

Why Is Multiculturalism Good?

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This article explores the moral sources that give multiculturalism the potency to move psychology to reassess itself. The power of the multicultural perspective appears to derive from its ability to show how psychology's tendency toward monocultural universalism has undermined its aims as a science of human behavior and a promoter of human welfare. The multicultural critique also draws on Euro-American moral traditions and ideals, such as individual rights, authenticity, respect, and tolerance. In spite of the importance of these ideals, multiculturalists often criticize Euro-American culture without acknowledging their debt to it. Moreover, these particularist moral sources undercut multiculturalism's universalist appeal. There is a paradoxical tendency among some advocates of multiculturalism to encourage cultural separatism and an inarticulateness in dealing with intercultural value conflict. We present some recommendations for dealing with these dilemmas from philosophical hermeneutics, including the contextualization of multiculturalism, an approach to sifting and evaluating cultural values, and an ontological account of the dialogical nature of humans.

Multiculturalism has become a very potent force in psychology in recent decades. Its influence has been institutionalized in psychology in the last 10 years. For example, the American Psychological Association (APA) has developed a set of guidelines for psychological practice with culturally diverse populations (American Psychological Association, 1990) and established the Office of Ethnic Minority Affairs, with the mission of assisting, coordinating, advocating, and implementing policies on ethnic minority issues. In addition, attention to cultural differences is not only one of the seven criteria for APA accreditation of applied training programs, it is also a guiding principle for other accreditation criteria (American Psychological Association, 1986). It is clear that multiculturalism has had a major impact on psychology and that its influence is likely to increase. Yet there has been very little critical scrutiny of this viewpoint in the psychological literature.

Multiculturalism is a social-intellectual movement that promotes the value of diversity as a core principle and insists that all cultural groups be treated with respect and as equals. It has attained considerable authority and a broad audience in psychology, often enjoying the status of a criterion of good psychological theory and practice. It is not possible to provide a comprehensive overview of the growing worldwide literature on diversity that is comprised of a variety of different voices. Instead, we limit

our attention to some of the key philosophical premises of multiculturalism in the United States and discuss some of the reasons this movement has been both compelling and problematic for psychology in the United States.

The great moral force of the multicultural argument is evident in the influence that it has gained in psychology and American society. Although far from entirely successful, psychology has been at pains to respond correctively to these criticisms. It is easy to see why multiculturalism appeals to minority and marginalized groups, but given psychology's predominantly mainstream constituency, why would the field pay attention to this kind of criticism? Psychology is often viewed as an oppressive institution, primarily in its unreflective perpetuation of the status quo and portrayal of American norms as universal (Jahoda, 1988; D. W. Sue & Sue, 1990). If that is so, why would psychology not, for the most part, seek to maintain its power through continued oppression? If organized psychology is as oppressive and racist as its multicultural critics claim, why has it so readily accepted the validity of these criticisms?

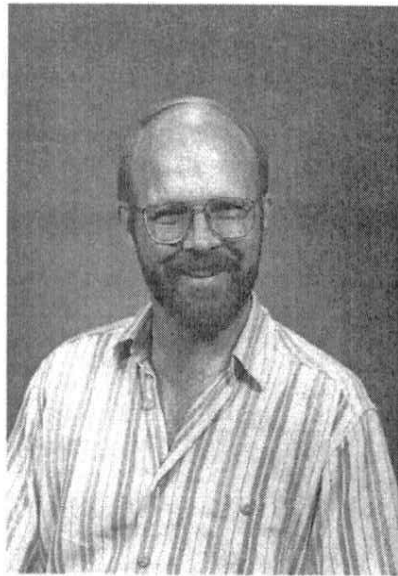
The purpose of this article is to explore the moral sources (Taylor, 1989) that give the multicultural perspective the potency to move psychology to reassess and change itself. For multiculturalism is, at its core, a moral movement that is intended to enhance the dignity, rights, and recognized worth of marginalized groups. It may be foolhardy to attempt this exploration at this time, given the tensions and pitfalls of this highly charged area. We wish to reflect on multiculturalism, first and foremost, because our collective deliberations about cultural differences constitute one of the great conversations of our time. A great deal is at stake in this dialogue, and the possibility of overcoming significant impasses in multiculturalism seems to justify the risks in pursuing this topic. In many ways, multiculturalism represents what is best in us. In other ways, it contains some of the most problematic cul-

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tural confusions of our time. We argue that the multicultural movement in psychology is inspired primarily by a moral perspective on human life that values diversity, tolerance, human rights, and authenticity. Our aim is to explore the compelling moral sources of multiculturalism, to recognize some of its crucial self-contradictions, and to outline a hermeneutic perspective that may help to address these difficulties while preserving what appears best in the multicultural perspective.

