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PREFACE

In June 1995, Václav Havel, the president of the Czech Republic, addressed graduating Harvard seniors on the theme of the new global civilization spreading around the world. "This civilization," said Havel, "is immensely fresh, young, new and fragile. . . . In essence, this new, single epidermis of world civilization merely covers or conceals the immense variety of cultures, of peoples, of religious worlds, of historical traditions and historically formed attitudes, all of which in a sense lie 'beneath' it." He noted the irony that the spread of globalization was accompanied by new forms of resistance and struggle and demands for "the right to worship . . . ancient Gods and obey ancient divine injunctions." A world civilization would not be worthy of its name, he declared, if it could not do justice to the "individuality of different spheres of culture and civilization." The new global civilization had to understand itself "as a multicultural and multipolar one" (Havel 1995).

Indeed, as Havel has reminded us, our contemporary condition is marked by the emergence of new forms of identity politics all around the globe. These new forms complicate and increase centuries-old tensions between the universalistic principles ushered in by the American and French Revolutions and the particularities of nationality, ethnicity, religion, gender, "race," and language. Such identity-driven struggles are taking place not only at the thresholds and borders of new nation-states, which are emerging out of the disintegration of regional regimes like Soviet-style communism in

East Central Europe and Central Asia, or in continents like Africa, where the nation-state, a fragile institution with roots barely half a century old, is crumbling in Rwanda, Uganda, and the Congo, among others. But similar struggles are also occurring within the boundaries of older liberal democracies. Since the late 1970s demands for the recognition of identities based on gender, race, language, ethnic background, and sexual orientation have been challenging the legitimacy of established constitutional democracies.

Reflecting a social dynamic we have hardly begun to comprehend, global integration is proceeding alongside sociocultural disintegration, the resurgence of various separatisms, and international terrorism. Of course, this is not the first time in human history that economic, cultural, and social homogenization have met resistance and subversion, protest and resignification by those concerned to guard the autonomy of their ways of life and value systems. We need only remind ourselves of the resistance of working and peasant classes to the advent of early industrial capitalism in Western Europe. Yet whether we call the current movements "struggles for recognition" (Charles Taylor, Nancy Fraser, and Axel Honneth), "identity/difference movements," (Iris Young, William Connolly), or "movements for cultural rights and multicultural citizenship" (Will Kymlicka), they signal a new political imaginary that propels cultural identity issues in the broadest sense to the forefront of political discourse.

In this book I address the challenges posed to the theory and practice of liberal democracies by the coexistence of these various movements in the same temporal and political space—the "strange multiplicity" of our times, as James Tully has called it (1995). Defending a view that cultures are constituted through contested practices, I argue that the response to this "strange multiplicity" has been a premature normativism in much contemporary political theory, that is, an all-too-quick reification of given group identities, a failure to interrogate the meaning of cultural identity, and a turning away from the sociological and historical literature on these topics, which are dominated by methodological "constructivism." This premature normativism has resulted in hasty

policy recommendations that run the risk of freezing existing group differences.

In contrast I propose a deliberative democratic model that permits maximum cultural contestation within the public sphere, in and through the institutions and associations of civil society. While defending constitutional and legal universalism at the level of the polity, I also argue that certain kinds of legal pluralism and institutional power-sharing through regional and local parliaments are perfectly compatible with deliberative democratic approaches.

I distinguish the vocation of the *democratic theorist* from that of the *multiculturalist theorist*, without disputing that most multiculturalists fully support democratic practices and institutions. The emphasis as well as the ordering of our principles are different. Most democratic theorists welcome and support struggles for recognition and identity/difference movements to the degree to which they are movements for democratic inclusion, greater social and political justice, and cultural fluidity. But movements for maintaining the purity or distinctiveness of cultures seem to me irreconcilable with both democratic and more basic epistemological considerations. Philosophically, I do not believe in the purity of cultures, or even in the possibility of identifying them as meaningfully discrete wholes. I think of cultures as complex human practices of signification and representation, of organization and attribution, which are internally riven by conflicting narratives. Cultures are formed through complex dialogues with other cultures. In most cultures that have attained some degree of internal differentiation, the dialogue with the other(s) is internal rather than extrinsic to the culture itself.

If we accept the internal complexity and essential contestability of cultures, then struggles for recognition that expand democratic dialogue by denouncing the exclusivity and hierarchy of existing cultural arrangements deserve our support. Culturalist movements can be critical and subversive to the degree that they are motivated by other than conservationist impulses. It matters a great deal whether we defend culturalist demands because we want to *preserve* minority cultures within the liberal-democratic

state or because we want to *expand* the circle of democratic inclusion. Unlike the multiculturalist, the democratic theorist accepts that the political incorporation of new groups into established societies will result most likely in the hybridization of cultural legacies on both sides. Modern individuals may choose to continue or subvert their cultural traditions; equally, immigrants may be incorporated into the majority culture through processes of *boundary crossing*, *boundary blurring*, or *boundary shifting* between dominant and minority cultures (see Zolberg and Long 1999). In short, democratic inclusion and the continuity and conservation of cultures need not be mutually exclusive. If one must choose, I value the expansion of democratic inclusion and equality over the preservation of cultural distinctiveness, but often one can attain both in some measure. Democratic equality and deliberative practices are quite compatible with cultural experimentation and with new legal and institutional designs that accommodate cultural pluralism.

I bring a comparative cultural, linguistic, and political perspective to this discussion, drawing from cultural politics in Spain as well as the Netherlands, Canada as well as Turkey. A comparative perspective sensitizes us to how movements and demands of the same kind in one country may bear quite different meanings and yield different results in another. Multicultural justice emerges at the interstices of such conflicts and paradoxes; there are no easy ways to reconcile either in theory or in practice rights of individual liberty with rights of collective cultural self-expression. Taking my cue from contemporary cultural conflicts concerning women's and children's rights, I suggest how a vibrant deliberative democratic society may succeed in realizing opportunities for maximum cultural self-ascription and collective intergroup justice.

Throughout this discussion, empirical and normative considerations are woven together to show that, within a deliberative democratic model, sensitivity to the politics of culture and a strong universalist position are not incompatible. Against attempts by other theorists to sacrifice either cultural politics or normative universalism, I argue that a modernist view of cultures as contested

creations of meaning and a universalist view of deliberative democracy complement one another.

On a more personal note: Since writing *Situating the Self: Gender, Community, and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics* (1992), I have argued that moral and political universalism, properly interpreted, are not irreconcilable with the recognition of, respect for, and democratic negotiation of certain forms of difference. In the past, I have tried to make this case by showing how universalism could be rendered sensitive and receptive to gender differences. In this book, I address forms of difference originating mainly through shared life-forms and cultural practices: Not *gender* but *culture* is in the forefront of my considerations, although, as I argue, there is a profound and unavoidable connection between cultural diversity and gender-related differences (see chap. 4 below).

This book begins in a philosophical vein. The introduction and chapter 2 develop the philosophical aspects of my concepts of culture, narrative, and human identities, as well as outlining the perspective of complex cultural dialogues. I try to show that my vision of cultures as essentially contested and internally riven narratives is compatible with a commitment to discourse ethics. Since there is a great deal of skepticism that normative universalism and a pluralist and contestatory view of cultures can be reconciled at all, chapter 2 asks the question, *Is universalism ethnocentric?* After answering in the negative, I take issue with philosophies of strong incommensurability for their incoherence at best and self-contradictions at worst. Having clarified some of the metaphysical issues that have plagued debates about cultural relativism, I turn in chapters 3 and 4 to the politics of identity/difference in a global context. Chapter 3 focuses on the much-noted paradigm change in contemporary politics from redistribution to recognition, and considers three theories of cultural recognition, namely, those of Charles Taylor, Will Kymlicka, and Nancy Fraser. While I consider cultural preservationist premises that govern some of Taylor's and Kym-

licka's stands on these questions unacceptable, I agree with Fraser that recognition of cultural identities can be seen as matters of universal justice. However, conflicts around the rights of women and children who are members of minority cultural nations or immigrant groups within liberal democracies enable us to see most clearly the moral and political choices involved in advocating the preservation of traditional cultural identities over and above individual rights. Chapter 4, "Multiculturalism and Gendered Citizenship," discusses these dilemmas in the context of three case studies: cultural defense cases in U.S. criminal law; the impact of the personal family code upon the lives of Muslim women in India; and the "scarf affair" in contemporary France.

Chapter 5 expands the model of a dual-track conception of deliberative democracy, which stresses the task of official legislative, political, and adjudicative institutions in civil societies as well as the role of unofficial citizens' associations, public interest groups, and social movements in the public sphere. I defend this model against other attempts in contemporary thought, like John Rawls's "overlapping consensus," Brian Barry's "liberal egalitarianism," and the "multicultural jurisdictions" perspective defended by Ayelet Shachar. I argue that a dual-track approach to multicultural issues and conflicts is a more viable route than ones proposed by these alternative theories, which tend to focus on the official public sphere to the exclusion of a more civil society-based model of cultural learning through cultural conflict. I also maintain that federative institutions as well as certain forms of multicultural jurisdiction that do not undermine the principles of individual and public autonomy are perfectly compatible with deliberative democracy.

Chapter 6 centers around the transformations of the institution of citizenship in contemporary Europe. Europe today is caught between the unifying and centralizing forces of the European Union on the one hand and the forces of multiculturalism, immigration, and cultural separatisms on the other. By focusing on the condition of Europe's Third Country Nationals, who are residents within the European Union countries but not citizens, I analyze the problematic interdependence of nationality and citizenship in the

development of the modern nation-state. I argue that what we are witnessing at the level of European institutions is a "disaggregation effect," through which the various components of citizenship, like collective identity, political rights, and the entitlement to social benefits, are being pulled apart. Contemporary multiculturalist movements are players in this larger transformation away from the institutions of unitary citizenship and sovereignty toward "flexible citizenship" and "dispersed sovereignty." I conclude with some observations about the consequences of these transformations on the potential for democratic citizenship in a global civilization.

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Although this book was finished in the summer of 2001, prior to the events of September 11, many of the issues discussed have, if anything, gained more salience since the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. The condition of Muslim men, women, and children in contemporary European liberal democracies, as well as the situation of the Muslim women in India and Israel, which practice multicultural jurisdictional models, are central to my considerations. By paying attention to the dilemmas and perplexities created by the attempts of these groups to retain their cultural integrity within the institutional boundaries of secular, liberal-democratic states, we can gain some appreciation for the root causes of the discontent harvested by international terrorist networks for their own ends. Neither the normative nor the institutional answers as to how to reconcile the wishes of religious and ethnic Muslim communities to continue their traditional ways of life while living in a culture of liberal-democratic universalism are easily available. Some have drawn the conclusion that coexistence is neither possible nor desirable; but the great majority of Muslim people all over the world, as well as others in whose midst they live, are caught in a democratic learning experiment. In this democratic experiment, the claims of cultures to retain their variety, and to "worship . . . ancient Gods and obey ancient divine injunctions," as Václav Havel reminds us, meet and intermingle within the con-

text of a new global civilization. We are caught in nets of bewildering and puzzling interdependencies. The claims of cultures to retain their individuality in the face of such interdependencies can be realized only through risky dialogues with other cultures that can lead to estrangement and contestation as well as comprehension and mutual learning.

