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To Act Otherwise: Agonistic Republicanism and Global Citizenship*

Duncan Bell

1. Introduction

James Tully's body of work constitutes one of the most innovative interventions in the current debates over global justice.¹ Combining erudite historical analysis with compelling political critique, he elucidates the diverse practices and complex legacies of European imperialism, connecting past and present in a manner unusual among contemporary political theorists. His historical scholarship, focusing above all on John Locke, helped place empire squarely on the agenda of historians of political thought.² It demonstrated, as much subsequent scholarship has confirmed, that questions of colonization and imperial governance were braided through the history of Euro-American political theory.³ But Tully has moved beyond this historical genre

* Thanks to the following for offering comments and insights: Dan Matlin, Andrew Sartori, Sarah Fine, Bonnie Honig. All the usual disclaimers apply.

¹ For diverse variants, see T. Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights: Cosmopolitan Responsibilities and Reforms*, Cambridge: Polity, 2002; S. Caney, *Justice Beyond Borders: A Global Political Theory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005; S. Benhabib, *Another Cosmopolitanism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008; N. Fraser, *Scales of Justice: Reimagining Political Space in a Globalizing World*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2008; M. Hardt and A. Negri, *Empire*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000; D. Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2009.

² See especially J. Tully, *An Approach to Political Philosophy: Locke in Contexts*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

³ For recent overviews, see D. Bell, 'Ideologies of Empire', in M. Freeden, L. T. Sargent and M. Stears, eds, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Ideologies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013; J. Pitts, 'Political Theory and Empire', *Annual Review of Political Science* 13: 211–35, 2010; S. Muthu, ed., *Empire and Modern Political Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

to unpack the ways in which the imperial past haunts the present, a spectre not yet vanquished. Empire shapes the very categories in which we ‘moderns’ think about politics, as well as the institutions bequeathed to us by half a millennium of conquest and colonization. Tully’s theoretical orientation – which I term ‘agonistic republicanism’ – was first systematically outlined in *Strange Multiplicity* and elaborated in the essays collected as *Public Philosophy in a New Key*.⁴ He has now extended it further in his latest discussion of cooperative citizenship. The orientation is agonistic insofar as it stresses the irreducibility and inevitability of conflict and struggle in the negotiation of political life.⁵ It is republican insofar as it seeks to harness the powers of active virtuous citizenship in enacting democratic freedom.⁶ Drawing insights from a diverse array of thinkers, perhaps above all Quentin Skinner, Foucault and Wittgenstein, Tully outlines a form of radical republican theorizing sensitive to the rich tapestry of practices of governance and freedom found throughout the world.⁷

In the following pages I offer an assessment of Tully’s ongoing project as a contribution to debates over global politics. The chapter is partly exegetical, partly critical, seeking both to outline some of the ways in which Tully frames the contemporary global condition while offering

⁴ J. Tully, *Strange Multiplicity: Constitutionalism in the Age of Diversity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995; J. Tully, *Public Philosophy in a New Key*, Two Volumes, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

⁵ For Tully, the benefits of an agonistic account of politics are manifold, for it emphasises the ‘manifest reality of partisanship, dissent, disagreement, contestation and adversarial reasoning in the history and present of democratic societies and the positive role it plays in exposing and overcoming structures of inequality and injustice, fostering a critical democratic ethos and, *eo ipso*, creating autonomous citizens with bonds of solidarity across real differences.’ Tully, *Public Philosophy* II, p. 110.

⁶ For non-agonistic republican accounts of global politics, see the essays by C. Laborde, ‘Republicanism and Global Justice: A Sketch’, *European Journal of Political Theory* 9 (1): 48–69, 2010; P. Petit, ‘A Republican Law of People’, *European Journal of Political Theory* 9 (1): 48–69, 2010; D. Ivison, ‘Republican Human Rights?’, *European Journal of Political Theory* 9 (1): 31–47, 2010; L. Halldenius, ‘Building Blocks of a Republican Cosmopolitanism: The Modality of Being Free’, *European Journal of Political Theory* 9 (1): 12–30, 2010; J. Bohman, *Democracy across Borders: From Dêmos to Dêmoi*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007.

⁷ Tully’s conception of theory as a critical mode of practical reasoning is outlined in the chapter by Anthony Laden, so I will not dwell on it here. Also see A. S. Laden, ‘The Key to/of Public Philosophy’, *Political Theory* 39 (1): 112–17, 2011.

some challenges along the way. I develop two related lines of argument, both of which flow from what I will call the ‘asymmetry problem’: the stark disjunction between his analysis of the pervasive impact of imperialism on the current global order and the critical resources that cooperative citizenship offers in response. Bonnie Honig hints at the problem when she writes that ‘[l]ike a realist, Tully sees the expansion of power, governance, and violence everywhere in the contemporary world, but, like a humanist, he insists nonetheless on hoping against hope for the human miracle against it.’⁸ I question whether Tully’s appealing humanism is sufficient to grapple with the depredations and power structures of the current imperial order. Section 2 outlines some salient features of Tully’s conception of citizenship, while probing issues of subject formation, ethico-political education and the possibilities of mass civic mobilization. Section 3 challenges his argument about the primacy of non-violence, suggesting that it may be prohibitively self-limiting. In the spirit of dialogue which Tully’s work so commendably embodies, I will pose these challenges as a series of questions, open to disputation and intended as an opening for further debate.

