

Statement Journal Statements

SJ 1 (Sheldon Wolin *Politics and Vision*, p. 22):

“A continuous tradition of political thought presents many advantages both to the political thinker and to the political actor. It gives them the sense of traveling in a familiar world where the landscape has already been explored; and where it has not, there still exists a wide variety of suggestions concerning alternative routes. It allows, too, for communication between contemporaries on the basis of a common language even when translated into different tongues.”

SJ 2 (Jacques Rancière “Ten Theses on Politics,” p. 36):

“Politics stands in distinct opposition to the police. The police is a distribution of the sensible whose principle is the absence of void and of supplement.”

SJ 3 (Andrew March “What is Comparative Political Theory,” p.535):

“[C]omparative political theory either needs to pitch itself to the entire field or (more likely) show where fruitful roles for comparison lie....”

SJ 4 (JJ Rousseau, *Emile*, p. 450):

“The abuse of books kills science. Believing that we know what we have read, we believe that we can dispense with learning it. Too much reading only serves to produce presumptuous ignoramuses.”

SJ 5 (Kautilya, *Arthashastra*, p. 16):

“The king who is well educated and disciplined in sciences, devoted to good Government of his subjects, and bent on doing good to all people will enjoy the earth unopposed.”

SJ 6 (Stuart Gray, *Re-Examining Kautilya and Machiavelli*, p. 651-652):

“...Kautilya’s political-theological realism furnishes a mirror for our own condition and helps identify our potential blind spots. Just as scholars have not fully recognized how Kautilya’s realist tactics are justified by and grounded in religious doctrines, so many citizens in secular democracies may remain mesmerized, and ultimately deluded, by the supposed non-theological aspects of their government’s realist tactics. Kautilya’s critique of Machiavelli incisively explains how destructive religious or theological beliefs in contemporary democracies such as the United States can hide behind a secular smokescreen and thus potentially damage democratic legitimacy. Kautilya’s political thought provides a cross-cultural vantage point that helps us locate potentially similar, and problematic, motivations and tactics involved in different types of political realism.”

SJ 7 (Liang Qichao, “Observations on a Trip to America,” p. 93):

“Now, freedom, constitutionalism, and republicanism mean government by the majority, but the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people are like those in San Francisco. If we were to adopt a democratic system of government now, it would be nothing less than committing national suicide.”

SJ 8 (Roxanne Euben, *Journeys to the Other Shore*, p. 23-24):

“In this context, then, “travel” signals both a metaphor for and a practice of journeying, in Nietzsche’s words, to “the other shore,” to worlds less familiar, and in terms of which a traveler may well come to understand his or her own more deeply and fully.”

SJ 9 (Franz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, p. 236):

“Let us decide not to imitate Europe and let us tense our muscles and our brains in a new direction. Let us endeavor to invent a man in full, something which Europe has been incapable of achieving.”

SJ 10 (Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, p. 4):

“The phenomenon of “political modernity”—namely, the rule by modern institutions of the state, bureaucracy, and capitalist enterprise—is impossible to *think* of anywhere in the world without invoking certain categories and concepts, the genealogies of which go deep into the intellectual and even theological traditions of Europe. Concepts such as citizenship, the state, civil society, public sphere, human rights, equality before the law, the individual, distinctions between public and private, the idea of the subject, democracy, popular sovereignty, social justice, scientific rationality, and so on all bear the burden of European thought and history.”

SJ 11 (Fukuzawa Yukichi, “Escape from Asia,”):

“Japan is located in the eastern extremities of Asia, but the spirit of her people have already moved away from the old conventions of Asia to the Western civilization. Unfortunately for Japan, there are two neighboring countries. One is called China and another Korea... In my view, these two countries cannot survive as independent nations with the onslaught of Western civilization to the East.”

SJ 12 (Leigh Jenco, *Changing Referents*, 94):

Recognizing the inadequacy of their “Western Learning” in comparison to the changes undertaken by the now more modernized and militarized Japan, Chinese reformers urged radical *bianfa*, which literally translates as “institutional reform” or “a changing of ways.” In the context of these debates, however, the term can also be read as “a changing of referents,” in that Chinese thinkers urged not just the hybridization or translation of Western ideas into Chinese contexts but the total re-alignment of Chinese institutions and ways of life to accord with what they believed to be “Western” models. These conversations respond to the problem of subalternity by recognizing that knowledge-blindness—that is, the reason that China remained unable to

generate knowledge as and like the Western nations did—was not only epistemological (i.e., requiring a shift in what and how things were thought about) but also political.

SJ 13 (Jose Vasconcelos - “The Cosmic Race, 412)

Many obstacles are opposed to the plan of the spirit, but they are obstacles common to all progress. Of course, some people may object, saying that how are the different races going to come to an accord, when not even the children of the same stock can live in peace and happiness within the economic and social regime that oppresses man today. But such a state of mind will have to change rapidly. All the tendencies of the future are intertwined in the present: Mendelianism in biology, socialism in government,' growing sympathy among the souls, generalized progress, and the emergence of the fifth race that will fill the planet with the triumphs of the first truly universal, truly cosmic culture.

SJ 14 (Farah Godrej - “Towards a Cosmopolitan Political Thought”, 138)

[I] argue that CPT stands in a particular relationship to the evolution of political theory's self-understanding as a whole. How we envision the methodological challenges of CPT, I will argue, has implications for the development of a more genuine cosmopolitanism in the field of political theory.

SJ 15 (Jose Rizal - “On the Indolence of the Filipino”, 20)

Man works for an object. Remove the object and you reduce him to inaction The most active man in the world will fold his arms from the instant he understands that it is madness to bestir himself, that this work will be the cause of his trouble, that for him it will be the cause of vexations at home and of the pirate's greed abroad. It seems that these thoughts have never entered the minds of those who cry out against the indolence of the Filipinos.

SJ 16 (Megan Thomas, *Orientalists, Propagandists, and Illustrados*, 7)

Orientalist and racial sciences can be used for liberatory projects as well as repressive ones; they are subject to the political and historical context in which they are deployed, and also to manipulation by their practitioners.

SJ 17 (Sayid Qutb, “The America I have Seen”, 4)

The researcher of American life will stand at first puzzled before a wondrous phenomenon, a phenomenon that exists nowhere else on earth. It is the case of a people who have reached the peak of growth and elevation in the world of science and productivity, while remaining abysmally primitive in the world of the senses, feelings, and behavior. A people who have not exceeded the most primordial levels of existence, and indeed, remain far below them in certain areas of feelings and behavior.

