Symposium

# IDEAS IN CONTEXT: A CONVERSATION WITH FRANK CUNNINGHAM

**ELAINE COBURN, HARRY GLASBEEK, MEG HOLDEN, CHARLES MILLS AND FRANK CUNNINGHAM**

**Abstract**

This symposium is a lively discussion about philosopher Frank Cunningham's *Ideas in Context: Essays in Social and Political Theory* (2021). The writings draw from a conversation held on May 29, 2021 by the Society for Socialist Studies as part of its annual conference. Featuring Harry Glasbeek, Meg Holden, the late Charles Mills and a response by Frank Cunningham, the conversation was an opportunity to engage with a life in ideas, as chronicled in Cunningham's "non-memoir" (2021,4). Now shared here in written form, the symposium includes what may be the last contribution by Mills, a friend of half of century to Cunningham, known for his generosity of spirit and his trenchant theorizing of racial injustice (Mills 1997).[1]

**Key Words**

Capitalism, democracy, Marxism, political philosophy, pragmatism, racism

## Introduction

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Those familiar with Cunningham's scholarship will not be surprised that *Ideas in Context* is wide-ranging. In fifteen essays written from 1978 to 2021, Cunningham argues that the best way

[1] Just as this publication was being finalized, we learned the sad news that Charles Mills passed away peacefully on September 20, 2021. His comments below may well be among his last published writing. His death is not just a loss to his many friends in and beyond Socialist Studies but to the struggle against racism in which his works have played such a significant role.

to revive Karl Marx's insights is by abandoning the idea that Marx provided a comprehensive worldview, instead committing to political (philosophical) pluralism (Cunningham 2021,7-14). He critiques Thomas Kuhn's relativistic account of paradigmatic shifts in science, defending a dialectical understanding of objectivity in socially situated scientific practices, among other concerns (17-23). He borrows from John Dewey to argue for the university as a site for practicing democracy, so realizing the self in relation with others (80-88). He mobilizes Edmund Husserl in a phenomenological account of the lifeworld of the racist, to better challenge racism (100-106). Philosophers from Plato and Aristotle to Réné Girard, Iris Marion Young, Hegel, Antonia Gramsci, Jürgen Habermas, and Chantal Mouffe, among others, appear when required for the purposes of careful -- and imaginative -- argument.

Thematically and conceptually, Cunningham's concerns are broad, variously concerning the relationship between capitalism and democracy, the quality of scientific thought, the need for "more, not less" democracy, varieties of nationalism (good and bad), Indigenous self-determination and the relationship to anglophone and Québécois nationalisms in Canada, human nature and violence, peace and the global public, social justice in the university, Indigenous rights in and outside the city, *Homo Ludens* in urban spaces, and the imperative of challenging contemporary right-wing populisms. Yet the whole of *Ideas in Context* is animated by a single through line: an enduring, partisan interest in liberation and empowerment as inevitably diverse, historically situated struggles.

Glasbeek, Holden and Mills meet Cunningham on shared grounds. Like Cunningham, their interventions are motivated by a vital concern to pursue social and political theory in ways informed by and informing contemporary liberation struggles. Each raises important questions as they engage with Cunningham's arguments. In his contribution, Glasbeek welcomes Cunningham's suggestion that expanded democratic, self-determining spaces matter if the problems faced by the "repressed, oppressed and vulnerable" are to be addressed, but then asks if these spaces are too small, too restricted and too fragile within advanced capitalist democracies to be politically meaningful for those who most need them. In a pragmatist vein, Holden salutes Cunningham's embrace of practically engaged political philosophy beyond metaphysics. In particular, Holden follows Cunningham in asking: what are the characteristics of a virtuous global urban public– and what are the odds of realizing such a transformational space amidst persistent inequities in today's cities? In his essay, Mills asks how "post-hegemonic Marxism" (Cunningham 2021, 7-14) can be usefully retrieved for the purposes of creating a principled and practical anti-racism.

Taken together, the conversation about *Ideas in Context* among Glasbeek, Holden, Mills and Cunningham opens up space for wide-ranging discussions about the inequitable world in which we live, urging us to pursue political and social theory that is both responsive to and practically useful in challenging diverse, historically situated oppressions. If, in itself, this is not enough to convince readers to engage with this work, I will just observe that in *Ideas in Context,* there are surprising appearances that enliven the whole account. Barry Goldwater, Barbara Amiel,

and the ghost of CB Macpherson all make appearances, the last -- despite being dead -- speaking eloquently about neoliberalism but also "friendship and love" (Cunningham 2021,143).

Equally unexpectedly, there is a glimpse of Cunningham's youthful fleet footedness. Readers learn that after staying out after curfew on a 1983 visit to Chile, an excursion made in solidarity with scholars standing against Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship, "[the philosopher Charles] Taylor and I came very close to being apprehended by machine gun wielding soldiers, whom we were able to outrun" (Cunningham 2021, 25). In short, *Ideas in Context* is an unusually eventful read, but one motivated throughout by a political concern for what matters for right relationships with each other, locally and around the world. Along the way, as Mills remarks, we observe "a full life of political activism and theoretical interventions aimed at bringing about a better world," one in which action and knowledge are not opposed but united in practical, everyday strivings for justice and for peace.

## In Appreciation

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This is a remarkable publication. Not just because the essays in it are accessible, elegantly written, witty and provide insights. No one would expect anything less from Frank Cunningham. No, it is a remarkable publication because of the way it is presented. Frank sets the stage for the papers by describing the social and political times in which struggles in which he was involved took place. We see how the issues he was confronting spurred him to ask new questions about how the wrongs which had got him involved should be addressed.

It is manifest that his sense of social injustice drove him. Whenever he perceived repressions, oppressions, vulnerabilities, he felt the responsibility to intervene -- politically, as an advocate, as a co-ordinator, as an educator to school himself and others. And, because he is an activist scholar, he not only questioned himself and others, he also offered ideas on how to alleviate the repressions, oppressions and vulnerabilities too many experience. The collection, then presents the trajectory of a public intellectual, of an academic in search of the right questions to ask. In and of itself this tale of political commitment and thinking and re-thinking makes it an exciting book to read. But it also provides a fruitful intellectual platform for anyone interested in social justice. For that is the focus of Frank's work.

Early on, he tells readers that he became impatient with the most established streams of philosophical method deployed in academe. He found that the Anglo/American analytic approach led to too many nit-picking debates and that the Continental philosophical tradition of

wide-sweeping theorizing was, all too often, more obscuring than clarifying. Well-versed as he became in the scholarly literature of both kinds of philosophy, his desire to confront social injustice head-on pushed him to move beyond either approach and instead to cast himself as a political theorist who faced the world as it is, asked what it ought to be like and how to get there.