2. Global virtue ethics: Agonistic citizenship and the arts of the self

The current debates over global justice have been framed largely in terms of a prescriptive discourse of justice and human rights. Tully adopts a different theoretical stance. The aim of public philosophy, he argues, is

... not to develop a normative theory as the solution to the problems of this way of being governed, such as a theory of justice, equality or democracy. Rather, it is to disclose the historically contingent

⁸ B. Honig, ‘[Un]Dazzled by the Ideal: Tully’s Politics and Humanism in Tragic Perspective,’ *Political Theory* 39 (1): 142, 2011. A potential tension in his account of empire is also picked up in D. Ivison, “‘Another World is Actual’: Between Imperialism and Freedom,” *Political Theory* 39 (1): 131, 2011.

conditions of possibility of this historically singular set of practices of governance and the range of characteristic problems and solutions to which it gives rise.⁹

Political theory, then, should be seen as a mode of ‘intersubjective and open-ended practical reasoning’ oriented ‘to freedom before justice’.¹⁰ This represents a form of immanent theorizing, opposed to entering into ‘dialogues with fellow citizens under the horizon of a political theory that frames the exchanges and places the theorist above the *demos*’.¹¹ On Tully’s account, this latter conception of the role of the theorist is paternalistic, demanding forms of coercion that replicate aspects of the long history of imperialism. In contrast, adopting a democratic mode of democratic theorizing leads, among other things, to scepticism about the confident universalism of much Western political argument. For Tully, purported universals are often false projections of local contingent beliefs, though he insists that he is not opposed to universalism per se, only to specific articulations of it. False universalism permeates both liberal political philosophy (in the image of Rawls) and Critical Theory (in the image of Habermas), and it served to justify imperialism in both its historical and contemporary guises.¹² A further problem with much existing political theory, according to Tully, is that it frequently fails as a political enterprise, for its relentless abstraction and distance from the lived experience of much of the world ‘tends to promote a kind of idle, talk-show chatter about public reason in some mythical public sphere, overlooking the situated knowledge, local skills and passionate partisanship of real democratic deliberation’.¹³ Tully insists that theorists need to focus their energies on elucidating and engaging the

⁹ Tully, *Public Philosophy* I, p. 16.

¹⁰ Tully, *Public Philosophy* II, p. 108. For Tully, political theorists are often too myopic: ‘big abstract questions of normative legitimation’ take up their attention, while ‘practices of freedom on the rough ground of daily colonization usually fall beneath’ their attention (*Public Philosophy* I, p. 288).

¹¹ Tully, *Public Philosophy* II, p. 4. Political philosophy, then, is the ‘methodological extension and critical clarification of the already reflective and problematised character of historically situated practices of practical reasoning’ (*Public Philosophy* I, pp. 28–9).

¹² See also the argument in P. B. Mehta, ‘Cosmopolitanism and the Circle of Reason’, *Political Theory* 28 (5): 619–39, 2000.

¹³ Tully, *Public Philosophy* II, 111.

practices of quotidian politics. To the self-confident liberal cosmopolitan theorist, Tully's project might appear rather too conservative, incapable of prescribing the radical transformations required to address global inequalities and suffering, and held hostage to objectionable local practices and prejudices.¹⁴ In turn, the Tullyian public philosopher will respond that the standard view of the role of political theory presents a deeply undemocratic account of the relationship between the theorist and the demos. This dispute enacts, in contemporary guise, the venerable tension between liberalism and democracy.

At the core of Tully's theory of radical democracy is an innovative, multi-faceted account of citizenship. A citizen, he argues, is any 'person who is subject to a relationship of governance (that is to say, governed) *and*, simultaneously and primarily, is an active agent in the field of a governance relationship.'¹⁵ Citizenship comes in different forms, each comprising a bundle of practices, principles and institutions. The contemporary world is dominated by the regime of 'Modern Citizenship' – a modular assemblage of legitimating historical narrative, institutional architecture and a specified set of rights and duties embodied in law, that finds its ultimate realization in the capitalist representative democratic state. Citizenship, on this view, is a legal *status* granted to individuals within a complex array of governing institutions, and it is 'presented as a universal form of citizenship for all peoples.'¹⁶ Yet it is an expression – perhaps the main expression – of a false and pernicious universal. Modern citizenship, Tully contends, is integrally related to both the past and present of Western imperialism. The model is embedded in, and is dependent

¹⁴ For prominent variations on the cosmopolitan theme, see B. Barry, 'Statism and Nationalism: A Cosmopolitan Critique', in I. Shapiro and L. Brilmayer, eds, *Global Justice*, New York: New York University Press, 1999; C. Beitz, *Political Theory and International Relations*, 2nd edn, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999; M. Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007; Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights*; J. Waldron, 'Minority Cultures and the Cosmopolitan Alternative', *University of Michigan Journal of Law Reform* 25: 751–93 1992.

¹⁵ Tully, *Public Philosophy* II, 3. Emphasis in original.

¹⁶ J. Tully, 'A Dilemma of Democratic Citizenship', Paper delivered at the University of Victoria, 8 May 2010, p. 5.

upon, a teleological theory of social development in which this particular conception of citizenship is figured as the end of history, even its consummation. This narrative has been emplotted in different ways during the previous five centuries, but the underlying structure of argument remains the same. During the nineteenth century, civilization was equated with progress and seen as the product – and the beneficent gift – of the Europeans. During the twentieth century this civilizational discourse was transfigured into the purportedly more palatable idioms of modernization, development and, finally, global governance. Imperialism casts a long shadow.

So much for the diagnosis, what of the medicine? Tully argues that it is necessary to supplant the hierarchical meta-narrative of imperial-globalization with an agonistic republican pluralism, embodied in a form of cooperative citizenship.¹⁷ Citizenship in this sense is not a legal status but an ethos and a repertoire of practices adopted in relations of governance. ‘The moment an individual or collective agent who is subject to or affected by any power relationship that governs their conduct no longer unreflectively obeys the rule, but turns and becomes an active agent in and of the relationship, that subject is on the road to becoming a citizen of the relationship.’¹⁸ The cooperative species of citizenship, though, involves further elements, notably adherence to a set of agonistic dispositions and attitudes, including an openness to the other, sensitivity to difference, a commitment to self-criticism and dialogic engagement and awareness of the contingency of beliefs and norms. The agonistic ethos of democratic freedom constantly questions and challenges established institutions and governance relations. Nothing is foundational, nothing fixed; everything is open to debate and contestation.