SJ 18 (Mizumura Minae, *The Fall of Language in the Age of English*, 189)

The problem is, the introduction of Western ideology into a non-Western context often does unimagined harm. Transported to a different culture, though it often loses its subtlety and can even rampage like a wild beast. The damage inflicted on the Japanese language by postwar revisions arose because belief in the superiority of phonetic notation was in fact a mark of utopianism imported from the West.

Exemplary Statement Journals

SJ 1 (Sheldon Wolin *Politics and Vision*, p. 22)

Sheldon Wolin argues in *Politics and Vision* that a “continuous tradition of political thought” provides a beneficial framework, through which modern political theorists are able to expand upon pre-existing ideas and share a “common language” (Wolin 2004, 22). I argue that this tradition is limiting in its approach and inherently “othering” to all theory that is non-western. Rather than perpetuate an inherently racist and exclusive tradition, political theorists in the future should be cognizant of the ways by which theorists who are “non-western” have been devalued and even erased from the discussion, and actively fight against this limiting approach.

The ways by which Wolin attempts to argue in favor of a coherent tradition demonstrates the limits of his argument. He strictly cites western philosophers, including Hobbes and Aristotle, and explicitly references the development of the “Western political tradition” (Wolin 2004, 10). The problem inherent here is his dismissal of all theorists who are not part of the west. This is problematic because it perpetuates the idea that the west is superior, and that only western political thought is worth preserving. Additionally, dismissing non-western political thought as unimportant limits the wealth of knowledge from which people can learn from and use to solve problems. Wolin contends that the tradition allows people in the present to use ideas from the past to solve current problems (Wolin 2004, 20). However, if this tradition is strictly western, then political theorists are limiting themselves by not taking into account the ideas and types of solutions that could be generated in traditions and cultures that are non-western.

Wolin’s argument belittles ideas from the non-west, and also actively contributes to a sense of “othering” towards those philosophers. Wolin’s only reference to non-western political theory is his explicit reference to the western tradition; he implies that a different sort of political thought exists, but fails to reference it directly (Wolin 2004, 10). In turn, he perpetuates the idea that eastern political theory is not worthy of being brought into the conversation of political theory in general. If one were to accept his argument, then one would also be accepting that those who have not been privy to the western tradition thus far are unable to contribute at all to the conversation surrounding political theory, because of their inability to adhere to the pre-established language. Therefore, non-western philosophers would be faced with the insurmountable challenge of being unable to enter the conversation, simply because they were never part of the conversation to begin with.

To fight against Wolin’s strictly western tradition, people should attempt to read and study political theory by people from a variety of cultures and backgrounds. To study and adhere strictly to western theory is limiting, both to non-western political theorists and to oneself in the pursuit of finding solutions to problems. In order to overcome the idea that the west is superior and to broaden one’s understanding of political thought, one should attempt to become as well versed as possible in theory from all around the world.

Word Count: 496

Works Cited

Wolin, Sheldon. 2004. *Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

SJ 2 (Jacques Rancière “Ten Theses on Politics,” p. 36): (27-44)

In “Ten Theses on Politics,” Jacques Rancière contends that politics is the process by which people confront each other as equals, break free from the police order that separates members of society, and create changes in the way that they are perceived (Rancière 2001, 36). I argue that Rancière is correct, and that the perceived, established order of society can only be altered through his definition of politics. Further, I will argue that the traditionally conducted method of politics in the U.S, such as passing legislation, fails to change the established perceptions of specific individuals, groups, and identities.

Rancière’s version of politics is effective in eliciting change in the way people are perceived because it is engaging, shocking, and challenges traditionally accepted norms. For example, Rosa Parks’s act of remaining seated on the front of a bus, at a time when black people were expected to sit at the back, altered the way that she was perceived and allowed for others to follow suit in the fight for equality. This process of expression and reception, in which her action did not match people’s expectations, was a powerful display of one person’s desire for equality. This seemingly simple action was powerful because Rosa Parks demonstrated to those around her that she was equal, and deserved to be treated as such.

The change in perception created by Rancière’s politics is unattainable through the processes that one might think of as traditional political acts in the U.S. today. One might argue that pieces of legislation, such as those that enable people of different races to marry, can change the way that specific groups are perceived. However, I argue that pieces of legislation of this nature actually reflect social change that is first incited by the kind of politics to which Rancière refers. For example, the case of *Loving*, in which the Supreme Court ruled that state law in Virginia that outlawed interracial marriage was invalid, did not undermine the established order of society. Rather, it conformed to it. The judges were in places that they were expected to be, and acted in a way that falls within the police order. However, when the Lovings lived together as a married couple, when it was not accepted, they challenged the established boundaries of society, and forced people to confront them as equals. This action had the capacity to change how they were perceived, but the passing of the law conformed to the distribution of the sensible. This is not to say that laws serve no purpose. They can protect rights, and have the power to help or harm, but they do not elicit changes in perception in the way that Rancière’s politics can.

Rancière’s politics means that there is potential for political change and revolution at any time. Furthermore, his interpretation allows for anyone and everyone to participate in the ongoing struggle for equality, which can only be attained through shifts in the ways that specific groups and identities are perceived.

Word Count: 496

Works Cited

Rancière, Jacques. 2001. *Dissensus: on Politics and Aesthetics*. London: Continuum.

SJ 3 (Andrew March “What is Comparative Political Theory,” p.535):

In “What is Comparative Political Theory?” Andrew March questions the validity of comparative political theory as a separate field, and contends that in order for it to be its own area of study, it must offer its own distinct contributions, through “the contestations of norms, values, and principles between distinct and coherent doctrines of thought” (March 2009, 531). Ultimately, I agree that CPT cannot simply be characterized as the study of non-western thought, as this furthers the idea that western ideas and texts are standard, and everything else is “other.” However, March’s stringent definition of CPT is limiting to the possibilities of the field, and is not the most beneficial way of conducting CPT.