He writes that "individuals are shaped by overlapping and sometimes even conflicting group identifications" (Cunningham 2021, 63). This reflects his appreciation of the complexity of human beings and their relationships. He is acutely aware of the significance of their differing locales, material circumstances, traditions, cultures, religions, attributes, and characteristics. Throughout the work, he stresses the need to respect these coincidences and differences as people resolve the tensions and contradictions that affect their interests and values. This demands nuance and tolerance. He writes that, although he recognizes the insights of Marxism — in which he is well-schooled -- its claim to proffer a totalizing theory has to be rejected. It is not subtle enough to explain why some repressions and oppressions arise and, therefore, does not provide answers to the problems they spawn. Thus, while Marxism remains central to understanding the economic dimensions of class conflict, in other spheres other means of understanding and approaches need to be developed. His instinct pushes him to give people the power they need to solve problems. Frank's intelligence and intellectual agility come to the fore.

Putting significant emphasis on John Dewey's publics, he posits that it is not essential for people to be *ad idem* on everything in order to come together to resolve and repair conditions which they perceive to affect their interests. All that is needed is that they share sufficient values to tackle the problem in a peaceful manner. Central to this tackling of problems is the willingness to negotiate in good faith and to make decisions democratically. Here Frank points to the need for institutions which support these practices. He acknowledges, and deals with, the difficulties raised by having to determine what sufficient sharing of values might mean, what peace and negotiation might involve. And unsurprisingly, from a scholar who has done so much work with, and on, Macpherson and on Dewey, he emphasizes the nature and importance of democracy.

His contention is that democracy is not merely a desirable way to get things done but is an end in its own right. He notes that bourgeois democracy is impoverished democracy and that the belief that socialism is inherently democratic is dubious, recent modern history serving as a cautionary tale. For Frank, democracy is not a means to get from capitalism to socialism. Instead, ever-perfecting democracy is the goal of progressive thinking and acting. It is an arresting argument. He lays the basis for it by asserting that democratic impulses exist in all relationships and institutions, although often only feebly so.

In sum, having embedded himself in the world as it is, Frank confronted social injustices and recommended that they be resolved by alliances and associations comprising people with some shared values using democratic means. He argues that this will move us closer and closer to a richer democratic polity. A major ingredient of this agenda, then, is to develop democratic practices, as this will enable people to live more potential-filling, more fulfilling, lives. This idea, more than any other, forced me, a lawyer, to re-think my assumptions about the way the world is and how it might be. As an academic lawyer, I have been taught to see social relations through the

prism of the sacred right to own private property, that is, the right of owners of property to exclude everyone else from its use. This provides the frame for all our legal decision-making and law-making. It is a profoundly anti-democratic starting point. This has always been understood.

One of the United States' constitution-makers, Alexander Hamilton, wrote in *The Federalist Papers* of 1788 "Most men of property… wish a government… to protect them against violence and the depredations which the democratic spirit is apt to make on property" (Hamilton, Jay and Madison 1999). Similarly, when the English bourgeoisie was faced by demands to enlarge the franchise, the historian G.L. Dickinson (2015) reported that the anxious representatives of property owners argued that the danger of allowing the masses to vote was that they would follow socialist teachings and clamour for a graduated income tax and legislative protections for workers. For the next two decades the English dominant class fought hard to shape and mould the emerging democratic trends. Eric Hobsbawm (1999) observed that, by the late 1860s, capitalists were satisfied that there were sufficient fetters on parliamentary democracy in place to blunt any revolutionary potential it had.

That said, it is true that the universal franchise has been won and is supported by gains that give some guarantees for freedom of belief, speech, association and assembly. As a result, inroads have been made on the absolute power that private property owners once wielded. To return to Frank: democratic impulses inhered in social relations long before modern constitutions evolved and they have been given more sway than before. The hard-won historical reality of greater scope for democratic impulses today, compared to the 19th century, makes credible his argument that democratic practices and institutions can/should provide a way forward as alliances are formed to deal with some non-economic class-ridden conflicts.

Yet, some doubts bubble in the back of my mind. While it is true that considerable progress has been achieved in terms of enlarging the public's *formal* participatory rights, is it right to conclude that non-property owners have the wherewithal to trump the rights of property owners in any meaningful manner, that is, in a manner that allows them to fashion remedies to the (seemingly) non-economic repressions, oppressions and vulnerabilities with which they are afflicted?

In advanced capitalist societies which lay claim to be liberal democracies, procedurally properly elected governments have the power to rein in the power of private capital. The gross inequalities and the continued exploitation of masses of people suggest that this has not led to the expected and desired results for the great majority of people. In part this is due to the fraught nature of the electoral systems. Voters get a chance every few years to select one candidate to represent them on myriads of issues over the next three to four years. The notion that this is giving them serious participatory political rights is risible. The ability of wealthy owners to affect politicians and their thinking by funding them, lobbying them, influencing them via think-tanks and accommodating cheerleaders in academe and revolving door opportunities, is well-known and much-discussed. Further, there are a great number of institutions, from the Bank of Canada to the secret service, which make, or cause others to make, significant decisions without much input

from the general public. For whatever reason -- most probably the inculcated ideology that accompanies the always present right of capital to go on strike -- governments have ceded a lot of ground to private property owners.

To take a topical example: the ability for the general public to oversee and contain police conduct is, to say the least, limited. The current fierce cries to defund the apparently out-of-control police in North America speak loudly to this. The jury is out on how much success, if any, the activists will enjoy. It is an open secret, of course, that a principal role played by the police is the protection of private property and that the way in which the police functions has a great impact on the way in which minorities are treated. Similarly, the capacity to monitor and restrain the operations of the State's security systems and/or its military is ephemeral at best and, again, minorities suffer abuses.

Another central and not-obviously-democratic decision-making forum is the judiciary. One of its major roles is to guard citizens from coercion, arbitrariness and caprice exercised by momentarily elected but misguided governments. The public is asked to look to an unelected judiciary whose members are appointed by the government and whose fundamental function is to preserve the social and political status quo, including the right to private property ownership. Not insignificantly, the history of the judiciary is dotted with opposition to pro-democratic practices and strong support for property rights.

