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TOLERANCE AS/IN CIVILIZATIONAL DISCOURSE

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. . . alongside an infinite diversity of cultures, there does exist one, global civilization in which humanity's ideas and beliefs meet and develop peacefully and productively. It is a civilization that must be defined by its tolerance of dissent, its celebration of cultural diversity, its insistence on fundamental, universal human rights and its belief in the right of people everywhere to have a say in how they are governed.[1]

—UN Secretary Kofi Annan

We meet here during a crucial period in the history of our nation, and of the civilized world. Part of that history was written by others; the rest will be written by us . . . And by acting, we will signal to outlaw regimes that in this new century, the boundaries of civilized behavior will be respected.[2]

—President George W. Bush

. . . America and the West have potential partners in these [Islamic] countries who are eager for us to help move the struggle to where it belongs: to a war within Islam over its spiritual message and identity, not a war with Islam . . . a war between the future and the past, between development and underdevelopment, between authors of crazy conspiracy theories versus those espousing rationality . . . Only Arabs and Muslims can win this war within, but we can openly encourage the progressives. . . .

> The only Western leader who vigorously took up this challenge was actually the Dutch politician Pim Fortuyn . . . Fortuyn questioned Muslim immigration to the Netherlands . . . not because he was against Muslims but because he felt that Islam had not gone through the Enlightenment or the Reformation, which separated church from state in the West and prepared it to embrace modernity, democracy and tolerance.
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> As a gay man, Fortuyn was very much in need of tolerance, and his challenge to Muslim immigrants was this: I want to be tolerant, but do you? Or do you have an authoritarian culture that will not be assimilated, and that threatens my country's liberal, multicultural ethos?[3]
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> —*New York Times* editorialist Thomas Friedman

> The War on Terrorism is a war for human rights.[4]
> —Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld

> Every terrorist is at war with civilization. . . . And so, America is standing for the expansion of human liberty.
> —President George W. Bush, 18 May 2004

In the modern West, a liberal discourse of tolerance distinguishes "free" from "fundamentalist" societies, "civilized" from "barbaric," and individualized from organicist or collectivized. These pairs are not synonymous, are not governed precisely the same way by tolerance discourse, and do not call up precisely the same response from that discourse. However, they do assist in each other's constitution and in the constitution of the West and its Other. Whenever one pair of terms is present, it works metonymically to imply the others, in part because these pairs are popularly considered to have an organic association with one another in the world. Thus, the production and valorization of the sovereign individual is understood as critical in keeping barbarism at bay, just as fundamentalism is understood as a breeding ground of barbarism, and individuality is what fundamentalism is presumed to attenuate if not cancel. But there is a consequential ruse in the association of liberal autonomy, tolerance, secularism, and civilization on the one hand, and the association of group identity, fundamentalism, and barbarism on the other. This essay seeks to track the operations of that ruse.

Civilizational Discourse

If tolerance as a political practice is always conferred by the dominant, if it is always a certain expression of domination even as it offers protection or incorporation to the less powerful, tolerance as an individual virtue has a similar asymmetrical structure. The ethical bearing of tolerance is a highminded one, while the object of such highmindedness is inevitably figured as something more lowly. Even as the outlandish, wrongheaded, or literal outlaw is licensed or suffered through tolerance, the voice in which tolerance is proffered contrasts starkly with the qualities attributed to its object. The pronouncement, "I am a tolerant man," conjures seemliness, propriety, forbearance, magnanimity, cosmopolitanism, universality, the large view, while those for whom tolerance is required take their shape as improper, indecorous, urgent, narrow, particular, and often ungenerous or at least lacking in perspective.[5] Liberals who philosophize about tolerance almost always write about coping with what they cannot imagine themselves to be: they identify with the aristocrat holding his nose in the agora, not with the stench.

Historically and philosophically, tolerance is rarely argued for as an entitlement, a right, or a naturally egalitarian good in the ways that liberty generally is. Rather, one pleads for tolerance as an incorporative practice that promises to keep the peace through such incorporation. And so the subterranean yearning of tolerance for a universally practiced moderation that does not exist, a humanity so civilized that it would not require the virtue of tolerance, sits uneasily with the normative aspect of tolerance that reaffirms the characterological superiority of the tolerant over the tolerated.

Attention to these rhetorical aspects of tolerance suggest that it is not simply asymmetrical across lines of power but carries caste, class, and civilizational airs with it in its work. This essay scrutinizes that conveyance through consideration of the logic of tolerance as a civilizational discourse. The dual function of civilizational discourse to mark in general what counts as "civilized" and to confer superiority on the West produces tolerance itself in two distinct, if intersecting, power functions: 1) as part of what defines the superiority of Western Civilization, and 2) as that which

marks certain non-Western practices or regimes as "intolerable." Together, these operations of tolerance discourse in a civilizational frame legitimize liberal polities' illiberal treatment of selected practices, peoples, and states. They sanction illiberal aggression toward what is marked as intolerable without tarring the "civilized" status of the aggressor.

Remarks by George W. Bush emblematize the material of my argument. Shortly after September 11th, the President asserted: "Those who hate all civilization and culture and progress . . . cannot be ignored, cannot be tolerated . . . cannot be appeased. They must be fought."[6] Tolerance, a beacon of civilization, is inappropriately extended to those outside civilization *and* opposed to civilization; violence, which tolerance represses, is the only means of dealing with this threat and is thereby self-justifying. Paired with remarks in February 2002, in which Bush declared the United States to have a "historic opportunity to fight a war that will not only liberate people from the clutches of barbaric behavior but a war that can leave the world more peaceful in the years to come," it is not difficult to see how an opposition between civilization and barbarism, in which the cherished tolerance of the former meets its limits in the latter (limits that also give the latter its identity) provides the mantle of civilization, progress, and peace for imperial militaristic adventures.[7]

"Civilization" is a complex term with an even more complex genealogy. The *Oxford English Dictionary* describes civilization since the eighteenth century as referring to the "action or process of civilizing or being civilized" and also as denoting a "developed or advanced state of human society."[8] In *Keywords,* Raymond Williams notes that while "civilization is now generally used to describe an achieved state or condition of organized social life," it pertained originally to a process, a meaning which persists into the present.[9] The static and dynamic meanings of civilization are easily reconciled in the context of a progressivist Western historiography of modernity in which individuals and societies are configured as steadily developing a more democratic, reasoned, and cosmopolitan bearing. In this way civilization simultaneously frames the achievement of European modernity, the promised issue of modernization as an experience, and crucially, the effects of exporting European modernity to "uncivilized" parts of the globe. European

colonial expansion from the mid-nineteenth through the mid-twentieth century was explicitly justified as a project of civilization, conjuring the gifts of social order, legality, reason, religion, regulating manners and mores.[10]

However, civilization did not remain a simple term of colonial domination in which all the subjects it touched aspired to European standards. Not only did non-European elites and various anti-colonial struggles reshape the concept to contest and sometimes forthrightly oppose European hegemony, the idea of civilization was also pluralized in both scholarly and popular discourses during the last century. From Arnold Toynbee to Fernand Braudel to Samuel Huntington, there has been a concerted if variously motivated effort to pry civilization apart from Europe and even from modernity to make it more widely define structured "ways of life" comprising values, literatures, legal systems, and social organization.

Plural accounts *of* civilization, however, do not equate to a pluralist sensibility *about* civilization. Samuel Huntington's thesis (best known as an argument about the mutual sparking points among what he designates as the world's distinct and incommensurate civilizations) makes abundantly clear that such pluralization can cloak rather than negate the Western superiority charging the term. Although Huntington insists that Western Civilization "is valuable not because it is universal but because it *is* unique" (in its cultivation of the values of individual liberty, political democracy, human rights, and cultural freedom), this apparent gesture toward cultural relativism does not materialize as a principle of mutual valuation.[11] This is not only because Huntington's argument about Western Civilization's uniqueness forms the basis for intolerance of multiculturalism *within* the West (famously, Huntington argues: "a multicultural America is impossible because a non-Western America is not American . . . multiculturalism at home threatens the United States and the West").[12] Equally important, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* concludes with a warning about the current vulnerability of what Huntington calls "civilization in the singular": "on a worldwide basis Civilization seems to be in many respects yielding to barbarism, generating the image of an unprecedented phenomenon, a global Dark Ages, possibly descending on humanity."[13] This danger is evident,

Huntington continues, in a worldwide breakdown of law and order, a global crime wave, increasing drug addiction, a general weakening of the family, a decline in trust and social solidarity, and a rise in ethnic, religious, and civilizational violence. And what is occasioning this dark specter of what Huntington terms "a global moral reversion?"[14] Nothing less than the decline of Western power, that which established the rule of law as a civilizational norm and decreased the acceptability of "slavery, torture and vicious abuse of individuals."[15] So even as Huntington argues for all civilizations to bond together in fighting barbarism, the intolerable, only the values of the West can lead this fight: what will hold barbarism at bay is precisely what recenters the West as the defining essence of civilization and what legitimates its efforts at controlling the globe.