March establishes early on in his essay that CPT must not be a “zoological cataloguing of diversity” (March 2009, 537). While diversity is beneficial and one should strive to learn about many cultures in order to broaden their understanding of the world, the simple act of doing so does not amount to comparative political theory. To label it as such perpetuates the arbitrary division between literature from the west and the non-west, without providing a valid basis for comparison. Furthermore, this division portrays all literature from the non-west as “other.” This depiction impedes a more genuine form of diversity from taking place.

Further, a more authentic version of diversity and comparison is possible within CPT, and does not require the strict guidelines for which March argues. For example, Leigh Jenco presents an interesting analysis of China’s reform system of *bianfa*, that allowed for Chinese systems of knowledge production to exist in parallel with the creation of western institutions of knowledge (Jenco 2015, 94). Her analysis was focused on how China developed in a postcolonial world, but it did not fit the rigid guidelines which March prescribes. Regardless, her work presented people with an alternative to a completely westernized form of development, such as the kind that Fukuzawa Yukichi advocated for. Her work also helps to shine a light on the inevitability that countries in a postcolonial world are inextricably tied to Europe, and that this will be reflected in their development. Despite this connection, she demonstrates that it is still possible for those countries to maintain their own unique culture and traditions in the modern world.

Each method of conducting comparative political theory has its own specific problems. The general classification of studying any non-western entity as “comparative” political theory perpetuates the idea that the west is normal, and that every other place and culture is inherently “other.” However, the strict guidelines which March proposes places limits on the field. Despite the issues inherent in the process of conducting CPT, theorists must strive to create interesting, helpful, and thought-provoking comparisons in the confines they are given, in order to solve problems in the world.

Word Count: 461

Works Cited

- March, Andrew F. 2009. “*What Is Comparative Political Theory?*” *The Review of Politics*. Notre Dame, IN: Cambridge University Press.
- Jenco, Leigh. 2015. *Changing Referents: Learning Across Space and Time in China and the West*. New York, NY : Oxford University Press.

SJ 4 (JJ Rousseau, *Emile*, p. 450): 450-472

In *Emile*, Rousseau contends that Emile could only become a healthy, happy person in a corrupt society by travelling to foreign countries' "remote provinces" (Rousseau 1762, 453). There, he can adopt the virtues of people, understand the effects of various forms of government, and ultimately learn how to be free. I argue that one develops a unique understanding of various cultures, customs, and morals through travel. However, freedom should not be perceived to be based on one's ability to travel, as this idea is inherently elitist, and contributes to the perceived inferiority of people who fall within low socio-economic classes.

Traveling to new places allows for a specific kind of learning that is unattainable through reading, as it pushes people out of their comfort zones and forces them to participate in different cultures. While most of my travel abroad has been limited to large cities, which Rancière argues are inaccurate representations of countries' cultures, I was fortunate enough to spend a weekend visiting a friend who was working as an au pair in the relatively small city of Bordeaux, France. My sister and I stayed in a guest room of a woman who was born in France and learned English in London. During our time there, we experienced the leisurely atmosphere of the city, drank wine among locals, and ate a traditional home-cooked meal from the woman with whom we stayed. I experienced a city that my friend had previously described, but the understanding that I gained of French culture would have been impossible to attain through her words alone.

While travelling can deepen one's understanding of different cultures, it is also inherently excluding to certain groups of people. From Rousseau's perspective, people who are unable to afford to travel would never be able to finish "the job of making him[self] good or bad" (Rousseau 1762, 457). The implication is that a person who does not travel is not a complete, fulfilled person, since they are unable to adopt the virtues of people from different countries. This may have been true in the past, when communication across countries was incredibly limited. However, since the invention of television and social media, people from all around the world are able to interact with one another, see pictures, and watch videos of how people in other countries live. While watching content online does not amount to the same experience as travelling to a place, it greatly expands the possibility for one to deepen their knowledge and acceptance of other cultures.

Even if one disagrees with the benefits of media in terms of expanding cultural acceptance, our society should not perpetuate the idea that freedom and fulfillment hinge on one's ability to travel. This contributes to the idea that lower-income people are inherently less cultured or educated than those who are wealthy. One should strive to learn about various cultures, and attempt to adopt the morals that one considers beneficial. However, travel should not be what determines how fulfilled, intelligent, or free a person is perceived to be within society.

Word Count: 500

Works Cited

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. 1762. *Emile, or on Education*. New York: Basic Books.

SJ 5 (Kautilya, Arthashastra, p. 16):

Kautilya argues that, so long as a king is sufficiently educated in the four sciences and “devoted to good Government of his subjects,” then he will be able to rule “unopposed” (Kautilya 1992, 16). I agree with Kautilya’s assessment, due to the inherent restrictions upon anyone who would attempt to revolt against a king who follows Kautilya’s strict advice. These restrictions which Kautilya describes ensure the safety of the king and his subjects, and also allow them to pursue dharma. Despite the use of a strict caste system in India, I argue that the Kautilya’s suggested techniques are similar to those used by politicians in present day America.

Kautilya advocates for an intricate network of spies to be used all over the kingdom and other territories in order to ensure peace. At first glance, these practices could be interpreted as a severe infringement on one’s right to privacy, especially when viewed from the perspective of a modern day American. However, modern technological advancements have enabled governmental institutions to spy on the general public at an unprecedented rate and with an extensiveness that has never before been possible. Generally, most people accept these intrusive techniques, because the actions are justified in the name of safety. Similarly, the advice to employ spies in India can easily be rationalized in order to ensure that the people of India and their ruler would remain safe.

Further, Kautilya establishes that the king must ensure that the four castes in society observe their own duties unswervingly in order for himself and his subjects to achieve the “infinite bliss” of Dharma (Kautilya 1992, 11). While there is no caste system in America, there are specific perceptions placed on certain groups, identities, and individuals, by the dominant social class. Rancière refers to this as the “distribution as the sensible” (Rancière 2001, 36). For example, people in the working class are expected to meet certain expectations in order to achieve an Americanized standard of “success,” including making a suitable living, or owning a home of one’s own. The cultural pressure to succeed at the individual level is necessary for democratically elected rulers to remain in power and for society to continue. Those in the working class are expected to attend work almost everyday, thereby contributing to the economy on a larger scale. If they fail to show up to work consistently, they lose their jobs. This form of punishment is similar to Kautilya’s justification of punishment after “due consideration,” as a means to keep people in line, and society running smoothly (Kautilya 1992, 13).