Or, on another front: most advanced capitalist nations have given important economic decision-making powers to unelected bodies which they stoutly maintain should independent from democratically elected governments. Institutions such as the Bank of Canada wield enormous powers, such as the right to determine interest rates, how much money should be pumped into the economy, and the like. Their decisions affect every single citizen, impinging on their material circumstances which may well perpetuate existing, or create new, repressions and oppressions and vulnerabilities. It is hard to see where accountability exists, where responsibility can be imposed for systematically imposed coercions or how Frank's Dewey-like publics can be effective in democratically persuading these bodies to be responsive to citizen and resident concerns.

And as relations between people and nations spread across nation states' boundaries, requiring administration, co-ordination and governance, institutions to protect the property owners of the world have sprung up like wild and toxic mushrooms, all of them hostile to democratic practices. Consider: the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the European Central Bank, the Bank for International Settlements, the World Trade Organization, Free Trade Agreements (whose central goal is to free foreign wealth owners from any elected government's restraint on their property rights), so-called "Trade-related" intellectual property rights or TRIPs (much in the news during the pandemic, since these restrain the production and distribution of low-cost vaccines and medicines in the name of intellectual property protections) and all those other acronyms which impact people differentially, depending on locale, culture, history, ethnicity, race, gender, etc.

These curbs on formal democratic institutions led the non-academic observer, Lewis Lapham (1996), to write that, in the United States, there are two governments, a permanent one and a provisional one. The former is comprised by the corporations on the Fortune 500, their attendant lobbyists, media and entertaining syndicates, research institutions and universities and law firms. This government is obedient to the rule of men. The provisional government is based on the notion that it is subject to the rule of law, not of men. As Lapham writes, "it lives within the cage of high-minded principle" while controlling little of substance (1996). A similar line of thinking has emerged among academics, such as Joshua Barkan (relying on the work of Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben), who speculate that, while corporations are seen as mere economic tools produced by law, they enjoy a sphere of sovereignty which is both symbiotic with the legal sphere and in competition with it, that is, they are not necessarily governed by its rules (Barkan 2013).

In short, there is both empirical evidence and novel conceptualizations which suggest that the democratic project, which Frank urges as a means to resolve the problems of repressed, oppressed and vulnerable, may be much more difficult to utilize and develop than he suggests. It may well be the case that simultaneous and large--scale agitation on the economic front will have to be engaged in by those associations and publics trying to resolve the problems they face. To illustrate the point, let me turn to the paper on "Democracy and Three-Nation Asymmetry" in *Ideas in Context* (Cunningham 2021, 46-48).

There, Frank tells the story about how he and some other leading Canadian progressive thinkers and activists intervened during Canada's debates on the drafting of a new constitution. Quebec's drive for more control/independence/sovereignty had spurred the struggle. Frank and his allies saw an opportunity to right a great wrong: the new constitution for the country we call Canada should not be limited by reinforcing the two pillars provided by English and French colonial settlement. They urged recognition and respect for the original inhabitants of the lands. Their claim was that the constitution should recognize three nations, Anglo-Canada, Quebec and First Nations.

This constitutional agenda reflected the principles and tenets which are promoted in this collection of essays: the three nations' arrangement was mandated, writes Frank, "because people whose identities and aspirations are linked to the futures of the nations they inhabit should enjoy special roles in determining those futures," that is, people with shared values should be allowed to resolve tensions and reduce problems by democratic means. Careful scholar that he is, Frank recognizes that, within each proposed nation, there might be some people who would feel uncomfortable, might be badly treated or simply be opposed to the supposedly shared values of the constituent members of the nation. He skillfully meets these objections and proposes means of guaranteeing certain transcendent civil and political rights to one and all. In brief, the paper is a good illustration of how Frank's analysis leads him to political solutions. But, for a lawyer, it also leaves a question. While self-determination within each proposed nation is both

attractive and feasible, what if the various nations' goals and consequential outcomes of policies clash?

Here I am alluding to the fact that, whatever differences in approach to democracy and negotiations there are in Anglo-Canada and Quebec (a point taken on by Frank, of course), they do share one significant value: adherence to private property rights and the use of them to accumulate more wealth. As this capitalist project is operationalized by them, they will exercise dominium over the resources and territories they rule as nations. The other nation-to-be does not start off with anything like the same approach. For many, if not all, members of First Nations, the right to private property is not only bizarre but offensive. As Anglo-Canadians and Quebec exercise their national rights, they will be robbing First Nations of their potential to live in harmony with nature, with the land, to be trustees of the land and not its dominators. From this perspective, the ideal of an asymmetrical democracy might yield an impoverished form of democracy for the First Nations. While it remains true that they will have a way to determine their own futures up to some point, that is, there will be many people making decisions about many issues (in Frank's terms, the democratic project will be enhanced in each projected nation), it is also true that in the First Nations' nation the inhabitants will be unable to make decisions about some of the issues which are of the greatest significance to them.

As Frank pushed me to ponder these questions, the force of his work became ever clearer. I believe that it comes to this: he is fully cognizant of the fact that, under capitalist relations of production, we live in polities hostile to democracy. But just as he contends that democratic impulses inhere in all our relationships, he is convinced that communal/collective aspirations are embedded in all human beings. In effect, he is reminding us all that, encaged as we so often feel by the logic of capitalism, capitalism has not snuffed out our more humane attributes. Much as capitalism would reduce us to be atomized, self-serving individuals, we want more and, more importantly, deep down we know we are capable of more.

Frank's work seeks to develop democratic practices to relieve repressions and, contemporaneously, to enable human beings to satisfy their more profound desires. They will be in a better position to become beings to whom co-operation, altruism, compassion, care, solidarity and love counts for more than self-indulgence and material acquisitions. If this task, as this comment suggests, demands perhaps a bit more emphasis on integrating economic class-conflict with his finely-honed strategies for self-determination by associations and the publics he favours as protagonists, it does not in any way lessen the value of the thrust of these essays. He has shown us the necessity to act on, and think about, the way the world is; he has made it clear how we should go about formulating how it ought to be and he has suggested a way forward.

## Frank's Reaction

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Many thanks to Harry as to Meg and Charles for their comments and questions, which are all in keeping with the intent of *Ideas in Context* (Cunningham 2021) to stimulate proactive thought about problematic current issues. I shall indicate, in brief, some reactions to their interventions.

Harry Glasbeek's sustained and hyper informed critique of capitalist wealth and corporate power has made it impossible for anyone who reads his works on these topics to avoid coming to grips with their far-reaching oppressive effects, and much of my thinking has been influenced by his writings. This includes a persistent concern apparent in *Ideas in Context* with democracy in capitalist societies.