One way of thinking about Tully’s project – indeed arguably about all accounts of agonistic politics – is to see it as an exercise in radical

¹⁷ Tully has also called this ‘plural’, ‘diverse’ and global/local citizenship.

¹⁸ Tully, ‘A Dilemma of Democratic Citizenship’, p. 20. For another imperial variant on the theme of citizenship, see D. Bell, ‘Beyond the Sovereign State: Isopolitan Citizenship, Race, and Anglo-American Union,’ *Political Studies* (2014, forthcoming).

virtue ethics.¹⁹ Agonistic theorists stress, in one way or another, the absolute centrality of the character of the moral agent – of attitudes, dispositions and self-understandings – rather than focusing on rule-following or formal-legal status. William Connolly, for example, argues that his account of agonistic pluralism requires the development of two civic virtues – ‘agonistic respect’ and ‘critical responsiveness.’²⁰ In order to fashion cooperative citizens it is essential to inculcate a minimal set of universal virtues – a *critical ethos* – to sustain the practices of agonistic politics. Subjects have to be (re)formed, oriented to a different kind of politics – to acting otherwise.

Tully seeks to overturn what he sees as a major intellectual obstacle to the realization of cooperative citizenship. A powerful tradition of thought, encompassing ‘Hobbes, Kant, Darwin, Marx, Mill, Freud’ and their heirs, insists on the inescapable but beneficial quality of *unsocial sociability*, the argument that in order to tame and productively direct the natural anti-social character of humans it is necessary first to socialize (‘civilize’) them through various kinds of institution-building.²¹ On this modernist account, humans are basically ‘antisocial, and antagonistic, and therefore untrustworthy outside of the coercive institutions of the modern state’, and as a consequence, ‘humanity needs a master to impose the basic institutions of social co-operation’ on recalcitrant peoples.²² Modern capitalist democracy, at the heart of which is modern citizenship, ‘socializes asociality’, channelling it into various competitive spheres, above all the market.²³ Modernity, then, is an institutional

¹⁹ For Aristotelian reconstructions of virtue ethics, see J. Annas, *Intelligent Virtue*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, which identifies the acquisition and exercise of virtues with adopting and using practical skills, and R. Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. It is in this quasi-Aristotelian moment, I would suggest, that Tully’s work differs from the ‘neo-republicans’ such as Quentin Skinner and Philip Pettit, who offer a more instrumental account of the relationship between virtue and citizenship. For use of the term neo-republican, see Tully, *Public Philosophy* II, p. 111, n. 32.

²⁰ W. E. Connolly, *Pluralism*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2005, p. 126. As he argues elsewhere, ‘we need periodically to work on ourselves to deuniversalize selective particularities that have become universalized by us’. W. E. Connolly, ‘Speed, Concentric Cultures, and Cosmopolitanism’, *Political Theory* 28 (5): 609, 2000.

²¹ Tully, ‘A Dilemma of Democratic Citizenship’, p. 12.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., p. 13.

constellation that articulates a particular conception of human nature. Tully disputes the fundamental premise of the neo-Hobbesian tradition and offers an alternative picture in its place, although in ‘The Dilemmas of Democratic Citizenship’ he only hints at what this might look like. We might call this position *social unsociability* – a fundamental cooperative framework within which (agonistic) political contestation can take place. Cooperative citizens, he claims, ‘argue that relationships of mutual cooperation and love among *all forms of life* on the planet are more basic than relationships of antagonism.’²⁴ This claim has two main dimensions. First, ‘social relationships of mutual aid are much more fundamental than antagonism and struggle in human evolution’. And second, a holistic account of global social ecology, in which ‘these social relationships of mutual aid are themselves embedded in yet deeper ecological relationships of cooperation and mutual assistance among all the diverse forms of life on the planet.’²⁵ Here he draws on the writings of Vandana Shiva, Albert Schweitzer and James Lovelock’s Gaia hypothesis. This is a distinctly non-agonistic moment in the argument: contestation is characterized as a second-order phenomenon, taking place against a background of human harmony. This differentiates Tully from the harsher conflictual accounts of agonism offered, for example, by Chantal Mouffe and many realist writers, including Raymond Geuss.²⁶

Here I want to raise some questions about the adequacy of Tully’s account of citizenship.²⁷ One weakness in his project – or at least a subject which he needs to say more about – concerns the picture of social unsociability. It is currently underdeveloped, only hinting at the account of human nature invoked. Moreover, in its current formulation it seems to depend on some highly speculative and controversial claims

²⁴ Ibid., p. 32. Emphasis in original.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 33.

²⁶ C. Mouffe, *On the Political*, London: Routledge, 2005; R. Geuss, *Philosophy and Real Politics*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008.

²⁷ I do not touch on any historical aspects. For questions about Tully’s historical account of modern citizenship, see D. Armitage, ‘Probing the Foundations of Tully’s Public Philosophy’, *Political Theory* 39 (1): 124–30, 2011.

about human evolution, though it seems clear that Tully could make the argument for cooperative citizenship without invoking the Gaia hypothesis of Kropotkinian visions of mutual aid. A further question concerns the way in which agonistic republican citizens are to be brought into being, especially on a global scale. How can we move from a world shaped by neo-liberal subjectivation and the deformation of ethico-political life under the forces of capitalism, racism and militarism, to one in which cooperative citizenship is the norm not the admirable exception. This is a profoundly difficult transition problem. It can also be seen as a species of the 'paradox of politics': Tully's account of the proper functioning of an agonistic democratic politics presupposes the existence of a body of cooperative citizens, but this citizenry can only fully be brought about, and allowed to function properly, in an agonistic republican polity.²⁸

If I am right about this, it follows that subject (re)formation and ethico-political education are prerequisites of the project of cooperative citizenship. What kind of education, and how is it to be secured? There are two different issues here. First, within democratic constitutional states, does the government – or some other governing institution – have an obligation to provide a form of education that trains individuals in the arts of cooperative citizenship?²⁹ Without a fundamental shift in educational norms it seems unrealistic to wait for a diverse range of existing practices to converge on a cooperative ethos capable of undergirding an agonistic politics to challenge both contemporary imperialism and the 'deeply sedimented' regime of modern citizenship. It is hard to see how the project can get off the ground in anything other than a limited, localized sense. But creating such an education system presents a further paradox, for it would

²⁸ The paradox of politics is, of course, derived from Rousseau's account of founding in Book II of the *Social Contract*. See especially B. Honig, 'Between Decision and Deliberation: Political Paradox in Democratic Theory', *American Political Science Review* 101 (1): 1–17, 2007.