The social order in ancient India differs greatly from that of modern day America; however, the general idea that societal order is necessary so that citizens will remain peaceful and those in power can stay in power is consistent across the two societies. Ultimately, Kautilya created fascinating advice for rulers of ancient India, but the overarching ideas of his specific arguments can easily transcend time and space.

Word Count: 480

Works Cited

- Kautilya. 1992. *The Arthashastra*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.
 Rancière, Jacques. 2001. *Dissensus: on Politics and Aesthetics*. London: Continuum.

SJ 6 (Stuart Gray, Re-Examining Kautilya and Machiavelli,” p. 651-652):

Gray contends that, through a critique of Machiavelli, Kautilya “incisively explains how destructive religious or theological beliefs in contemporary democracies such as the United States can hide behind a secular smokescreen and thus potentially damage democratic legitimacy” (Gray 2014, 651). However, I argue that the values upon which a country is founded are always subjective, and that there is ultimately little tangible difference in the legitimacy of the source of values cited by countries, whether they be religious or otherwise. Ultimately, if a group of people are choosing to use a set of beliefs to justify their way of life and the actions of their government, then there is no significant, objective difference between the legitimacy of set of values over another.

For most of human history, governments have been based on religion in some way. During Kautilya’s time, the people in ancient India were separated into a caste system. The level into which one was born was allegedly based on the way that the person had acted in their previous life. The society revolved around the pursuit of achieving dharma, so that one could break free from this cycle between life and death. Since this was the ultimate motivation, and it was believed that one could achieve dharma by diligently focusing on the duties to which they were assigned, a caste system was accepted.

From a modern western perspective, the idea that people could live without the potential for upward mobility sounds, initially, absurd. However, the values held by Americans today are starkly different than those held by people in ancient India. We in the west frequently proclaim that American democratic values are best. However, if people in a specific place are content with living in a society that separates people into a caste system, because the ultimate motivation is achieving dharma, then people who believe in a different set of values are unable to proclaim that they are wrong. Because no source from which values derive is inherently better than another, Gray’s claim that modern democratic values that are grounded in religious or theological beliefs are less legitimate than others is not valid.

In order to avoid a sense of elitism towards certain values, political theorists in the future should attempt to avoid Gray’s mistake of claiming that religious grounds could delegitimize ideas of democracy. While the use of theology as a basis for a country’s values could initially strike one as illegitimate, one should strive to understand the perspective of people in different cultures, and question whether the basis for any set of values has a more objectively legitimate starting point than religious ones.

Word Count: 434

Works Cited

Gray, Stuart. 2014. *Reexamining Kautilya and Machiavelli: Flexibility and the Problem of Legitimacy in Brahmanical and Secular Realism*. Baltimore, MD: SAGE Publications.

SJ 7 (Liang Qichao, “Observations on a Trip to America,” p. 93):

After Liang Qichao travelled to America in 1903, he concluded that the people of China were not suited to adopt a democratic system of government, and that if they did, “it would be nothing less than committing national suicide” (Scott 1992, 93.). He contended that the reason for this was that Americans had developed the “city-system of self-government,” while the Chinese had developed a “clan system of self-government” (Scott 1992, 93). Qichao’s descriptions of people in China, such as calling them “simply not intelligent,” are wide-sweeping and inherently wrong (Scott 1992, 92). Ultimately, his racist perceptions of Chinese people contribute to his conclusion that they were not ready for democracy. While I do not agree with Qichao’s generalizations, I argue that China should not have adopted a democratic form of government at that time, because a regime change should come from within a country’s own people, rather than from other people telling them that democracy is superior and must be accepted. While I have my own preconceived notions of the benefits of democracy, I argue that no person should have the right to tell another group of people that democracy is a superior form of government than their own.

Qichao contends that China was not well-suited for democracy because of its inferiority. Rather, I propose that it was perhaps not well-suited to a revolutionary new form of government because the motivations and values of people in China were different than those held by people in America. These cultural values and norms develop over centuries of time, and are not inherent to any person of a specific race. Regardless, these biases affect what one desires from their government. Further, I contend that no one could claim that American democratic values were inherently, objectively better than values in China. To assume that all people long for one kind of government is presumptuous, elitist, and perpetuates the narrative that the west is superior to the non-west.

Additionally, Qichao’s assessment assumes that there is a linear narrative to political regimes, and that they develop towards objectively ideal, democratic societies. The assumption that one’s government is constantly developing towards being better and more democratic is misleading, and can lead to complacency. Additionally, this narrative once again assumes that all people desire the same services from their government. However, some groups of people are motivated by other values. Harkening back to Kautilya, people in ancient India strove for dharma above all else. As such, they were willing to forego the modern western value of equality.

Ultimately, I argue that a fundamental goal for comparative political theory should be to attempt to place oneself in another’s shoes when questioning the value of transitioning to a different regime type. Through this attempt to read texts from different perspectives, perhaps we can gain important insights as to how we should approach our own country’s problems.

Word Count: 474

Works Cited

Wong, K. Scott. 1992. “*Liang Qichao and the Chinese of America: A Re-Evaluation of His ‘Selected Memoir of Travels in the New World.’*” Bloomington, IN: Journal of American Ethnic History.

SJ 8 (Roxanne Euben, *Journeys to the Other Shore*, p. 23-24):

In *Journeys to the Other Shore*, Roxanne Euben argues that traveling to “worlds less familiar” allows for one to “understand his or her own more deeply and fully” (Euben 2008, 23). This acquiring of knowledge is not guaranteed to generate beneficial results, however. Euben contends that travel and the knowledge gained from it will inevitably change a person, but in ways that are impossible to predict. Ultimately, I argue that those who have the ability to travel to foreign places also possess the privilege of using what they learn to justify imperialism and perpetuate the idea that their home country is superior.

Euben’s concerns towards travel are similar to those expressed by Rousseau in *Emile*. However, Euben’s analysis of the way that people are transformed by travel is less predetermined than Rousseau’s and more deeply explored. Rousseau argues that traveling completes the process of pushing a man towards his natural bend of good or evil, because of the vices or virtues he may acquire from people along the way (Rousseau 1762, 456). Euben, on the other hand, contends that, through a deeper understanding of how other cultures are different than one’s own, one could use that knowledge to justify “cultural superiority,” “imperialist ventures,” and the like (Euben 2008, 32). Euben’s depiction of the potentially negative effects of travel are more sinister than those proposed by Rousseau. Historically, the concerns which Euben addresses have had significant, long-lasting implications. Imperialism has shaped the world we live in, and perpetuates the power-dynamic through which invaders are able to construct a narrative that their culture is superior.