One of Harry's questions is how much democracy can be achieved without addressing private property. Given the continuing grip of such property on thought and institutions, this is, unfortunately, not a hard question to answer, namely "not much." "All roads," Macpherson averred, "lead to property" (2012 [1973] 121). In part he meant by this that the state-supported right of people to exclude others from the deployment and benefits of what they privately own is at the centre of the politics, economics, and culture of what he famously labelled possessive-individualist, market-dominated societies (Macpherson 2010 [1962]). The centrality of privately owned property in a market society is, as Harry argues in *Class Privilege* (Glasbeek 2018) and elsewhere, at odds with a focus on public needs and challenges and the collective actions required to meet them.

This brings me to Harry's worry about the ability of democracy to confront capitalism. Democracy, taken in a sense of just being able to vote for politicians presented by dominate political parties certainly has proven itself largely impotent indeed complicit in this matter, but for me, as for Dewey, Macpherson, and others democracy much more broadly involves people taking collective action to address common problems. Social movement activism, trade-union militancy, strengthened pro-socialist political organization both in and out of parliaments, securing worker cooperatives, all these and other such endeavours count as democratic in its broad sense. Some gains in confronting detrimental effects of the property-centric power of capitalism by such movements have surely been made. When my grandmothers were born women were denied the vote. It was the suffragette movement that changed this, and subsequent feminist movements have secured many more gains for women. As Harry notes, advances resisted by capitalists have been made since the 19th Century.

Nobody can doubt that significant gains for workers depended upon union organization. What progress has been made in combating environmental degradation has largely derived from the efforts of organized environmental movements and aboriginal opposition, just as gains in combatting homophobic discriminations are owed to persistent activism. Thanks to Black Lives Matter campaigns, some cities are now beginning to reform police services. To be sure these exhibit continuing capitalistic obstacles of the sort Harry documents and, as he notes, there are domains so far largely immune to citizen pressures. Moreover, progress is usually uneven – often of the two steps forward, one step back variety. But those gains achieved offer lessons about how action on the part of organized "publics," that is, democratic action in a robust sense, can achieve changes.[1]

Perhaps Harry shares the view that all these things are reforms which, should they significantly challenge the dominance of private capital, i.e. become potentially revolutionary, will be undone by capitalist ferocity and power. One reaction is vigorously to pursue those reforms that the leading capitalists can accommodate, however uncomfortably, thus yielding welfare capitalism. Maybe this is as far as one can go, and it would improve the quality of life for many. Or the anti-capitalist can pursue a bolder tack such as those of political parties like Podemos in Spain, Syriza in Greece, or even the self-described socialist wing of the current U.S. Democratic Party. Like the earlier efforts of the Eurocommunists, they essay to integrate non-sectarian anti-capitalist political party organization with social movements pursuing ever more ambitious popular gains, the aim being to build up such strong support that capitalism can be constrained or even dispensed with by peaceful means. (I examined such an approach in an earlier book on democracy and socialism (1987, ch. 11), with special reference to Eurocommunism.) Both strategies exhibit a general attitude of optimism, which, in accord with Deweyan Pragmatic thinking, I'm inclined to embrace.

Harry is right to interrogate the way that attitudes toward property differ as among the three national groupings in Canada, where within aboriginal culture there is a conception of property different from the exclusivist conception imported with European colonization. The difference is exemplified in a comment in the 1890's by a U.S. Indian Commissioner when he decried "the degrading communism" of indigenous peoples who he hoped would come to say "this is mine" instead of "this is ours" (in Allen 1994 38). An appeal to private property in defense of such as pipelines, where champions of big oil appeal to the desire of a minority of aboriginal entrepreneurs to get in on profits is an attempt to counter a trusteeship attitude toward the natural environment.

Indigenous people are not immune to the pressures of a private-property centred culture, but in my view the minority entrepreneurial efforts derive more from economic desperation than from enthusiastic pro-capitalism. Increasing realization of environmental and other detrimental effects of a fixation on private property, enhanced by the example of traditional aboriginal attitudes toward the relation of humans to the natural world may have the potential of bringing about a

[1] A publication of the Society for Socialist Studies , *Social Movements/Social Change*, Socialist Studies *Annual* Vol. 4, (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1988) is devoted to a survey of a the strengths and weaknesses of a variety of social movements in the 1980's.

Canada (in all of its national and subnational groupings) where people will say "this land is ours" (or better "nobody's").

## Frank Cunningham's Pragmatic Perspective [1]

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Frank Cunningham's collection of essays offers insights and anecdotes from a life of Canadian ideas that is lively and compelling, despite the author's winningly sincere but unjustified emphasis on the modesty of his contributions. Here I offer my comments on two of the essays in the book, "The global public and its problems" (Cunningham 2021, 63-70) and "Urban philosophy: a pragmatic perspective" (Cunningham 2021, 109-116). Pragmatists put a lot of weight behind the notion of a *public* as the site of social intelligence, the existence of which makes the social and political action necessary for a functioning democracy possible. This notion is like an urban logic of action that is flexible, not grounded in any particular philosophical or political tradition, and as committed to the possibility of coming up with something new as it is skeptical of any given idea that needs to be tested in a pluralistic and fallibilistic community context. Frank draws an interesting series of comparisons across both desirable and undesirable consequences of coherent and incoherent traits in urban action. Complete coherence would kill a city through homogeneity whereas, from the opposite perspective, complete incoherence would kill a city through a lack of trustworthy relationships of any kind.

### The Emergence of the Global Public: Four Conditions

Frank offers four necessary conditions for the emergence of a global urban public.

#### *1. Self-conscious public*

In order to achieve a fully global public, we should stive for a public that is self-conscious *pour soi*. People have to be able to understand themselves, and they have to understand themselves as being in relation with one another. In a turn of phrase that captures the balance between respect for individual distinctiveness and sense of community, Frank refers to the desired self-conscious public as having non-homogenizing unity and anti-fragmenting diversity. One concept that Frank raises is that of trusteeship, which may have the power to stimulate an equal or greater amount of

[1] A fully developed version of these comments is available in my forthcoming article in *Socialist Studies*.

pride and commitment as the power of private property ownership which is so compelling to the possessive-individualistic urge.