The term *moral* is usually used to refer narrowly to what is seen as proper conduct. This article explores a broader and deeper conception of the moral that centers on what is considered a good life or what makes life worth living. The *good* is defined culturally in the ideals and aspirations that delineate better and worse ways to live, what is noble and base, and what is worth striving for. The mainstream view of the good life in the United States generally includes a large measure of individual autonomy and mastery, rewarding associations with family and chosen friends, financial success, and personal happiness. Similarly, we have shared ideas about what constitutes a good family, a good society, a good psychologist, and so on. Mainstream culture in the United States is not univocal on these matters. Although there are many different viewpoints, enough is held in common to justify seeing mainstream culture as a single, if multivocal, culture. This article explores the relationship between the goods promoted in mainstream U.S. culture and in multiculturalism that call for our allegiance and move us to re-evaluate our personal and professional lives. These visions of the good prescribe certain actions over others and therein provide the foundation for our conceptions of proper action.

Culture is a key concept in multiculturalism. For the purposes of this article we define *culture* as the set of shared meanings that make social life possible. These shared meanings often take the form of assumptions that

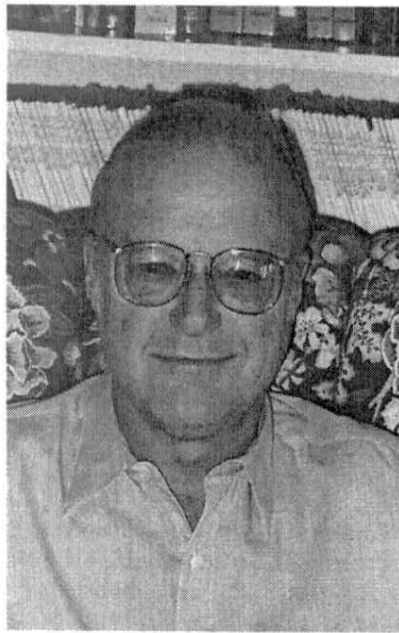
are simply taken for granted as the way reality is in a particular way of life (Triandis, 1995). These meanings and assumptions orient the members of a culture and structure their lives through exemplars, norms, and standards of behavior (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Geertz, 1973). Geertz called these sets of meanings *webs of significance* and viewed them as permeating social intercourse in a way that helps to coordinate daily life and sustain its coherence. For example, individualistic cultures assume that persons are independent entities, distinct from their groups, whereas collectivist cultures view persons as tightly bound up with and defined by their groups (Triandis, 1995).

The Rationale for a Multicultural Psychology

Multiculturalists cite four broad rationales for attending carefully to cultural differences in psychology. First, psychology claims to be a science of human behavior and to promote human welfare. As Triandis and Brislin (1984) pointed out, "definitions of psychology usually include the phrase, 'the scientific study of human behavior,'" which implies "that human behavior in all parts of the world must be investigated, not just those aspects of behavior conveniently available to investigators in highly industrialized nations" (p. 1006). Betancourt and Lopez (1993) believed that "culture has largely been ignored in mainstream psychology and . . . theories do not include cultural variables and findings or principles are thought to apply to individuals everywhere" (p. 632). Although most researchers would recognize that this universality is a questionable assumption, the inattention to cultural factors in the vast majority of studies represents a tacit statement of universality. This is true even in social psychology where the importance of norms and values is particularly obvious (Bond, 1988; Pepitone & Triandis, 1987; Triandis, 1989).

Other authors have taken the stronger position that this universalist claim amounts to a false and oppressive cultural imperialism that undermines the viability and legitimacy of other ways of life (Jahoda, 1988; Kim & Berry, 1993; D. W. Sue & Sue, 1990). They argue that the Eurocentric bias in psychology must be eliminated through cross-cultural psychological research or the study of indigenous psychologies. For this reason, multiculturalism's promotion of the values of diversity and cultural equality provides an important conceptual and moral underpinning for cross-cultural psychology. Although multicultural premises provide crucial support, the cross-cultural study of psychology is also animated by the ideals of science, such as the limited generalizability and applicability of Eurocentric psychology. The relationship between these areas is reciprocal in that cross-cultural psychology also provides significant theoretical and empirical support for multiculturalism.