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My thinking on these matters has evolved in the last five years in conversations with a number of individuals. First and foremost, my students Patchen Markell, Sankhar Muthu, Edwina Barvosa, Michael Fergusson, and Daniel Suleiman have enriched my sense of the significance of culture for politics through their own doctoral dissertations, and in the case of Daniel, his senior thesis. My colleagues in the Committee for the Degree in Social Studies at Harvard—April Flakne, Pratap Mehta, Glyn Morgan, and Sayres Rudy—have lent a sympathetic, even if at times skeptical, ear as I have worked through various stages of these arguments. I am particularly grateful to Carolin Emcke, Rainer Forst, Nancy Fraser,

INTRODUCTION

On the Use and Abuse of Culture

CULTURE AND ITS PERMUTATIONS

The emergence of culture as an arena of intense political controversy is one of the most puzzling aspects of our current condition. From Supreme Court decisions concerning the right of performance artists to smear themselves with excrement-like substances to a Canadian court's admission of the oral stories of First Nations as legitimate evidence; from disputes over how to preserve historical memory through public artworks, whose meaning for different cultural groups varies widely, to debates about the teaching of history in multicultural curriculums, we are daily confronted with culture "skirmishes," if not wars.

The claims of diverse groups engaged in the name of this or that aspect of their cultural identity have become contestants in the public sphere of capitalist democracies and are embroiled in characteristic struggles for redistribution and recognition. *Culture* has become a ubiquitous synonym for *identity*, an identity marker and differentiator. Of course, culture has always been the mark of social distinction. What is novel is that groups now forming around such identity markers demand legal recognition and resource allocations from the state and its agencies to preserve and protect their cultural specificities. Identity politics draws the state into culture wars. Accordingly, the very concept of culture has changed.

Culture derives from the Latin root *colare*, and is associated with activities of preservation, of tending to and caring for. Romans viewed agriculture as the "cultural" activity par excellence. But the emergence of Western modernity, a capitalist commodity economy, the rationalized scientific worldview, and bureaucratic administrative control have radically altered this root meaning of culture. Reflecting the challenge posed by a commodity capitalism, poised to yoke science and industry for ever more rapid expansion, culture in the Romantic period was contrasted with *civilization* whose distinguishing mark was precisely that it did not encourage mindful "tending to." In the discourse of German Romantics such as Johann Gottlieb Herder, *Kultur* represents the shared values, meanings, linguistic signs, and symbols of a people, itself considered a unified and homogeneous entity (cf. Parens 1994). *Kultur* refers to forms of expression through which the "spirit" of one people, as distinct from others, is voiced. In this view, an individual's acquisition of culture involves a soul's immersion and shaping through education in the values of the collective. In viewing culture as a process of intellectual-spiritual formation—as *Bildung* (a forming and shaping of the soul)—Herder's definition retains some aspects of the original connotations of a formative activity associated with culture. *Civilization*, by contrast, refers to material values and practices that are shared with other peoples and that do not reflect individuality. It roughly designates the bourgeois capitalist world. This contrast between civilization and culture is associated with other binaries like exteriority versus interiority, superficiality versus depth, linear progress versus organic growth, and individualism versus collectivism.¹

With the emergence of mass totalitarian movements in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s came anxiety about the very possibility of culture. Could there be "mass" culture? Were the masses capable of culture? This discussion, which had already begun in the Weimar Republic in the 1920s, was transported across the Atlantic during World War II with intellectual refugees such as Hannah Arendt and the Frankfurt School members, who applied it to the experience of mass consumer democracies. Mass culture carried all the negative

attributes once associated with the concept of *Zivilisation*—namely, superficiality, homogeneity, reproducibility, lack of durability, and lack of originality. Mass culture is not educative or transformative; it does not shape the soul or express the spirit or collective genius of a people. It is mere entertainment, and in Theodor Adorno's memorable phrase, "entertainment is betrayal" ([1947] 1969, 128–58), promising happiness to those consuming masses who displace onto the screen and figures of Hollywood the *promesse du bonheur* that advanced capitalism always holds before them, but never quite delivers.

Reviewing discussions of culture today within and beyond the academy, one is struck by the obsolescence of the old, value-laden contrast between *Kultur* and *Zivilisation*. What dominates now is an egalitarian understanding of culture drawn from the social anthropology of Bronislaw Malinowski, Evans Pritchard, Margaret Mead, and Claude Lévi-Strauss, who were critical of Eurocentric cultural presumptions. They viewed culture as the totality of social systems and practices of signification, representation, and symbolism that have an autonomous logic of their own, a logic separated from and not reducible to the intentions of those through whose actions and doings it emerges and is reproduced. The old contrast between culture and civilization and the anxiety over mass culture it occasioned resurfaces at times in these discussions, but, more often, the ubiquitous notion of an autonomous culture is coupled with the notion of identity. British social anthropology and French structuralism democratize the concept of culture in that they eliminate the binary that made it a term of critique in opposition to the concept of civilization. Yet although Herder's contrast between culture and civilization seems hardly relevant to these approaches, his identification of a people's genius with expressions of its cultural identity persists.

In this sense, much contemporary cultural politics today is an odd mixture of the anthropological view of the democratic equality of all cultural forms of expression and the Romantic, Herderian emphasis on each form's irreducible uniqueness (cf. Joppke and Lukes 1999, 5). Whether in politics or in policy, in courts or in

the media, one assumes that each human group "has" some kind of "culture" and that the boundaries between these groups and the contours of their cultures are specifiable and relatively easy to depict. Above all, we are told, it is good to preserve and propagate such cultures and cultural differences. Conservatives argue that cultures should be preserved in order to keep groups separate, because cultural hybridity generates conflict and instability: they hope to avoid the "clash of civilizations" by reinforcing political alliances that closely follow cultural-identity rifts (Huntington 1996), lest attempts to bridge these rifts produce hybridity and confusion.² Progressives, by contrast, claim that cultures should be preserved in order to rectify patterns of domination and symbolic injury involving the misrecognition and oppression of some cultures by others.

Whether conservative or progressive, such attempts share faulty epistemic premises: (1) that cultures are clearly delineable wholes; (2) that cultures are congruent with population groups and that a noncontroversial description of the culture of a human group is possible; and (3) that even if cultures and groups do not stand in one-to-one correspondence, even if there is more than one culture within a human group and more than one group that may possess the same cultural traits, this poses no important problems for politics or policy. These assumptions form what I will call the "reductionist sociology of culture." In the words of Terence Turner, such a view "risks essentializing the idea of culture as the property of an ethnic group or race; it risks reifying cultures as separate entities by overemphasizing their boundedness and distinctness; it risks overemphasizing the internal homogeneity of cultures in terms that potentially legitimize repressive demands for communal conformity; and by treating cultures as badges of group identity, it tends to fetishize them in ways that put them beyond the reach of critical analysis" (1993, 412). A central thesis of this book is that much contemporary debate in political and legal philosophy is dominated by this faulty epistemology, which has grave normative political consequences for how we think injustices among groups should be redressed and how we think human diversity and pluralism should

be furthered. Our thinking about these questions is hobbled by our adherence to a reductionist sociology of culture.

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM AND ITS NORMATIVE IMPLICATIONS

Throughout this book I defend social constructivism as a comprehensive explanation of cultural differences and against attempts in normative political theory that reify cultural groups and their struggles for recognition. To be sure, many contemporary writers on multiculturalism reject cultural essentialism as well (see Tully 1995, 7ff.; Parekh 2000, 77–80, 142–58; Carens 2000, 52ff.). But they do not do so for the same reasons, and the epistemic premises that lead them to do so are often unclear. What distinguishes my critique of cultural essentialism from these efforts is the *narrative view of actions and culture* that informs it. In my view, all analyses of cultures, whether empirical or normative, must begin by distinguishing the standpoint of the social observer from that of the social agent. The social observer—whether an eighteenth-century narrator or chronicler; a nineteenth-century general, linguist, or educational reformer; or a twentieth-century anthropologist, secret agent, or development worker—is the one who imposes, together with local elites, unity and coherence on cultures as observed entities. Any view of cultures as clearly delineable wholes is a view from the outside that generates coherence for the purposes of understanding and control. Participants in the culture, by contrast, experience their traditions, stories, rituals and symbols, tools, and material living conditions through shared, albeit contested and contestable, narrative accounts.³ From within, a culture need not appear as a whole; rather, it forms a horizon that recedes each time one approaches it.

A most spectacular example of the creation of cultural unity through various external discursive interventions is provided by the Hindu practice of sati, according to which a widowed wife immolates herself by ascending the burning funeral pyre of her husband. In her analysis of the politics of tradition formation, Uma

Narayan puzzles over "how and why this particular practice, marginal to many Hindu communities let alone Indian ones, came to be regarded as a central Indian tradition" (1997, 61). Her answer, based on recent historiography of colonial India, is that the meaning and status of sati as a tradition emerged out of negotiations between British colonials and local Indian elites. The colonial administrators, who were driven by their own moral and civilizational revulsion when confronted with this practice, were equally intent that their outlawing of this practice not lead to political unrest. So they investigated the status of sati as a "religious practice," assuming that if it had religious sanction, it would be unwise to abolish it; if it did not, then its abolition could be approved by local elites themselves (62). To determine whether a practice had a religious basis, in turn, meant finding a justification for it in religious scripture. Reasoning analogically that in Hinduism the relationship of scripture to practice was like that in Christianity, British colonial powers trusted accounts of documents produced by Indian *pundits* (religious scholars) as codifying in effect the interpretation of tradition. But since Hinduism, unlike Christianity, does not have a core spiritual text, "the question of where to look for such scriptural evidence was hardly self-evident. The interpretive task was not made any easier by the fact that there seemed to be few, if any, clear and unambiguous textual endorsements of sati" (200). A long historical process of cultural interventions and negotiations ironed out inconsistencies in the accounts of local elites about various myths surrounding the practice of sati. Religious stories in relation to existing practices were codified, and, above all, discrepancies in local Hindu traditions that varied not only from region to region but between the various castes as well were homogenized.

Culture presents itself through narratively contested accounts for two principal reasons. First, human actions and relations are formed through a double hermeneutic: We identify *what* we do through an *account* of what we do; words and deeds are equiprimordial, in the sense that almost all socially significant human action beyond scratching one's nose is identified as a certain *type of doing* through the accounts the agents and others give of that doing.

This is so even when, and especially when, there is disagreement between doer and observer. The second reason why culture presents itself through contested accounts is that not only are human actions and interactions constituted through narratives that together form a "web of narratives" (Arendt [1958] 1973), but they are also constituted through the actors' evaluative stances toward their doings. In other words, there are second-order narratives entailing a certain normative attitude toward accounts of first-order deeds. What we call "culture" is the horizon formed by these evaluative stances, through which the infinite chain of space-time sequences is demarcated into "good" and "bad," "holy" and "profane," "pure" and "impure." Cultures are formed through binaries because human beings live in an evaluative universe.¹

The demarcations of cultures and of the human groups that are their carriers are extremely contested, fragile as well as delicate. To possess the culture means to be an insider. Not to be acculturated in the appropriate way is to be an outsider. Hence the boundaries of cultures are always securely guarded, their narratives purified, their rituals carefully monitored. These boundaries circumscribe power in that they legitimize its use within the group.

Sociological constructivism does not suggest that cultural differences are shallow or somehow unreal or "fictional." Cultural differences run very deep and are very real. The imagined boundaries between them are not phantoms in deranged minds; imagination can guide human action and behavior as well as any other cause of human action. Yet the student of human affairs should never take groups' and individuals' cultural narratives at face value. Rather, to explain human behavior, the student should seek to understand the totality of circumstances of which culture is an aspect. This is obvious and would not need repeating were constructivism not frequently misidentified with the view that anything goes and that symbols and representations can be shuffled like cards in a deck. In truth, cultural narrative, change, and innovation have their own logics.