### *2. Values*

On the subject of values, Frank points out an important factor that "It is only necessary that members of a public share some values, namely those required for them to take common action in the face of specific problems" (Cunningham 2021, 65). This basic realization moves the prospect of dialogic resolution of the very idea of a global public from impossible to conceivable. It requires that a global public share a common sense of being in public together over the long haul. At all scales, publics come together and break apart, issue after issue, context after context, but it should be conceded that we are witness to a rising tide of global reckoning that we humans do live on the same planet, and that our fates at this scale are indeed bound up together. This rise in global recognition of basic shared values, however, does not obviously translate into growing ability to negotiate the same at the neighbourhood or city scale as Frank points out with respect to the troubling rise in right wing populism, and election of right-wing populist leaders at the city scale as happened in Toronto with Mayor Rob Ford. As the dynamics of economic, gendered and racialized inequality are exacerbated, so it goes that the work of generating and maintaining common values also gets harder.

As a local case in point from Vancouver, a recent urban dispute over the siting of two public elementary schools in expensive downtown neighbourhoods is illustrative. In May and again in June 2021, in the two neighbourhoods of Southeast False Creek and Coal Harbour neighbours have rallied against the siting of modest public schools in their midst. In the case of Southeast False Creek, a new resident group emerged explicitly to oppose a planned school. In the case of Coal Harbour, 198 residents submitted a variety of value-based arguments against the siting of the school. These public mobilizations run directly counter to the public values encapsulated in the City's planning documents since 1992, when policy directives began to explicitly articulate the values for social and sustainable cities of integrating families with children, and high-amenity residential and neighbourhood spaces for these households, into downtown plans. The reversal of public values within these two cases underlines Frank's sense of a broader regress from the fully global public, perhaps paradoxically felt even more strongly in certain local settings than is the case at the global scale. Generating and maintaining common values appears paradoxically simpler among global rather than local publics.

### *3. Peace*

As Frank emphasizes, following Dewey, the peaceful reconciliation of conflict is necessary for the creation and maintenance of a global public. In this, there is cause for hope arising from the impressive uses of nonviolent protest in the past two years in the name of racial justice for Black lives, in particular, and pragmatic moves to begin to restructure that within our systems –

racial inequities, patriarchy, economic inequality – which generates violence. At the scale of cities, one important outcome so far, with respect to racial inequities and especially Black Lives Matter, has been questioning and restructuring of the role of the police in schools. However, we have less call to see a tendency toward peacefulness at urban scales. One particularly troubling statistic in the case of Canadian cities is the rise in reported racially-motivated hate crimes across all ethnic groups, and most notably amongst Asians, during the recent period of the COVID-19 pandemic. For Frank, these contradictory tendencies towards pragmatic moves to bring about peace by challenging dynamics of racism and the persistence or even resurgence of violence, also remind us how difficult it is to achieve and sustain a global public.

***4. Institutions***

Considering Frank's fourth component of a global public, institutions, these must operate with democratic transparency and offer fair and widespread representation. At the global scale, the obvious emblem of such an institution is the United Nations, even if the practice of the United Nations reproduces rather than challenges uneven global representation. When referring specifically to the challenge of growing a global public in cities, an unsystematic sample of networks includes the Cities Alliance, C40, the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, the Resilient Cities Network, and the World Social Forum. If these institutions were sites of powerful and creative global publics around the turn of the millennium, they appear to be mostly waning in terms of energy, excitement and action. Frank asks how such institutions should relate to social movements, and we might also ask how such institutions ought to orient themselves in relation to formal city governments and urban publics too.

Responding effectively to this question requires a kind of pragmatic reframing. The problem that hundreds of neighbours had with the siting of new public schools in Vancouver might not be a situation of value conflict. Instead, it might be reconceptualized in terms of structural errors in the institutions that determine urban planning and development in Canadian cities. A first structural error in Vancouver is that neighbourhoods have no political representation at city hall. A second structural error is that the mechanism by which the City allocates schools, parks, and other infrastructure and amenities is based on the rate of neighbourhood change, rather than demonstrated neighbourhood need. Because of these structural errors in the institutions they have to work with, powerful residents form their own political action groups to assert voice and reframe the perception and implications of neighbourhood change, to suit their specific preferences and contrary to the interest of greater local participation in neighbourhood politics or the interest of meeting the spectrum of local needs. Not so much values but institutions are in need of change so that the city supports the generation of publics capable of thinking of their city as a whole, and their neighbourhood in relation to others, of the long-term, and of the value of private trade-offs for the sake of public trusteeship. Setting the stage and the terms of that dialogue and action are the pragmatic demands of city building.

Beyond correcting these and other structural errors, we might also investigate the questions that arise from folding explicitly activist agendas into the state apparatus. Vancouver has declared itself a City of Reconciliation, committing to renewing settler-Indigenous relationships on a just and peaceful basis. It began to decriminalize drug possession, declared a climate emergency, and adopted other advocacy agendas. All of these moves speak to the emergence of an urban public with shared, progressive values. Vancouver is not alone. While it does not officially refer to the state of housing in the city as in a crisis state, other cities have done so; the City of Barcelona created a Manifesto Against Gentrification that has been shared in a host of cities since 2018.

Here arises the pragmatic challenge that Frank faces with his penchant for utopian thinking – ungenerously, a chicken-and-egg problem; more generously, a challenge of agency. If our collective, democratic goal is to create cities the likes of which we have never before inhabited, then we need institutions, shared values, peace, and self-conscious citizens acting *pour soi* in ways that are also ambitious and never-before-seen. We need to think of our work together as a technically unlikely moon shot. At the same time, we need to invest our lives into the work of bringing real cities into being where the unequal realities of today's cities are typically an inhospitable context for the utopian thinking and transformational change that is required to truly act in the public interest, over the long haul.

Frank proposes Keynesian economic regulation as a possible pathway. In this view, to move toward a better, more public city, social license should not be assumed by those seeking the possibility of economic gain. Instead, those seeking profit should be required to petition for special permission before a body of trustee minded civic members. In the wake of the massive investment by governments in a social safety net during the COVID-19 pandemic, while restricting businesses' ability to profit through shut down measures, this shift seems a lot less far-fetched than it did two years ago.

To push this further, Canadian cities need to change the way they think about the speculative increase in land value generated by the technical ability to plan for more and taller buildings. In the private property mindset that we have inherited from our hegemonic colonial and capitalist theory, law, and governance, the spoils of this speculative increase are considered to accrue essentially to the private risk-takers who own property that grows in value. The City, for its part, claws back perhaps 5-10% of this increase in tax and at times of rezoning or property transfer. This logic is considered fair because it is calculated as the amount the city needs to pay for basic infrastructure, maintenance, services and amenities. From a Keynesian perspective, this is the wrong logic, as evidenced by the city's inability to afford the services that are needed by all residents. If we revise this logic toward an understanding of the city as fundamentally public property, the corresponding tax and development fee formulas would need revision as well. The development pro forma, the land value capture mechanism, and the logic of risk and reward in property ownership would change drastically for the prototype, truly global city imagined by Frank.