Second, many authors point out that psychology's promotion of human welfare is undermined by universalist aims and a misguided attempt at color blindness, which have perpetuated racism in blinding us to the dis-



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crimination that is an everyday experience for members of minority groups (Jahoda, 1988; D. W. Sue & Sue, 1990). Moreover, the color-blind approach to reducing discrimination is flawed because it does not recognize authentic differences that are defining features of identity. Nonrecognition or misrecognition can do real harm by reflecting a demeaning or contemptible picture of oneself that traps a person or group in a distorted or dehumanized existence (Taylor, 1992).

D. W. Sue and Sue (1990) stated that they were motivated to revise their highly influential book on cross-cultural counseling and psychotherapy because of their "belief that traditional counseling theory and practice have done great harm to the culturally different. Our intent was to challenge the counseling and mental health professions to address this charge" (p. v). The book begins with a series of highly charged instances of racism and oppression of minority individuals to demonstrate that racism is alive and well in the United States. Moreover, the authors stated that the mental health field has "failed to fulfill its promises to the culturally different" because commendable principles detailing the "uniqueness of clients," "the inherent worth and dignity of all people," and "helping others attain their own self-determined goals have oftentimes been translated in such a manner as to justify support for the status quo" (p. 5). D. W. Sue and Sue emphasized that this gap between psychotherapeutic ideals and practices is crucial to understanding how to reform our profession along multicultural lines.

A third rationale is the tradition in psychology that urges the discipline to provide a critical perspective that actively fights against political oppression and economic injustice in the world, in our country, and especially in our local communities (American Psychological Association, 1990; Prilleltensky, 1989; Prilleltensky & Gonick,

1995). From this point of view, psychology must choose whether to perpetuate contemporary inequalities through blindness and inaction or use its scientific, clinical, and public policy resources to oppose them.

A fourth rationale is the promise of a cultural blossoming that is made possible by multiculturalism. The nurturance of diversity is expected to enrich all of us through understanding and interacting with the multiple sources of meaning and the vastly expanded cultural resources available in a truly multicultural society.

The Power of Multiculturalism

There are pragmatic aspects to all of these arguments for a multicultural perspective (e.g., improving psychological science and practice and enriching our society). However, the core of the multicultural program is a principled moral argument that a monocultural psychology is not simply less accurate or generalizable, but positively distortive and oppressive. Misrecognition and the failure to oppose oppression do not merely render our promotion of human welfare less effective. Rather, multiculturalists see them as moral failings that undermine the very legitimacy of psychology. Therefore, understanding the moral bases of the multicultural outlook is crucial to comprehending both its power and limitations.

The multicultural perspective is presented as morally superior to xenophobic, racist, or imperialistic outlooks on human diversity. What are the bases for this claim? The abhorrence of oppression and racism has hardly been the norm in the contemporary world or in our own past. Slaughtering, enslaving, and dealing treacherously with the alien other have been tolerated and encouraged throughout history. Laws, norms, and mores have commonly permitted or even required differential treatment for members of outgroups: Greek and barbarian, Christian and Jew, Muslim and infidel, tribal members and outsiders. For example, less than 140 years ago in the United States, culpability in the death of a slave was often seen more as financial mismanagement than crime. This has changed so thoroughly that relatively few individuals in the contemporary United States would publicly advocate overt discrimination.

Individual Equality, Rights, and Dignity

Our central claim is that multiculturalism has compelling moral force because it invokes the ideals of contemporary psychology and the moral and political traditions of Euro-American civilization. The multicultural criticisms of psychology have been telling because they show a disconcerting gap between the ideals of our discipline and the way in which psychology has dealt with human diversity. In the history of Western societies, our moral relations with the alien other have changed as our conceptions of individual rights and dignity have evolved. In premodern times, rights and privileges were based on one's membership in a particular society and one's position in that society. In the post-Enlightenment era, these rights have been reformulated as natural and inalienable to the individual. Human equality has a central place in the story

of the United States, in spite of the fact that, at its founding, equality pertained essentially to White male property holders. The increasing dominance of the view that humans have natural rights and inherent dignity brought about the inevitable universalization of these rights and the demise of slavery, colonialism, and selective suffrage. This has progressed to a general campaign to comprehensively delegitimize racist and oppressive practices.

Opposition to racism and oppression has become part of the moral framework of mainstream society in the United States. It is not simply that oppression is seen as abhorrent. Even the failure to see oppression as a moral issue is widely viewed as contemptible, indicating an appalling superficiality or the base inability to appreciate this compelling human issue. This means that the elimination of racism and oppression is not merely desirable, it is a standard against which our desires are measured. Taylor (1985, p. 15ff) termed the recognition of this kind of crucial moral issue *strong evaluation*. In the present case, the reduction of oppression has become a good that is superordinate to our choices and desires. In other words, one might experience shame or guilt if one came to see one's desires, inclinations, or actions as racist. Seeking true equality and dignity for all cultural groups has become such a standard in contemporary psychology in the evaluation of our intentions and practices.