Euben’s concerns manifest in today’s society in ways that are frequently veiled by acts of charity or benevolence. For example, documentarians frequently depict people in foreign countries via ethnographic films, and cite their justification as the need for raised awareness on issues. Relatively popular documentaries do in fact have the capacity to raise awareness. Through the process, however, ethnographic documentaries are intrinsically tied to the idea of perpetuating a tradition of the victim” (Nichols 2001, 140). This tradition refers to the exploitation of subjects and the tendency for filmmakers to portray them as powerless. In doing so, a subject’s culture, tradition, and country is portrayed through a lens of inferiority. While these kinds of documentaries are less immediately harmful than imperialism, they contribute to the overall idea that some countries are inferior to others, and can be used to justify imperialist actions.

Through travel, people inevitably widen their understanding of the world they visit, and the one that they leave behind. Those who are privileged enough to venture to unfamiliar places should be cognisant of the ways by which their biases affect their perceptions of unknown experiences. Comparative political theorists and travelers in general should strive to understand how to better oneself and one’s own community through the things that they learn abroad.

Word Count: 464

Works Cited

Euben, Roxanne. 2008. *Journeys to the Other Shore: Muslim and Western Travelers in Search of Knowledge*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Nichols, Bill. 2001. *Introduction to Documentary*. Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University Press.
 Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. 1762. *Emile, or on Education*. New York: Basic Books.

SJ 9 (Franz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, p. 236):

In *Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon argues that Africa must not “imitate Europe” in the way that America did. He contends that they must “endeavor to invent a man in full,” rather than succumb to committing the crimes of imperialism, such as “slavery” and “exploitation” (Fanon 1963, 238). At the time Fanon wrote *Wretched*, capitalism had reached a point where everyone in the world was essentially unable to escape its system. A society in the midst of revolution has the capacity to actively work against committing the crimes of the imperialists before them and strive to be better in their own way. However, I argue that the idea that they would be able to “invent” a new man, without any ties to Europe, would prove impossible, due to the ingrained European systems of thought that would bias their development, as a result of their forced assimilation.

As much as Fanon advocated for creating a society without European influence, the incapacity for his country to do so was foreshadowed by his inability to break out of European systems of thought in his writing. In the postcolonial world, the intertwining of cultures was inevitable, with the west almost exclusively being the point of comparison. Additionally, the ways in which politics is discussed in the postcolonial world is inherently European. For example, the terms “citizen” and “subject” are constantly used to discuss societies; the images and associations these terms conjure are the result of European ideas that have been spread through colonization. While “citizen” implies ideas of self-rule and mutual participation among people, the term “subject” implies that one has duties that must be obeyed. Further, even the writing of “history” is a constructed idea, created in Europe in the 19th century, in order to justify the nation-state. Ultimately, the idea of completely breaking free from Europe would prove impossible for any country in the postcolonial world.

Fanon’s criticisms of imperialist forces in *Wretched* demonstrate the negative effects of travel. The European colonists who Fanon criticizes were people who used the knowledge they gained abroad to force themselves upon others. European influence is felt all over the world, in a way that presents the west as the top-level tier of civilization, while everyone else falls below. In the future I propose that political theorists strive to fight against the idea that white people are superior to others. This concept has been constructed intentionally by those in positions of power across centuries. Now, we must work to undo the racism and bigotry they created, which many people continue to accept today.

Word Count: 426

Works Cited

Fanon, Frantz. 1963. *The Wretched Of The Earth*. New York:Grove Press.

SJ 10 (Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, p. 4):

While Fanon advocates for breaking free from European culture and influence in the development of his home-country, Chakrabarty argues in *Provincializing Europe* that it is “impossible to think of anywhere in the world without invoking certain categories and concepts, the genealogies of which go deep into the intellectual and even theological traditions of Europe” (Chakrabarty 1992, 4). Essentially, he contends that in a postcolonial world, no country can escape the confines of European influence. In what follows, he attempts to analyze the “translucence” in the “relation between non-Western histories and European thought and its analytical categories” (Chakrabarty 1992, 17). Ultimately, I agree with Chakrabarty in that no there is no feasible way to avoid the concepts, narratives, and institutions that Europe created; political theorists now must work to demonstrate the unnatural, violent elements within the development of European expansion and influence, and how other cultures developed as a result.

The influence of Europe on modern institutions and concepts can be seen in the very language we use to describe them. For example, the word “democracy” conjures specific associations, such as representation within government, liberalism, and freedom. Because of colonialism, these associations were spread all over the world, and are now recognized everywhere. The interconnectedness between words and the images they conjure generally feel natural, even though language itself is completely contrived. This feeling that the meanings behind words is inevitable is reflected in narrative accounts of societies transitioning from “premodern” to “modern.” The general through-line among much political theory is that societies advance in a linear motion towards being “modern.” However, Chakrabarty highlights the fact that this sense of modernity is synonymous with being European. While the benefits that come with progress, such as running water and food to eat, are beneficial, the violence and exploitation is not.

The acceptance of these narratives as natural is evidence of European power developing and expanding over time. Because a given country is unable to escape the ubiquity of European culture, people must work, instead, to show how their society has been exploited in the name of European progress. In turn, this will highlight the ways by which certain cultures developed through the exploitative processes of colonialism. As such, political theory must be significantly historical in nature, and work within the confines of European ways of thinking.

Chakrabarty convincingly advocates for working within the constraints of European influence. Ultimately, through comparative political theory it is important to highlight the intricacies of how European expansion affects the development of other countries. In doing so, we will gain a deeper understanding of other cultures and traditions.

Word Count: 434

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SJ 11 (Fukuzawa Yukichi, “Escape from Asia,”):

In *Escape from Asia*, Fukuzawa Yukichi argues that China and Korea will not be able to survive as “independent nations with the onslaught of Western civilization” (Yukichi 1885, 1). He contends that all nations in the non-west must transition to a westernized way of life, in order to avoid being colonized, and so that they may remain independent. I argue that the linear narrative he perpetuates is not inevitable, that completely giving up all elements of Japanese culture amounts to a self-colonization, and that Leigh Jenco’s argument that multiple ways of thought can exist in parallel with each other is a better approach to conserving independence and Japanese culture.