But that is not the extent of transformation needed. If we are to enact our commitments to the value of truth and reconciliation, the responsibilities of colonial Canada to Indigenous peoples

of this land demand entirely different logics of land beyond property ownership. I am a novice in such matters, but Canadian Indigenous understandings of responsibilities to the land appear much better aligned than private property relationship with the concept of trusteeship. To decolonize our cities and institutions, we need to reconcile our financial accounts and the trusteeship responsibilities tied to land and to what happens on it, meaningful recognition and reparations for the dispossession and harms done to Indigenous peoples figuring prominently in such efforts. This will require better accounting of the social as well as material costs of inequality and excessive private wealth.

**Philosophy Beyond Metaphysics**

To conclude these reflections, one place where I find myself in complete agreement with Frank's thinking is in his receptiveness to blurring the boundaries between knowledge and action. This is a copiously argued theme within the writing of John Dewey and one that Frank exemplifies in these two essays. It is also, I think, shown in the opus of Frank's scholarly career reflected in *Ideas in Context*: the sense of commensurability between instrumental thought and action, on the one hand, and democratic thought and knowledge generation, on the other.

It isn't just that pragmatists hold that it is elitist and a waste of time to fixate on metaphysical and epistemological problems in philosophy. What is needed, according to pragmatists, is the strength of mental conviction and creativity needed to abandon the quest for metaphysical certainty. The notion that knowledge proceeds in a manner that is separate and distinct from the way that action proceeds stands in the way of social action aimed at progressive change. To act and fail, realizing too late that our ideas do not produce the effects we held in our theorizations, risks psychic humiliation and leaves us without the means to either think or act our way out of the problems we have gotten ourselves into. To decline to act and just to keep thinking, provides a great deal more reassurance, for thinking people willing to live with their own practical uselessness.

Rather than fixate on the purported need for distinctions between knowledge and action, Frank demonstrates that his own life of ideas has been lived not only and not primarily within the safe confines of a university philosophy department. Throughout his storied career, Frank campaigned with the Communist Party of Canada, worked to bridge the divide among social scientists and between francophone and anglophone thinkers, was part of the movement against Pinochet's military dictatorship in Chile and for peace in countries suffering from violent ethno-cultural conflicts. He introduced philosophy into the high school curriculum in Ontario, and fought for citizen engagement in planning decisions. He worked to bring people with experiences of poverty and discrimination that had kept them away from higher education into the University of Toronto, and went into marginalized communities to bring higher education to them; and he included Indigenous thought into the canon called Canadian philosophy. I am personally grateful

to Frank for all of this thought-work that has made the Canadian academy an action-institution that I can take greater pride in being a part of, than would have otherwise been possible. And I am grateful for the somewhat heretical, anti-foundational inspiration, confidence in uncertainty and syllabus-building tips that Frank gave me to start a graduate seminar in Urban Ethics and Philosophy at Simon Fraser University when he joined us in 2014.

**Frank's Reaction**

Meg Holden was among those in Urban Studies at Simon Fraser University who welcomed me to the Program when I moved from Toronto to Vancouver. One contributing factor to this move was that my last academic home, the University of Toronto's Cities Centre, was closed by the University in 2013. In the Simon Fraser program I found the same progressive, cross disciplinary thinking, and ground-level engagement with local urban issues that I had enjoyed in the Toronto Centre. I also found in Meg a kindred soul in her enthusiasm for philosophical pragmatism.

In true pragmatic fashion she identifies ways that making progress in solving some problems, exemplified in citizen engagement in recent False Creek and Coal Harbour developments in Vancouver, can create new problems. I recall a segment of a course I taught in the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Toronto on participatory planning where I took as a case study an effort of Vancouver's City Council to promote such participation also in False Creek. The study revealed the same strengths and problems in that experiment some 45 years previously as the contemporary ones Meg recounts. Her account also makes me think of my direct experience in the downtown, "Annex," Toronto neighbourhood association. The occasion of its formation in 1925 exhibited NIMBYism with a vengeance when False Creek residents successfully fought the construction of a school (and later an orthopedic clinic).

The subsequent transformation of this association away from narrow self-interest is an encouraging example of how citizen groups can transform themselves in a progressive direction. The most dramatic turning point came in the early '60s when the Annex association played an important role in arresting a major step toward the Los Angeles-ization of Toronto by the threatened construction of an Expressway (the Spadina Expressway) though the City's centre. To this end it restructured itself, changing from a "Ratepayers" to a "Residents" association, and pursued progressive policies. The False Creek efforts exemplify the adage, "The more things change, the more they remain the same;" while the transformation of the Annex Association gives one cause for hope that change is possible.

I certainly agree with Meg's insistence that citizen groups be consulted in planning processes. She rightly emphasized the difficulty of forging global publics, though perhaps such as the Rio and Beijing conferences in additions to the efforts she lists are examples of how this can be achieved. Her refence to urban reform also suggests some important structural changes possible in cities. To her examples I add provision for citizen membership in urban agencies, boards,

commissions, and tribunals. This participation goes beyond just consultation and is most fruitful when such membership is institutionally linked to engaged organizations in civil society.

Regarding the problem she flags of citizen participation opening the door to narrow self-interest, of course, this is a danger as her False Creek example illustrates. In many if not most communal actions there is no doubt a tension between concerns of short-term self-interest and promotion of broader public goods. When citizen action is confined to individual groups, mainly defensive and in the face of immediate problems, self-interest is likely to predominate. To my mind the best protection against this is not to curtail citizen involvement, but to enhance it by providing for ongoing communication and coordination among citizen groups and between them and city agencies. The solution to problems of participation is more and better structured participation.

Meg's reference to a penchant for utopianism leads me to think about the extent to which this is accurate. I only address this topic in one paper, "Triangulating Utopia" (Cunningham 2010), where I argue both for and against utopianism. On its negative side, utopian thinking unwittingly supports a *status quo* by remaining within the realm of abstract rhetoric without addressing the practical, political measures required to achieve them. Positively, utopian visions provide targets toward which potentially transformative action may be directed, even if they are not always or completely attained. Echoing Immanuel Kant's epistemological view of the relation between abstract "thoughts" and concrete sensations or "intuitions" (2003 [1881] 93), one might say that: "visions without politics are empty, but politics without visions are blind."

