favor of the supremacy of Western modernity, nor to become entrenched in traditional parochialisms and sequestered worldviews; nor was it a matter of forging a hasty fusion, confusion or hybridity shortchanging reciprocal questioning. In his words again: What is required is “no facile compromise or reconciliation, miscalled ‘synthesis’” but rather “a relentless exposure to the tension between the scientific consciousness [of the West] and the legacy of the [cultural and religious] past”; only in this way is it possible to “learn to address the right questions to our religious tradition and be rewarded by answers truly adequate to our present situation.”^{ix}

To be sure, Heideggerian impulses have not been alone in fostering a philosophical sea-change; they were fruitfully assisted by developments in language philosophy and French

phenomenology and deconstruction. In the former domain, Wittgenstein's later writings contextualized human reason and the subject of cognition (*cogito*) by making them a function of grammar and of multiple "language games." The implications of this move were developed still more resolutely by the Russian linguist Mikhail Bakhtin whose idea of "heteroglossia" underscores the need for multi-lingual dialogues between (only partially translatable) idioms and cultural frameworks.^x In the French context, Jacques Derrida's work pointed in a similar direction; his key notion of "*différance*" (radical self-difference), in particular, is meant to unsettle rigidly self-contained identities or invariant meaning structures. Drawing out the political implications of this notion, his book *The Other Heading* urged a basic repositioning of Europe or the West in the world, a repositioning which would replace its role as "capstone" or headmaster by a different "heading" more hospitable to cross-cultural learning.^{xi}

In recommending this change, the book endorsed the legacy of his older compatriot, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, whose reflections on language and culture urgently deserve to be remembered today. As for Derrida, the task for Merleau-Ponty was to resist the lure of a privileged or hegemonic spectatorship and to engage rather in the labor of concrete "lateral" interactions. As he wrote in a text on modern social science: "How can we understand someone else without sacrificing him to our logic or it to him?" Preferring to assimilate reality too quickly to our ideas, (Western) social science has tended to proceed "as if it could roam over the object of its investigations at will . . . [as] an absolute observer." As an antidote to this approach, Merleau-Ponty proposed an alternative path to the universal: "no longer the overarching universal of a strictly objective method, but a sort of lateral universal which we acquire through ethnological experience and its incessant testing of the self through the other person and the other person through the self."^{xii}

All the mentioned initiatives combined paved the way to a properly “comparative” theorizing or philosophizing along cross-cultural or inter-civilizational lines. The challenge of such a mode of philosophizing was well understood and confronted by J. L. Mehta when he tried to compare Heidegger’s thought with the complex tradition of Indian Vedanta. In such an attempt, he realized, abstract metaphysical concepts and categories need to be put aside or at least “sublated” for the goal of “setting free, bringing into view and articulating in contemporary ways of speaking ... the matter of thinking which, in what has actually been realized in thought, still remains unsaid and so unthought in the tradition of the East.”^{xiii} Parallel arguments can be found in the writings of the Spanish-Indian scholar Raimundo Panikkar. In an instructive essay titled “What is Comparative Philosophy Comparing?” Panikkar attacked a widespread tendency to submerge comparison in the categories of a hegemonic and supposedly “universal” metaphysics. Under such auspices, he noted, comparative studies are integrated into “the thrust toward universalization characteristic of Western culture,” its desire to exert control “by striving toward a global picture of the world.” A basic endeavor of his essay was to debunk this pretense: “Comparative philosophy cannot accept a method that reduces all visions to the view of one single philosophy” or meta-philosophy.

As an alternative Panikkar delineated what he termed a “dialogical” or else “imparative” mode of philosophizing (where “imparative” derives from the Latin “imparare” meaning “to learn”). Such a mode of philosophizing, he observed, reflects the conviction that we cannot escape taking a stand somewhere when we philosophize” and that such a limitation makes our theorizing “relative to similar enterprises undertaken from different angles.” Dialogical comparison thus does not pretend to possess “a fulcrum outside time and space and above any other philosophy,” but involves a continuous border crossing or negotiation of boundaries. The

proper method to be pursued in these border crossings, in Panikkar's view, is a "diatopical hermeneutics," that is, a mode of interpretation required when the difference to be negotiated is "the distance between two (or more) cultures which have independently developed in different spaces (*topoi*) their own forms of philosophizing and ways of reaching intelligibility."^{xiv}

3. *Some Pioneers of Comparative Political Theory*

Let me now turn to some repercussions of philosophical initiatives in political theory. It may not be entirely surprising that many of the pioneering efforts in comparative political theory have been launched by practitioners located at, or hailing from, the periphery of the "corridors of power," that is, by thinkers whose life experiences have placed them at the boundaries or cross-roads of cultures.