²⁹ For different perspectives, see D. Bell, 'Agonistic Democracy and the Politics of Memory', *Constellations* 15 (1): 148–66, 2008; and M. Nussbaum, 'Cosmopolitanism and Patriotism' in J. Cohen, ed., *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism*, Boston: Beacon, 1996.

mean that it is necessary to inoculate aspects of that system from practices of democratic contestation, because (the right kind of) education serves as the precondition for it. The second issue concerns the widespread realization of cooperative citizenship outside the boundaries of democratic constitutional states. On the modernist model, the pedagogical strategy is clear: the spread (through direct coercion or informal imperialism) of a form of legal and political architecture which trains peoples in the arts of modern citizenship. Imperial powers assume the role of Solonic law-giver, short-circuiting the problem of founding. This is empire figured as educative technology. But what are the pedagogical strategies of cooperative citizenship?

In a recent talk, Tully responded to a question about the education of citizens by pointing to schools on the Eastern seaboard of the United States and in Central America that taught forms of agonistic respect.³⁰ This is admirable but surely exceptional: for every progressive school teaching the arts of cooperative citizenship, there are dozens of others teaching a variety of attitudes antithetical to the ethos cooperative citizenship requires. Think only of the power of conservative faith schools in many countries or the common insistence that school history curricula teach celebratory accounts of national pasts. Another possibility, in tune with Tully's own line of argument, is that political activity and engagement themselves serve, in a Millian sense, as a school of democracy. There is something to this, though the results are likely to be very uneven and there is no guarantee that they will necessarily produce the particular kind of ethos that agonistic democracy requires. At the least, then, Tully needs to further develop an account of ethico-political pedagogy, of the ways in which it is possible to inculcate the critical ethos that is presupposed by his picture of politics.

Here it is worth drawing a distinction between two modes of citizenship which, though related, differ in key respects. *Active citizens*

³⁰ J. Tully, 'The Crisis of Global Citizenship', Seminar in Political Thought and Intellectual History, University of Cambridge, 8 February 2010.

engage in practices of cooperation and contestation, mobilizing to challenge existing norms and values. *Cooperative citizens* likewise engage in social cooperation and contestation, but they do so in the name of a politics defined by openness to difference, to practices of self-criticism and with a recognition that politics is a field in which nothing is ever fixed. While there are plenty of examples of the former that Tully can point to, I would submit that cooperative citizens are much rarer on the ground than he allows. Active citizenship can be witnessed in the growing influence of conservative religious groups in the United States and throughout the Middle East and South Asia, where people are mobilizing to impose a particular moralized view of politics on their compatriots (and maybe the world as a whole). Similar dynamics can be seen in the resurgence of Far Right political parties in Europe. These are exemplary active citizens, cooperating with each other to 'be the change' (in Tully's and Obama's terms) and to confront existing power structures. But they are certainly not cooperative citizens, for they believe in the fixity of forms of life, the absolute, non-negotiable, often God-given, nature of various principles and commands that (among other things) deny forms of human equality and freedom.

Tully would presumably be wary of a Solonic norm-giver – Rousseau's solution to the paradox of politics – but absent this, and absent a state-enforced educational program, it is not clear how a regime of cooperative citizenship could begin to seriously challenge modern citizenship. Relying on the bottom-up, self-organizing powers of citizens is certainly not fruitless; there are successful examples to which he can point. But here the asymmetry between diagnosis and prescription leads to problems. In a global landscape dominated by vast concentrations of capital and military power, how can this vanguard have any systematic or transformative effect? Is it a recipe for permanent subalternization, doomed to remain forever interstitial, an illuminating example of how life might be lived otherwise? Or is that enough?

This leads to a related worry: perhaps cooperative citizenship is least effective where it is most urgently required. Tully concentrates his energies on intra-democratic debate, noting that the 'the orientation

of practical philosophy should not be to reaching final agreements on universal principles or procedures, but to *ensuring that constitutional democracies are always open* to the democratic freedom of calling into question and presenting reasons for the renegotiation of the prevailing rules of law, principles of justice and practices of deliberation.³¹ But what of people(s) throughout the world struggling for change outside the norms and institutions of the modern regime of citizenship? Tully is right that modern citizenship was globalized through the agency of European and later American imperialism, and that this process has continued in various iterations. But this globalization was and is highly uneven: in many states which profess modernist citizenship its norms are more often breached than upheld. It is far more common to pay lip service to democracy and constitutionalism than it is to live within their embrace. In much of the world, regimes of modern citizenship would surely be better than what people actually have, however preferable agonistic forms may ultimately be. Cooperative citizenship seems best suited to challenging the failures of existing forms of citizenship, chiefly by drawing on some of its own resources. It seeks to overcome the failures of that which produced it. As such, it acts as a powerful mode of immanent critique. Is it, then, most effective when it is parasitic on modernist citizenship?