Sociological constructivism leads me to the conviction that strong multiculturalism, or what has been called *mosaic multicultural-*

alism, is wrong, empirically as well as normatively, and that intercultural justice between human groups should be defended in the name of justice and freedom and not of an elusive preservation of cultures. By strong or mosaic multiculturalism I mean the view that human groups and cultures are clearly delineated and identifiable entities that coexist, while maintaining firm boundaries, as would pieces of a mosaic. By contrast, it is not a visual but an auditory metaphor that guides my understanding of a complex cultural dialogue. We should view human cultures as constant creations, recreations, and negotiations of imaginary boundaries between "we" and the "other(s)." The "other" is always also within us and is one of us. A self is a self only because it distinguishes itself from a real, or more often than not imagined, "other." Struggles for recognition among individuals and groups are really efforts to negate the status of "otherness," insofar as otherness is taken to entail disrespect, domination, and inequality. Individuals and groups struggle to attain respect, self-worth, freedom, and equality while also retaining some sense of selfhood. Whether in the psyche of the individual or in the imagined community of a nation, it is very difficult to accept the "other" as deeply different while recognizing his/her fundamental human equality and dignity. I argue that the task of *democratic equality* is to create impartial institutions in the public sphere and civil society where this struggle for the recognition of cultural differences and the contestation for cultural narratives can take place without domination.

Nationalist ideologies and movements reject the constitutive "otherness" at the source of all culture; more often than not, they seek to "purge" the culture of its impure or foreign elements and thus render it whole again. Ironically, nationalisms reverse the participant/observer perspective, in that the adherents and ideologies of nationalist movements attempt to create forced unity out of diversity, coherence out of inconsistencies, and homogeneity out of narrative dissonance.

In his essay "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation," Homi K. Bhabha lays bare the narrative strategies and tropes through which nationalist ideologies are

constructed. "The 'scraps, patches and rags' of daily life," Bhabha writes, referring to a phrase of Ernst Gellner,

must be repeatedly turned into the signs of a coherent national culture, while the very act of the narrative performance interpolates a growing circle of national subjects. In the production of *nation as narration*, there is a split between the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative. It is through this process of splitting that the conceptual ambivalence of modern society becomes the site of *writing the nation*.¹ (1994, 145–46; the first emphasis mine; second emphasis in the text)

What Bhabha names the "continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical" refers to narrative strategies, to the writing, production, and teaching of histories, myths, and other collective tales, through which the nation as one represents itself as a continuous unit. In such strategies of representation, "the people" is constituted as one. Time is rendered homogeneous, in that the conflicting, irreconcilable, often contradictory and illogical daily narratives and experiences of individuals and collectivities are re-presented as aspects, elements, stages, or in Hegelian language, as "moments," of a unified narrative. The "recursive strategy of the performative," by contrast, is the invention by intellectuals and ideologues, artists and politicians, of narrative and representational strategies through which the "nation's self-generation" is reenacted. What Homi Bhabha names the "pedagogical" and the "performative" aspects of the national narrative have somehow to hang or fit together. It is precisely this fit that the student of human affairs tries to explain.

Let me give an example that would be quite unfamiliar to European and North American students of nationalism. The creation of modern Turkey through the reforms of Kemal Atatürk can be viewed as a paradigmatic example of civic nationalism. In order to forge a new civic identity out of the old Ottoman Empire, which prided itself in being composed of seventy-two *millet*s (peoples or nations in the nonterritorial sense of the term), Atatürk had to position the new nation in opposition to the Persian and Arab legacies

that dominated the cultural life of the empire. In a radically constructivist gesture, Atatürk abolished the old script, which was written in Arabic letters and was a mélange of Persian, Turkish, and Arabic, in 1923 and created a new official language, using a modified version of the Latin alphabet and the vocabulary of the vernacular Turkish, spoken in the countryside as well as the city, albeit with different accents. In abolishing the old Arabic alphabet and choosing the Latin script, Atatürk was combining the pedagogical and the performative in a most interesting way.

The new alphabet, this primary instrument of the pedagogy of the nation, reinforced a certain new identity by contributing to the resolution of the identity conflicts that had plagued the Ottoman Empire since the eighteenth century. These had been caused by the fact that the Ottomans, while ruling a Muslim empire, controlled significant parts of Europe in the regions of Greece and the Balkans and thus acted as a bridge between Europe and the Orient, the West and the East. Atatürk simply chose the West, expressing this most dramatically by abolishing the cultural and literary medium in which the Muslim elite of the empire had expressed itself. Here, clearly, "the cultural shreds and patches used by nationalism" (Gellner 1983, 56) were not arbitrary historical inventions. They had to fit together; they had to tell a story and perform a narrative that made sense, that was plausible and coherent, and that motivated people to the point that they were willing to sacrifice their lives for it. It is also the case that such collective narratives can cease to make sense, cohere, motivate, or hold people together. Such appears to be the case in contemporary Turkey, where the dominant ideology of Kemalism has fallen out of grace, and new and competing collective narratives are clamoring to take its place.

I want to emphasize that sociological constructivism is a very broad concept in social theory that can cover distinct methodological strategies, ranging from postmodernism to critical social theory, from postcolonial studies to Marxist or non-Marxist functionalism.

Very often, constructivist strategies have failed to *explain* identity-based movements, in that they do not account for the "fit" between the cultural shreds and patches that movements and militants pick up from the culture around them and the more enduring identity dilemmas and options these shreds and patches appear to resolve.⁵ Identity/difference politics is afflicted by the paradox of wanting to preserve the purity of the impure, the immutability of the historical and the fundamentality of the contingent. Constructivism enlightens us about the processes that transform each of the first terms in these pairs of opposites into the second. A social constructivism that considers the interplay between structural and cultural imperatives is possible as well as desirable: Throughout this book I will try to keep in view the functional/structural imperatives of material systems of action like the economy, bureaucracy, and various social technologies on the one hand, and the symbolic-representative imperatives of systems of cultural signification on the other.

DISCOURSE ETHICS AND MULTICULTURALISM

My reflections on the cultural politics of capitalist societies follow the broad normative principles I developed in *Situating the Self* (1992). Expanding there on the program of a communicative or discourse ethics, I stipulated norms of *universal respect* and *egalitarian reciprocity* as guiding principles of human interaction. With Jürgen Habermas, I hold that only those norms and normative institutional arrangements can be deemed valid only if all who would be affected by their consequences can be participants in a practical discourse through which the norms are adopted. Norms of universal respect and egalitarian reciprocity already undergird practices of discursive argumentation: they must be presupposed in some form for practical discourses. This reflects not a vicious circle but a virtuous one: Moral and political dialogues begin with the presumption of respect, equality, and reciprocity between the participants. We engage in discourses with an assumed background, and we understand that these norms apply to all participants. Through dis-

courses, the participants subject these assumed background interpretations to intersubjective validation. Discourses are procedures of *recursive validation* through which abstract norms and principles are concretized and legitimized. We may all claim that we respect one another, but we cannot know what such respect requires or entails in the face of deep cultural conflicts; while some of us may consider certain practices and judgments an affront to human dignity, others may consider our evaluations a species of ethnocentric imperialism. Practical discourses, in the broadest sense, include *moral discourses* about universal norms of justice, *ethical discourses* about forms of the good life, and *political-pragmatic discourses* about the feasible. These are dialogic processes through which we not only concretize and contextualize the meaning of such norms; we also determine what kind of a problem is being debated. Very often, moral dialogue is necessary to identify an issue as one of legislation rather than morality, of aesthetics rather than politics. Participants must not only reach understanding of the norms in question; they also must share a *situational* understanding of these norms' intended applications. Discourses in multicultural societies often require negotiation of such shared, situational understandings. What kind of practice we think a specific cultural practice is—religious or aesthetic, moral or legal—will determine which norms we think should apply to it.

Let me illustrate again with reference to sati. The British colonial administration, cooked in the cauldron of the religious wars in Europe that had pitted Protestants against Catholics, Anglicans against both, and sectarian and millenarian movements against all, sought to apply to India the lessons of religious tolerance as practiced in the modern European secular state. As long as a practice was considered central to one's religion, some tolerance was to be shown. But if it was not *religious* but merely *cultural*, in the sense that members of the same religion felt free to engage in it or not, colonial administrators presumed that it should be less protected from colonial intervention, especially if the practice in question could also be considered odious and offensive to human dignity.

Most liberal democracies still operate with some version of this distinction between cultural and religious practices, and between central and subsidiary practices of a religion.⁶ My point here is not to challenge this distinction; I want to stress that very often we do not know what *type of practice* is in question, for we do not share a common understanding of the disputed practice itself. Is it religion, culture, or morality? What if it is all, or none? What if its meaning shifts and changes with social and cultural interactions, across time and within shared space? (This is precisely what is taking place now around the practice of "veiling" in different communities of Muslim women, in countries of immigration as well as in their own societies.) In other words, practices themselves are often resignified. Practical discourses are processes through which such resignifications can unfold. Attention to such processes of resignification and narrative retelling will alter the line between the universalizable content of moral discourses and the ethical discourses of the good life without erasing it altogether.

Discourse ethics has one distinctive virtue when compared with other variants of contractarian and universalist models of normative validity: its participants feel free to introduce into the dialogue their life-world moral dilemmas and conflicts without any constraints imposed by counterfactual experiments and idealizations. Discourses do not prescribe the content of moral argument through thought experiments or definitional boundary drawings between the public and the private. Furthermore, individuals' needs as well as principles, life stories as well as moral judgments, can be freely shared with others, but discourse participants may also keep "private" aspects of their personal narratives they prefer not to share. There is no obligation to self-disclosure in the discursive space.

The lack of idealized strictures on discursive content and a greater need for the possibility of individual self-presentations within communicative ethics led me in an earlier work to distinguish *universalist* from *substitutionalist* universalisms (Benhabib 1992). The latter, like those of Immanuel Kant and John Rawls, pro-

ceed from a certain definition of human agency and rationality. In them, the subject matter of practical discourses is restricted to what each can will or choose, in conjunction with all, to be a universal law. Or it is restricted to those principles of a just society, to which rational agents, placed behind the epistemic strictures of a "veil of ignorance," would agree. Such theories have the advantage over the discourse model of being able to provide a more *determinate* or *concrete* content of choice and deliberation. Yet this determinacy of content is attained at the cost of restricting the agenda of the conversation as well as of abstracting away from the identity of the individuals involved. Substitutionalist moral theories view individuals as generalized, not as concrete, others (1992).

Interactive universalism, by contrast, accepts that all moral beings capable of sentience, speech, and action are potential moral conversation partners.⁷ It does not privilege observers and philosophers. The boundaries of moral discourses are set only by the extent of our doings as a consequence of which we affect one another's well-being and freedom. The boundaries of moral discourses are indeterminate; they include all beings, and not just rational humans, whose interests can be affected by the consequences of one's actions. According to interactive universalism, I can learn the *wholeness* of the other(s) only through their narratives of self-identification. The norm of universal respect enjoins me to enter the conversation insofar as one is considered a generalized other; but I can become aware of the *otherness* of others, of those aspects of their identity that make them concrete others to me, only through their own narratives. And because cultural narratives (which comprise linguistic, ethnic, religious, as well as territorial and regional accounts) are crucial to the narrative constitution of individual self-identities, such processes of interactive universalism are crucial in multicultural societies. My specific reformulation of discourse ethics through interactive universalism permits me then to extend this model to the dilemmas of multiculturalism, since cultures provide us with narratives as well as practices, sayings as well as doings. We encounter each other and ourselves as others through such processes of doing and saying.