A good case in point is the Canadian-Indian political theorist Anthony Parel. Having immersed himself in his earlier years in a thorough study of Western political thought (with a focus on Aristotle, Aquinas, and Machiavelli), Parel subsequently shifted his research toward comparative or cross-cultural inquiries, paying special attention to (East) Indian traditions. Corroborating this shift, he soon cleared a path for himself and other practitioners by (co-)editing the very first book in this field of inquiry: *Comparative Political Philosophy: Studies Under the Upas Tree* (1992). As he noted in introducing his book, scholarship in political theory has preponderantly come to mean the study of modern Western political thought—on the assumption that modern Western texts are "products of universal reason itself." In our contemporary context, however, this assumption has become dubious. In fact, Parel found "mounting evidence" suggesting that Western claims of universality are being "questioned by other cultures, or at least by significant representatives of these cultures"—a questioning which renders comparative political theorizing today "both opportune and intellectually satisfying." For Parel,

the phrase “comparative political philosophy” meant an approach which takes seriously “the validity of cultural pluralism and philosophical pluralism”—which does not amount to an endorsement of relativism or radical incommensurability. Although acknowledging the distances between cultural frameworks, comparison in Parel’s view had to explore not only existing differences but also possible overlaps or similarities—what (following Eric Voegelin) he termed “equivalences.” Thus, it was possible to discover fruitful resemblances by comparing, for instance, “the Aristotelian *politikos* and the Confucian *junzi*, Indian *dharma* and the pre-modern Western notion of ‘natural justice,’ the Islamic prophet-legislator and the Platonic philosopher-king.” Paying heed both to equivalences and differences was bound to enrich scholarship, by being able both to “deepen one’s understanding of one’s own tradition and engender understanding and respect for the traditions of others.”^{xv}

A parallel foray beyond mainstream “canons” was undertaken roughly at the same time by the Korean-American political theorist Hwa Yol Jung. Relying in part on Continental philosophy and in part on the work of the historian Hayden White, Jung introduced the notion of a “differential” or “diatactical” mode of theorizing (where “diatactics” means a concrete-experiential form of encounter). As he wrote (in 1989), modern Western thinking has tended to be monological and “logocentric” (centered on the *cogito*), thereby allowing a detached and “disembodied reason” to generate the specters of ethnocentrism and Eurocentrism. By contrast, diatactics champions a “new, lateral way of interpreting culture, especially an alien culture, based on the principle of *difference* in the Heideggerian sense of both *Differenz* and *Unterschied* (i.e., heterology).” More recently, Jung has spelled out further the implications of this approach in a volume titled *Comparative Political Culture in the Age of Globalization* (2002). The basic aim of the volume was again to “decenter” or call into question the “canonization” of the modern

West, its “narcissistic or hegemonic” self-image which privileges Europe or the West as “cultural, scientific, religious and moral mecca and capital of the world.” Casting his cultural net very wide—from the Latin American thinker Enrique Dussel to the Vietnamese Buddhist Thich Nhat Hanh—Jung links comparative study with a “relational ontology” or a conception of “interbeing” according to which everything must “inter-be” or be “inter-connected to everything else” in the world. Employing such terms as “transtopia” and “transversality,” his study credits comparative theorizing with overcoming the twin dangers of “ethnocentric chauvinism” and “faceless universalism,” as well as the dead-ends of “Orientalism” and “Occidentalism.”^{xvi}