3. Political violence, empire and the limits of global justice

When applied to the global level, Tully's public philosophy 'consists of historical and critical studies of global relationships of horrendous inequality, dependency, exploitation and environmental damage, and of corresponding practices of civic freedom of global and local citizens to transform them into democratic relationships.'³² Imperialism forms the

³¹ Tully, *Public Philosophy* II, p. 110. Emphasis added.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 6.

core of his 'historical and critical studies'. This distinguishes Tully from most contemporary political theorists who either ignore imperialism altogether or think of it in the past tense, as a state of affairs that once produced injustices that may (or may not) be the subject of legitimate claims for rectification. For Tully, imperialism never went away.

He identifies four main 'discourses' and three main forms of Western imperial governance.³³ The discourses are interlocking justificatory arguments that have been utilized to legitimate Western conquest and rule. First, Europeans have often claimed a *ius commercium*, a right for Western states and corporations to enter into relations with other peoples. Most commonly, the *ius* has been interpreted as encompassing distinct rights to trade and to convert peoples to Western forms of life. The second discourse is the corresponding duty of hospitality that peoples throughout the world are supposed to owe to imperial powers. Failure to uphold this duty leads to the third discourse, which is the right of the imperial powers to use force to 'open' societies which refuse to engage in commerce with them. Finally, there is a right (even duty) of purportedly 'civilized' states to transform the world in their own image, to drag it from backwardness into the bright light of modernity. This has been justified in a variety of ways: 'to improve, to civilize, develop, modernize, constitutionalize, democratize, and bring good governance and freedom.'³⁴ All are expressions of a powerful imperialist imaginary.

Empire has also assumed diverse institutional forms. *Settler colonialism* saw the creation of 'new Europes' throughout the world, leading either to the extermination or assimilation of indigenous populations. The legacies of this mode of governance can be seen most clearly in North America and the Pacific. *Indirect colonial rule* involved the creation of small administrative cadres – either acting on behalf of the imperial state or through private corporations – to govern local populations through political technologies including divide-and-rule,

³³ J. Tully, 'Lineages of Contemporary Imperialism', in D. Kelly, ed., *Lineages of Empire: The Historical Roots of British Imperial Thought*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 11–12.

³⁴ Tully, 'Lineages of Contemporary Imperialism', p. 11.

co-opting local elites, establishing capitalist labour markets and legal regimes and so forth. Like the first, this modality of empire helped to globalize modern citizenship. It was prevalent in India and much of the Middle East and Africa. Both kinds of imperialism have created toxic legacies, but neither finds widespread support today. Instead, a third modality, with its roots in the nineteenth century, structures the current international system: *informal imperialism*.³⁵ Under conditions of informal imperialism, there is no need to govern populations and territories through formal-legal means because the most powerful states 'induce local rulers to keep their resources, labour, and markets open to free trade dominated by western corporations and global markets, thereby combining "empire and liberty"'.³⁶ In the nineteenth century, free trade imperialism was one of the main instruments through which Britain integrated much of Latin America into the imperial capitalist system. During the twentieth century, and especially following the catastrophic failure of alternative models of Nazi and Soviet imperialism, it emerged as the preferred mode of domination by the leading imperial powers, chiefly the United States. This is the contemporary expression of liberal civilizing imperialism; modern citizenship stands at its ideological core. Along the way it has been (mis)labelled modernization and development, and it now functions under the rubric of globalization, 'the continuation of Western imperialism by informal means and through institutions of global governance'.³⁷

This analysis represents a standing reproach to much of the liberal normative debate over global justice. Despite their good intentions, liberal theorists (and politicians) are frequently stuck in an historical loop, unreflectively reproducing a mode of benevolent civilizing imperialism. As Tully notes, many purportedly anti-imperial languages and practices 'are neither outside of contemporary imperialism nor the means of

³⁵ Tully also refers to this (following Robinson and Gallagher) as 'free trade imperialism', and as 'interactive' or 'infrastructural' imperialism.

³⁶ Tully, 'Lineages of Contemporary Imperialism'.

³⁷ Tully, *Public Philosophy* II, p. 7. For a parallel critique (albeit one with a different conclusion), see T. McCarthy, *Race, Empire and the Idea of Human Development*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

liberating us from imperialism'.³⁸ For example, 'the dominant forms of representative democracy, self-determination and democratisation promoted through international law are not alternatives to imperialism, but, rather, the means through which informal imperialism operates against the wishes of the majority of the population of the post-colonial world'.³⁹ Liberal theorists are thus, according to Tully, often unwitting heirs of the long history of European imperial dominance.

The protection of self-determination and democratic government under international law and the exercise of powers of self-determination and democratic self-rule are internal to informal post-colonial imperialism, at least in their present form. They are literally the two main ways by which the conduct of subaltern states is governed by informal imperial rule: that is, through supporting, channelling and constraining their self-determining democratic freedoms.⁴⁰

Tully offers a brilliant conspectus of the ways in which the history of Western political thought, even in its most apparently progressive manifestations, has been implicated in the justification of oppression, occupation, displacement, even extermination. He is particularly good at moving beyond textual criticism and conceptual analysis to uncover the institutional preconditions that have proved necessary for the enactment of many of the policies put forward by defenders of the modern regime of citizenship. But while I am very sympathetic to his diagnosis of the pathologies of the current international system, and to the connections he traces between imperialism past and present, I want to raise some questions about the lessons he draws from this analysis. In particular, there is a disconnect between his account of the

³⁸ Tully, *Public Philosophy* II, p. 130. See also the discussion in Ivison, 'Another World is Actual', pp. 133–4, 135. On Kantian imperialism, see Tully, *Public Philosophy* II, chapter 1. For a different view, see S. Muthu, *Enlightenment Against Empire*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003.

³⁹ Tully, *Public Philosophy* II, p. 158.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 53. 'Cosmopolitan theorists work out, by a process of solitary reflection on the European history of representative government and democracy, and then project globally, prior to any exercise of representative popular sovereignty in forums of democratic dialogue, a cosmopolitan public law that lays down the preconditions of global practices of democracy' (*Public Philosophy* II, p. 63).

sheer historical *weight* of imperialism – the way in which it continues to fundamentally shape many of the dominant practices, norms and structures in the international system – and his prescribed cooperative remedies.