NARRATIVITY AND THE SELF

To be and to become a self is to insert oneself into webs of interlocation; it is to know how to answer when one is addressed and to know how to address others (cf. Benhabib 1999e). Strictly speaking, we never really *insert* ourselves, but rather are *thrown* into these webs of interlocation, in the Heideggerian sense of "thrownness" as *Geworfenheit*. We are born into webs of interlocation or narrative, from familial and gender narratives to linguistic ones and to the macronarratives of collective identity. We become aware of who we are by learning to become conversation partners in these narratives. Although we do not choose the webs in whose nets we are initially caught, or select those with whom we wish to converse, our agency consists in our capacity to weave out of those narratives our individual life stories, which make sense for us as unique selves. Codes of established narratives in various cultures define our capacities to tell our individual stories. There are only so many ways in which a cultural code may be varied; beyond them, one may run the risk of becoming an outcast or a convert, a marginal figure or a deserter of the tribe. But just as it is always possible in a conversation to drop the last remark and let it reverberate on the floor in silence, or to carry on and keep the dialogue alive, or to become whimsical, ironic, and critical and turn the conversation back on itself, so too do we always have options in telling a life story. These options are not ahistorical but culturally and historically specific, inflected by the master narratives of family structure and gender roles into which each individual is thrown. Nonetheless, just as the grammatical rules of a language, once acquired, do not exhaust our capacity to build an infinite number of well-formed sentences in a language, so socialization and acculturation do not determine an individual's life story or his or her capacity to initiate new actions and new sentences in conversation. Donald Spence, a psychoanalyst, formulates the link between the self and narration insightfully:

It is by means of continuous dialogue with ourselves—in day-dreams, partial thoughts, and full-fledged plans—that we search for

ways to interact with our environment and turn happenings into meanings, and we organize these reactions by putting our reactions into words. . . . Language offers a mechanism for putting myself into the world, as Heidegger might phrase it, and for making the world part of me; and language very likely determines the way in which experience will be registered and later recalled." (1987, 134)

My approach to the politics of multiculturalism is defined by these theoretical commitments: the discourse theory of ethics; the dialogic and narrative constitution of the self; and the view of discourses as deliberative practices that center not only on norms of action and interaction, but also on negotiating situationally shared understandings across multicultural divides.

Strong or mosaic multiculturalism is very often mired in futile attempts to single out one master narrative as more significant than others in the constitution of personal identities. Proceeding from an overly socialized vision of the self, strong multiculturalists have to face the embarrassing fact that most individual identities are defined through many collective affinities and through many narratives. The multiculturalist resistance to seeing cultures as internally riven and contested carries over to visions of selves, who are then construed as equally unified and harmonious beings with a unique cultural center. By contrast, I view individuality as the unique and fragile achievement of selves in weaving together conflicting narratives and allegiances into a unique life history. Practical autonomy, in the moral and political sphere, is defined as the capacity to exercise choice and agency over the conditions of one's narrative identifications. Such capabilities necessarily include some disposition of material resources, such as income and access to education and professional development as well as to public institutions and spaces. Using this dialogic and narrative model of identity constitution, I propose to define group identities much more dynamically and to argue that in reflecting upon politics of identity/difference, our focus should be less on what the group is but more on what the political leaders of such groups *demand* in the public sphere.

A DYNAMIC MODEL OF IDENTITY GROUPS

Contemporary discussion of these issues is often mired in two shortcomings: (a) Processes of group formation are not treated dynamically enough and too much effort is spent on identifying what a group is, in terms of structural indicators of economic oppression or cultural indicators of discrimination, marginalization, and the like (Young 2000, 97–98); (b) this literature, which rehashes the Marxian dichotomies of base versus superstructure in light of the new categories of economic versus cultural processes of group formation, ignores processes through which existing social and cultural cleavages are transformed into political mobilization (Kymlicka 1995, 1997; and cf. chap. 3 below). Thus, the likelihood that ethnic and language politics in a given case reflects class politics is often considered; but the reverse, namely that class politics may channel itself into ethnic lobbying, is not. To give two examples: It can be plausibly argued that part of what motivates the Québécois and the Catalan separatist movements is the emergence of local elites, sufficiently independent of Ottawa in the case of Quebec, and Madrid in the case of Barcelona, to carry on their own economic and cultural transactions. The new global economy permits the growth of regional networks over and beyond the boundaries of nation-states, making it plausible for them to short-circuit traditional centralized decision making in banking, finance, communications, and transportation. These political and economic facts are manifesting themselves in linguistic nationalism and separatism, precisely because the lingua franca of the global economy is not based on the old national linguistic idioms. Even Québécois nationalism, which wants to retain French as the only and official language of the province of Quebec, is made possible by the interconnectedness of Quebec to networks of global capitalism by virtue of its being a part of the Canadian federation (see Ignatieff 1995).

In another case, the majority of the Oriental Jews in Israel, whose families came from Morocco, Yemen, Tunisia, Iraq, Iran, and Turkey, tend to vote for religious right-wing parties like Shas (less

so in the case of the Jews from Iraq, Iran, and Turkey). Oriental Jews come generally from the working class; they have not made sufficient inroads into the military, scientific, political, and media elite of the country. Their vote for religious parties who actually have more regressive economic and social policies vis-à-vis their constituencies than do social democrats in Israel—the Marah—may be seen as reflecting their ethnic group identity; but it may be better understood through the failure of Eurocentric Israeli elites to build a common idiom and political culture through which to integrate these groups into the democratic public sphere. As the case of David Levy, who represented this constituency, demonstrates very well, they can shift allegiances from the right-wing religious Shas to the Marah around social and economic policy issues. One cannot understand their politics through an analysis of ethnic or cultural identity alone. One needs to pay more attention to the mobilization of social and cultural cleavages in political movements and to focus on the public political demands of such actors⁸ (see Offe 1998).

Here we reach the most important difference between the approaches of democratic and multicultural theorists. The democratic theorist is concerned with the public manifestation of cultural identities in civic spaces; the multiculturalist is interested in classifying and naming groups and then in developing a normative theory on the basis of classificatory taxonomies. History as well as social study shows us that any minority group in human society may adopt any of a number of political positions; political attitudes cannot be derived from group identities. In the contemporary United States, for example, there are gay males who are Republican; there are conservative libertarian lesbians; there are black Muslims, just as there are postmodernist black cultural activists. Likewise, regionalism in Europe can extend from the right-wing politics of the Lega Nord in Italy to the ecological demands of left-leaning French groups of Provence. Demands for cultural autonomy may reflect the aspirations of the new global elites or the agony and frustrations of a people like the Kurds, who have been denied their own language, customs, and schools through the cumulative oppression by the Turkish, Iraqi, and Iranian governments (see Randal 1997).

Democratic theorists should support movements for equality and justice and for increasing the space of narrative self-determination in cultural terms. Yet there is increasing skepticism toward the model of universalism that I defend. As globalization and the cultural pluralization of societies proceed apace, arguments are advanced for a legal pluralism that would countenance a coexistence of jurisdictional systems for different cultural and religious traditions and accept varieties of institutional design for societies with strong ethnic, cultural, and linguistic cleavages. Focusing on the dilemmas of multiculturalism and women's issues in countries with pluralist traditions, I will argue that as long as these pluralist structures do not violate three normative conditions, they can be quite compatible with a universalist deliberative democracy model. I call these the conditions of *egalitarian reciprocity*, *voluntary self-ascription*, and *freedom of exit and association* (see chapters 4 and 5 below for a fuller justification of these principles):

1. *egalitarian reciprocity*. Members of cultural, religious, linguistic and other minorities must not, in virtue of their membership status, be entitled to lesser degrees of civil, political, economic, and cultural rights than the majority.
2. *voluntary self-ascription*. In consociationalist or federative multicultural societies, an individual must not be automatically assigned to a cultural, religious, or linguistic group by virtue of his or her birth. An individual's group membership must permit the most extensive forms of self-ascription and self-identification possible. There will be many cases when such self-identifications may be contested, but the state should not simply grant the right to define and control membership to the group at the expense of the individual; it is desirable that at some point in their adult lives individuals be asked whether they accept their continuing membership in their communities of origin.
3. *freedom of exit and association*. The freedom of the individual to exit the ascriptive group must be unrestricted, although exit may be accompanied by the loss of certain kinds of formal and informal privileges. However, the wish of individuals to remain group members,

even while outmarrying, must not be rejected; accommodations must be found for intergroup marriages and the children of such marriages.

Whether cultural groups can survive as distinct entities under these conditions is an open question,⁹ but I believe these conditions are necessary if legal pluralism in liberal-democratic states is to achieve the goals of cultural diversity as well as democratic equality, without compromising the rights of women and children of minority cultures.

Whether multiculturalist aspirations and liberal-democratic universalism are or can be made compatible is a contested issue. In chapter 5, I consider a variety of contemporary positions, such as the model of overlapping liberal consensus (John Rawls); the model of liberal egalitarianism (Brian Barry); the model of pluralist interlocking power hierarchies (Ayelet Shachar); and the deliberative democracy approach (James Bohman, Jorge Valadez and Melissa Williams). Rawls's political liberalism introduces several crucial distinctions into the debate that, in my view, are foundational for any future discourse on liberal democracy. These include the distinction between constitutional essentials, on the one hand, and specific institutional and policy arrangements, on the other, which show great variation across actually existing democratic systems. Rawls also argues that from the standpoint of the major institutions of society, persons are to be considered as capable of forming their own senses of the good, and of cooperating with others around principles of justice. This is the public view of the person as an autonomous being. I accept the Rawlsian insight that political liberalism must respect the public autonomy of individuals and constitutional essentials.

Yet Rawls's attempt to restrict public reason to discourses concerning constitutional essentials alone is unconvincing on philosophical and sociological grounds. I argue that the domain of public reason must not be restricted to constitutional essentials, and that "the background culture," which surrounds and infuses the task of reason with particular content, must be considered essential

to consensus formation in liberal democracies. Following Habermas, I defend a *dual-track approach* to multiculturalism: In deliberative democracy, as distinguished from political liberalism, the *official* public sphere of representative institutions, which includes the legislature, executive and public bureaucracies, the judiciary, and political parties, is not the only site of political contestation and of opinion and will formation. Deliberative democracy focuses on social movements, and on the civil, cultural, religious, artistic, and political associations of the *unofficial* public sphere, as well. The public sphere is composed of the anonymous and interlocking conversation and contestation resulting from the activities of these various groups. It is in this domain that multicultural conflicts and politics have their place. Rawls's approach, but Brian Barry's as well (which is quite critical of Rawls's), neglects this dimension and instead attempts to solve multicultural conflicts through a juridical calculus of liberal rights. While I argue that certain normative constraints—like the norms of egalitarian reciprocity, voluntary self-ascription, freedom of exit and association—must be respected by multicultural groups, I also accept that certain forms of legal and political pluralism, including multiple jurisdictional systems and regional parliaments, may be compatible with deliberative democratic universalism.