When these two arguments of Huntington's are combined—the argument for mutual accord among civilizations governed by what Huntington sets out as the distinctly Western value of tolerance, and the argument that the barbarism into which the world now threatens to slide is attributable to the decline of the West—there appears an unmistakable chain of identifications of the West with civilization ("in the singular"), of civilization with tolerance, and of the intolerant and the intolerable with the uncivilized. That these identifications occur despite Huntington's sincere effort to disrupt them is only a sign of how powerful civilizational discourse is in liberal theories of tolerance, even (and perhaps especially) when that discourse is most thoroughly inflected by political realism.

Huntington's work also makes clear that even when civilization is rendered in the plural, its signifying opposite remains barbarism. "Barbarian," it will be remembered, derives from the ancient Greek term denoting all non-Greeks. With the rise of Rome, its meaning shifted to refer to those outside the Empire; with the Italian Renaissance, barbarian defined all those imagined unreached by the Renaissance, that is, non-Italians. A barbarian is thus technically "a foreigner, one whose language and customs differ from the speaker's" but crucially, this foreignness has been continually established *vis-à-vis* empire and imperial definitions of civilization. And so the OED provides the second meaning: a condition of being "outside the pale of civilization." Outside the pale (an English

phrase for measuring its colonial jurisdiction in Ireland in the six-
teenth century) is not merely beyond geographical bounds but
unreached by civilization without its canopy. It is not difficult,
then, to see the path from the ancient meaning of barbarian as
foreigner to its contemporary signification, the third listing in the
OED: "a rude, wild, uncivilized person . . . an uncultured person,
or one who has no sympathy with literary culture."[16] As we shall
see shortly, Susan Okin's designation of selected non-liberal cul-
tural practices as barbaric, and her inability to see "barbaric" prac-
tices anywhere within liberal orders perfectly mimics the etymo-
logical slide of barbarian from *foreigner* to *uncivilized* to *wild brute,*
and inhabits as well the blindness to colonial or imperial domi-
nation that this slide entails. Again, this slide also underwrites
George W. Bush's routine accounts of his military engagements in
the Middle East as a struggle of the civilized world against barba-
rism: "Now is the time, and Iraq is the place, in which the enemies
of the civilized world are testing the will of the civilized world."[17]

If being beyond the pale of civilization is also to be what civiliza-
tion cannot tolerate, then tolerance and civilization not only en-
tail one another, but mutually define what is outside of both and
together constitute a strand in an emerging transnational govern-
mentality. To be uncivilized is to be intolerable is to be a barbar-
ian, just as to declare a particular practice intolerable is to stigma-
tize it as uncivilized. That which is inside civilization is tolerable
and tolerant; that which is outside is neither. This is how, even
amidst plural definitions of civilization, the discourse of tolerance
re-centers the West as the standard for civilization, and how toler-
ance operates simultaneously as a token of Western supremacy
and a legitimating cloak for Western domination. This is also why
Kofi Annan, in one of the epigrams for this essay, had to bring all
the world's cultures into a discursive meeting place governed by a
liberal political idiom named "global civilization." In no other way
could these diverse cultures attain or keep their status as civilized.

TEACHING TOLERANCE

According to Huntington, the West will save itself by valuing itself
and will save the world through developing global practices of civ-
ilizational tolerance, but the latter requires enlightening others

about the value of tolerating difference and eschewing funda-
mentalism. This formulation renders tolerance as pedagogically
achieved, a rendering inscribed in the very name of the "Teaching
Tolerance" project of the Southern Poverty Law Center.[18] Or, in
the words of K. Peter Fritzsche of the International Tolerance Net-
work, ". . . tolerance has to be learned. One has to be made capa-
ble of tolerance, and it is one of the utmost tasks of tolerance edu-
cation to promote the elements of this capability."[19] And Jay New-
man, a contemporary philosopher of tolerance, introduces his
volume on religious tolerance with a similar invocation: "intoler-
ance is the most persistent and the most insidious of all sources of
hatred. It is perhaps foremost among the obstacles to civilization,
the instruments of barbarism."[20] Newman's cure for intolerance?
Education, which he equates with "a process of civilizing." So
strongly does the binary of the ignorant and parochial hater and
the cosmopolitan sophisticate govern Newman's argument that
he does not even feel compelled to specify what *kind* of educa-
tion is needed; knowledge and thinking are themselves the en-
gine that dispel tribal enthusiasms and replace them with reflec-
tive individuals.[21]

The notion that tolerance must be taught articulates intoler-
ance as the "native" or "primitive" response to difference, an ar-
ticulation consonant with an equation of tolerance and individu-
ation. The rhetoric of "teaching tolerance" relegates enmity or
intolerance to the construed narrow-mindedness of those more
childlike, less formally educated, and above all, less individu-
ated than enlightened moderns. Hence, the equation of the
"bigot" with "ignorance," and also the popular journalistic tropes
of "primitive blood feuds" or "archaic enmity" to frame contem-
porary ethnic conflict in eastern Europe, Rwanda, or Ethiopia.
Hence, too, another popular journalistic trope that Islamicist vio-
lence is the consequence of a premodern sensibility. At work here
is a familiar Orientalist narrative of the cosmopolitan Westerner
as more rational and peaceful because more enlightened than the
native, a rationality, cosmopolitanism, and peaceability under-
stood to derive from and generate tolerance. This is a narrative in
which, as Barry Hindess argues, difference itself is temporalized,
and in which progressivism tied to Western notions of the individ-
ual, as well as of knowledge and freedom, are fundamentalized.[22]

The native, the fanatic, the fundamentalist, and the bigot are what must be overcome by the society committed to tolerance; from the perspective of the tolerant, these figures are pre-modern or at least have not been thoroughly washed by modernity, a formulation endlessly rehearsed by Thomas Friedman in his *New York Times* editorials on Islam.[23] This reminds us that it is not really Western Civilization *tout court* but the identification of modernity and, in particular, liberalism with the West, indeed the identification of liberalism as the telos of the West, that provides the basis for Western civilizational supremacy.

What wraps in a common leaf the native, the fanatic, the fundamentalist, and the bigot—despite the fact that some may be religiously orthodox or members of an organicist society while others may be radical libertarians—is a presumed existence in a narrow, homogeneous, unquestioning, and unenlightened universe, an existence that inherently generates hostility toward outsiders, toward questioning, toward difference. "Learning tolerance" thus involves divesting oneself of relentless partiality, absolutist identity, and parochial attachments, a process understood as the effect of a larger, more cosmopolitan worldview and not as the privilege of hegemony. It is noteworthy, too, that within this discourse the aim of learning tolerance is not to arrive at equality or solidarity with others but, rather, to learn how to put up with others by weakening one's own connections to community and claims of identity, that is, by becoming a liberal pluralist, one who, according to Michael Ignatieff, can "live and let live" or "love others more by loving ourselves a little less."[24] Tolerance as the overcoming of the putative natural enmity among essentialized differences is the issue of education and repression, which themselves presume the social contract and the weakening of nationalist or other communal identifications. Formulated this way, the valuation and practice of tolerance simultaneously confirms the superiority of the West, de-politicizes (by recasting as nativist enmity) the effects of domination, colonialism, and Cold War deformations of the Second and Third Worlds, and portrays those living these effects as in need of the civilizing project of the West.