Before doing so, however, it is important to note that Tully offers a partial response to this line of argument. He does so by differentiating his account of empire from the influential critique of Hardt and Negri, as well as many post-colonial critics. Imperialism, he writes, is not as 'global and total as it appears, and alternative, non-imperial ways of living in the present are not only *possible*, but *actual* to some degree in the lived experience of millions of people'.⁴¹ There are two main reasons for this. First, imperialism is only a 'feature' of the dominant languages and practices; it does not exhaust them. Moreover, such features are contingent aspects of those languages and practices, and they are therefore capable of being transcended or eliminated, at least in principle. This opens up the space for subaltern agency and for exercising the arts of agonistic citizenship. The second point is that under informal imperialism there is more space for working against the hegemonic powers than under direct imperial governance. I concur with both of these points. Despite these qualifications, though, Tully presents imperialism as a pervasive and profound influence on the contemporary world, one that shapes many of the institutions, laws and norms that govern us, and which is upheld in the interests of the dominant actors – those who have very few incentives to democratize the distribution of power in the system. His analysis, he admits, is 'gloomy'.⁴² Imperialism is 'deeply sedimented'.⁴³

What, then, can be done to confront this vast system of oppression and injustice? Or as Tully himself phrases the question, 'what can citizens who are subject to these imperial relationships (in both the

⁴¹ Tully, *Public Philosophy* II, p. 130, n. 8, discussing Hardt and Negri, *Empire*. 'Imperialism has not made the world over to the extent the promoters and critics presuppose' (Tully, *Public Philosophy* II, p. 164).

⁴² Tully, *Public Philosophy* II, p. 164.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

North and the global South) do to transform them into non-imperial, democratic relationships by bringing them under their shared authority?’⁴⁴ It is here that I think Tully’s answer is incomplete, or at least underdeveloped. One of the main reasons for this is that he does not view the use of force as a legitimate element of the arts of cooperative citizenship. Proclaiming an Arendtian aversion to violence, Tully sees force as the antithesis of politics rather than a constitutive dimension of it. When violence breaks out (agonistic) politics has failed.⁴⁵ But he goes further than Arendt, valorizing the benefits of non-violence, which he construes as an ethical injunction: ‘it is necessary to turn the other cheek and try gradually to bring [others] into a relationship of conversation, negotiation and conversion to non-violence.’⁴⁶ This is not pacifism as ‘passive resistance’, but rather, following in the footsteps of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr, it is the operation of ‘very active non-violent arts of government and citizenship.’⁴⁷ Violence, Tully concludes, ‘*begets* violence and anti-democratic politics. Non-violence and democracy *begets* non-violence and democracy’. The only way to break out of spirals of bloodshed is to approach the ‘other’ non-violently, ‘with an open hand rather than a closed fist’.⁴⁸

Advocacy of non-violence can be read in several different ways, and Tully is not always clear about where he draws the lines. It could be interpreted in a strong pacifist sense: non-violence as an absolute prohibition on the use of force, whatever the circumstances. A slightly weaker claim would permit the use of violence in situations of personal self-defence, in which an immediate and overriding threat to bodily integrity is met with force. A yet weaker claim is the imperative to deploy non-violent strategies against repression *in the first instance*, an argument that allows for the use of violence after some yet-to-be-specified threshold has been crossed. At times Tully gestures in this

⁴⁴ Tully, *Public Philosophy* I, p. 7.

⁴⁵ H. Arendt, *On Violence*, New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1970.

⁴⁶ Tully, ‘A Dilemma of Democratic Citizenship’, p. 29.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 30 and 31. Tully also lists Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Gene Sharp, Petra Kelly and Vandana Shiva as inspirations.

⁴⁸ Tully, ‘A Dilemma of Democratic Citizenship’, p. 30.

direction, noting for example that ‘direct confrontation’ and ‘rebellion and revolution’ are an integral albeit extreme practice of civic freedom.⁴⁹ However, he does not explore the conditions in which they are justified, and elsewhere he defines the arts of cooperative citizenship in strictly non-violent terms. Do people stop being (cooperative) citizens when they move from non-violent agonism to violent resistance, or is violence recognized as a legitimate part of the arts of citizenship? It is not clear. Tully does not appear to be an absolutist pacifist, but the position that he argues for allows very little room for the use of force. However, I would argue that a comprehensive conception of agonistic citizenship requires a normative account of the conditions in which the use of organized violence against oppression is legitimate.

Tully’s argument for non-violence also adduces some empirical claims. The empirical argument aims to demonstrate that non-violence can be a very effective force for change – maybe even *the* most effective form. ‘It is the great changes in the ethical behaviour of citizens that move governments to end slavery, enfranchise women, enact climate change legislation, end unjust wars, recognize indigenous peoples or adopt effects human rights; not the other way around.’⁵⁰ Cooperative citizens, he insists, have many options available to them to challenge existing power structures. They ‘use non-violent networks of persuasion and pressure to bring the powers-that-be to the negotiating table, whether this is an official or an ad hoc table. These activities comprise the great local and global arts of *non-violent citizen-based negotiation*.’⁵¹ The arts include ‘protests, petitions, boycotts, non-cooperation, arguing and bargaining, alternative dispute resolution, and transformative justice.’⁵² Tully invests great hope in such non-violent practices, suggesting that their cumulative power ‘can move and transform the mode of being (hearts and minds) of unjust and

⁴⁹ See, for example, his claim about ‘at the extreme, the Lockean activity of overthrowing an unjust government and setting up a new one’ (*Public Philosophy* II, p. 99).