Fukuzawa Yukichi first establishes that the transformation towards “civilization” in the East is akin to a “wind” that blows from the west, one that is reflected by the movement in the “grass” and the “trees” (Fukuzawa 1885, 1). Here Fukuzawa Yukichi uses wind as a metaphor for the transformation towards westernization being a natural, inevitable occurrence. His argument is that, because the transformation will happen regardless, Japan should succumb to the ways of the west, and forego their culture. However, I contend that there is no endpoint to history. While it is a traditional mode of thought to believe the narrative that nations are constantly developing towards something better, I believe that this is not the case. For example, had Germany succeeded in winning WWII, their victory should not have been considered the natural and inevitable way by which the world was destined to develop.

Further, a complete westernization of Japan essentially strips the country of its culture and amounts to a self-colonization. Through this process, one must question the purpose of remaining independent. If the motivation behind conserving autonomy is so that a country can act in a way that it sees fit, the idea that the country would succumb to a completely western way of living, in order to avoid colonization, seems purposeless. By stripping one’s country of its substance, and replacing it with another’s, one avoids being a slave to a colonizer, but becomes a slave to something else.

Additionally, I agree with the argument proposed by Leigh Jenco, that history does not move in a specific direction. Rather, the only constant is change. As such, there is no force moving a nation towards complete westernization. Instead, Japanese thought could sit along parallel to European thought, in a way that would not necessitate the erasing or complete shift of Japanese culture (Jenco 2015, 94).

Ultimately, the shift towards complete westernization in Japan makes me question the substantive motivation behind remaining independent. However, I recognize that the source of this alleged, inevitable transformation originated in Europe itself. Fukuzawa Yukichi likely believed that this self-imposed transformation was the most successful way to avoid colonization. In the future, I propose that political theorists explore more widely the idea that the only constant is change, and that any one progression or the other is not inherently natural.

Word Count: 485

Works Cited

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 Jenco, Leigh. 2015. *Changing Referents: Learning Across Space and Time in China and the West.* New York, NY : Oxford University Press.

SJ 12 (Leigh Jenco, Changing Referents, 94):

In *Changing Referents*, Leigh Jenco presents the ways by which China adopted *bianfa*, which translates to “a changing of referents,” in order to restructure “Chinese institutions and ways of life to accord with... ‘Western’ models” (Jenco 2015, 94). The motivation behind this realignment was to generate knowledge in the same way by which knowledge was developed in the west. Jenco defends China’s methods of reform; she contends that while a country must develop communities that contribute to the development of westernized forms of knowledge, they can also simultaneously hold on to their traditional institutions that generate alternative forms of knowledge (Jenco 2015, 94). I argue that Jenco’s defense of *bianfa* is justified, largely because there is no inevitable, westernized direction in which societies must travel. Ultimately, *bianfa* serves as a valid alternative to a complete displacement of a country’s culture.

Jenco contends that institutions can exist in parallel with one another. In order to contribute to conversations surrounding westernized knowledge, people in China needed to develop communities and institutions that would be able to yield the same kinds of knowledge that is produced in the west. For example, by creating universities in China, communities of scientists would be able to come together, conduct research, and generate information that would allow them to contribute to conversations about science on the global scale. The creation of this university does not require, however, that China completely abandon its own institutional ways of producing knowledge.

Jenco defends China’s reform methods to maintain its own knowledge communities. For example, people in China could and should maintain the institutions that spread knowledge of Confucianism. Through *bianfa*, Confucianism and western style universities could exist in parallel with one another. Therefore, reform through *bianfa* allows for the maintenance of culture and the ability for people from every country to contribute to and be competitive in forms of knowledge that largely dominate in the world. Additionally, countries that maintain their own diverse network of knowledge production are then able to share this information with the world. These types of contributions can help to educate people from other countries, and hopefully be instrumental in the creation of a more accepting, diverse world.

The nuance with which Jenco approaches the topic of China’s reforms through *bianfa* is more satisfying than the suggested ideas which have been advanced by other scholars in the class thus far. The idea of western and non-western institutions existing in parallel with one another seems substantially more possible than a complete rejection of European ideals and also satisfies a maintenance of culture and tradition. In the future, I propose that political theorists explore ways by which they can create their own new knowledge communities to solve the world’s problems, in the same way that China created their own through reforms.

Word Count: 457

Works Cited:

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SJ 13 (Jose Vasconcelos - “The Cosmic Race, 412)

Jose Vasconcelos argues in “The Cosmic Race” that humanity is headed towards an inevitable form of cosmopolitanism, in which the “fifth race” will “fill the planet with the triumphs of the first truly universal, truly cosmic culture” (O'Brien 2013, 412). This new race will be the final one, according to Vasconcelos, and it will be the result of people in Latin America mixing all of the various types of races together, because their history has been one of love. Through this mixture of biological and cultural blending, the genuine essence of global humanity will appear. Ultimately, I argue that the idea of an emerging fifth race is not practical, and that instead political theorist should adopt a perspective of working towards spreading cultural understanding and knowledge.

The world as it exists today is unfortunately rife with hatred, racism, and violence. Vasconcelos argues that the differences between human beings will all be erased, and that people will be able to live as a unified group in a harmonious culture. Unfortunately, his argument reads like a piece of fiction. The development of a unified human race, based on love and acceptance, is an idealized vision of the world. I argue that this is a fantasy because there is no specific direction or order which guides history. Change is constant, but it is not directing humanity towards an idealized future. Rather, change alters history, and then people tend to interpret these changes to be beneficial, inevitable forces of nature.

Rather than dream of a world in which there exists a single, unified culture, comparative political theorists should instead focus on better exploring the voices of those cultures who have been historically silenced. The kinds of stories, traditions, and information held by, for example, women in third world countries, could give significant insight into the ways by which cultures and countries develop in a postcolonial world. Further, through the spread of knowledge and diversity of cultures, countries are better able to learn how to preserve their respective culture, while also bettering its peoples standard of living. For example, before reading Jenco’s *Changing Referents*, I was fairly convinced that “development” is inevitably equated with “westernizing.” However, Jenco’s defense of *bianfa* in China, in which multiple cultural institutions are able to exist in harmony with one another, opened my eyes to the possibility of a country being able to hold onto its culture, while also adding westernized elements that enable its people to be part of global discussions of one form of knowledge (Jenco 2015, 94).