Undergirding this conceptualization of enmity toward difference as natural and primitive is the conceit that the rational individual is inherently more peaceable, civil, far-seeing, and hence

tolerant than are members of "organicist societies." If Thomas Friedman is one of the most widely read and unabashed promulgators of this view, Michael Ignatieff is one of its most subtle exponents. For Ignatieff, racism and ethnically based nationalism are the effects of being "trapped in collective identities," the cure for which is "the means to pursue individual lives" and especially individual routes to success and achievement.[25] Thus, it will be recalled, Ignatieff argues that "the culture of individualism is the only reliable solvent of the hold of group identities and the racisms that go with them" and that the "essential task in teaching 'toleration' is to help people see themselves as individuals, and then to see others as such." Ignatieff also understands this way of seeing as bringing us closer to the truth of "actual, real individuals in all their specificity" as opposed to the "procedures of abstraction" constitutive of group interpellation; it brings us closer, in other words, to the truth of what human beings really are.[26] This makes the individual a distinctly Hegelian *a priori* in Ignatieff's analysis—ontologically true yet historically achieved. And the more developed and rewarded this individual is *as* an individual, the more that collective identity is eroded or undercut by individualism and especially individual ego strength, the greater the prospects for a tolerant world. This is the equation that not only posits liberalism as superior because true and posits tolerance as the sign of a fully and rightly individualized society (one that has arrived at the core truth of human beings) it also invokes a representation of liberalism as both a-cultural and anti-cultural, beyond culture and opposed to culture.

Conferring and Withholding Tolerance

Tolerance is generally conferred by those who do not require it upon those who do; it arises within and codifies a normative order in which those who deviate from rather than conform to the norms are eligible for tolerance. The heterosexual proffers tolerance to the homosexual, the Christian tolerates the Muslim or Jew, the dominant race tolerates minority races . . . each of these only up to a point. However, the matter is rarely phrased this way. Rather, power discursively disappears in an action in which a hegemonic population tolerates a marked or minoritized one. The

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scene materializes instead as one in which the universal tolerates the particular in its particularity, which also means that the putative universal always appears superior to that unassimilated particular, a superiority itself premised upon the non-reciprocity of tolerance (the particular does not tolerate the universal). It is the disappearance of power in the action of tolerance that convenes the hegemonic as the universal and the subordinate or minoritized as the particular. The mechanics of this are familiar: homosexuals discursively appear as more thoroughly defined by their sexuality and hence less capable of participation in the universal than heterosexuals, just as Jews, Catholics, Mormons, and Muslims appear more relentlessly saturated by their religious/ethnic identity than other Americans. (Thus, vice presidential candidate Joseph Leiberman's orthodox Judaism became a significant campaign issue, as did John F. Kennedy's Catholicism, while the born-again Christianity of Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, and both Bushes did not.) This quality of saturation is consequent to a normative regime and not to some quality inherent in the identities or practices. However, in aligning itself with universality and relative neutrality, the unmarked-because-hegemonic identity also associates tolerance with this standing, and conversely, associates objects of tolerance with particularity and partiality.

When the heterosexual tolerates the homosexual, when Christians tolerate Muslims in the West, not only do the first terms *not* require tolerance, but their standing as that which confers tolerance is their superiority over that which is said to require tolerance; the tolerating and tolerated are simultaneously radically distinguished from each other and hierarchically ordered according to a table of virtue. That which tolerates is not eligible for tolerance; that which is tolerated is presumed roughly incapable of tolerance. It is this aspect of the binary structure of tolerance discourse that circulates not just power but the superordination of a group with the term. Through the alignment of the object of tolerance with *difference,* its inferiority to that which is aligned with sameness or universality is secured. The inflection with difference places the object of tolerance outside the universal, positioning it as needing tolerance but unable to tolerate, and hence casting it as a lower form of life than the host. But this positioning is a discursive trick, one that disguises the extent to which it is power,

and not inherent qualities of openness or rigidity, moral relativism or orthodoxy, that produces the universal and the particular, the tolerant and the tolerated, the West and the East, the pluralist and the fundamentalist, the civilized and the barbaric, the same and the other. This discursive trick also purifies the first term, the tolerant entity, of all intolerance; and it saturates the second term, the tolerated, with intolerance nearly to (and sometimes arriving at) the point of intolerability.

In liberal theories of tolerance concerned with liberalism's orientation toward putatively non-liberal cultures, or practices, liberalism acquires moral superiority through its ability to tolerate in its midst those thought not to be able to tolerate liberalism in their midst. This superiority is sustained by the conceit that liberalism can tolerate religions without being conquered by them, or tolerate certain fundamentalisms without becoming fundamentalist. Liberalism tolerates fundamentalism, it can incorporate it, so the logic goes, while fundamentalism cannot tolerate or incorporate liberalism; the superior entity is the more capacious one, the one that can harbor difference and not be felled by it. In this regard, tolerance valorizes both size and strength; its virtue rests in a presumption about the value of being large, and that which cannot be large is its inferior. This is how tolerance discourse rewards power's potential for capaciousness with the status of virtue.[27]

Politically, then, the capacity for tolerance is itself an expression of power and of a certain security in that power. At the collective and individual levels, the strong and secure can afford to be tolerant; the marginal and insecure cannot. A polity or culture certain of itself and its hegemony, one which does not does not feel vulnerable, can relax its borders and absorb otherness without fear. Thus the Ottoman Empire could be modestly tolerant and so could Euroatlantic liberalism, though the latter has reified tolerance as a continuous principle while the actual practice of tolerance in liberal societies varies dramatically according to perceived threats and dangers. Indeed, liberal commitments to tolerance are always modified by anxieties and perceived dangers— from the effect of racial integration on neighborhood property values to the effect on schoolchildren when open homosexuals are teachers. If tolerance is an index of power, it is also a practice of vulnerability within this power, an instrument of governance

that titrates vulnerability according to a variety of governmental aims.

This suggests that tolerance is also crucial to the shell game that liberal political thought plays with Christianity and with liberal capitalist culture more generally, the ways it denies its involvement with both while promulgating and protecting them.[28] A homely example: the University of California academic instructional calendar, like that of most state schools, is prepared without deference to major religious holidays for Jews, Muslims, or eastern Orthodoxy. One year, a faculty member complains that the first day of fall instruction, when students risk losing their place in over-subscribed courses if they are not present, falls on Yom Kippur. The Registrar responds that the academic calendar honors no religious holidays but that faculty are urged to tolerate all recognized religions by offering make-up exams and other non-punitive accommodations for students whose religious commitments require them to miss selected classes. The faculty member notes that classes are never held on Christmas, Easter, or for that matter, the Christian sabbath. The Registrar replies that this is a coincidence of the timing of "winter break" and of Easter and Sundays always falling on a weekend.

Liberal tolerance discourse not only hides its own imbrication with Christianity and bourgeois culture, it sheaths the cultural chauvinism that liberalism carries to its encounters with non-liberal cultures. For example, when Western liberals express dismay at (what is perceived as mandatory) veiling in fundamentalist Islamic contexts, this dismay is legitimized through the idiom of women's choice. But the contrast between the nearly compulsory baring of skin by American teenage girls and compulsory veiling in a few Islamic societies is drawn routinely as absolute lack of choice, indeed tyranny, "over there" and absolute freedom of choice (representatively redoubled by near nakedness) "over here." This is not to deny differences between the two dress codes and the costs of defying them, but rather to note the means and effects of converting these differences into hierarchicalized opposites. If successful American women are not free to veil, are not free to dress like men or boys, are not free to wear whatever they choose on any occasion without severe economic or social consequences, what sleight of hand recasts this as freedom and individ-

uality contrasted with hypostasized tyranny and lack of agency? What makes choices "freer" when they are constrained by secular and market organizations of femininity and fashion rather than by state or religious law? Do we imagine the former to be less coercive than the latter because we cling to the belief that power is only and always a matter of law and sovereignty, or, as Foucault put it, because we have yet to "cut off the king's head in political theory"? A less politically innocent account of this analytic failure would draw on the postcolonial feminist insight that the West encodes its own superiority through what Chandra Mohanty identifies as the fantasy of Western women as "secular, liberated, and having control over their own lives," an identity derived in part from the very figure of an oppressed Third World opposite.[29] To acknowledge that we have our own form of compulsory feminine dress would undercut this identity of superiority: we *need* fundamentalism, indeed, we project and produce it elsewhere, to understand ourselves as free.[30]

One of the most crucial mechanisms of this projection is the reification and totalization of "intolerant societies," the representation of such societies as saturated by intolerance and organized by the very principle of intolerance. Conversely, the political principle is almost always imagined to exhaustively define the polity that harbors it, even as the question of the limits of tolerance may be hotly debated within it.[31] This division of the world into the tolerant and the intolerant, the fundamentalist and the pluralist, the parochial and the cosmopolitan, allows the political theoretical and philosophical literature on tolerance to repeatedly pose the problem, "what should be the attitude of the tolerant toward the intolerant," as if these were true and dire opposites hosted by radically different entities. The point, again, is not that there are no differences between regimes that expressly advocate tolerance and those that do not, but that civilizational discourse converts these differences into opposites and attributes a distorting essence to each—"fundamentalist/intolerant/unfree" on one side and "pluralist/tolerant/free" on the other—as it aligns liberalism with civilization.