One of the central contentions among deliberative democrats working on multiculturalism is whether our normative model denies strong incommensurability among worldviews, belief systems, and the like, and privileges a unitary polity. I will argue in chapters 2 and 5 that strong incommensurability is an incoherent philosophical position, but that intractable political and epistemological conflicts can sometimes be resolved through moral compromises. From a political perspective, I do not see that separatist movements offer a magical solution to the dilemmas of coexistence among different ethnic and cultural groups. While separatism is often inevitable and sometimes desirable, all modern separatist movements that aspire to state formation face the tension and indeed outright contradiction between their democratic sovereignty claims and respect for universal human rights. In chapter 6, I focus

on transformations of citizenship and the status of immigrants and aliens in contemporary Europe in order to illustrate how and why conflicts between universal rights and sovereign self-determination are intrinsic to democratic state-forms. Postnational democracies must engage in self-reflexive questioning of their own practices of inclusion and exclusion.

COMPLEX CULTURAL DIALOGUES

To make more vivid the relationships between interactive universalism, the narrative constitution of self, and complex cultural dialogue, I would like to conclude this introduction with a personal memory. In the late 1980s I was lecturing at the Inter-University Center of the city of Dubrovnik, currently part of the Republic of Croatia, but at the time part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. I cited a passage from John Locke's *Second Treatise of Civil Government* on the "state of nature," which reminds us that this figure of speech, while a metaphor, may have some factual basis as well. Locke recounts by way of illustration "the two men on the desert island, mentioned by Garcilaso de la Vega, in his history of Peru; or between a Swiss and an *Indian*, in the woods of America" ([1690] 1980, 13). After the lecture I was approached by a colleague of Peruvian descent. He asked me for the reference to the full citation because he was astonished that John Locke knew of Garcilaso de la Vega. I was in turn astonished that this detail would interest him that much, for my lecture had been a feminist critique of the concept of individuality implicit in early liberal political theory as articulated by the metaphor of the state of nature. Who *was* Garcilaso de la Vega? Why should he matter to my feminist critique?

Garcilaso de la Vega, also known as "El Inca," is hailed by Arnold Toynbee as "an early representative of a class which has been important throughout the history of the encounters between modern Western civilization and all the other surviving civilizations and precivilizational cultures on the face of our planet, and which is supremely important today" (1966, xii). Thanks to his mixed Andean-European descent and to his acculturation in both

ancestral traditions—a double education that was the privilege, or burden, of his mestizo blood—Garcilaso was able to serve as an interpreter or mediator between two different cultures that had suddenly been brought into contact. Born in the ancient Inca capital of Cuzco in 1539 of a Spanish conqueror of noble lineage and an Indian princess, he was one of the first mestizos. After much family misfortune, the forced separation of his parents, and the annulment of their mixed marriage by the Catholic Church, he left his native Peru, never to return, and it was in the seclusion of a small Andalusian town that he wrote his great work, *Royal Commentaries of the Incas and General History of Peru*. It is divided into two parts, which were published separately, one in Lisbon in 1609 and the other in Cordoba, posthumously, in 1616–17.

Had John Locke actually read Garcilaso when he published his *Two Treatises of Civil Government*? Was his construction of the "state of nature" based on Garcilaso's *Royal Commentaries* or on his *Florida* (de la Vega [1616–17] 1980), in which Garcilaso tells the tale of an expedition to explore and occupy territories inhabited by half-savage Indians, many of them cannibals? What is revealing in this anecdote is how my interests as a feminist scholar led me to focus on some of the marginalia in the text of the *Second Treatise*, and how the interests of another scholar showed me the way to an encounter with another culture implicit in the subtext of John Locke's famous work. Depending indeed upon how Locke read or misread, presented or misrepresented Garcilaso, we gain fascinating insights into the process of the construction of "others" in the texts of Western political thought. I concur with Homi Bhabha that "the borderline work of culture demands an encounter with 'newness' that is not part of a continuum of past and present. It creates a sense of the new as an insurgent act of cultural translation" (1994, 70.) I attempt in the following chapters to spell out the political consequences of treating the "new" as an insurgent act of cultural translation.

the human person is at the center of a divine chain of being of ascending complexity, beauty, and perfection; we reach the height of our spiritual capacities insofar as we partake through our minds of the divine order of these forms. Emre, one of the great mystical poets of Islam, blended Plato's teaching of the forms with an Aristotelian ontology. Galileo's claim, several centuries later, that "the book of nature was written in mathematics"² has much in common with Yunus Emre's belief that the universe is an intelligible, ordered hierarchy of forms.

When we pose the question "Is universalism ethnocentric?" do we take account of this complex global dialogue across cultures and civilizations? Or do we rest satisfied with the gesture of self-criticism emerging out of the radical doubt that European culture, in particular, experienced about itself at the end of the eighteenth century and increasingly in the nineteenth century? The question "Is universalism ethnocentric?" presupposes that we know who the "West and its others," or in Tzvetan Todorov's famous words — "Nous et les autres" — are (1993). But who are we? Who are the so-called others? Are they really our others?

More often than not, the answer in recent debates on cognitive and moral relativism has turned on a holistic view of cultures and societies as internally coherent, seamless wholes. This view has prevented us from seeing the complexity of global civilizational dialogues and encounters, which are increasingly our lot, and it has encouraged the binarities of "we" and "the other(s)." Fortunately, current concerns about multiculturalism and multicultural citizenship are bringing to an end this preoccupation with the supposed tension between relativism and universalism, discussions that had been dominated by strong theses of "incommensurability" and "untranslatability." Nevertheless, and despite the waning of epistemological relativisms (see Krausz 1989), false assumptions about cultures, their coherence and purity, still influence the work of various contemporary multicultural theorists. This chapter pleads for a recognition of the radical hybridity and polyvocality of all cultures; cultures themselves, as well as societies, are not holistic but polyvocal, multilayered, decentered, and fractured systems of action and

TWO

"NOUS" ET LES "AUTRES" (WE AND THE OTHERS)

Is Universalism Ethnocentric?

The question Is universalism ethnocentric? betrays an anxiety that has haunted the West since the conquest of the Americas. It grows from beliefs that Western ways of life and systems of value are radically different from those of other civilizations. This widespread anxiety rests on false generalizations about the West itself, about the homogeneity of its identity, the uniformity of its developmental processes, and the cohesion of its value systems. The suggestion that universalism is ethnocentric often also presupposes a homogenizing view of other cultures and civilizations, neglecting elements in them that may be perfectly compatible with, and may even lie at the root of, the West's own discovery of universalism.

Consider an episode in the rise of Renaissance culture: After the division of the Roman Empire in A.D. 395 and the fall of its western part in A.D. 476, Greek philosophy, in particular the thought of Plato and Aristotle, was forgotten in the West. It is well known that Arab and Jewish philosophers of the Middle Ages, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), Ibn Rushd (Averroes), Moshe ben Maimon (Maimonides), and Ibn Gabirol (Avicebron) kept the classical tradition alive.¹ In the thirteenth century in Anatolia the poet Yunus Emre developed a form of mystical Neoplatonism that anticipated not only elements of Renaissance humanism but also pantheistic philosophies of the nineteenth century. Emre advocated the view that

signification. Politically, the right to cultural self-expression needs to be grounded upon, rather than considered an alternative to, universally recognized citizenship rights.

UNIVERSALISM IN CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHICAL DEBATES

The term *universalism* can stand for several clusters of views.

1. It may signify the philosophical belief that there is a fundamental human nature or human essence that defines who we are as humans. Some may say, as did most philosophers of the eighteenth century, that human nature consists of stable and predictable passions and dispositions, instincts and emotions, all of which can be studied. Thomas Hobbes, David Hume, and Adam Smith, but also Claude-Adrien Helvétius and Baron Paul-Henri Diderich d'Holbach come to mind here. Others may argue that there is no fixed human nature (Rousseau), or that even if there were, it would be irrelevant to determining what is most essential about us as humans (Kant): namely, our capacity to formulate and to live by universalizable moral principles. Still others, like Jean-Paul Sartre, may repudiate empirical psychology, philosophical anthropology, and rationalist ethics, and maintain that what is universal about the human condition is that we are doomed to choose for ourselves and create meaning and value through our actions in a universe that would otherwise be devoid of both. Although most philosophical universalists are essentialists, the example of Sartre shows that they need not be. They can be existentialists, instead.
2. Universalism in contemporary philosophical debates has come to mean, most prominently, a justification strategy. Questioning whether there can be an "impartial," "objective," and "neutral" philosophical reason, hermeneuticists like Hans-Georg Gadamer, strong contextualists like Richard Rorty, postmodern skeptics like Jean-François Lyotard, and power/knowledge theorists like Michel Foucault maintain that all justificatory strategies, all pretenses to philosophical objectivity, are trapped within historical horizons and in

cultural, social, and psychological currents. In Thomas McCarthy's words, these philosophers advocate a "critique of impure reason" (1991, 43-76).

Opposed to them are universalists like Karl Otto Apel, Hilary Putnam, Jürgen Habermas, Ronald Dworkin, Thomas Nagel, Thomas Scanlon, and John Rawls (at least in his *Theory of Justice*). These justificatory universalists may not be essentialists: some may entertain very few rock-bottom beliefs about human nature and psychology. But they all share strong beliefs in the normative content of human reason—that is, in the validity of procedures of inquiry, evidence, and questioning that have been considered the cognitive legacy of Western philosophy since the Enlightenment. Impartiality, objectivity, intersubjective verification of results, arguments and data, consistency of belief, and self-reflexivity minimally define this normative content.

3. Universalism is not only a term in cognitive inquiry; equally significantly, it has a moral meaning. I would associate it with the principle that all human beings, regardless of race, gender, sexual preference, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious background, are to be considered moral equals and are therefore to be treated as equally entitled to moral respect. The hard question in philosophical ethics today is whether one can defend this moral universalism without supporting strong cognitive universalism in the senses of either 1 or 2.

4. Finally, universalism may have a legal meaning. Many who are skeptical of human nature or rationality, or of philosophical justifications, may nonetheless urge that the following norms and principles be accorded universal respect by all legal systems: all human beings are entitled to certain basic rights, including, minimally, the rights to life, liberty, security, due process before the law, and freedom of speech and association, including freedom of religion and conscience. Some would add socioeconomic rights, such as the right to work and to health care, disability, and old-age benefits; others would insist on participatory democracy, as well as cultural, rights.

Richard Rorty's defence of "postmodernist bourgeois liberalism," for example, fits this model (Rorty 1983). John Rawls's position in

The Law of Peoples (1999) is quite consistent with it, as are Jacques Derrida's many interventions against apartheid and on behalf of minorities and civil rights (see Derrida 1992). Rorty, Rawls, and Derrida all attempt to disassociate legal universalism from essentialism. They attempt to show that universalism, like justice, can be political without being metaphysical.³ Although I believe that universalism without metaphysics is possible, I question whether moral and legal universalisms can be defended without a strong commitment to the normative content of reason.

Let me consider briefly the argument that universalism, however defined, is a form of ethnocentrism. I will call this position "the relativism of frameworks," and I will take some early writings of Jean-François Lyotard and Richard Rorty as exemplifying it. Framework relativists do not defend the indefensible; they do not argue that "anything goes" in morality, in the sphere of law, in epistemology or ethics. They recognize criteria of validity for action, conduct, and inquiry in all of these fields. Yet they argue that judgments of validity are "framework relative," whether these frameworks are defined as language games, epistemological worldviews, or ethnocentric traditions. Furthermore, a preference for one framework over another cannot be established in universal, rational terms, since such terms themselves would be framework relative.