Of course, the ideal of equality is not the only influence on political structures. It has frequently been overpowered by other forces for self-serving aims. Many multiculturalists have argued that an appreciation of power is necessary to address the oppression of minority groups and those of other nationalities. It is also clear that the prominent ideal of human equality has often been used to further political and economic agendas that are damaging to minority groups. Equality, like any ideal, can be subtly distorted and appropriated in the service of questionable ends. Despite these instances, the enduring moral power of the ideal of equality has been articulated and demonstrated in the slow and difficult expansion of basic human rights from the privileged few to include all groups and individuals in the contemporary United States, at least in principle. In spite of frequent opposition, we have come to see individual rights as universal and inalienable on the basis of this perspective on human dignity.

Multiculturalism is, in some respects, the most recent stage of this universalization. It calls on us to recognize the rights of all peoples, and it attempts to ensure the equal dignity and first-class citizenship of all. Of course, racism and oppression have not been eliminated, but racist and oppressive practices and their legitimating theories of racial superiority or tribalism have become generally unacceptable to us, at least in our public discourse.

The Unique Value of Cultures

A second moral warrant for multiculturalism extends the idea of individual uniqueness to cultural groups. In so doing, it extols the right of different groups to follow their unique path to development, free from the imposition of

other groups' norms and standards (D. W. Sue & Sue, 1990). This ideal of authenticity was influentially articulated by Herder, an 18th-century German philosopher (Taylor, 1992). He claimed that both individuals and peoples can only be truly human by being true to themselves. All peoples must be allowed to unfold toward their unique destinies, which requires resisting external pressure and other inducements to mimic and thereby become derivatives of another culture. This has been a guiding principle for the development of group identity and nationalism ever since Herder's influential writings were published, for good and ill.

Multiculturalists have gone beyond Herder's authenticity in one very important respect. Whereas Herder promoted the development of self-regulating, largely homogenous peoples, the multicultural understanding of ethnic or racial authenticity is discussed in terms of groups living and interacting in the midst of other cultural groups in multicultural societies. This is a particularly modern extension of Herder's ideal of cultural authenticity that necessarily places great importance on intercultural relations. Yet the relations between groups constitute critical fault lines in the multicultural viewpoint, as we discuss below.

The Reduction of Suffering

A third important moral foundation of the multicultural viewpoint began to emerge in the Reformation, which involved a concern for preserving life, fulfilling human needs and desires, and above all, relieving unnecessary suffering. These priorities were completely different from earlier times, in which contemplation, heroic action, or priestly celibacy were seen as incomparably higher than the mundane concerns of ordinary life. Taylor (1989) characterized this shift in the moral outlook of the West as an "affirmation of ordinary life" (p. 13). By *ordinary life*, Taylor meant the activities of production and reproduction—work, marriage, love, and family. These pursuits were previously seen as mainly necessary to support higher ways of life, but they are now understood as worthy in themselves. This affirmation of ordinary life is apparent in our current view that science—psychology included—should exist for the benefit, security, and happiness of all people. In contrast, the ancient view was that ordinary life served largely as an infrastructure to support higher intellectual, heroic, or religious pursuits.

Foucault (1977) powerfully illuminated this sensibility by contrasting a grisly, protracted execution of a parricide in 17th-century France with our deep aversion to cruel and unusual punishment. Such an execution seems to involve senseless suffering to us, but the gruesome, public acts represented, at the time, a ritual undoing of the crime that was seen as necessary for restoring the cosmic and social order. At that time, the individual's suffering was seen as a relatively inconsequential aspect of the restoration of this order.

The modern imperative to reduce suffering takes us in the United States beyond seeing racism and oppression as wrong merely because individuals and cultures deserve

respect. These considerations are compelling, but they tend toward the abstract. Modern individuals are most appalled by human suffering that is inflicted by racist and oppressive practices, particularly because it occurs on the basis of status variables such as race, ethnicity, gender, social class, or sexual orientation. The affirmation of ordinary life is crucial here, too, because we have gone beyond overthrowing the specific contrast between ordinary life and "higher" activities such as contemplation to a profound leveling and the rejection of any hierarchical ordering of forms of life. One culture cannot be viewed as higher than another in this perspective.