It is not only liberal advocates of tolerance who participate in this Manichean rhetorical scheme. Liberal anti-relativists, on the right and the left, who seek to limit tolerance, indeed who regard

current deployments of cultural tolerance as abetting a loath-some relativism, also depict the world as divided between the tol-erant and free (West) and the fundamentalist and oppressive (non-West). In a special issue of *Daedelus* entitled "The End of Tolerance: Engaging Cultural Difference" and in Susan Okin's *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* a concerted argument emerges for articulating standards of the humane and acceptable and lim-iting tolerance to those cultural practices or even to those cul-tures that meet such standards.[32] Western refusals to condemn and legally ban practices such as genital mutilation, widow suttee, or polygamy are treated as relativism run amok (tacitly, if not ex-pressly attributed to something called "postmodernism") and as thoroughly compromising liberal values of autonomy and free-dom. Tolerance is not here repudiated as a value but rather is practiced as a line drawing activity where the line is drawn at the "barbaric" or the coerced.

Intrinsically unobjectionable as this argument may sound, the problem is that all instances of the barbaric and the coerced are found on the non-Western side of the line, that is, where culture or religion are taken to reign and hence where individual auton-omy is unsecured. No legal Western practice is marked as *barbaric* (which is only to say that it is a culture that, like all cultures, af-firms itself), including feasting upon a variety of animals except those fetishized as pets, polluting the planet and plundering its resources, living and dying alone, devoting life to the pursuit of money, making available human eggs, sperm, and infants for pur-chase by anonymous strangers, abortion, nuclear weapons, sex clubs, indigency and homelessness, flagrant luxury enjoyed in the presence of the poor, junk food, imperialist wars—any one of which might be considered violent, dehumanizing, or degrading from another cultural perspective. But what Okin and others con-sider beyond the pale of tolerance are selected non-Western prac-tices, each of which is taken to be promulgated by culture, reli-gion, or tradition, three terms from which Okin imagines liberal legal categories to be immune. The effect is to tar the non-West with the brush of the intolerable for harboring certain practices that are not only named barbaric, that is, uncivilized in contrast to our practices, but coerced, that is, unfree compared to our practices.

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The limits of tolerance are thus equated with the limits of civilization or with threats to civilization. Indeed, their common invocation of a civilizational discourse for brokering the tolerable is where those who worry about tolerating what portends the unraveling or decline of Western civilization (Samuel Huntington, the Neoconservatives, rightwing Christians) ideologically converge with those who worry about tolerating non-Western practices that are outside civilization's pale (Susan Okin, liberals, human rights activists). Conservatives and liberals alike are captured by this colonially inflected discourse to establish a civilizational norm by which the tolerable is measured, a norm that tolerance itself also secures.

Moreover, for purposes of distinguishing the civilized from the uncivilized, the discourse of tolerance at its limits is as effective as the discourse of tolerance in a more capacious mode, where it demeans what it abides by making it an object of tolerance. The former marks the barbaric, the latter the abject or deviant. Together, they figure the West *as* civilization and produce liberalism itself as uniquely generative of rationality, freedom, and tolerance; at the same time, they designate only certain subjects as rational and free, and only certain practices as normative. A closer examination of Susan Okin's argument in *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* will allow us to grasp this logic.[33]

Okin's basic claim is that multiculturalism, which she takes to be a relatively unqualified respect for various cultures and which may assume the juridical form of group rights or cultural defenses of particular practices, is in high tension with feminism, the opportunity for women to "live as fulfilling and as freely chosen lives as men can."[34] Reduced further, Okin's argument is that respect for culture collides with respect for gender equality, even that culture *tout court* is in tension with feminism. If culture and sex difference are something that all peoples everywhere have, there is, of course, no logical reason for culture and gender equality to be antagonists, especially when one considers that the gender equality Okin values itself emerges from within some culture.[35] Or does it? What Okin mostly means by culture is not the conventions, ideas, practices, productions, and self-understandings that bind and organize the lives of a particular people. Rather, for Okin, culture comprises ways of life that are not markedly liberal,

Enlightenment bound, rational-legal, and above all, secular. Cul-
ture is implicitly pre-modern or at least incompletely modern in
her account. For Okin, non-liberal societies *are* cultures; liberal so-
cieties are . . . states, civil societies, and individuals. Culture ap-
pears when a collectivity is not organized by individual autonomy,
rights, or liberty. Culture is non-liberal; liberalism is *kulturlos.*

Okin does not argue this explicitly; to the contrary, she man-
ages to utter the phrase "liberal culture" when acknowledging and
lamenting that Western democracies harbor some sexist practices;
in other words, culture makes an appearance in the West when-
ever Okin has to explain how sexist practices have persisted into a
time and place formally governed by individual rights. But this
only confirms the pejorative standing of "culture" in her analysis
—culture is what a complete realization of liberal principles will
eradicate or at least radically subdue. Moreover, the gesture of rec-
ognizing liberalism as bearing culture seems disingenuous when
one notices the incessant slide from culture to religion in Okin's
argument. Not only does she repeatedly pair "culture and reli-
gion," but she begins a paragraph with a claim about the drive of
most *cultures* to control women and ends that same paragraph
with a series of examples from Judaism, Islam, and Christianity.[36]
And that paragraph is followed by one that treats together ortho-
dox monotheism and "Third World cultures" for their shared pa-
triarchal tendencies. For Okin, the link between what she calls
culture and religion is their common occupation with the domes-
tic life which she takes to be a crucial site for women's oppression
and the transmission of gender ideology: "obviously culture is not
only about domestic arrangements, but they do provide a major
focus of most contemporary cultures. Home is, after all, where
much of culture is practiced, preserved, and transmitted to the
young."[37] So culture and religion both organize domestic life pa-
triarchically and are transmitted through domestic life. What is
the standing of liberalism in this regard? Its sharp ideological
and political-economic divide between public and private (which
other feminists have spent the past thirty years subjecting to cri-
tique both for its structural production of women's economic de-
pendence and for its depoliticization of women's subordination)
is here affirmed by Okin for the dam it ostensibly erects between
gendered family values and gender-neutral civic and public law.

If the private realm in liberal societies harbors gender inequality, Okin tacitly suggests, if this is where sexist culture lingers and is reproduced, this is offset by the public and juridical principles of abstract personhood and autonomy. In liberal democracies, the formal commitment to secularism and to individual autonomy can be mobilized to erode sexist culture, and this is what Okin wants for the rest of the world.

"Most cultures," Okin writes, "have as one of their principal aims the control of women by men."[38] But "Western liberal culture" (her phrase) is a little different. "While virtually all of the world's cultures have distinctly patriarchal pasts, some—mostly, though by no means exclusively, Western liberal cultures—have departed far further from them than others."[39] What distinguishes Western cultures, which "still practice many forms of sex discrimination," from others is that in them women are "legally guaranteed many of the same freedoms and opportunities as men."[40] In other words, it is not the law or the doctrine of liberalism that is sex discriminatory but some kind of cultural remainder that the law has not yet managed to reform or extinguish. Whatever the remains of culture in Western liberal orders, and whatever the remains of sexism within those cultures, liberalism as a political-juridical order is, or has the capacity to be, gender-clean. This, of course, is warmed over John Stuart Mill: in a progress narrative led by liberalism, indeed, by the bourgeoisie, male dominance is the barbaric stuff of the old regime, of a time when might, custom, and religion rather than the law of equality and reason ruled the world, and of a time before the individual reigned supreme. Thus, if liberal regimes continue to house deposits of misogyny and female subordination, this must be the result of something other than liberalism which, with its legal principles of autonomy, liberty, and equality, constitutes the remedy to such ills within the societies it orders.