⁵⁰ Tully, ‘A Dilemma of Democratic Citizenship’.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 24.

free-riding parties, bring unjust power relationships under democratic authority or all those subject to or affected by them, and thus change the world from the ground up.⁵³ What, though, if it turned out that the empirical argument for the effectiveness of non-violence is weak, or at least weaker than Tully allows? Would the ethical imperative to do no harm still hold, even if it unintentionally helped to maintain the status quo?

When pushed by Bonnie Honig on the role of reason and violence, Tully responded by clarifying the relationship between the two. However, he does so by deflecting the question. He suggests that one of the purposes of his work has been to highlight the prevalence of a false argument that snakes through the Western tradition of political thought.

This is the assumption that certain conditions must be in place and humans must be subject to them before it is possible to engage in non-violent reasoning altogether (cooperating and contesting forms of cooperation). Accordingly it is irrational to try to reason with another person or people prior to imposing coercively over them a secure structure of law, for only once they have been pacified, civilized or modernised by forceful subjection to a structure of cooperation of some kind or another (military rule, Western law, primitive accumulation, labour discipline, markets, state structures, restructuring policies) is it then reasonable to reason non-violently with them. Thus violence is both reasonable and necessary to establish democracy and peace.⁵⁴

Such a view, he argues, has been central to the justification of imperialism and it remains a core component of its contemporary 'informal' expressions. But the assumption is false: there is no necessary connection between violence, reason and peace. This is highlighted above all by the successful evolution of the tradition of non-violence over the last century.

⁵³ Tully, 'Lineages of Contemporary Imperialism', p. 150.

⁵⁴ J. Tully, 'Dialogue', *Political Theory* 39 (1): 157, 2011.

I want to push Tully on this point, because it seems to me that there are a number of problems to be confronted with this strict adherence to practices of non-violence. We need not accept the argument about pre-conditionality, or the claim about a necessary internal relation between reason and violence, to recognize that sometimes, just sometimes, force may be the best or only option available. While there are plenty of inspirational examples of peaceful cooperative life, it remains the case, as Tully himself recognizes, that the global field of action is itself fundamentally structured by hegemonic institutions and practices, with violence a routinized strategy deployed to maintain the existing system. While there is some room for agency, it is highly restricted. It seems, then, this argument involves form of idealization that, unlike the diagnosis, does not really grapple adequately with the power relations that uphold the global order.

Non-violence is, all things being equal, preferable to violence as a means to resolve conflicts and bring about sociopolitical change. Moreover, practices of non-violent resistance did help to bring about some social change during the last century and a half.⁵⁵ But things are rarely equal, and the feasibility of non-violence is the exception not the rule. The actions of Martin Luther King Jr and Gandhi are worthy of great respect and sometimes emulation, at least where possible, but the efficacy of non-violence as a strategy is largely dependent on the institutional and normative context in which it is utilized. Sometimes the circumstances open a space in which power can be countered or derailed by non-violent forms of action. This was the case with Indian resistance to British rule and the American civil rights struggle, Tully's key examples. But even in these cases, non-violence was typically shadowed by violence, or the threat of it. In India, Gandhian non-violence was accompanied by other, violent resistance movements, and British rule was ultimately brought to an end by Japanese imperialism and its subsequent weakening through a

⁵⁵ For a valuable survey, see D. Cortright, *Peace: A History of Movements and Ideas*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

prolonged global conflict.⁵⁶ The (partial) success of the US civil rights movement was a product of various interlocking factors and cannot be reduced to the efficacy of heroic non-violence. The dynamics of the Cold War, changes in the structure of the American political economy and the shifting balance of power in Washington, were all important variables. So too was the fear of black violence – symbolized above all by Malcolm X – which King and his followers successfully played on in formulating their strategies.⁵⁷ Another feature unites both cases: they occurred within the framework of the modern regime of citizenship. They were fights over the interpretation and application of extant rules and conventions: it was possible to appeal to existing laws, principles or norms – of equality, liberty, citizenship or rights of national self-determination – that were not being properly enacted. At times, then, it is arguable that Tully falls foul of romanticized view of the power of non-violence, one which is then generalized beyond the specific conditions which facilitate it as a modality of politics into situations where it is almost invariably bound to fail.

Alternatives to the absolutist non-violent stance were outlined by Frantz Fanon and Nelson Mandela. Fanon justified the use of violence against the French colonial regime in Algeria, arguing in *The Wretched of the Earth* that it was both a necessary military response and (perhaps less plausibly) that it performed a range of cathartic psychological tasks.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Note, for example, that armed resistance against Britain, notably the Indian National Army under Subhash Chandra Bose, had a significant impact on British thinking about the future viability of the empire. P. W. Fay, *The Forgotten Army: India's Armed Struggle for Independence 1942–1945*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994.

⁵⁷ S. Tuck, *We Ain't What We Ought to Be: The Black Freedom Struggle from Emancipation to Obama*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010, p. 322. On this account, Malcolm X played bad cop to King's good cop. Note too that non-violent protests were often protected by armed activists: L. Hill, *The Deacons for Defense: Armed Resistance and the Civil Rights Movement*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006; T. Tyson, 'Robert F. Williams, "Black Power," and the Roots of the Black Freedom Struggle', *Journal of American History* 85 (2): 540–70, 1998. ('Our vision of the African American freedom movement between 1945 and 1965 as characterized solely and inevitably by nonviolent civil rights protest obscures the full complexity of racial politics', p. 570). See also the interesting analysis in M. Stears, *Demanding Democracy: American Radicals in Search of a New Politics*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010, chapter 5.

⁵⁸ F. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, London: Penguin, 2001. See also the famous 'Preface' by Jean-Paul Sartre. For discussions of his justification of violence, see N. C. Gibson, *Fanon: The Postcolonial Imagination*, Cambridge: Polity, 2003, chapter 5.