Multiculturalism's moral claims have force for us in the United States and for psychologists because this perspective shows how our unreflectively monocultural outlook has deeply violated these central ideals and aims. The slight phrase "for us" has great significance, however, for it is not difficult to find examples of ideologies and national or ethnic groups that would be much less troubled by charges of oppression. True believers of many stripes have no difficulty believing that their way of life is the best available and should be adopted by all. In fact, many people in the United States have this faith in the spread of democracy and capitalism. Moreover, ethnically motivated violence around the world makes it clear that the elimination of oppression and racism in favor of tolerance and mutual understanding are impotent ideals for many in today's world. This means that tolerance and mutual acceptance of differences are neither indigenous nor universal.

Tensions in Multiculturalism

Multiculturalists generally do not acknowledge their debt to the Western ethical traditions that honor human dignity and authentic being even though these ideals seem central to multicultural criteria for good psychological theory and practice. Multiculturalism strives to contextualize the individual and group with respect to culture and history, but it generally fails to be self-reflective about the contextual sources of its own ethical ideals. This lack of self-reflectivity about why multiculturalism is good results in a series of deep inconsistencies and self-undermining core beliefs. We briefly outline four of these difficulties.

The Paradoxical Acceptance of Multiculturalism in Psychology

The first inconsistency in multiculturalism is evident in the fact that it does attain a hearing within American psychology. This responsiveness is due to the liberal tradition that both mainstream psychology and multiculturalism share. Multicultural arguments have force for us in the United States because we adhere to the democratic, egalitarian, liberal principles that have also inspired this perspective. Psychology is portrayed as insensitive, oppressive, and monocultural precisely because psychologists have not sufficiently universalized our recognition of the essential differences among cultural groups in our theory, research, and practice. Psychology has, to some degree, failed to live up to its ideals, but the profession is

working to overcome this, with these critics' valuable assistance.

Those multiculturalists who criticize Western civilization without acknowledging their intellectual and moral indebtedness to it are also failing to fulfill their aspirations to respect and cherish what is valuable in all cultural groups. This is in no way a defense of the failures of American society and psychology to live up to their ideals. The point is that the multicultural perspective seldom awards the same respect and honor to Euro-American groups that it demands for other groups. A statement by D. W. Sue and Sue (1990) illustrates the pervasively negative view of majority culture taken by many multiculturalists: "racism is a basic and integral part of U.S. life and . . . all Whites are racist whether knowingly or unknowingly" (p. 113). Similarly, Corvin and Wiggins (1989) advocated an antiracism component in professional training because "White racism is not a result of cultural differences, but the consequence of White ethnocentrism" (p. 106). There is certainly some truth in these kinds of assertions, and racism is an important problem in our profession and society. It must be recognized, however, that this kind of statement is excessively one-sided, which is apparent in two ways. First, racism and ethnocentrism are virtually always taken as characteristic of Whites. More moderately, Triandis (1994) argued that racism and ethnocentrism are common features in all cultural groups and therefore must be seen as a general problem. Second, these assertions are seldom, if ever, qualified by the recognition that racism is but one strand in a very complex cultural tapestry that also contains aspirations to equality and respect for the freedom and dignity of all.

This one-sidedness is all the more striking because these ideals provide the very foundations of the multicultural outlook. This one-sidedness is further illustrated by the troubling double standard that portrays behavior that follows from majority norms and values as inherently racist and behavior that adheres to minority norms in terms of survival and maintenance of traditions. It is true that majority cultural norms have great power because of the sheer size of the majority and because of the fact that its members hold the preponderance of positions of power. Multiculturalists are correct in asserting that greater power entails greater responsibility for the effects of one's beliefs and behaviors. At the same time, majority-cultural norms ought to be evaluated on the basis of their judged merits or lack of merit, not characterized as racist or oppressive by nature. This is not to say that these or any other norms are beyond criticism, only that the majority culture deserves the same presumption of moral legitimacy as any other group.

Multiculturalism and Cultural Separatism

A second problematic area is that some strands of multiculturalism have resulted rather paradoxically in increasing the distance between ethnic groups (e.g., separate college dorms or eating areas). This separatism and self-protection arose partly in reaction to the excesses of the

melting-pot ideology of assimilation. Intercultural distance is maintained out of concerns that interaction with the majority culture will overwhelm and impede the authentic wholeness of minority groups. For this reason, the intersection of cultures is sometimes seen as an evil to be avoided in the avid protection of authenticity. Yet this isolating self-protection undermines and delegitimizes the intercultural dialogue that multiculturalists hope will enrich and enhance life for all. For how is it possible to allow one's perspective, traditions, and culture to be enriched by others' points of view if one is constantly preoccupied with defending it from real or perceived assaults?