But what if liberalism itself harbors male dominance, what if male superordination is inscribed in liberalism's core values of liberty, rooted in autonomy and centered upon self-interest, and equality, defined as sameness and confined to the public sphere?[41] Many feminists have argued that liberal categories, relations, and processes are inseparable from a relentlessly gendered division of labor and a far-reaching public / private distinction, in which

everything associated with the family—need, dependence, in-equality, the body, relationality—is identified with the feminine and constitutes both the predicate and the opposite to a masculin-ist public sphere of rights, autonomy, formal equality, rationality, and individuality. In this critique, masculinist social norms are part of the very architecture of liberalism; they structure its divi-sion and population of the social space and govern its production and regulation of subjects. These are norms that produce and privilege masculine public beings—free, autonomous, and equal—while producing a feminine other as a familial being—encum-bered, dependent, and different.[42]

Okin does not simply elide such feminist critiques of liberal-ism.[43] The presumption of ungendered liberal principles counter-posed to gendered cultural ones is necessary to the argument that liberalism is the best cure for the patriarchal ills of culture. Okin perfectly expresses an ideology of the autonomy of the liberal state and individual from (what is named) culture, an autonomy that positions the liberal state as singularly freeing and the lib-eral individual as singularly free. Culture is not only historically sexist in her account, it is corrosive of autonomy and corrupting of juridical universalism. For Okin, individual autonomy prevails only when culture recedes.[44] And where there is autonomy, there is choice and where there is choice, there is freedom, especially women's freedom. This is how Okin positions both culture and patriarchy (as opposed to mere "sexist attitudes or practices") as always elsewhere from liberalism. Culture and religion perpetu-ate inequality by formally limiting women's autonomy while the constraints on choice in a liberal capitalist order—say, those of a single mother with few job skills—are either not cultural or not significant. The formal existence of choice is the incontestable (hence non-cultural?) good, regardless of its actualizability. Thus, Okin concludes:

> In the case of a more patriarchal minority culture in the context
> of a less patriarchal majority culture, no argument can be made
> on the basis of self-respect or freedom that the female members
> of the culture have a clear interest in its preservation. Indeed,
> they *might* be much better off if the culture into which they were
> born were either to become extinct (so that its members would

become integrated into the less sexist surrounding culture) or, preferably, to be encouraged to alter itself so as to reinforce the equality of women—at least to the degree to which this value is upheld in the majority culture.[45]

This passage involves several remarkable claims. First, in arguing that women who have self-respect and want freedom will necessarily oppose (not simply be ambivalent about) their culture, Okin rehearses a false consciousness argument always reserved today for the practices of women: a woman who defends cultural or religious practices that others may designate as patriarchal cannot be thinking for herself, and so cannot be trusted to think well about her attachments and investments. Consequently, self-respecting liberals like Susan Okin must think for her. Second, it implies that female subordination is sufficient grounds for wanting one's culture dead, an extraordinary claim on its own but made more so when coming from one as wedded to Western culture as Okin is. Third, it argues that the standard against which minority cultures are to be measured is not an abstract standard of freedom, equality, and self-respect for women but rather that superior *degree* of these things found in the majority culture and measured by the values of the majority culture. In this strict quantification of sexism—more there, less here—and inattention to the *varieties* of male superordination, it is hard to imagine a more naked version of Enlightenment progressivism and the brief for liberal imperalism it entails.

Where does tolerance fit into this picture? In Okin's view, liberal orders and liberal legalism should *not* stretch to accommodate the overtly misogynisitic or sexist practices of minority cultures— e.g., child brideship, polygamy, clitoridectomy—and should not permit cultural defenses any standing in criminal trial cases concerned with rape, wife-murder, or infanticide.[46] Okin draws the line for tolerance at the point of what she calls not simply "sex inequality" but the "barbaric" treatment of women. Tolerance is for civilized practices: barbarism is on the other side of the line, "beyond the pale."

But consider this: American women spend upwards of nine billion dollars annually on plastic surgery, cosmetic implants, injections, and facial laser treatments, and untold more on over-the-

counter products advertised to restore youthful looks. In the last
half-decade, tens of thousands of women have opted to smooth
their forehead lines with regular injections of Botox, a diluted ver-
sion of what the American Medical Association has identified as
"the most poisonous substance known"; far more deadly than an-
thrax, "a single gram, evenly dispersed, could kill more than one
million people, causing 'symmetric, descending, flaccid paralysis'
and eventually cutting off its victims' power to breathe, swallow,
communicate, or see."[47] How many noses have been cut, flattened,
or otherwise rearranged to fit an Aryan ideal of feminine beauty?
How many breasts reduced? How many enlarged? How many sub-
missions to painful electrolysis and other means of removing body
hair? What of the rising trend among well-off American women to
have their feet surgically reconfigured to fit high-fashioned shoes
or their labia surgically "corrected" to be symmetrical? Or the
popularity of plastic surgery—for noses, lips, breasts, and hips—
among high school girls?[48] Are these procedures less culturally or-
ganized than the procedures Okin cites to condemn? Is their "vol-
untariness" what spares them from being candidates for her atten-
tion? Does a liberal frame mistake elective surgery for freedom
from coercive power, as it tends to mistake elections for political
freedom? What is voluntary about treatments designed to pro-
duce conventional ideals of youthful beauty for an aspiring Holly-
wood actress, a trophy wife on the verge of being traded in for a
younger model, or an ordinary middle-aged, middle-class woman
in southern California?

   Similarly, why is Okin more outraged by clitordectemy than
by the routine surgical "correction" of intersexed babies in the
United States—babies whose genitals are sexually ambiguous and
who have no say whatsoever in these surgeries but are condemned
to live the rest of their lives with the (often botched) outcome?[49]
Is Western anxiety about sexual dimorphism, and in particular
about female availability for penile penetration, any less cultural
than the anxieties about female sexual pleasure she condemns
in parts of Africa and the Middle East?[50] Why isn't Okin alarmed
by the epidemic of eating disorders among American teenaged
girls or the epidemic of American women being pharmaceutically
treated for depression? Why doesn't Okin find drugging such
women rather than transforming their life conditions barbaric

and intolerable? In sum, why is Okin more horrified by the *legal* control of women by men than by the controlling cultural norms and market productions of gender and sexuality, including norms and productions of beauty, sexual desire and behavior, weight and physique, soul and psyche, that course through modern Western societies?

When individual rights and liberties are posited as the solution to coercion, and liberalism is the antidote to culture, women's social oppression or subordination (as opposed to their contingent or domestic violation or maltreatment) appears only where law openly avows its religious or cultural character, that is, where it has not taken the vow of Western secularism. But as the examples above suggest, liberalism's formulation of freedom as choice and its reduction of the political to policy and law sets loose, as a de-politicized underworld, a sea of social powers nearly as coercive as law, and certainly as effective in producing subordinated subjects. Indeed, as a combination of Marcusian and Foucauldian perspectives remind us, choice can become a critical instrument of domination in liberal capitalist societies; insofar as the fiction of the sovereign subject blinds us to powers producing that subject, choice both cloaks and potentially eroticizes the powers it engages.[51] Moreover, Okin's inability to grasp liberalism's own cultural norms, in which, for example, autonomy is valued over connection or the responsibility for dependent others (with which women are typically associated), liberty is conceived as freedom to do what one wants (for which women are often faulted), and equality is premised upon sameness (while women are always conceived as different), eliminates the possibility for discerning deep and abiding male superordination in liberalism itself—not just in "liberal cultures" but in liberal legalism and political principles.

In sum, the putative legal autonomy of the subject, along with the putative autonomy of the law itself from gendered norms and from culture more generally, combine to position women in the West as free, choosing beings who stand in stark contrast to their sisters subjected to legally sanctioned cultural barbarism. From this perspective, liberal imperialism is not only legitimate but morally mandated. "Culture" must be brought to heel by liberalism so that women are free to choose their anti-wrinkle creams.

There is a final irony in Okin's formulation of "culture" as the

enemy of women. This focus sustains an elision of the conditions imposed on Third World women by global capitalism, conditions to which Western critics could be responsive without engaging in cultural imperialism or endorsing political and military imperialism. These range from labor hyper-exploitation in export platforms and free trade zones to global capitalism's often violent disruptions and dislocations of family and community. If the aim is to secure possibilities for modest self-determination for Third World women, what could be more important than addressing and redressing these circumstances? Instead, in the obsession with culture over capitalism, indeed in her apparent indifference to the economics of poverty, exploitation, and deracination, Okin repeats a disturbing colonial gesture in which the alleged barbarism of the native culture, rather than imperial conquest, colonial political and economic deformation and contemporary economic exploitation, is made the target of progressive reform. As the final turn of this essay suggests, this gesture is characteristic of tolerance discourse in its civilizational mode.