Ultimately, Vasconcelos argues for an idealized version of the world. While this can at times be beneficial to think about, in order to see the similarities across all humanity, it is far more practical and worthwhile to work towards spreading understanding, diversity, and cultural acceptance today, than hope for a unified race to develop in the future.

Word Count: 471

Works Cited

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O'Brien, Elaine. 2013. *Modern art in Africa, Asia, and Latin America: an introduction to global modernisms*. Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell.

SJ 14 (Farah Godrej - "Towards a Cosmopolitan Political Thought", 138)

In *Towards a Cosmopolitan Political Thought*, Farah Godrej argues for a form of cosmopolitanism in which the boundaries between areas are preserved, all places and cultures are created equal, and everyone exchanges ideas with one another. To enable this kind of world, which she refers to as a "more genuine cosmopolitanism," she argues that comparative political theorists must travel to historically underrepresented places, leverage their experiences into texts to be read by others, and then share these experiences with everyone (Godrej 2009, 138). I argue that Godrej's approach is a kind of thinly veiled colonialism, and that it enables a distorted representation of the "other" to be created by those in positions of privilege. Additionally, I argue that this distorted representation can be seen across various kinds of media, thereby perpetuating a distrust of those who actually experience the problems.

Godrej's claim that theorists must transfer the traditions of cultures into writings from which others may learn perpetuates the privilege of the theorists, who are generally from the west, and the silencing of underprivileged voices. Those who are able to travel to an unfamiliar country with the purpose of deepening their own understanding start from a place of privilege. Inherently, there is nothing wrong with this pursuit of knowledge. However, when those people attempt to speak on behalf of the people they visit, they take on the role of being "white saviors." These "white saviors" present themselves superficially as helpful, but actually perpetuate the distrust of people who are experiencing problems in foreign countries.

This kind of representation is not isolated to comparative political theory. It is also prominent within a wide variety of media, including ethnographic documentary films. In these films, documentarians travel to foreign countries, and portray subjects from a position of power. This sense of power comes from filming and editing techniques that enable subjects to be represented in ways which they generally have little control over. Like Godrej, some of the filmmakers take a reflexive approach, and acknowledge the issues inherent in speaking for other people, rather than letting them speak for themselves. Some documentarians overcome this problem better than others, but no one can avoid it entirely.

Godrej contends that she can join an existing discourse in one location and bring it to another, however, she fails to overcome the issue of the inevitable distortion that she and other people from positions of privilege would bring to their respective writings. While cosmopolitanism may superficially appear to be a viable and honorable goal for the world, Godrej's methods for achieving such a structure actually perpetuate the inequalities between those who were born into a position of privilege versus those who were born into positions of extreme disadvantage.

Word Count: 448

Works Cited

Godrej, Farah. 2009. *Towards a Cosmopolitan Political Thought: The Hermeneutics of Interpreting the Other*. Riverside, CA: Polity.

SJ 15 (Jose Rizal - “On the Indolence of the Filipino”, 20)

In “On the Indolence of the Filipino,” Jose Rizal uses orientalist literature against the Spanish colonists who claim that Filipino indolence is hereditary. Instead, Rizal cleverly demonstrates that, through centuries of being deprived of education, subjected to violence, and ultimately stripped of their livelihoods by the Spanish, the Filipinos transformed from industrious, hard, workers into lazy, indolent people. Ultimately, once the “object” they worked on was removed by the Spanish, the Filipinos were “reduce[d] to inaction” (Rizal 1913, 20). I argue that Rizal’s proposed solution to have the Philippines be recognized as a province in the same way that others were in the rest of Spain was a beneficial solution, and was a practical response to the constraints upon Filipinos at the time. Additionally, I argue that the blatantly racist narrative that was perpetuated by the Spaniards is, in a lot of ways, similar to the underlying, institutionalized racism in America today, which prevents specific groups from upward mobility.

Rizal establishes that the problems that the Spaniards initiated within the Philippines would make it impossible for the Filipino people to rule themselves as a completely independent nation after suffering generations of destruction and exploitation. Instead, he argues that the structure of government must be reformed, so that the Philippines can become an equal province of Spain. Then, education reforms and laws would enable them to return to their initial culture of industriousness. This solution is incredibly interesting, because in the vast majority of theory that I have read, the general solution to ridding a country of its oppressors is through the immediate formation of a nation-state. Instead, Rizal’s proposal would allow for a much more stable transition towards freedom, through the acquisition of secular education and general reforms. The idea of working within the confines one is given is appealing for practical reasons. Many political theorists argue in favor of revolutionary acts outside the practical scope. However, those who argue within the restraints of the real world, such as Rizal, are more thorough, and create realistic, feasible solutions.

Spanish claims that indolence within Filipinos was hereditary now seems shocking and appalling. Rizal’s masterful approach demonstrates the institutionalized oppression that created a population of people who were forced into submission. This sort of blatant racism is similar to the ways by which poor, underprivileged, generally non-white populations are perceived in America today. The popular narrative continues to persist that the individual is responsible for “pulling oneself up by their bootstraps.” This message of self-accountability covers up the problems of institutionalized racism that prevent upward mobility in underprivileged communities, including a lack of sufficient education. This kind of sinister, implicit racism is dangerous and harmful, largely because of its lack of explicitness. Rizal’s approach to undermining the Spanish system with orientalism should serve as an inspiration to political theorists who intend to change the way that specific groups are perceived and treated.

Word Count: 476

Works Cited

Rizal, José. 1913. *The indolence of the Filipino* ("*La indolencia de los Filipinos*" in English). Philippines: Dodo Press.

SJ 16 (Megan Thomas, Orientalists, Propagandists, and Illustrados, 7)

Megan Thomas argues in *Orientalists, Propagandists, and Illustrados* that orientalism and “racial sciences can be used for liberatory projects as well as repressive ones,” depending on the context and how they are “manipulat[ed] by their practitioners” (Thomas 2012, 7). Despite the specificity of the case of the Philippines lending itself exceptionally well to this argument, I agree with Thomas’s somewhat optimistic interpretation of the possibilities of orientalist sciences. A strong piece of evidence for the possibility of liberation is the work of Jose Rizal, through his innovative technique of using orientalism in order to undermine the arguments of Spanish colonists. Ultimately, I argue that Thomas is correct in her argument, and that the nature of an “orientalist” or “racial science” being used for liberatory or repressive purposes depends on context and manipulation, thereby demonstrating the inherent subjectivity imbedded within the fields. Additionally, I argue that this manipulation continues today, and can be explored through various mediums.