He was an inspiration for many anti-colonial resistance movements. For Mandela, non-violence was part of a repertoire of resistance to the brutal apartheid regime, but one that ran its course and failed. As he wrote,

. . . the hard facts were that fifty years of nonviolence had brought the African people nothing but more and more repressive legislation, and fewer and fewer rights . . . [I]n May and June of 1961, it could not be denied that our policy to achieve a nonracial state by nonviolence had achieved nothing and that our followers were beginning to lose confidence in this policy . . . Each disturbance pointed clearly to the inevitable growth among Africans of the belief that violence was the only way out – it showed that a government which uses force to maintain its rule teaches the oppressed to use force to oppose it.⁵⁹

Both the Algerian and South African cases were arguably legitimate examples of violent resistance to oppression, violence to counter violence. Tully may concur that both were extreme but defensible instances of civic freedom. My suspicion, though, is that these kinds of situations are far more common than those in which non-violence can secure victory over oppressive regimes. Think, for example, of the ‘Arab Spring’, in which a combination of violent and non-violent strategies were employed (in different combinations) across Libya, Syria, Egypt, Bahrain, Yemen and others. In Libya, rebellion turned into violent revolution. In Iran, the non-violent ‘Green Revolution’ of 2009 was crushed by state power. In Syria, non-violent protests morphed into armed rebellion after the Assad regime met banners with machine gun fire and tanks. Tully’s optimism about the arts of non-violent citizenship needs qualifying. None of this guarantees that violence will work of course. Sometimes it appears to; often it does not.

But there are other circumstances which are perhaps slightly less clear-cut, but in which we might also ask about the limits of non-violence.

⁵⁹ S. Johns and R. H. Davis, eds, *Mandela, Tambo, and the African National Congress: The Struggle Against Apartheid 1948–1990: A Documentary Survey*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, pp. 119–20.

What about resistance to the structural violence of global poverty and immiseration? The current debates over global justice remain largely silent on the issue. Thomas Pogge provides a bracing example.⁶⁰ In *World Poverty and Human Rights* he makes three interlocking empirical claims. First, that the extant global economic system is the product of a long history of European imperialism. Second, it is structured in such a way that it benefits the Global North at the expense of the Global South, impoverishing hundreds of millions throughout the world (it is this argument which motivates his influential account of negative duties). And third, the current global conjuncture, in which millions die of remediable starvation and preventable diseases every year, constitutes a 'full size crime against humanity', indeed a crime that has killed far more people than the Holocaust.⁶¹ This catastrophe, he continues, is traceable to a set of identifiable practices and institutions – namely, the policies of the dominant powers in the capitalist world system. It represents 'the imposition, by our governments, in our name, of a coercive global order that perpetuates severe poverty for many who cannot resist this imposition.'⁶²

I imagine that Tully would agree with this analysis, if not with other aspects of Pogge's neo-Kantian cosmopolitan project. Yet this argument raises an important question: what are the rights of (violent) resistance against such oppression? Or, in Tullyian language, when (if at all) can cooperative citizens utilize violence as part of a repertoire of practices of

⁶⁰ In a number of places, Tully identifies Pogge as a fellow-travelling critical scholar concerned with challenging global structures of oppression. For example, see Tully, *Public Philosophy* II, p. 221. On resistance and Pogge's account of global justice, see also G. D. Blunt, 'Transnational Socio-Economic Justice and the Right of Resistance', *Politics* 31 (1): 1–8, 2011.

⁶¹ Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights*, p. 25.

⁶² Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights*, p. 23. Here lies one of the main differences between Pogge's account and that of many other global justice theorists. Pogge's argument about the negative duties owed by the global rich to the global poor depends on the adequacy of his empirical account of the structure of the international system. If the empirical argument does not hold, he cannot motivate the negative duties argument (though a positive duties argument would then kick in). This difference would, presumably, have significant consequences for how we might think about resistance. For challenges to Pogge's account, see, for example, J. Cohen, 'Philosophy, Social Science, and Global Poverty', in A. M. Jaggar, ed., *Thomas Pogge and His Critics*, Cambridge: Polity, 2010; M. Risse, 'How Does the Global Order Harm the Poor?', *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 33 (4): 349–76, 2005.

civic freedom? Nowhere in Pogge's or Tully's texts is there any sustained answer. Instead, we are presented with a range of ways in which the problem can be ameliorated – how the system can be changed so that it no longer arises. For Tully, the answer lies in inculcating the non-violent arts of cooperative citizenship and allowing people to self-govern in democratic constitutional regimes. For Pogge (and many other cosmopolitan theorists) the answer lies in a radical transformation of the principles and practices of global resource redistribution (in his case, through the creation of a 'Global Resources Dividend'). However, all of these proposals are dependent on very major shifts in the existing global order, requiring that those who benefit most from the current system give up many of the instruments of their power. Perhaps in the long run such plans will come to fruition. But what about now? If a crime against humanity is being committed, if millions of people are dying or suffering *today*, then why is it not legitimate to use force in response? It seems counter-intuitive, at the very least, to insist on the primacy of non-violent action – of Gandhi over Fanon – or to wait until improbable changes to the global economic and political architecture can be brought about at some indefinite point in the future.

In summary, then, I think we need to revisit the two mantras that Tully sets himself firmly against: 'democracy cannot be brought about by democratic means' and 'peace cannot be brought about by peaceful means'.⁶³ We do not need to accept these rigid formulations to recognize that peaceful citizen action cannot always bring about peaceful transformation and that democracy is not always brought about by democratic means.

4. Conclusion

For Tully, no political argument, no perspective, no norm, is ever final or fixed. Conclusions are only tentative opportunities for further

⁶³ Tully, 'A Dilemma of Democratic Citizenship', p. 13.

reflection, for raising other questions. In this chapter I have sought to take up this challenge by pressing him on aspects of his argument about cooperative citizenship. I have suggested that there is a tension running through his powerful and provocative writing on global politics. While he offers a compelling 'gloomy' account of the ongoing and deeply sedimented practices of imperial domination that continue to shape the lives of millions, cooperative citizenship fails to offer sufficient resources to resist the imperial order.