There is a second colonial gesture in a Western feminism that targets "culture" as the problem. The liberal construction of tolerance as respect for individual autonomy secured by a secular state, a construction shared by liberal theorists on both sides of the "group rights" debates, means that the practice of tolerance is inconceivable where such autonomy is not a core political principle and juridical norm. Such an account of tolerance not only consecrates liberalism's superiority but reiterates liberalism's obliviousness to social powers other than law and thereby sustains the conceit of the thoroughgoing autonomy of the liberal subject. At the same time, in its dependence upon legally encoded autonomy—rights—this definition rules out the possibility of non-liberal political forms of tolerance. But what if tolerance of differing beliefs and practices can and does attach to values other than autonomy, for example, to formulations of plurality, difference, or cultural preservation that do not devolve upon individual liberty?[52] Conversely, what if individual liberty were decentered (without being rejected) as the sign of civilization, grasped as but one way of gratifying the richness and possibility in being human and also as fictional in its absolutism? That is, what if autonomy were recognized as relative, ambiguous, ambivalent, partial, and

also advanced by means other than law?[53] This would not only make non-liberal tolerance practices conceivable, it would serve as a vantage point for a more critical understanding of liberal practices than is permitted by its self-affirming vocabulary and dubious syllogisms.

Tolerance, Capital, and Liberal Imperialism

In considering the place of tolerance in civilizational discourse through the entwining of liberalism and postcolonial discourse, I have dwelt upon Okin at length. This is not because she is its most sophisticated exponent but because she is among the most open-handed. But other liberal theorists make similar moves. Recall Michael Ignatieff's argument that tolerance is the fruit of individuation and hence the achievement of societies governed by individualism. Recall, too, that Ignatieff portrays such individualism as the primordial truth of human beings—who we really are—as opposed to the abstract human being entailed in collective conceptions of identity. This positing of the individual as *a priori* not only renders collective identity as ideological, deformative, and dangerous, it tacitly assigns culture and all other forms of collective identification unconquered by liberalism to a premodern past and nonhuman elsewhere. This depicts liberal democracy as representing the truth of human beings and depicts those mired in collective identity, or as Fukuyama would have it, "mired in history" as at once misguided, irrational, and dangerous.

On a closer reading of Ignatieff, however, tolerance is not simply the fruit of individualism but of prosperity—it is not the individual as such but individual success that breeds a tolerant moral psychology. On the one hand, "the German man who can show you his house, his car, and a family as measures of his own pride rather than just his white skin may be less likely to wish to torch an immigrant hostel." On the other hand, "if the market fails, as it is failing upwards of twenty million unemployed young people in Europe alone, then it does create the conditions in which individuals must turn to group hatreds in order to assert and defend their identities."[54] Here, tolerance appears less a moral or political achievement of liberal autonomy than a *bourgeois* capitalist virtue, the fruit of power and success . . . even domination.

As the passage above suggests, while affirming the value of eco-
nomic prosperity in generating a tolerant outlook, Ignatieff is
fully confident that globalization brings with it a more tolerant
world. He worries that its economic depression of certain popu-
lations may incite racial or ethnic nationalisms as a kind of last-
gasp source of supremacy or privilege.[55] However, moral philoso-
phers Bernard Williams and Joseph Raz have no such anxieties;
for them, the market inherently attenuates fundamentalism, puts
the brakes on fanaticism, and "encourages scepticism about reli-
gious and other claims to exclusivity." In short, it erodes cultural,
nationalistic, and religious forms of local solidarity or belonging.[56]
Williams and Raz, however, themselves differ in their accounts
of how neoliberal globalization enriches the ground from which
tolerance grows. For Raz, market homogenization counters the
fragmenting effects of multiculturalism in the era of global capi-
talism. That is, the market helps to dampen the "culture" in the
multicultural civic and national populations produced by global-
ization *because* it tends to brings liberal democratic politics along
with it, thereby producing a common (cultureless) political and
economic life to attenuate the substance and contentiousness of
(culturally based) claims of difference. Williams, though, does not
need the globalized market to import liberal democracy as a po-
litical form for it to effect an increase in religious and ethnic tol-
erance. For him, the market itself loosens the grip (by greasing
the palm?) of the fundamentalist, thereby reducing intolerance
through recourse to the principle of utility rather than by any
other moral or "civilizing" principle. In Williams's words,

> when such scepticism [induced by international commercial so-
> ciety] is set against the manifest and immediate human harms
> generated by intolerance, there is a basis for the practice of toler-
> ation—a basis that is indeed allied to liberalism, but is less ambi-
> tious than the pure principle of pluralism, which rests on auton-
> omy. It is closer to the tradition that may be traced to Montes-
> quieu and to Constant, which the late Judith Shklar called "the
> Liberalism of Fear.[57]

Indeed, not only the politics of fear configured by the rightest lib-
eral tradition of Hobbes, Montesqueiu, and Constant but a forth-

right neoliberal political rationality appears on Williams's pages, as unfettered capitalism is imagined to produce a normative social order and calculating subject, neither of which need be codified in liberal law or letters. For attentive students of the history of capitalism, of course, the erosion of non-market practices and customs by capital is old news. What is striking about the enthusiasm with which political liberals such as Williams and Raz applaud this phenomenon is that they are cheering raw Western liberal imperialism and neoliberal globalization for their combined effectiveness in destroying local culture.

Other political liberals are less confident about the ease with which tolerance can be exported to non-liberal sites. Speaking about multiculturalism within liberal democratic societies, Will Kymlicka concludes that there is no way to impose the value of tolerance upon minority cultures for which individual autonomy is not a primary value other than to make it part of the deal of being tolerated by the majority or hegemonic culture. For a culture to be tolerated by liberalism, in Kymlicka's view, it must become tolerant within, even if this compromises crucial principles of the culture.[58] Thus, Kymlicka effectively advocates exploiting the power position of the tolerating culture, which means deploying Kantian liberalism in a distinctly non-Kantian way, that is, treating tolerance as a means for transforming others rather than as an end in itself, and treating individual autonomy as a bargaining chip rather than as an intrinsic value. The demand for cultural transformation, of course, also compromises the gesture of tolerance at the moment it is extended. Kymlicka's proposition for the extension of tolerance to non-liberal cultures tacitly exposes the anti-liberal aspects of this aim, along with the absence of cultural and political neutrality in tolerance itself. It reminds us that more than a means of achieving civil peace of freedom, tolerance in its liberal mode is an exercise of hegemony that requires extensive political transformation of the cultures and subjects it would govern.

There are important analytic and prescriptive differences among Okin and Ignatieff, Huntington and Raz, Williams and Kymlicka. Together, however, they paint a picture of tolerance as a civilizational discourse that draws from and entwines postcolonial, liberal, and neoliberal reasoning. This discourse encodes the

superiority of the West and of liberalism by valorizing (and even ontologizing) individual autonomy, by positioning culture and religion as extrinsic to this autonomy, and by casting governance by culture and religion as individual autonomy's opposite. The cultural norms carried by the market and organizing liberal democracy are not made visible within the discourse.

That tolerance is preferable to violent civil conflict is inarguable. What this truism elides, however, is the discursive function of tolerance in legitimating the often violent imperialism of international liberal governmentality conjoined with neoliberal global political economy.[59] Not only does the practice of tolerance anoint the superior or advanced status of the tolerant. Not only does withholding tolerance for designated practices, cultures, and regimes mark them as beyond the pale of civilization. It is also the case that the economy of this offering and this refusal masks the cultural norms of liberal democratic regimes and of the West by denying their status as cultural norms. What becomes clear from considering the above named thinkers together is that the discourse of tolerance substantively brokers cultural value—valorizing the West, Othering the rest—while feigning only to distinguish civilization from barbarism, protect the former from the latter, and extend the benefits of liberal thought and practices. Insofar as tolerance in its civilizational mode draws upon a political-juridico discourse of cultural neutrality, in which what is at stake is said to be rationality, individual autonomy and the rule of law rather than the (despotic) rule of culture or religion, tolerance is crucial to liberalism's denial of its imbrication with culture and the colonial projection of culture onto the native. It is crucial to liberalism's conceit of independence from culture, neutrality with regard to culture . . . a conceit that in turn shields liberal polities from charges of cultural supremacy and cultural imperialism. This was precisely the conceit that allowed George W. Bush to say, without recourse to the infelicitous language of "crusade," that "we have no intention of imposing our culture" while insisting on a set of liberal principles that cannot be brooked without risking being bombed.