Against these views, I maintain that framework relativism fails because the very process of individuating and identifying frameworks contradicts the claims of framework relativism. Frameworks could be individuated only if there were framework-transcending criteria of evaluation, comparison and individuation. So framework relativists' strong distinction between being "within" and "outside" a framework cannot be maintained. Establishing this point alone is not sufficient to help us decide which set of framework-transcending criteria ought to be defended over others. Independent arguments would then be needed to defend such criteria in turn. This chapter develops only some epistemic argu-

ments to further strengthen the model of complex cultural dialogues advocated in the Introduction. My model of complex cultural dialogue and discursive ethics is further developed in chapters 3, 4, and 5.

THE CHALLENGE OF RELATIVISM

Contemporary philosophical arguments about relativism often proceed from insights developed in the philosophy of language. Incommensurability, incompatibility, and untranslatability claims are usually formulated with reference to linguistic systems and address the possibility of communication across them. For Jean-François Lyotard, for example, the "phrase," is the most elementary unit of analysis, which is "constituted according to a set of rules (its regimen)" (Lyotard 1988). Thus a genre of discourse, like teaching, can entail phrase regimens of knowing, interrogating, showing, ordering, and classifying. Phrase regimens and genres of discourse always exist in the plural; furthermore, and this is crucial, genres of discourse are not only plural but also "heterogeneous," that is, irreducible to a common or comprehensive discourse. This is the problem of the *différend*. A *différend* is a case of a conflict between two parties that cannot be resolved equitably for lack of a common or shared rule of judgment that would be applicable to both cases.

Lyotard's vision is that of a quasi-Nietzschean metaphysics of struggle and the will to power, extending throughout our linguistic, symbolic, cognitive, and political universe. He writes of phrase "regimens," the "civil war of language," the impossibility of "subjecting" heterogeneous phrase regimens to a common law, except by force. His vision is one of contestation, struggle, battle, the ubiquitous presence of power everywhere. "To speak," wrote Lyotard earlier, "is to fight" (1984, 10).

Yet there is also something remarkably brief, impatient, almost staccato in these formulations. The premise of the absolute heterogeneity and incommensurability of regimens and discourses is never argued for; it is simply asserted. It corresponds to what Richard Bernstein has called a "pervasive amorphous mood" (1981,

117). Incommensurability is the central epistemic premise of Lyotard's philosophy of language, and also its weakest. He nowhere distinguishes between incommensurability, heterogeneity, incompatibility, and untranslatability. He assembles under the heading of *le diffèrent* a range of meanings, extending from radical untranslatability in language to the sense of unfairness or injustice that may be experienced when the language of the victor is invoked to describe the wounds of the vanquished.⁴

The thesis of radical untranslatability of genres of discourse and phrase regimens is no more meaningful, however, than the thesis of the radical incommensurability of conceptual frameworks. If frameworks, linguistic or conceptual, are so radically incommensurable, then we would not even be able to know that much; our ability to describe a framework as a framework in the first place rests upon the possibility that we can identify and select certain features of these other frameworks as sufficiently like ours to be characterized as conceptual activities in the first place. Radical incommensurability and radical untranslatability are incoherent notions, for in order to be able to identify a pattern of thought, a language—and, we may add, a culture—as the complex meaningful human systems of action and signification that they are, we must first at least have recognized that concepts, words, rituals, and symbols in these other systems have a meaning and reference that we can select and describe in a manner intelligible to us—as being concepts at all, for example, rather than mere exclamations. If radical untranslatability were true, we could not even recognize the other set of utterances as part of a language, as, that is, a practice that is more or less rule-governed and shared in fairly predictable ways. If cultures were so radically divergent, we would not be able to isolate complex human activities, with their myths, rituals, and symbols, as meaningful and intelligible wholes and describe these as a marriage ceremony, a feast, or a prayer. As Hilary Putnam has noted: "It is a constitutive fact about human experience in a world of different cultures interacting in history while individually undergoing slower or more rapid change that we are, as a matter of universal human experience, able to do this; able to interpret one another's

beliefs, desires, and utterances so that it all makes some kind of sense" (1981, 117, emphasis in original).

If phrase regimens and genres of discourse were so radically heterogeneous, disparate, untranslatable, then indeed it would be impossible to account for one of the most common competencies of language users: that in the course of the same conversation, we can move from teaching to advertising, from informing to seducing, from judging to ironizing. As competent users of a language, we can negotiate these nuances of meaning, shifts of style, suggestions of innuendo, playfulness, or irony. But if ordinary language use and performance suggest that phrase regimens and genres of discourse are not insular and unbridgeable units, what becomes of the thesis of their absolute heterogeneity?

To be sure, there is a conceptual as well as moral danger in insisting too glibly and rapidly upon total commensurability. Experiences of incommensuration can range from total bafflement in the face of another culture's rituals and practices to more mundane and frustrating encounters with others when we simply say, "I just don't get it. What do you really mean?" Such experiences and encounters need to be seen as calls to further conversation and interaction; breakdowns in communication often generate hostility and indifference, or even aggression and violence. But at times the breakdown of communication can also have the salutary effect of extending the horizons of one's comprehension, as we try to understand others better. That is why talk of commensurability and incommensurability always involves an epistemic as well as a moral dimension. Understanding the other is not just a cognitive act; it is a moral and political deed. Theories of strong incommensurability distract us from the many subtle epistemic and moral negotiations that take place across cultures, within cultures, among individuals, and even within individuals themselves in dealing with discrepancy, ambiguity, discordancy, and conflict.

While for Jean-François Lyotard cultural relativism is but one aspect of the larger problem of the incommensurability, Richard Rorty maintains that the very terms of this debate between universalism and relativism are outmoded: "they are remnants of a vo-

cabulary which we should try to replace" (1986, 44). Rorty sees his own commitment to the values of liberalism not in some metaphysical and transcendent terms, but as a simpler preference for a certain self-description. At times he, like Lyotard, argues that narratives of our cultures do what they do without any need for further justification: "we do not need to scratch where it does not itch" (54). At other points, he acknowledges that liberal culture institutionalizes the search for reflexive justification in science, ethics, aesthetics, jurisprudence, and politics, but refuses to attribute to this fact any gain in rationality. For Rorty the attempt to question and to challenge the values and norms of one's own culture, or any other culture, in terms that transcend the self-understanding of this culture is illusory (59).

Yet unlike Lyotard, Rorty rejects radical incommensurability and untranslatability. In "Solidarity or Objectivity" he writes, "The distinction between different cultures does not differ in kind from the distinction between different theories held by members of a single culture. . . . The same Quinean arguments which dispose of the positivists' distinction between analytic and synthetic truth dispose of the anthropologists' distinction between the inter-cultural and the intracultural" (1985, 9). But the consequences of this argument are much more damaging for Rorty's own position than he acknowledges. If in effect there is no asymmetry between disputations among members of one culture and disputations among members of different cultures; if it is merely a matter of the degree and extent of divergent belief systems, then Rorty's talk about "us" versus "them," about "our ethnocentrism" versus "theirs" is misleading and self-contradictory. The lines between us and them do not necessarily correspond to the lines between members of our culture and those of another. The community with which one solidarizes is not ethnically or ethnocentrically defined; communities of solidarity may or may not be ethnically established. There is no necessary overlap between solidarity and ethnocentrism, only a contingent one.

By Rorty's own philosophical admission, all that the pragmatist should be warranted to say is that "among human beings

there are those who can be actual or potential participants with me in a community of conversation and those who are not and may never be."⁵ Yet this community of conversation has a shifting identity and no fixed boundaries. It is not coincident with an ethnos, with any homogeneous "we." Membership in this community is defined through the topic of the conversation, the task at hand, or the problem being debated. For a true pragmatist, the formation and definition of identity would follow suit upon identification of a set of shared interests, be they scientific, artistic, cultural, linguistic, economic, or national. We are all participants in different communities of conversation, as constituted by the intersecting axes of our different interests, projects, and life situations. A consistent pragmatist could say only that all inquiry, whether scientific or moral; all justification, whether in aesthetics or jurisprudence; and all demonstrations, whether in banking or in physics, are conversations that can occur only in the presence of others who share enough of our beliefs to enable us to communicate. In his continuing references to "they" versus "us," "their" versus "our" group, Rorty ignores the fact that most of us today are members of more than one community, one linguistic group, one ethnos. Millions of people the world over engage in economic, political, or artistic migrations. More than ever before, "true nations," "pure" linguistic groups, and unsullied ethnic identities are truly "imagined" communities. The latter were created through the imagination of nineteenth-century poets, novelists, historians, and, of course, statesmen and ideologues. Who are we? And what is ours?

THE PARTIAL TRUTH OF CULTURAL RELATIVISM: FROM COMMUNITIES OF CONVERSATION TO COMMUNITIES OF INTERDEPENDENCE

Even if views of radical incommensurability and untranslatability inspired by philosophies of language are untenable, many of us still feel that there is some deep truth in the cultural relativist position. The intuition that some aspects of cultural relativism are true derives from certain features of our modern world, although knowl-

edge of the variability of human cultures is as old as human culture itself.⁶ As moderns, we know much more than people of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did about the sheer variety and incongruity of human cultures, systems of belief, value hierarchies, and modes of representation. As our knowledge of other cultures and of ourselves increases, so does our sense of relativity. Paradoxically, the more we understand, the more we can forgive: in the study of human culture and society, "Tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner." That is the *hermeneutic truth of cultural relativism*.

All understanding, be it of the past, of a different culture, or of a work of art, must begin with a methodological and moral imperative to reconstruct meaning as it appears to its creators and makers. What is this strange artifact we see there in the corner in an antique store, we ask? Is it a weather vane, the spoke of a wheel, or a kitchen fixture? What was it used for and what did its makers intend? Why does the poet use this metaphor at this point? Why does Paul Celan write of "your ashen hair Shulamith," at this point, evoking at once the blond hair of Aryan women and the name of the murdered Jewish woman? Or is it not hair color but the reference to ashes and cremation that we are asked to recollect? Temporary discussions about authorial intention, "the death of the author," and the like, do not change the principle that there can be no reconstruction of meaning without interpretation, without placing the object of one's study, be this an artifact or a poem, in some other framework, from the standpoint of which it makes sense. In this process of making sense, the belief system studied meets one's own framework. These systems enter into dialogue; they challenge and dislodge each other. Hans-Georg Gadamer has used the phrase *Horizontverschmelzung*, "a melting or merging or blending into one another of horizons," to describe this process ([1960] 1975). In this sense, "all understanding is interpretation." To be sure, sometimes the hermeneutic conversation is far from civil, egalitarian, and mutually enriching: Wars, conquests, and plunders bring cultures and civilizations together as much as do *le doux commerce* and other peaceful human transactions. Some conversations are confrontations; and confrontations can be more or less violent. They may not

permit a *Verschmelzung*, a melting together and into one another. They may present us with tragic alternatives in which there are winners and losers, in which opting for one language and pattern of interpretation may require excluding the other. But they may also force us to revise our visions and paradigms. The most successful hermeneutic conversations are uncomfortable precisely because they set in motion processes of mutual challenging, questioning, and learning.⁸

This conclusion still does not permit us to answer the question: Even if every act of understanding and interpretation implies a *Horizontverschmelzung*, do we know *which* set of presuppositions, which horizon, is the most reasonable and correct? Some of the most difficult issues facing us today arise primarily from real confrontations between cultural horizons. The distinction between periphery and center has been superseded; the periphery is at the center. The condition of global interdependence has practically transformed all cross-cultural communication and exchange into a real confrontation: Bernard Williams's insight that the notion of "real confrontation" is to some extent a sociological notion is crucial.⁹ The worldwide development of means of transportation and communication along with the growth of international markets in labor, capital, and finance are multiplying and increasing the effects of local activities on a global scale. Take the case of ecological damage. The real confrontation between different cultures is producing not only a community of conversation, but also a community of interdependence. Not only what we say and think but also what we eat, burn, produce, and waste has consequences for others about whom we may know nothing, but whose lives are affected by our actions. I am not suggesting that our sociological condition provides an answer to the philosophical query of how to choose among varieties of framework-transcending criteria, which may be epistemological or evaluative, constitutional or aesthetic. All I have suggested so far is that theses of radical incommensurability are wrong. The burdens of choice and judgment between different institutions as well as traditions remain. In fact, judgments about "ex-

clusivity" and "coexistence" have a philosophical as well as a social dimension (see chaps. 4 and 5 below).