This is reflected in a more moderate form in the study of *indigenous psychologies*, defined by Kim and Berry (1993) as "the scientific study of human behavior that is native, that is not transported from other regions, and that is designed for its people" (p. 2). This nativist viewpoint assumes and to some degree glorifies socialization into an idealized, indigenous culture. Although these and other authors (Arredondo, 1994; Wolf, 1992) recognize that life in the United States has always been multicultural, they incorporate this nativist myth in the very definition of their work. Szapocznik and Kurtines (1993) have pointed out that cultures themselves always contain diverse voices and are never monolithic, isolated entities. Yet the common emphasis on protecting the authentic nature of minority cultures seems to assume the actuality and desirability of this sort of independent, univocal existence.

To the extent that multiculturalism promotes separatism and self-protection, it loses sight of the continual dialogue between subcultures and larger cultures and the ways that this dialogue inescapably defines us. Undercutting this dialogue, even in the name of protecting minority cultures, seriously underestimates the resilience, ingenuity, and survival capacity of minority cultures. Moreover, it discounts the enormous influences that these groups have had on mainstream culture in the United States. Two obvious examples of this include the incomparable influence of African American musicians (i.e., jazz, blues, and spiritual) and the importance of Native American outlooks as inspiration and guidance for the environmental movement. The ongoing dialogue between cultural groups has already helped to make Americans who we are, even if that dialogue has been stilted and often disavowed.

Psychologists who espouse the multicultural perspective often acknowledge this cultural distance, but they rarely articulate a clear approach to addressing inevitable difficulties in intercultural contact. Cross-cultural psychotherapists, for example, commonly recognize that mental health services almost inevitably promote some changes that run contrary to the client's cultural heritage. Although S. Sue and Zane (1987) asserted that therapists gain credibility with culturally different clients by approaching them in a way consistent with the client's culture, they noted that "therapists should not simply strive to match clients. At times, the client's belief systems may be inappropriate" (p. 41). Similarly, Rogler and his col-

leagues stated that "sometimes the objective of therapy is to change culturally prescribed behavior" (Rogler, Malgady, Costantino, & Blumenthal, 1987, p. 568). In discussing the clinical psychology program in Hong Kong, Ho (1985) candidly wrote that "there is a basic contradiction between the [indigenous] traditional moralistic-authoritarian orientation and the psychological-therapeutic orientation of clinical psychology." He saw "no honest way out of this dilemma. . . . The best one can do is to ally oneself with those forces in the culture that point to directions congenial to . . . clinical psychology. In this sense, the clinical psychologist acts as an agent of sociocultural change" (p. 1214).

Unfortunately, these authors had little to say about how one should decide when to "match" their client's culture and when to see that perspective as "inappropriate." Rogler et al. (1987) said more than most in recommending that psychotherapists "must ultimately attend to the final objective of relieving the client of psychological distress and of improving his or her level of effective functioning in the society" (p. 570). They approvingly cited a program designed to improve the assertiveness of Mexican American women as an example of this aim. These women's culturally prescribed "subassertiveness" is viewed as the basis of their depression. Rogler et al. questioned what effect this strategy would have on gender roles and cultural prescriptions, but did not address more telling issues. Is assertiveness training an appropriate intervention for this culture? Is subassertiveness the unquestionable root of these women's difficulties or the only way they might be interrelated? Is assertiveness a desirable trait in all cultures? How is effective functioning to be defined?

The deeper problem, of course, is that what counts as psychological distress, improvement, and effective functioning is always defined within a cultural perspective. How are these issues to be characterized? How can psychologists have any confidence in the determination that a client's culturally informed viewpoint is problematic or inappropriate? Or is it simply a failure to understand the client and his or her culture? This clearly requires a good deal of reflection and the ability to sift and contrast different cultural points of view. Unfortunately, the advocates of multiculturalism fall curiously silent at this critical, one might say defining, juncture. We outline a more useful approach to intercultural contact below.

Respecting Cultures in the Face of Moral Conflict

A third significant difficulty in multiculturalism arises in its call to accept and respect the unique character of all cultural groups. The APA *Guidelines for Providers of Psychological Services to Ethnic, Linguistic, and Culturally Diverse Populations* (American Psychological Association, 1990) state that psychologists should "become familiar with indigenous beliefs and practices and respect them" (p. 3). Psychologists are called on to celebrate the variety of cultural groups encountered and recognize them as unique and equal contributions to humanity.