Tolerance *conferred* as well as tolerance *withheld* serves this function; both are essential in the circuitry tolerance travels as a civilizational discourse. *Tolerance conferred* upon "foreign" practices

shores up the normative standing of the tolerant and the liminal standing of the tolerated—a standing somewhere between civilization and barbarism. It reconfirms, without reference to the orders of power which enable it, the higher civilizational standing of those who tolerate what they do not condone or share—their cosmopolitanism, forbearance, expansiveness, catholicity, remoteness from fundamentalism. It is only against this backdrop that *tolerance withheld* succeeds in marking the other as barbaric without implicating the cultural norms of the tolerant by this marking. When a tolerant civilization meets its limits, it does not say that it is encountering political or cultural difference but that it is encountering the limits of civilization itself. At this point, the tolerant civilization is justified not only in refusing to extend tolerance to its Other, but in treating it as hostile, both internally oppressive *and* externally dangerous, and, externally dangerous *because* internally oppressive. This hostile status in turn legitimates the tolerant entity to suspend its own civilizational principles in dealing with this Other, principles that range from political self-determination and nation-state sovereignty to rational deliberation, legal and international accountability, and reasoned justifications. This legitimate abrogation of civilizational principles can be carried quite far, up to the point of making preemptive war on the Other.

The circuitry of tolerance in civilizational discourse also abets the slide from terrorism to fundamentalism to anti-Americanism that legitimates the rhetorical Manicheanism often wielded by the Bush regime: "You're either with the civilized world, or you're with the terrorists." It facilitates the slide from Osama Bin Laden to Saddam Hussein as the enemy to civilization, and from a war *on* terrorism to wars *for* regimes change in Afghanistan and Iraq. And likewise it indulges a slide from a war justified by Iraq's *danger* to the "civilized world" to one justified by the Iraqi people's *need* for liberation (by the West). Tolerance in a liberal idiom, both conferred and withheld, serves not merely as the *sign* of the civilized and the free but configures the *right* of the civilized against a barbaric opposite that is both internally oppressive and externally dangerous, neither tolerant nor tolerable.

In these operations, tolerance has a slim resemblance to its founding impetus as a response to the fracturing of church authority, an instrument for consolidating emerging nation state

power and provenance, even as a *modus vivendi* for co-habiting be-
lief communities. That tolerance has acquired such a troubling
relationship to Western empire today does not add up to an ar-
gument to scrap the term or jettison its representation of a prac-
tice for living with what is undesirable, offensive, or repugnant.
Rather, it suggests the importance of becoming erudite and dis-
cerning about the ways of tolerance today and of seeking to con-
test the anti-political language of ontology, affect, and ethos it cir-
culates with considerations of power, social forces, and justice.
This means becoming shrewd about the ways tolerance operates
as a coin of liberal imperialism, intersects with racialized tropes of
barbarism or the decline of the West, and abets in legitimizing the
very violence it stands for deterring. It means apprehending the
ways that tolerance discourse articulates normal and deviant sub-
jects, cultures, religions, and regimes, and hence how it produces
and regulates identity. It means tracking the work of tolerance in
iterating subordination and marginalization and does so in part
by functioning as a supplement to other elements of liberal dis-
course, such as universalism and egalitarianism, associated with
remedying subordination and marginalization. It means grasping
tolerance as a mode of governmentality that discursively depoliti-
cizes the conflicts whose effects it manages by analytically occlud-
ing the histories and powers constitutive of these conflicts, and by
casting "difference" as ontological and inherently prickly if not
hostile. It means attending to the ways that tolerance draws on its
reputation as a civilizing moment in the early modern West, atten-
uating persecution in the field of religion, for the legitimation of
its current work as a civilizational discourse that masks the vio-
lence in its dealings with the non-West. It means, in sum, grasping
tolerance as a mode of national and transnational governmental-
ity today.

The development of this kind of political intelligence does
not entail rejecting tolerance *tout court,* declaring it an inherently
insidious value, or replacing tolerance with some other term or
practice. Becoming perspicacious about the contemporary opera-
tions and circuitries of tolerance, however, does suggest a positive
political strategy of nourishing counter-discourses that would fea-
ture power and justice where anti-political tolerance talk has dis-
placed them. We can attempt to strengthen articulations of in-

equality, abjection, subordination, and colonial and postcolonial violence that are suppressed by tolerance discourse. We can configure conflicts through grammars of power rather than ontologized ethnic or religious feuds. And we can labor to expose the cultural and religious norms organizing liberalism along with the ethnic, racial, sexual, and gendered norms it harbors. In short, without foolishly positioning ourselves "against tolerance" or advocating "intolerance," we can contest the depoliticizing, regulatory, and imperial aims of contemporary deployments of tolerance with alternative political speech and practices. Such work constitutes a modest contribution to the larger project of alleviating the human suffering, reducing the violence, and fostering the political justice for which the twenty-first century howls.

NOTES

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1. Address to a United Nations Meeting on Dialogue Among Civilizations, September 5, 2000, Press Release SG/SM/7526/Rev.1.

2. Address to the American Enterprise Institute, February 26, 2003.

3. "Moderate Muslim Voices Must be Heard," *New York Times,* Op-Ed, June 4, 2002.

4. NPR, June 12, 2002, Rumsfeld responding to concerns about the rights of 2,400 "terror suspects" detained at that time by the United States government.

5. The same associations are not conjured by the utterance, "she is a tolerant woman" or even "he is a tolerant person." This differential speaks volumes about tolerance as both an effect of power and a vehicle of power, an expression of domination and a means of extending and consecrating it.

6. Address to Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit in Shanghai, October 20, 2001.

7. Address to the Republican Caucus in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, February 1, 2002.

8. "Civilization," in the *Oxford English Dictionary, Second Edition* OED online, http://www.oed.com. Gail Hershatter and Anna Tsing remind us that the OED is "itself no minor civilizational project in its creation of

literary legacies that both set linguistic standards and define a cultural practice." Gail Hershatter and Anna Tsing, "Civilization," *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society,* ed. Tony Bennett, et al. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 37.

9. Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society,* revised edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 57.

10. Hershatter and Tsing, "Civilization," 36.

11. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 311.

12. Ibid., 318.

13. Ibid., 321.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. The conflation of civilization with culture in this definition is paralleled by Huntington's definition of civilization as "culture writ large" (41) or "the highest cultural group of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have short of that which distinguishes humans from other species" (43). However, in its reference to one who has "sympathy with literary culture," the OED definition clearly equates civilization with high European culture, thus referencing its class connotations and explaining why we refer to children learning table manners as a process of "civilizing" them.

17. Prefatory Remarks to George W. Bush's April 13, 2004, press conference.

18. See the Teaching Tolerance website (http://www.tolerance.org) and the Southern Poverty Law Center website (http://www.splcenter.org). The SPLC has been plagued with controversy in recent years and was compromised from the beginning by the hucksterism and opportunism of its co-founder, Morris Dees. The richest civil rights organization in the business, it raises astonishing sums that it never spends and consequently has been assigned one of the worst ratings of any group monitored by the American Institute of Philanthropy. According to Ken Silverstein, who wrote about the organization in *Harper's,* the SPLC spends twice as much on fund-raising as it does on legal services for victims of civil rights abuses. And while backing away from the kinds of cases, especially death penalty appeals, that might lower its attractiveness to wealthy white liberals, it exploits and sensationalizes steadily dwindling Klan activities in a manner designed to rake in contributions from whites. In 1986, Silverstein reports, "the Center's entire legal staff quit in protest of Dee's refusal to address issues—such as homelessness, voter registration, and affirmative action—that they considered far more pertinent to poor minorities, if far less marketable to affluent benefactors, than fighting the

KKK" ("The Church of Morris Dees," *Harper's,* November 2000). Another lawyer who resigned a few years later told reporters that the Center's programs were calculated to cash in on "black pain and white guilt," a calculation that is patently evident in the over-the-top stories and testimonials featured in the fund-raising literature. However, these kinds of *exposés* from within and without have been largely ignored by the mainstream press and both the SPLC and the Teaching Tolerance project continue to garner ringing endorsements from a range of politicians, educators, and media personnel.

19. K. Peter Fritzsche, "Human Rights and Human Rights Education," International Network: Education for Democracy, Human Rights and Tolerance, *Podium* 2/2000 http://www.tolerance-net.org/news/podium/podium031.html.