Another major impulse promoting “transversal” studies comes from the Canadian political theorist Charles Taylor. Deeply rooted in the Hegelian tradition—creatively reinterpreted—as well as in recent philosophical hermeneutics, Taylor’s work has given a powerful boost to cross-cultural or “multicultural” studies highlighting dialogical encounter and recognition. As he wrote in a famous study on that topic (“The Politics of Recognition,” 1992): a crucial feature of human life is “its fundamentally *dialogical* character” manifest in the fact that “we define our identity always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the things our significant others want to see in us.” Without shortchanging the modern ideas of individual freedom and equality, Taylor finds it desirable to supplement the liberal “politics of equal dignity” with a sturdy “politics of difference” which—in lieu of an abstract “difference blindness”—seeks to “maintain and cherish distinctness,” that is, the “potential for forming and defining one’s own identity, as an individual and as a culture.” As one should note, “multiculturalism” from his perspective does not imply an “anything goes” relativism nor a “melting pot” confusion, but rather an open-minded learning process across boundaries: It is “an admission that we are very far away from that ultimate horizon from which the relative worth of

different cultures might be evident.”^{xvii} Relying on these premises, Taylor has engaged in comparative inquiries on many levels: focusing not only on relations between Anglophone and Francophone political cultures in his native Canada, but also on broader East-West comparisons—for example, on the different usage of the “language of rights” between Western liberals and Asian Buddhists. As he writes thoughtfully in the latter context, proper cross-cultural comparison arises not from an exodus from the past but from a willingness to engage in mutual learning: “Contrary to what many people think, world convergence will not come through a loss or denial of traditions all around, but rather by creative reimmersions of different groups, each in their own spiritual heritage, traveling different routes to this goal.”^{xviii}

In the field of multiculturalism, one of the most significant contributions is owed to the British-Indian political theorist Bhikhu Parekh. Like Anthony Parel, Parekh devoted his early career to a sustained immersion in Western political thought, giving particular attention to the works of Jeremy Bentham, Michael Oakeshott, and Hannah Arendt. Like Parel again, he subsequently broadened his horizons, shifting his focus to the legacy of Gandhi and to issues of post-colonialism and multiculturalism. His book, *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory* (2000), is a path-breaking text in this field. Apart from probing discussions of such topics as the meaning of “culture,” the relation between pluralism and universalism, and the appropriate structure of a multicultural society, the book offers valuable observations on comparative political theorizing along dialogical or hermeneutical lines. Such theorizing, he states, has to recognize the interplay of three aspects or factors: “the cultural embeddedness of human beings, the inescapability and desirability of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, and the internal plurality of each culture.” Together with Panikkar and Gadamer, Parekh remonstrates against the adoption of a privileged “view from nowhere” which

distances and neutralizes all cultural differences: “The common good and the collective will that are vital to any political society are generated not by transcending cultural and other particularities, but through their interplay in the cut and thrust of a dialogue.”^{xix}

Without being improperly immodest, I might also mention my role in the emergence of the new type of inquiry. As in the case of some of the other “pioneers,” my own early work was family rooted in Western and more particularly European philosophy and political theory. The main influence on my early thinking were two main strands of thought: phenomenology and hermeneutics, on the one hand, and Frankfurt School “critical theory,” on the other. The former strand was inaugurated by Husserl in Freiburg and led to the offshoots of existential phenomenology, social phenomenology, and hermeneutics (later to be supplemented by “deconstruction”). The second strand was inaugurated by Adorno and Horkheimer and later continued or modified by Jürgen Habermas. Many of my early writings revolved around a critical exegesis of the Habermasian perspective, while also trying to explore the rich reservoir of phenomenological and hermeneutical insights. At one point, to come to terms with the dual legacy, I tried to build a bridge “between Freiburg and Frankfurt.”^{xx} Extended visits to India disrupted my European moorings and opened the door for me to cross-cultural studies involving South Asian, East Asian, and West Asian contexts. The first manifestation of this turning were books like *Beyond Orientalism* (1996), *Border Crossings* (1999), and *Dialogue Among Civilizations* (2002). In 1999 I launched a series titled *Global Encounters: Studies in Comparative Political Theory*—a series which, ten years later, comprised 18 volumes. In 2010 I published a textbook in this field: *Comparative Political Theory: An Introduction*.^{xxi}