Rizal employed the masterful use of orientalism as a tool with which he was able to undermine the racist arguments of Spanish colonists (Rizal 1913, 20). Unfortunately, however, usually those with the ability to study and analyze “orientalism” or “racial science” are those in privileged positions of power. Generally, these people employ a use of orientalism as a racist tactic to dominate a specific disenfranchised group. However, when people such as Rizal are able to seize the opportunity to use orientalism as a tool in support of liberation, it demonstrates the importance of how the text is manipulated. Many political theorists, especially those in the distant past, present their work as objectively true. However, every piece of political theory is inherently subjective in the way that it is presented, and in how it is utilized by people citing those arguments.

Rizal’s manipulation of texts and racial science is similar to the ways in which filmmaker Ava DuVernay explores the narrative of racial inequality in the U.S., and how it developed overtime through oppressive tactics, in her 2016 documentary film, *13TH* (Duvernay 2016). The film tracks the moments in history since slavery that have led to a disproportionately high number of incarcerated black people. Extreme racial inequality does not happen overnight, and it is never the result of one racial group being inherently lazy, or more inclined to commit crimes. Rather, it is the institutionalization of racism that forces certain groups to endure more hardships than others.

In the future I propose that political theorists, documentarians, and people concerned with inequality explore the ways by which history has shaped the world that we live in today. Through analyses of this nature, people are able to use racial science to undermine itself, in ways similar to Rizal.

Word Count: 445

Works Cited

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SJ 17 (Sayid Qutb, “The America I have Seen”, 4)

In “The America I Have Seen,” Sayid Qutb argues that America’s peak in “science and productivity” lies in parallel with its abysmally primitive relationship with “feelings and behavior” (Qutb 1992, 4). A significant portion of his writing in “The America I Have Seen” indicate that his general perception of American people and culture is one of disgust. Despite the hatred intertwined in the article, it is important to read and analyze the ways in which American is perceived by people from vastly different cultural backgrounds. Ultimately, I argue that Qutb cherry-picks examples to create sweeping generalizations of American culture. Through his flawed logic, he fails to account for the diversity of America and the elements of other countries’ cultures around the world that would be, from Qutb’s perspective, equally as “primitive” in terms of “feelings and behavior.”

Qutb cites the violence of football as an indicator of American primitiveness. He contends that the fan’s “animal excitement” is “born of their love for hardcore violence” (Qutb 1992, 7). Through his analysis, however, Qutb fails to mention that baseball, volleyball, and snowboarding are three non-violent sports created in America, that continue to be popular today. These physical activities reward skill and nuance above physical brutality. Further, the sense of community and emotional support that one gains by being a part of these sports in America, either as a competitor or a fan, is the opposite of how Qutb wishes to portray American citizens. The “feelings and behavior” exhibited in a team huddle before a game, for instance, is a kind of spiritual experience, in which teammates come together and commit to support one another through the game.

Furthermore, Qutb fails to take account of countries other than America in which violent sports contribute to their culture. Qutb commends the English for being more “elegant” than Americans, but fails to mention the origination and continuation of the violent sport of rugby in England (Qutb 1992, 18). The sport is an important part of their culture, and draws an equally intense fan-base as football does in America. While the utilization of violence in sports is not objectively evil, if Qutb is choosing to condemn violent sports in America, he should not forgo criticisms of other countries which favor violence in sports, as well.

America is far from a perfect country. However, Qutb’s use of generalizations in an active approach to condemn all American culture is especially upsetting. There exists a plethora of issues over which one could choose to criticize America, but his use of sweeping claims, rather than nuance and critical assessment, do not amount to a persuasive critique of America.

Word Count: 431

Works Cited

Qutb, Sayid. 1951. *“The America That I Have Seen”: In the Scale of Human Values*. Kash ul Shubuh Publications.

SJ 18 (Mizumura Minae, *The Fall of Language in the Age of English*, 189)

In *The Fall of Language in the Age of English*, Mizumura Minae uses the case of “damage” being “inflicted on the Japanese language by postwar revisions” to demonstrate how the “introduction of Western ideology into a non-Western context” in general “often does unimagined harm” (Minae 2015, 189). I argue that Minae is correct, and the political power entwined in the dominance of the spread of the English language has the ability to alter, destroy, and even erase non-western culture and political structures.

One area that demonstrates the power of English is academia. When texts are translated into English, the words are no longer a completely genuine representation of the author’s thoughts, feelings, and arguments. In a way, translators are doing political acts, simply through this process of translation. This political power can largely be attributed to the fact that language is the vehicle of culture. The prevalence of English by itself is not a problem. However, it is the destruction of other cultures through westernization that is inextricably linked to this prevalence that constitutes a dramatic issue. Through the introduction of phonetic notation in Japan, many Japanese symbols became lost and distorted, thereby severely limiting the language. This example demonstrates that the dominance of English in the ways that we learn perpetuates the issues that are apparent in comparative political theory.

Many native English speakers generally believe that English dominance is benign. The spread of English should make the lives of native speakers easier, after all. However, this simplistic approach fails to account for the implications upon the rest of the world. To continue with the example of Japan, the spread of westernization drastically changed their way of living and also contributed to a severe limitation of their language. In addition to being concerned with the preservation of various cultures around the world for reasons unrelated to oneself, native English speakers could also be motivated to avoid the dominance of English around the world for more selfish reasons. There is much to be learned from other countries, cultures, and ways of life, and to erase them would erase the possibility of learning them. For example, many people in America in general, and Los Angeles in particular, enjoy the mental and physical benefits of Yoga, which originated in India. If, hypothetically, a complete westernization were to have taken over India before the spread of Yoga, people all around the world would not be able to benefit from this activity.

This example, while extremely simple, is evidence of the fact that people from all over the world benefit from the spread of different, diverse cultures. To erase them is damaging to the people who experience the culture at home, and to those with whom the culture can be shared and appreciated.

Word Count: 455

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