20. Jay Newman, *Foundations of Religious Tolerance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 3.

21. There is a certain tension in the nativism of the popular tolerance literature. Cross-cutting the view that intolerance is primordial and tolerance is a civilizational achievement is another one that "people are not born as little haters, we learn to hate. And just as we learn to hate, we have to unlearn (sic) to hate" (Caryl Stern, Senior Associate National Director of the Anti-Defamation League, quoted in WorldNetDaily.com, January 6, 2005). While superficially opposite to the idea that bigotry is primitive while tolerance is civilized and advanced, the ADL formulation may well retain the nativism. The "learning" presumably occurs in the tribe, and may very well be transmitted and absorbed almost unconsciously or at least subrationally as part of what binds and reproduces the tribe; the "unlearning" presumably occurs in a more cosmopolitan setting, and is rational and deliberate.

22. Barry Hindess, personal communication, but see also Christine Helliwell and Barry Hindess, "Temporalizing of Difference," *Ethnicities,* 5:3, 2005. Much politically liberal talk of tolerance and multiculturalism participates in this temporalizing of difference even in describing the difference between liberals and conservatives: liberals self-characterize themselves as more enlightened, forward-looking, or advanced, and refer to conservative agendas as traditional, backward-looking, or regressive.

23. See, for example, the following editorials in the *New York Times*: "The Core of Muslim Rage," March 6, 2002; "Moderate Muslim Voices Must Be Heard," June 4, 2002; "Noah and 9/11," September 11, 2002; and "An Islamic Reformation," December 4, 2002.

24. Michael Ignatieff, "Nationalism and Toleration," *The Politics of Toleration in Modern Life,* ed. Susan Mendus (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 85.

25. Ibid., 101.

26. Ibid., 102.

27. Capacity as such is the measure of tolerance in many domains of its usage: at its most rudimentary, tolerance is defined by how much error, contamination, or toxicity can be absorbed by the host without damaging it, whether the element at issue is alcohol consumption for a college freshman, margin of error for a statistical inference, or ethnic nationalism for a liberal society. But within a liberal regime, this capacity is not only a measure of ability but virtue.

28. As a political rationality contoured by the Protestant Reformation, liberal tolerance not only presumes individual autonomy but the viability of privatizing fundamental beliefs. Most of the belief structures of most of the world's peoples for most of human history do not fit with these presumptions. Reformation tolerance doctrine does not work well for the faith structures of the ancient Greeks, Mediaeval Christians, or of modern Muslims, Jews, Hindus, or Catholics. It does not work well for a socialist, tribalist, or communitarian ethos or order. It was coined to solve a specific problem issuing from a specific social formation and political crisis: how to allow Protestant sectarians the right to worship God according to their own individual understanding of Him and His words without undercutting both Church and state authority, how to substitute accommodation of these sects for burning heretics alive, how to stem the tide of blood spilled over religious rebellion in early modern Europe.

29. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," *Feminist Review* 30, Autumn 1988, 74.

30. Of the many feminist post-colonial scholars who have made this point in recent years, three of the best accounts come from Lila Abu-Lughod, Interview, AsiaSource, March 20, 2002 http://www.asiasource .org; Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); and Charles Hirschkind and Saba Mahmood, "Feminism, the Taliban, and Politics of Counter-Insurgency," *Anthropological Quarterly* 75.2, 2002.

31. Thus, Bush can declare, and his neoconservative and Christian backers can agree, that America stands for the principle of tolerance, even as the Republican Party is considered the party of "intolerance" by those on the cultural left, and many conversations rebuke certain practices of tolerance as moral decline or depravity.

32. *Daedalus* 129.4, Fall 2000, and Susan Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

33. Anne Norton's review of *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* offers a scathing critique of Okin's orientalist logic, poor scholarship, and ignorance of critiques of liberal feminism and of the debates surrounding her

instances of the "intolerable," from polygamy to clitoridectomy. See *Political Theory* 29.5, October 2001, 736–49. Most of the other reviews and receptions of this work, however, have been relatively positive.

34. *Multiculturalism,* 10.

35. A discussion of Okin's argument about multiculturalism and feminism poses a conundrum about whether to deconstruct her impoverished concept of culture and thereby refuse to enter the rest of the argument, or to provisionally accept her account as one takes up other aspects of the argument. Okin largely is impervious to the last several decades of rethinking what culture is and could mean (a rethinking undertaken primarily in anthropology and cultural studies) and is wholly unconcerned with specifying what culture is—there is a stray reference to "ways of life" on page 10 of *Multiculturalism.* However, it is also the case that her analysis could not get off the ground if she attended closely to theorizations of culture that do not isolate it from the political, juridical, and economic, if she grasped the colonial inflection in the notion of culture she deploys (in which culture is always pre-liberal and liberalism is always without culture), if she recognized that the sense of culture she uses is the coinage of both liberal strategies of depoliticization and colonial discourse.

36. *Multiculturalism,* 13–14.

37. Ibid., 13.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid., 16.

40. Ibid., 16–17.

41. See Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988); Clarke and Lange, *The Sexism of Social and Political Theory* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1979); Kathy Ferguson, *The Feminist Case Against Bureaucracy* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1985); Wendy Brown, "Liberalism's Family Values" in *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Joan W. Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996); Catharine MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991); Nancy Hirschmann and Christine di Stefano, eds., *Revisioning the Political: Feminist Reconstructions of Traditional Concepts in Western Political Theory* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996); Nancy Hirschmann, *Rethinking Obligation: A Feminist Method for Political Theory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992) and *The Subject of Liberty: Toward a Feminist Theory of Freedom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

42. See "Liberalism's Family Values," op cit., and Catharine MacKinnon's essay, "Difference and Dominance: On Sex Discrimination," in *Fem-

inism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988).

43. Okin's own feminist critique of liberalism is to be found in *Justice, Gender, and the Family* (Basic Books, 1989) which argues on behalf of treating the family as one of the "spheres of justice" articulated in Michael Walzer's book by that name.

44. This makes clear why *multi*culturalism is so bad for women: it multiplies enemies to autonomy.

45. *Multiculturalism,* 23.

46. Ibid., 18.

47. Susan Dominus, "The Seductress of Vanity," *New York Times,* May 5, 2002, 50.

48. Karen Springen, "Kids Under the Knife," *Newsweek,* November 1, 2004.

49. Information about the nature and frequency of intersex, along with the history of its treatment, can be found at the website of the Intersex Society of North America, http://www.isna.org.

50. Intersexed children, regardless of where they are on a complex spectrum of physiological sex, are more often "surgically corrected" to be anatomically female than male, since, according to the surgeons, it is "easier to poke a hole than to build a poke." This surgery, which is performed neither for the physical health or nor the future sexual pleasure of the subject, may include clitoral reduction (so the clitoris is less penile-like), invagination (production or enlargement of the vagina), and removal of undescended or "internal" testes. The post-surgical course of treatment, often lasting for years, includes stretching the vaginal cavity with successively sized vaginal inserts; the aim is to enlarge it sufficiently for penetration by an erect penis when the child reaches maturity. Since administration of these painful treatments often requires forcible restraint of the child undergoing them, it is hard to name them anything other than medically authorized rape.

51. Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon, 1964); Foucault, *History of Sexuality,* vol 1, *An Introduction,* trans. R. Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1980). For a somewhat different perspective on this dimension of agency and capitalism's charms, see Jane Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

52. Anthropologists David Scott, *Refashioning Futures: Criticism After Postcoloniality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999) and Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Renewal and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004) are among those who have traced the arc of colonial discourse in measuring postcolonial states against liberal formulations of tolerance and have made a compelling

case for thinking about tolerance in postcolonial settings outside of the frame of liberalism, that is, a case for refusing liberal imperialism in its academic as well as political mode.

53. Even in hyper-liberal societies, not all practices of autonomy are equally valued–consider the indigent person resistant to being managed by social services or the teenager hanging around a street corner with nothing to do. Nor are all associations and practices governed by the principle of autonomy and rights; without those governed by relationality and need, there is no basis for familial or social bonds.

54. Ignatieff, "Nationalism and Toleration," 102.

55. Ibid., 94–95.

56. The cited material is from Bernard Williams, "Toleration: An Impossible Virtue?" in *Toleration: An Elusive Virtue,* ed. David Heyd (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 172. See also Jospeh Raz, *Ethics in the Public Domain* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984), 171–72.

57. Ibid., 26.

58. Kymlicka, "Two Models of Pluralism and Tolerance," in *Toleration,* op. cit.

59. See Wendy Brown, "Neoliberalism and the End of Democracy," *Theory and Event* 7.2, 2003.