## Looking Back: Some Comments on Frank Cunningham's *Ideas in Context*[1]

**Charles W. Mills**
Professor of Philosophy, the Graduate Center, City University of New York

I'd like to begin by saying how delighted I am to be back in Canada for this panel—if not quite on Canadian soil, then on Canadian airwaves—commenting on Frank Cunningham's *Ideas in Context* (2021). I was an international (Jamaican) graduate student at the University of Toronto for many years and would happily have stayed on in Canada after graduation if I could. Unable to find a job, however, I moved to the United States in 1987, and have been here ever since. But I still retain fond memories of my Toronto student days, and of the activist scene there both on and off campus, which many of Frank's essays, for example on the controversy over the university's Transitional Year Program (TYP), bring vividly back. So I've known Frank since entering the

[1] The only changes made to this text, since it was submitted by Charles Mills, are to insert full references and to write in full terms that he had abbreviated (notably "U.S.").

University of Toronto program in 1973—almost half a century, doubtless to the alarm of both of us. He and Danny Goldstick were the two key people on my dissertation committee, and thus must share the blame for how my career has turned out.

Seriously, the point is not just anecdotal, but theoretical, since I'm going to talk about race. (Next week I will also be putting in an appearance on a Canadian Philosophical Association panel on diversity and Canadian philosophy. So it's suddenly old home week.) In my personal statement applying to the University of Toronto I had expressed my interest in working philosophically on issues of race and imperialism, and this is in fact the work for which I am now best known. But though Frank and Danny would have been willing to give it a supervisory shot, I think it's true to say that University of Toronto at the time (and now…?), and mainstream philosophy more generally, simply did not have the resources then to accommodate such a project. Remember how long ago this was: the early 1970s, before critical race theory, postcolonial theory, feminist philosophy, before even mainstream Anglo-American political philosophy's revival as a result of John Rawls's (1971) *A Theory of Justice* had really gotten off the ground. So I did a dissertation on Karl Marx's theory of ideology instead—not a completely unrelated topic, especially considering that the 1970s were also the highpoint of Anglo-Caribbean radicalism and as a Jamaican on the left I was part of Toronto's Anglo-Caribbean socialist solidarity scene. My early publications, post-graduation, were in fact all on Marxist theory, and it was only after several years in the United States that I began systematically working on race.

The issues raised are thus relevant to the ongoing debate in the West (but elsewhere also) about race and class, whether mainstream "white" socialist theory in its different incarnations can adequately theorize race, how progressives should relate to liberalism, and — from different disciplinary angles — the rethinking of the canon in response to the anti-racist and postcolonial challenge. As will be appreciated, Frank's essay collection touches on these matters not just in the two chapters explicitly on racism, "Urban-Dwelling Aboriginal Peoples" (Cunningham 2021, 91-100) and "Husserl's Phenomenology and Racism" (Cunningham 2021,100-106) but at many other locations also. (In societies structured by racial domination it is hard to "cabin" race because of its pervasive effects on the social order.)

For example: where does white supremacy (admittedly my term, not his) fit theoretically in a "post-hegemonic Marxism"? The term "racial capitalism," originally coined by Cedric Robinson (2000) in his classic *Black Marxism*, has been found useful by many contemporary scholars trying to synthesize the insights of critical race theory and Marxism. (Compare "capitalist patriarchy" from the 1970s heyday of socialist feminism.) Frank sees as one of Marxism's enduring insights (Cunningham 2021, 13-14) the analysis of class oppression, while pointing out that "Hegemonic Marxist economic theory reifies the notion of a worker," marginalizing their other identities. In the United States, which (forgive me) understandably shapes my concerns, given that I've now been there for more than 30 years, there is a huge volume of work at both the academic and popular levels on the white working class specifically, and how to understand its motivations. Can the white working class as a group, or at least a large section of it, be won over to a progressive anti-racist agenda, or does the record of recent decades show that identitarian interests rather than

classic material economic interests are—contra the predictions of orthodox Marxism—what are ultimately most important for them?

Likewise, in his essays on democratic theory, Frank analyzes how in the United States a racialized nationalism (Cunningham 2021, 40 ff.) unites whites around an anti-democratic politics that makes people of color the enemy rather than potential allies in a struggle against capital. I need hardly point out — in a United States where the Republicans have now made voter suppression a national priority — how blatant this policy has now become. The "Three-Nation Asymmetry" (Cunningham 2021, 46-48) intervention again raises the issue of race, though Frank generally uses the language of ethnicity. This essay dates back to 1992. One question for Frank, rereading it today, might be whether he thinks the framework of white settler colonialism that some contemporary scholars of Indigenous Studies use when theorizing the relation between race and nation in the Anglo settler states (the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa) is a useful one or not.

Particularly in a "Why Is My Curriculum So White?" and post-Floyd "Black Lives Matter" epoch, the role of the university in furthering social justice, not merely in making higher education accessible to marginalized social groups, but revising curricula for an active anti-racist agenda, has become more crucial and more scrutinized than ever. (In the United States, of course — and perhaps here too? — such efforts have become the target of fierce assault by the political right, extending on a grand scale the more localized redbaiting he mentions (Cunningham 2021, 77.)) Frank's chapters on the University of Toronto's attempts to be more sensitive to the concerns of Aboriginal and Black students thus remain timely, as well as the challenge of negotiating a satisfactory path between assimilationism and affirmation of the value of non-Western traditions. Right-wing populism in many Western and non-Western nations (think of Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalism) is now centrally organized around ethno-racial identity, so we find race at work here also. The point, then, is that by its very nature — insofar as racism is making foundational claims about the essential constitution of human beings — race as imputed identity and putative corollary traits ramifies throughout the social system in a myriad different ways, so that understanding its workings turns out to be necessary even for grasping social phenomena seemingly quite removed from such matters.

Let me now turn, though, to the two chapters specifically on race. Frank's attempt to get a philosophical conversation going on the situation of Aboriginal Peoples is a great illustration of the positive role that can be played by the "white ally." In the United States, post-Floyd, philosophy graduate students at numerous universities, including my own, have presented demands to the administration for minority hirings and curriculum reform that would enlist philosophy as an active participant in the struggle against racism as a national problem. So Frank can take considerable credit for the fact that he was initiating such suggestions decades ago, long before they attained their current popularity. One obvious question to ask him, looking back and looking around at the present, is how much he thinks his efforts accomplished, and how much still remains to be done. (For those who don't know, let me parenthetically insert here the news that the

University of Toronto Philosophy Department. has now hired its first Black faculty member. So progress is being made. And as noted, there will be a Canadian Philosophical Association panel next week talking about these issues, with various minority panelists participating.)