In this context, the articulation of a pluralistically enlightened ethical universalism on a global scale emerges as a possibility and as a necessity.

1. The interpretation of cultures as hermetic, sealed, internally self-consistent wholes is untenable and reflects the reductionist sociology of knowledge.
2. This view of cultures as self-consistent wholes is also refuted by philosophical arguments concerning the impossibility of radical incommensurability and untranslatability.
3. If all understanding and interpretation of the other(s) must also make sense to us from where we stand today, then the boundaries of the community of conversation extend as far as our never-ending attempts to understand, interpret, and communicate with the other(s). We have become moral contemporaries, even if not moral partners,¹⁰ caught in a net of interdependence, and our contemporaneous actions will also have unanticipated consequences. This global situation creates a new "community of interdependence."
4. If in effect the contemporary global situation is creating real confrontations between cultures, languages, and nations, and if the unintended results of such real confrontations is to impinge upon the lives of others, then we have a *pragmatic imperative* to understand each other and to enter into a cross-cultural dialogue.
5. Such a pragmatic imperative bears moral consequences. A community of interdependence becomes a moral community only if it resolves to settle those issues of common concern to all via dialogical procedures in which all are participants. This "all" refers to all of humanity, not because one has to invoke some philosophically essentialist theory of human nature, but because the condition of planetary interdependence has created a situation of worldwide reciprocal exchange, influence, and interaction.
6. All dialogue, in order to be distinguished from cajoling, propaganda, brainwashing, and strategic bargaining, presupposes normative rules. Minimally formulated, these entail that we recognize the

right to equal participation between conversation partners, whom I define provisionally as "all whose interests are actually or potentially affected by the courses of action and decisions which may ensue from such conversations." Furthermore, all participants have an equal right to suggest topics of conversation, to introduce new points of view, questions, and criticism into the conversation, and to challenge the rules of the conversation insofar as these seem to exclude the voice of some and privilege that of others. These norms can be summed up as "universal respect" and "egalitarian reciprocity" (see chap. 5).

7. In the context of cross-cultural, international, and global exchanges, but not only in such cases, these norms of universal respect and egalitarian reciprocity are counterfactual guides to action. The limits of universal respect are always tested by differences among us; egalitarian reciprocity will probably never be realized in a world community where states and peoples are at different levels of technological, economic, and military development and are subject to different social, historical, and cultural structures and constraints. What these norms of universal respect and egalitarian reciprocity articulate are guideposts for our intuitions; they are normative principles to guide our judgments and deliberations in complex human situations.

In *Situating the Self* (1992), I explained that to justify the norms of universal respect and egalitarian reciprocity involves strategies derived from different traditions of philosophical reflection on human conduct and inquiry. I agree with Karl Otto Apel and Juergen Habermas that these norms are in a minimal sense necessary for us to distinguish a consensus, rationally and freely attained among participants, from other forms of agreement that may be based on power and violence, tradition and custom, ruses of egoistic self-interest as well as moral indifference. The minimal norms of universal respect for each other as conversation partners, and the fairness and equality of procedures for reaching agreements—the sum total of which can be summarized as egalitarian reciprocity—are bound up with the pragmatics as well as se-

manics of what we understand by free and rational agreement. Clearly, the ideal of a rationally motivated consensus is central to democratic theory and practice. An analysis that showed these norms' interdependence with practices of rational agreement would produce a kind of "transcendental argument" in the weak sense. This would not be a strong transcendental argument proving the necessity and singularity of certain conditions without which some aspect of our world, conduct, and consciousness *could* not be what it is. A weak transcendental argument would demonstrate more modestly that certain conditions need to be fulfilled for us to judge those practices to be of a certain sort rather than of a different kind. For example, without showing equal respect for one's conversation partners, without an equal distribution of the rights to speak, interrogate, and propose alternatives, we would find it hard to call the agreement reached at the end of a conversation fair, rational, or free. This does not mean that these conditions do not themselves permit interpretation, disagreement, or contention, or that they are rooted in the deep structure of human consciousness. I call them "weak transcendental conditions" in the sense that they are *necessary* and *constitutive* for the moral, political, and social practices of reaching reasoned agreement. Unless such conditions are met, one cannot claim that such practices have been fulfilled.

However, the justification of these norms through a recourse to the internal logic of argumentation situations alone will not get us very far. Such recourse is important but clearly insufficient. The norm of universal respect presupposes a generalized moral attitude of equality toward other human beings. The boundaries of the community of moral discourse are open-ended; "all those whose interests are affected" are part of the moral conversation. But in the case of most human communities and cultures, we can take for granted neither that this generalized moral attitude toward human equality will be shared nor that all other human beings will be considered worthy conversation partners in settling social, moral, and political matters. I believe that a generalized attitude of moral equality spreads in human history through conversations as well as confrontations across cultures, and through

commerce as well as wars; international agreements as well as international threats contribute to its emergence. This is a sociological and historical observation. I believe in moral learning through moral transformation, and I assume that it is not the deep structure of the mind or psyche that makes us believe in universalism, but rather such historical and moral experiences. Therefore, in addition to weak transcendentalism, I would defend a historically enlightened universalism.

What happens, however, when we situate moral discourses within the horizons of specific cultures? I have assumed that a distinction between moral and cultural discourses is possible and viable. I have assumed further that moral discourses concern *all* as equal participants in a dialogue, insofar as their interests are affected. But since moral discourses are situated in cultural life-worlds, is it plausible to want to separate them? Can they be separated? What if the model of complex cultural dialogue cannot prove that other cultural traditions and life-worlds are receptive to these universalist norms? Is this an empirical question about cultural history or a philosophical question about human morality? Clearly, I do not want to conflate the two. Questions about the philosophical justification of an ethics of conversation—its range, its internal coherence—remain within the domain of normative philosophy. I am arguing that my view of a complex cultural dialogue is a better, empirically more defensible, and more correct understanding of the development of human culture and history. Philosophical theses of strong incommensurability, I want to suggest, also produce bad historiography.

There is an influential position in contemporary moral and political theory that I shall call *strong contextualism*. Displaying some affinities to Richard Rorty, Michael Walzer has advanced the strongest case for this position in his *Spheres of Justice* (1983). Walzer is not a relativist, though at times it is hard to see how he can avoid relativism. Proceeding from the central hermeneutic insight that all meaning must first be interpreted and understood from the standpoint of its producers, Walzer writes: "One characteristic above all is central to my arguments. We are (all of us) culture producing

creatures; we make and inhabit meaningful worlds. Since there is no way to rank and order these worlds with respect to their understanding of social goods, we do justice to men and women by respecting their particular creations" (314). Walzer thus takes cultural context seriously, but he collapses the distinction between moral and cultural discourses and does not seem to believe that such a distinction is viable. By contrast, I believe that cultures permit varying degrees of differentiation between *the moral*, which concerns what is right or just for all insofar as we are considered simply as human beings; *the ethical*, which concerns what is appropriate for us insofar as we are members of a specific collectivity, with its unique history and tradition; and *the evaluative*, which concerns what we individually or collectively hold to be valuable, worth striving for, and essential to human happiness. Admittedly, such differentiations are most characteristic of cultural life-worlds and worldviews under conditions of modernity. Increasingly though, the globalized world we are inhabiting compels cultural traditions that may not have generated these differentiations in the course of their own development to internalize them or to learn to coexist in a political and legal world with other cultures that operate with some form of these differentiations. Many traditional cultures, for example, still consider women's and children's rights as an aspect of their ethical life-world, of the way things are done in that particular culture. However, the international discourse on women's rights, the activism of international development and aid organizations, migration, and television programs are transforming these assumptions. The rights of women and children are now being considered in the light of a universalist moral language, which is context independent, in that it is argued that women have a right to work and support themselves, for example, or that regardless of which religion or culture these women and children belong to, child labor and prostitution are wrong (see chap. 4).

The social goods Walzer discusses, which range from attitudes toward health care to attitudes toward the family and non-citizens, are composites bundled together through strands of moral, ethical, and evaluative stances and argumentations. It does not fol-

low that if we respect human beings as culture-creating beings that we must either "rank or order" their worlds as a *whole* or disrespect them by dismissing their life-worlds altogether. We may disagree with *some* aspect of their moral, ethical, or evaluative practices without dismissing or holding in disrespect their life-worlds *altogether*. Most human encounters, with the exception of attempts by murderous regimes to annihilate the world of the other, occur in this in-between space of partial evaluations, translations, and contestations. It would be just as foolish to deny the existence of regimes of annihilation both in premodern and modern times—the Spanish Inquisition and the destruction of the Inca and Maya at the cusp of modernity; the Nazi regime and ethnic cleansing in the twentieth century—as to forget that they are the exception and not the rule in human history. Most human history unfolds in this in-between space of commerce and confrontation, battle and association.

Michael Walzer's claims are too holistic; they do not permit us to make the fine-grained differentiations we need for cross-cultural judgment and evaluation. For example, one can condemn the ancient Chinese tradition of foot binding of women while admiring Chinese calligraphy, pottery, and dedication to the value of honest work. Likewise, one can condemn the controversial rite of sati (widow burning) while praising Indian erotic traditions, Indian pluralism, and the everyday sense of the aesthetic. In others words, we need not approach cultural traditions and worlds as wholes. The method of complex cultural dialogue suggests that we focus on the interpenetration of traditions and discourses and disclose the interdependence of images of the self and the other. As Walzer argues, it indeed makes no sense "to rank and order these worlds," for the category of "these worlds" is itself a conceptual shorthand we use to distill coherence out of the multiplicity of conflicting narratives and practices, symbolizations and rituals that constitute life-worlds. The lived universe of cultures always appears in the plural. We need to be attentive to the positioning and repositioning of the other and the self, of "us" and "them," in this complex dialogue. Walzer's strong contextualism does not permit us to make the necessary analytical distinctions in evaluating cultural universes. As soon as we

produce rich, contextually informed accounts of "these worlds," we see that their understandings of social goods permit multiple and conflicting evaluations and that this hermeneutic complexity permits us to enter into some kind of dialogue with the inhabitants of these "other worlds." It is not just "us" versus "them"; there are those with whom we agree, who inhabit other cultures and worlds, but whose evaluations we find plausible and comprehensible, and still others whose ways of life as well as systems of belief will be abhorrent to us. But who are "we"? Isn't the "we" attempting this evaluation just as much a subject of cultural multiplicity, diversity, and rifts as the others whom the "we" is studying? Where exactly is the moral asymmetry here, if there is one? I think such purported moral asymmetries between insider and outsider positions are usually the consequences of bad cultural narratives following upon the heels of wrong philosophical assumptions.