4. *In Pursuit of the Good*

Let me, by way of conclusion turn to the question of the *telos* of comparative political inquiry. Here, it seems appropriate to reflect briefly on the meaning of “goodness” and its relation to human activities. For me, the most helpful starting point is Aristotle’s discussion in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. The very first book of this *Ethics* is devoted to the exploration of goodness, the different types of goods, and the notion of a “highest (or complete) good.” According to the opening lines, every inquiry as well as every action or pursuit “seems to aim at some good”; hence, the notion of the “good” is that “at which everything aims” or toward which everything is direct. Given that there are different kinds of actions, inquiries or pursuits, it follows that the aims or “goods” will also vary. Hence, the good in matters of health care is the right medicine; the good in seafaring is a seaworthy boat or ship; the good in economic dealings is proper financial management. There is a further difference which needs to be considered. In some cases, the good or aim lies outside the actions or pursuits, in the sense that the actions are performed for an ulterior motive; in some other cases, however, the actions or pursuits carry the goodness in themselves. In this case, the action or inquiry is undertaken for its own sake or “because of itself” and not for the sake of something else. If we can find a situation in which the latter fully prevails, then Aristotle suggests we are face to face with what may be called the “best good” or the “highest good.”^{xxii}

Turning to comparative political theory, one of the immediate intrinsic benefits is its tendency to rekindle the critical élan endemic to political philosophy since the time of Socrates and Plato but likely to be curbed or throttled by canonization or routinization. Moving from the domain of habitual familiarity in the direction of the unfamiliar is likely to restore the sense of “wondering” (*thaumazein*) extolled as pivotal to philosophizing by Plato. Impelled by

wondering, we are likely to open ourselves up in “good will” and without undue resistance to novel experiences and phenomena.

But let me look more closely at the range of possible goods or benefits. Returning to Aristotle, we might say that there is an ascent through different levels of benefit or goodness. The first level is that of pleasure and entertainment. We engage in cross-cultural studies out of curiosity and for the sake of enjoyment of diversity. This is the level of global tourism. The next level is that of utility: we pursue cross-cultural studies to garner instrumental, tangible benefits, to satisfy our own self-interest. We might say: comparative studies are “good for business”; unfortunately, they might also be good for military strategies, possibly conquest. But there is a higher level where such studies are good intrinsically, for themselves, because they cultivate our sense of what is ethically good and just, and thus promote goodness and justice in the world.

Let me conclude with some comments on this final and basic level. In terms of long-range political vision, comparative political theorizing places itself on the side of global multilateral cooperation over against unilateral, oligarchic or imperial domination, the side of peaceful dialogical interaction over against hegemonic monologue. The dangers of the latter are evident both in academic studies and in global politics. In the academic domain, Charles Taylor long ago exposed the consequences of unilateral ethnocentrism: the tendency to interpret “all other societies in the categories of our own” and finally to erect the “Atlantic-type polity” into the zenith of politics.^{xxiii} In the political arena, Albert Camus’ warning remains memorable when he writes that “dialogue on the level of humankind is less costly than the gospel preached by totalitarian [and other hegemonic] regimes in the form of a monologue dictated from the top of a lonely mountain. On the stage as in reality, monologue precedes death.”^{xxiv} For his part, Hans-

Georg Gadamer has pleaded in favor of a “politics of dialogue and *phronesis* (practical wisdom)” aiming at the creation of a “new world order of human solidarity.”^{xxv} Such a politics, it seems to me, might yet salvage our globe from the ravages of genocidal mayhem and nuclear disaster. In supporting such a politics, political science as a discipline might escape the lure of mere self-gratification and careerism and become a valuable participant in the effort to build a just global peace.

NOTES

i. See in this context the chapters “Dialogue Among Civilizations: A Hermeneutical Perspective” and “Conversation Across Boundaries: E Pluribus Unum,” in my *Dialogue Among Civilizations: Some Exemplary Voices* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 17-30, 31-47.

ii. In my view, comparative political theorists should be very familiar with at least one major non-European language. Such familiarity will increase their sensitivity to the intricacies of language and the problems of translation.

iii. Compare Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); Marshall Sahlins, *Culture and Practical Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978); James Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

iv. See, for example, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *Postcolonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (New York: Routledge, 1998); Gayatri C. Spivak, *The Post-Colonial Critic* (London: Routledge, 1990); Alfred J. Lopez, *Posts and Pasts: A Theory of Post-colonialism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2001); Andrew E. Benjamin, et al., eds., *Postcolonial Cultures and Literatures* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002).

v. See, for example, Harold Coward, ed., *Hindu-Christian Dialogue: Perspectives and Encounters* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989); Huston Smith, *The World's Religions: Our Great Wisdom Traditions* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991); Ninian Smart, *Buddhism and Christianity: Rivals and Allies* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993); Osman Bakar and Cheng Gek Nai, eds., *Islam and Confucianism: A Civilizational Dialogue* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya, 1997).