Although this outlook is laudable with respect to many cultural groups, there may be others with which familiarity may actually impede our inclination to affirm. Consider those promoting Serbian nationalism and ethnic cleansing, or the ethnic slaughter in Rwanda. Should psychology celebrate cultural groups who engage in the destruction of other groups or in what we consider abuses of basic human rights? These examples are extreme, but they make the point that there are profound differences in moral perspectives across cultures, in response to which we may feel compelled to take a considered moral stand. Following the Holocaust, it is clear, perhaps as never before, that there are occasions when tolerance and respect for the internal workings of a culture or nation are anything but virtuous. The *Guidelines* encourage us to work "within the cultural setting . . . if there is a conflict between cultural values and human rights" (p. 4), but this bland statement hardly instructs us in responding to ethnic violence or serious breaches of human rights that might involve important "indigenous beliefs and practices" (p. 4).

Multiculturalism is often seen as one of the remedies for this violence and hatred. If hostile groups could come to understand one another better and appreciate their differences, they would be less inclined to mutual slaughter. This may or may not be possible, but the recommendation that other cultures adopt our multicultural ideals does not show respect for their self-understanding. This may be the ultimate irony of multiculturalism—the imposition of our ideals of tolerance and respect on other groups who hold ethnocentric or racist views!

The vicissitudes of tolerance are not limited to ethnocentrism and intergroup hostilities. What would multiculturalism recommend in response to practices such as involuntary virginity tests in Turkey or "female circumcision" in Africa? If we as psychologists tolerate these practices in the name of the dignity we wish to accord another culture, we seem to condone the subjugation and brutalization of women. If we condemn such practices as inhumane and insist that they be stopped on the basis of supporting human dignity and basic human rights, we are clearly imposing our standards of behavior on them. This is indeed a cruel dilemma because it pits two of our deepest ethical principles against each other in a profoundly wrenching manner. Multiculturalism seems to be impaled on both horns of this dilemma, for many cultures' ideas about human rights and dignity are not even remotely similar to ours.

It is clear, however, that no culture is univocal and no cultural practices are universally followed. When we, as psychologists, see cultural practices as harmful, we may wish to ally ourselves with those in the culture who oppose the practices in question. Of course, this may not be so simple because cultural practices are often powerful expressions of cultural ideals that are very difficult to change. In addition, they may serve the interests of those who exercise power.

The power and oppression so evident in matters of culture therefore become crucial concerns. If psychologists

condemn some cultural practices as illegitimate exercises of power, are we not imposing our own standards regarding the appropriate uses of power? After all, there are many cultures, both contemporary and historical, that are pervasively oppressive from our point of view. One recent formulation defines *oppression* in terms of asymmetrical power relations between groups that involve restricted access to material resources and a psychological sense of inferiority for the oppressed group (Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1995). Hierarchically organized cultures are constituted by the asymmetric power relations and differential access to material resources that Prilleltensky and Gonick defined as oppressive. Yet members of these cultures would likely see this characterization of their society's organization as oppressive and a form of cultural imperialism, for what counts as a legitimate exercise of power differs across cultures and is not easily characterized by a single, universal definition. We return to the question of power below.

The key issue is that many of the cultural practices that we in the United States consider objectionable involve apparently unilateral exercises of power that appear oppressive to us. The difficulty is that the proposed remedies for this oppression are themselves frequently quite unilateral—they (those engaging in practices objectionable to us) should change their practices to bring them in line with our more humanitarian standards. We discuss a more bilateral approach to intercultural contact in the section on cultural dialogue.

Cultural Uniqueness and Equality as a Universal Standard

These difficulties lead to the recognition that multiculturalism is self-undermining in a fourth way, because it untenably combines an overarching relativism with specific universal ethical principles. Cultural relativism is a critical issue for multiculturalism because conflicts in core values across cultures must be dealt with in some way. There are three basic alternatives for dealing with these value differences. First, universal standards could be used to evaluate cultural practices and values. This has been rejected by most multiculturalists as a thinly veiled Eurocentrism. Second, one could use the standards of one's own culture to evaluate the norms and ideals of other cultures, but this would amount to cultural imperialism. By what right, the multiculturalist might ask, can a cultural group be evaluated by standards external to itself? Third, many multiculturalists reject the very idea of evaluating cultures because it is unnecessary and it undermines the inherent value and equality of cultures.

The equal value of all cultures is central to multiculturalism, and this equality seems to require a radical relativism in which each culture can only be understood and evaluated on its own terms. The cultural neutrality of multiculturalism seems to require the abandonment of any standards for evaluating cultural norms and values at the risk of cultural imperialism. At the same time, the multicultural outlook relies on the universal moral principles of tolerance, respect, equality, and authenticity to

justify and ensure the inviolability of cultures. Multiculturalism's relativism undermines the moral force of any universal argument, especially in light of the particularist roots of these ideals in Euro-American cultures. For how could one defend the principles of cultural equality, tolerance, and respect within a relativistic viewpoint? Whence do these universal principles arise? How can they be taken as universally valid? Clearly, it is inconsistent to promote a thorough neutrality toward all cultures as prescribed by central, cherished ideals of the Euro-American constellation of cultures.