JOHN LOCKE AND THE LIMITS OF COMPLEX CULTURAL DIALOGUE

I want to conclude this chapter by returning to John Locke and his *Second Treatise on Civil Government* (1690), which I discussed in chapter 1. I focus once more on the metaphor of the "state of nature" in order to unveil the discourse of the *Second Treatise* as an argument in moral philosophy and a complex intervention in the justification of a newly emergent colonizing property regime. Locke's parable about what was wrong and right about Western modernity and universalism is situated at the critical juncture between the restoration of constitutional government in England; the consolidation of the bourgeois liberal regime of representative government based upon respect for the rights of life, liberty, and property; the colonization of the Americas; and the beginnings of the African slave trade.

As is well known, Locke begins by positing that all men in the state of nature are equal and "naturally endowed" by their Maker with life, liberty, and property. The "state of nature" is a metaphor that compounds the historical with the psychological, the an-

alytic with the cultural, in a most resonant way. It refers to the condition men would be in were they not governed by common laws. In that sense, it is an analytical abstraction that answers the hypothetical question of what the human condition would be like outside the boundaries of civil government. But Locke's metaphor also contains oblique references to a distant historical past. Although it is unlikely that human beings ever existed without some form of government, Locke assures us, we have some vague historical sense of primitive forms of human organization in times past that would almost amount to a lack of civil government altogether. Locke adds an anthropological reference to "the two men on the desert island, mentioned by Garcilaso de la Vega, in his history of *Peru*; or between a Swiss and an *Indian*, in the woods of America" ([1690] 1980, 13). These peoples on faraway islands and woods, even if they are our historical contemporaries, now become part of our historical past; their culture and forms of government are thus reordered within a uniform chronological sequence. The otherness of their way of life now loses its otherness and becomes familiar, because it is seen as being like our past, the past of the Europeans.

Psychologically, the state of nature metaphor is an affirmation of individualism, autonomy, independence, and self-reliance. The male is seen as one who owes nothing to others for the rights to which he is entitled; it is not his historical community of birth and entitlement which endows him with these rights; rather, it is his "Maker" and the law of nature, which all men of sound reason and goodwill can consult in order to discover this radical message of equality and autonomy. This gesture of reasoning about the limits of legitimate government through a radical abstraction is breathtaking, yet it is not new with Locke. It was used by Stoic moral philosophers and was revived in more vivid terms by Thomas Hobbes in his *Leviathan* in 1651. Nonetheless, whereas Stoic moral philosophers used this metaphor to reason about moral dilemmas under conditions where no civil law could guide individuals, modern political philosophers revived it to project onto the beginning of human history and of human government an image of individual autonomy, equality and self-reliance. Gone were the motley ties, hi-

erarchies, and encumbrances of the feudal order under which an individual was in fact defined by the social rank and the estate into which he was born. The modern bourgeois individual faces his Maker alone, and it is this presumptive radical independence and autonomy of creatures "promiscuously born to the same God" that he must transform into civil dependence upon laws of legitimate civil government.

Locke's universalist portrait of bourgeois freedom has serious limitations. It will turn out that, after all, we are not all similarly equal, rational, and deserving in the eyes of God. "In the beginning all the World was America," writes Locke in section 49 ([1690] 1980, 29). What does he mean? "America" for Locke becomes a placeholder for "the state of nature." Thus does a logical abstraction get superimposed upon an existing place and on the inhabitants of the Americas, "the Amerindians" who now come to represent "men in the state of nature." In Locke's view, the state of nature involves first and foremost the exercise of individual judgment in the "execution of the Law of Nature," since there is no common authority to whom all have consented; it also involves exclusive individual rights over one's labor and its products: Every man has property "in the labor of his body and the work of his hands"; to this no one but himself is entitled.

In a brilliant and provocative reading of these passages, James Tully shows that Locke's seemingly innocent incorporation of the Amerindians into an evolutionary account of the history of European civil society, where they represent the stage of the state of nature, accomplishes two ends.

First, Locke defines political society in such a way that Amerindian government does not qualify as a legitimate form of political society. Rather, it is construed as a historically less developed form of European political organization located in the later stages of the "state of nature" and thus not on a par with modern European political formations. Second, Locke defines property in such a way that Amerindian customary land use is not a legitimate type of property. Rather, it is construed as individual labor-based possession and as-

simulated to an earlier stage of European development in the state of nature, and thus not an equal footing with European property. (1993, 139)

The consequences of these rhetorical moves on Locke's part, who may genuinely have believed that Amerindian forms of organization and land use were simply another version of the European, "are far-reaching. The uniqueness of Amerindian political organization is disregarded, and Amerindian forms of property ownership are denied and eventually replaced by a system of "primitive accumulation" based upon individual labor. The result is an elaborate philosophical justification of the colonization of the Americas (151).

Locke accomplishes this first and foremost through his argument on property, which for him is coeval to the development of civil society. If God gave the earth to men in common, and every man has property in the labor of his body and the work of his hands, how does an "individual" system of property, with clearly defined boundaries, emerge? At first, the extent of appropriation is set by need—every man has a right to accumulate and take of the earth's common possession as much as he can use without it spoiling or going to waste ([1690] 1980, 28). But this spoilage condition is soon upset by two factors: some are more industrious and far-sighted and frugal than others, and can thus accumulate and put to prudent use more than others who do not possess these qualities. Yet at first even this condition of "differential rationality" does not negate the stipulation that the limits of property are set by need, for Locke assumes that there will still be "enough and as good to go around for others." It is the second factor—namely, the introduction of money—that destroys this delicate balance of need and appropriation by giving individuals an item that does not spoil. In fact, money is unnatural in that it disrupts the physical link between appropriation, property, and need by introducing an abstraction named "value" into the equation. The value of money has few consequences for the satisfaction of needs; the value of money is its exchange value in procuring through buying and selling other useful objects, desired for the satisfaction of concrete human needs.

With the introduction of money, the link between the means of appropriation, which are supplied by the human body, and the title to the property appropriated completely dissolves. It is money that supplies the title to property and, in particular, to land. And since Locke mysteriously assumes that there is a morally justifiable connection between the amount of money one possesses and the virtues of rationality and thrift that create distinctions between individuals in the state of nature, the claim to the land by those who can purchase it and then augment its value by laboring upon it is also morally justified. The dispossession of the Amerindians is not only a historical fact; in Locke's hands it also becomes sanctified as a moral act.

What consequences should we draw from this reading of Locke's *Second Treatise*? One of the seminal texts of Western political thought turns out to be engaged in a complex cultural dialogue that positions and repositions the "we" and the "others" in complex, multiple, and unpredictable ways. The Amerindians become just like the Europeans; their otherness is buried in the early stages of our own past. But because we are like them, or rather *were* like them, the order of government and property that we bring upon them is not alien to them, but simply a better and higher version of what they lack. Thus colonization becomes an act of speeding up a developmental process toward consensual government and a regime of private property.

It is impossible to take seriously Locke's fantastical and oft illogical derivation of the origins of human property. In fact, the Amerindian view, which would consider property—and particularly property of the land—an entitlement insofar as one is a member of a human community, is the more correct view anthropologically, since most human cultures practiced some form of communal property in the land until the emergence of early capitalism. Furthermore, in most precapitalist economic formations, individuals were considered entitled to own property in virtue of their membership in some human community (cf. Polanyi 1971). Karl Marx appropriately called Lockean theories "the Robinsonades" of early bourgeois thought ([1857–58] 1973, 83). Yet what about

Locke's claim that civil government rests upon the consent of those considered equals in their entitlement to a set of equal rights? Can we dispense with that principle? I think not. We can criticize Locke's derivation of property rights; we can take apart the contradictions in his understanding of the law of nature; we can show the outrageous exclusions of women, propertyless servants, and other races from the ark of equality; but at the end of the day the ideal of government based upon the consensual agreement of equals prevails as a foundation for all democratic theory and practice. Thus the perspective of complex cultural dialogues enables us to evaluate the discourses of "we" and the "others" more fully, without leading to the reductionist conclusion that all philosophical validity is context specific. Locke's argument about what may be called *the appropriation theory of property* is wrong, not only because it excludes and delegitimizes the Amerindian land holding traditions, but because it posits a human person and a set of human relationships that are simply historically inaccurate. As Marx noted a long time ago, Locke projects onto the beginnings of human history a degree of individuation and individualism in social bonds, which is itself only the product of history (Marx [1857–58] 1973). But these fanciful reconstructions of the hypothetical beginnings of human history need to be untangled from Locke's philosophical argument concerning consent and political legitimacy. The validity of the latter does not stand or fall with the validity of the former. This conflation of validity and genesis is a mistake that strong contextualists as well as postmodernists frequently make.

My goal so far has been to clear up the philosophical underbrush, that is, those epistemological and methodological assumptions that have dominated philosophical debates about universalism/relativism. Contemporary debates about "multiculturalism and the politics of recognition," to use Charles Taylor's felicitous phrase (1995, 25–75), begin from the epistemological vantage point that cross-cultural dialogue and coexistence are real, unavoidable, and necessary. The confrontation between various currents of Islamic thought and the varieties of the Western tradition, to name but one case, is no longer merely a "notional confrontation," in Ber-

nard Williams's sense. It is carried out every day in a variety of forms in a myriad of countries: from debates about Koran schools in postunification Germany; to struggles about the rights of young Muslim women in the Pakistani community of Bradford, England, to refuse arranged marriages; to the desire of girls of Islamic faith to wear the scarf (*foulard*) in French public schools and to not be required to participate in coeducational physical education classes. The clash of cultures, and since September 11, 2001, the violent confrontation in the name of different civilizations, is right here in our cities, parliaments, marketplaces, and public spheres. "Complex cultural dialogue" is not only a sociological reality, but also an epistemological vantage point with methodological implications for social science and moral inquiry. What consequences does such a viewpoint have for current multiculturalism debates?

The following three chapters refocus the analysis away from epistemology and toward the politics of multiculturalism, while continuing to explore the links between them. I begin with an analysis of the much noted paradigm change in contemporary political theory from *redistribution to recognition*, and consider three contemporary theories of cultural recognition, namely, those of Charles Taylor, Will Kymlicka, and Nancy Fraser. After probing the persistence of certain problematic assumptions concerning culture in Taylor's and Kymlicka's contributions, I turn to an analysis of the interdependence of recognition and redistribution, as such policies create and reproduce *corporate group identities*.

T H R E E



FROM REDISTRIBUTION TO RECOGNITION?

The Paradigm Change of Contemporary Politics

The phrases the "struggles for recognition" and from "redistribution to recognition" are widely used in contemporary debates to mark the novelty and distinctiveness of the new politics of identity/difference (Fraser 1997b). In her book *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the "Postsocialist" Condition*, Nancy Fraser articulates the purpose behind this phraseology very well.

The "postsocialist" condition concerns a shift in the grammar of political claims-making. Claims for the recognition of group difference have become increasingly salient in the recent period, at times eclipsing claims for social equality. This phenomenon can be observed at two levels. Empirically, of course, we have seen the rise of "identity politics," the decentering of class, and, until very recently, the corresponding decline of social democracy. More deeply, however, we are witnessing an apparent shift in the political imaginary, especially in the way in which justice is imagined. . . . The result is a decoupling of cultural politics from social politics and the relative eclipse of the latter by the former. (Fraser 1997b, 2)

The phrase "the politics of recognition" was first introduced into the debate by Charles Taylor in his famous essay "Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition" (1992; see also 1994). Re-