The other chapter sketches a promising attempt to turn Husserlian phenomenology to the subject of race, with special focus on the idea of a *Lebenswelt*, a life-world. I'm not a Continental guy myself — nor did I think Frank was! — but the racial appropriations of the phenomenological tradition I know about are through Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Frantz Fanon, particularly the latter's famous *Black Skin, White Masks* (2008). The focus there is on the body, and how the "epidermalization" (Fanon) of the body in an anti-Black world necessarily rewrites the mainstream Euro phenomenological tradition. So I'm not sure to what extent the "life-world" aspect has been taken up, but certainly in the racially polarized polity in which I'm writing, where balkanization is the norm rather than the exception, we need such explorations to understand the growing barriers to any real national political unity. Moreover, there are deep epistemological implications also, causing some commentators to speak of an "epistemological crisis" in the country. If tens of millions of ordinary Americans now hold beliefs that are so flagrantly deviant from reality (not merely about the "stolen" election, but QAnon conspiracy theories), how can this *not* eventually lead to disaster? I assume — I hope — that despite right-wing populism's influence in Canada also that you have not had anything comparable, at least in scope, up here. But one can see how, both with phenomenology on the Continental side and social epistemology on the analytic side, philosophy can make a contribution to understanding the cognitive dynamics at work within these adversarially self-conceived communities, so heavily structured by race.

This chapter also raises the more general issue of what to do with a philosophical canon that has turned out to be so sexist and racist: trash it all (the radical, usually student-centered solution)? continue as before after a few apologist remarks, if that much (the solution of many mainstream professors)? or see how a creative rethinking can be carried out that demonstrates how these theorists can still be made relevant and valuable (Frank's answer here)? My own sympathies are very much with this last option, both for pragmatic and principled reasons. The wholesale abandonment of the canon is simply not going to happen—there are too many vested interests, too much "sunk costs"—in its retention. Nor—the principled point—can it reasonably be maintained that sexist and racist theorists may not have worthwhile and crucial insights on issues where their biases are not activated, or where they can be readily corrected for.

Immanuel Kant, for example (to mention an Enlightenment figure who has been getting increasing attention in this connection recently), was a sexist who thought women could only be "passive citizens" — this has been known for a long time. But in recent decades, as a result of the work of the late Emmanuel Eze (1995) and Robert Bernasconi (2002), he has also been revealed to be not merely a racist but a founding figure, or *the* founder, of modern "scientific" racism. Yet some feminists are trying to develop a scare-quoted, distinctively "Kantian" feminism, while I myself recently published an essay with the calculatedly eye-catching title "Black Radical Kantianism" (Mills 2018). So I am fully on board with the project of retrieval, which does not at all

commit one, as some have claimed, to denying the sexism and racism of these figures. The ideal is a revised canon that both incorporates the insights and the neglected voices of the underground anti-sexist, anti-racist tradition, and recuperates what is worthwhile from the Establishment tradition, sexist and racist as it too often was and is.

Frank can look back on a full life of political activism and theoretical interventions aimed at bringing about a better world. This valuable collection of essays, written originally over many years, shows the continuing relevance of his work, in a conversation that is not at all over, but ongoing. I am delighted to have known him for nearly half a century, and look forward to the next half-century's output.

**Frank's Reaction**

Charles Mills' generous and challenging comments prompt me to note that my own efforts to address the topic of racism began in 1997. This is a significant date in terms of Charles's influence on me (yes, the educator, as Marx would have it, can be educated) since my concern was occasioned by the publication in that year of Mills' first book, *The Racial Contract*. This book exploded in North American political-theoretical circles and deeply affected my and many others' subsequent thinking about a grave void in our approach to social and political thought. Charles asks how "post-hegemonic Marxism", the topic of one essay in *Ideas in Context* (Cunningham 2021,7-14) can contribute to combatting racism. Well, the "post" dimension of this perspective cautions against attempts to prioritize class struggle over anti-racism or to try to reduce race to class. Meanwhile, its Marxist dimension provides an essential component for current "intersectional" approaches to structural oppressions. Most advocates of intersectionality refer to class, along with race and gender oppressions, but they put most emphasis on the latter two of these. Marxist class analysis can fill out these endeavours.

Another question Charles puts is whether the white settler framework is useful for combatting contemporary racism. Due to the continuing oppressive and culturally genocidal treatment of its Aboriginal populations, this framework is prominent both in Canadian scholarly work and in anti-racist struggles. Current spokespeople in Black Lives Matter campaigns and against anti-Asian racism almost always make reference to the colonial heritage of racism in Canada. (Consonant with Meg's discussion of racism in Vancouver, Bloomberg News (Pearson 2021) recently identified this city as "the anti-Asian hate crime capital of North America.")

On universities and the canon, Charles and I share a "retrievalist" approach to political theory, likely inspired for him as for me by Macpherson (2012 [1973]), where, rather than chucking all aspects of traditional political thinking, one looks to find in it potentials for anti-oppressive theory and practice. Teaching the canon from a retrievalist perspective encourages reforming university education without mandating total rejection of previous thought. I thus see the potential

for putting university education to the service of anti-racism, namely by interjecting issues of race and racism within the curricula of its disciplines in all of the humanities, social, and natural sciences, as in its professional faculties. As to how much remains to be done, to address another of Charles' question to me, there is still a lot.

Charles' most demanding question is whether large sectors of the white working class can be won over to anti-racism. My short answer to this question, is "I wish I knew." A pertinent distinction that Macpherson made with respect to people actively opposing possessive individualism is between structural, "external" impediments confronting this endeavour, such as inadequate resources required for robust democracy, and the "internal" ones of consumerist and other subjectively held values (2012 [1973] 39-70). A similar distinction can be made regarding racism.

For Macpherson, internal impediments cannot be directly dismantled, but external ones that support them can be confronted, and cumulatively this can facilitate changes in values (*ibid.*, 39-70). I think that this approach might have some use regarding working-class racist values, but there are limits. In fact, success in current efforts to undo systemic salary and employment inequities can *strengthen* the racist attitudes of white privilege which look to perpetuate continuing advantages in these matters. Racist internal impediments need somehow to be addressed head on. Strong anti-racist advocacy and policies on the part of respected labour leaders and socialists, social-democratic (or what progressive wings there are in other political parties) would help, but this will require more vibrant and progressive labour movements and political parties than now exist.

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