vi. See Martin Heidegger, *The Question of Being*, trans. William Kluback and Jean T. Wilde (New York: Twayne, 1958); *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz (New York: Harper & Row, 1971); *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1996).

vii. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. ed., trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Crossroad, 1989); *Das Erbe Europas: Beiträge* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp 1989).

viii. See J. L. Mehta, *Philosophy and Religion: Essays in Interpretation* (New Delhi: Manoharlal Publ., 1990), pp. 30-31.

ix. J. L. Mehta, *India and the West: The Problem of Understanding* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), p. 124.

x. See Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogical Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

xi. See Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 1-27; *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today's Europe*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael B. Naas (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992).

xii. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "From Mauss to Claude Lévi-Strauss," in *Signs*, trans. Richard C. McCleary (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), pp. 115, 120. Compare also his "Everywhere and Nowhere," in *Signs*, pp. 126-158.

xiii. Mehta, "Heidegger and Vedanta: Reflections on a Questionable Theme," in Graham Parkes, ed., *Heidegger and Asian Thought* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987), pp. 28-29.

xiv. See Raimon Panikkar, “What is Comparative Philosophy Comparing?” in Gerald J. Larson and Eliot Deutsch, eds., *Interpreting Across Boundaries: New Essays in Comparative Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 116-118, 125-130, 132-134. It may be appropriate to mention also two Muslim thinkers whose work points in a similar direction: Mohammed Arkoun, *Thinking the Unthought in Contemporary Islamic Thought* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2002); Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, *Rethinking the Qur’an: Towards a Humanistic Hermeneutics* (Utrecht: Humanistic University Press, 2004).

xv. Anthony J. Parel, “The Comparative Study of Political Philosophy,” in Parel and Ronald C. Keith, eds., *Comparative Political Philosophy: Studies Under the Upas Tree* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1992), pp. 11-14. Compare also Parel, *Gandhi’s Philosophy and the Quest for Harmony* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

xvi. See Hwa Yol Jung, *The Question of Rationality and the Basic Grammar of Intercultural Texts* (Nigata: International University of Japan, 1989), pp. 14, 48-49; *Comparative Political Culture in the Age of Globalization: An Introductory Anthology* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2002), pp. 2, 8, 13-14.

xvii. See Charles Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition,” in Amy Gutmann, ed., *Multiculturalism and “The Politics of Recognition”* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 32-33, 40-42, 73; compare also his “Understanding and Ethnocentricity,” in *Philosophical Papers II: Philosophy and the Human Sciences* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 116-133.

xviii. Taylor, “Conditions of an Unforced Consensus on Human Rights,” in Jeanne R. Bauer and Daniel A. Bell, eds., *The East Asian Challenge for Human Rights* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999) pp. 143-144.

xix. Bhikhu C. Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory* (London: Macmillan, 2000). See also his *Colonialism, Tradition, and Reform: An Analysis of Gandhi's Political Discourse* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publication, 1989), and *Gandhi's Political Philosophy: A Critical Examination* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989).

xx. See Fred Dallmayr, *Between Freiburg and Frankfurt: Toward a Critical Ontology* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1991). Among my early (Continental) writings compare also *Hegel: Modernity and Politics* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1993/1995); *The Other Heidegger* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993); and Dallmayr and Seyla Benhabib, eds., *The Communicative Ethics Controversy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990).

xxi. See *Beyond Orientalism: Essays on Cross-Cultural Encounter* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1996); *Border Crossings: Toward a Comparative Political Theory* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 1999); *Dialogue Among Civilizations: Some Exemplary Voices* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); and *Comparative Political Theory: An Introduction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

xxii. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Martin Oswald (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1999), Book 1, pp. 3-19 (1094a – 1098b).

xxiii. Taylor, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man," *Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 25 (1971), p. 34.

xxiv. Albert Camus, *The Rebel: An Essay on Man in Revolt*, trans. Anthony Bower (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), p. 284.

xxv. See Thomas Pantham, "Some Dimensions of the Universality of Philosophical Hermeneutics: A Conversation with Hans-Georg Gadamer," *Journal of Indian Council of Philosophical Research*, vol. 9 (1992), p. 133.