Moreover, membership in a culture involves an ingrained commitment to its shared meanings in a way that is bone deep. One's culture is not experienced simply as one among many. Seeing one's own way of life this way would constitute an appalling moral vacuum, for where would one find the strength or courage to carry through one's obligations if they appear arbitrary and lacking in any sort of rational or moral justification? The price of seeing all cultures as equal is nothing less than the loss of the rational defense and promotion of any way of life.

Cultural relativism appears to make it possible to incorporate attributes or aspects of other cultures in a way that enhances life (Triandis, 1995). Although such an approach to cultural differences shows admirable openness, it ignores the fact that such choices are made according to some criterion. Are the characteristics adopted because they benefit the individual? This assumes an individualistic cultural standard in which freedom for self-enhancement trumps other essential convictions or obligations. If the incorporation of cultural tendencies are guided by the standards of the culture, then their adoption amounts to coopting some aspect of another culture for purposes defined by one's own way of life. For example, Japan adopted the technology of mass production in the 19th century in the service of primarily nationalistic rather than economic aims. It subsequently developed a unique form of mass production defined by Japanese values that furthered nationalistic aims. The idea of choosing to incorporate aspects of another culture assumes that embracing them will improve life according to some criterion that precedes the adoption. Therefore, the standard or good for which they are adopted is essential and not seen as optional or relative.

Finally, a culturally relativistic stance is itself corrosive to certain religious or collectivist communities in which whole-hearted commitment to that way of life is central to the self-perpetuation of the community. The Amish, Hasidic Jews, and other well-defined subgroups in our society could not tolerate the view that the identity of their "subculture" is merely another expression of human diversity—unique, but no more or less valid than any other. Their sense of deep commitment and mission would be impossible without seeing their way of life as clearly superior in a moral and spiritual sense.

A Hermeneutic Perspective

We believe that philosophical hermeneutics can help to resolve the four incoherences in multicultural thought

discussed above. The term *hermeneutics* originates in the Greek word for interpretation. Ontological hermeneutics is concerned with the conditions under which understanding is possible. It views all human action and expression as incomplete, partial, and often characterized by concealments or distortions. Interpretation is necessary for understanding action for two reasons. First, actions and expressions contain an inexhaustible number of unexpressed nuances, connotations, and purposes, the articulation of which can render the action more coherent and meaningful. Second, human action is grounded in rich sociohistorical settings that provide the context within which it is intelligible. This means that understanding action is dependent on the ability to interpret it in terms of its context. We will now outline five hermeneutic principles of interpretation that we feel can assist us in reformulating multiculturalism's claims and values.

Contextualizing Multiculturalism

First, hermeneutics offers a more meaningful understanding of the cultural and historical context of multiculturalism than this outlook provides for itself. Both the hermeneutic and multicultural perspectives view all human action as deeply shaped by the cultural and historical context and deny the availability of a "God's eye point of view" that could indicate a single optimal way of life. The multicultural critique of the majority culture's failure to live up to its own ideals is protohermeneutic. It falls short because it obscures its own historical embeddedness and does not fully recognize the valuable aspects of the majority culture that underlie its own program. From this point of view, recognizing multiculturalism's roots in North Atlantic cultural traditions does not reduce its stature in the least. Rather, it clarifies the sources of its moral strength and illuminates the meaningful historical background for its aims.

Traditions and Social Practices

Second, Taylor (1985, 1989) argued that human viewpoints such as multiculturalism are constituted by traditions and social practices that help to shape them. Taylor went on to state that human action is partly constituted by these social practices because humans are self-interpreting beings whose actions can only be understood within a shared set of meanings that gives them definition and form. For example, an action can only be characterized as "buying" in reference to the social practices of a marketplace. Similarly, "praying" involves a set of religious practices, and "voting" invokes practices in a democratic polity.

These social practices are possible only in the context of a set of shared assumptions, conceptions, and values that structure our world in particular ways. These meanings are constitutive because, without them, the practice could not exist as it is understood by the participants. Changes in the constitutive meanings of the practice would make it a different practice. For example, the social practice of dating is only intelligible in the context of particular shared conceptions of mate selection that in-

volve conventions about appropriate dating activities, which are jointly understood as useful in selecting from a pool of potential mates and are preparatory to a relatively unconstrained personal choice of mates. No amount of time spent with another person will amount to dating outside of the operation of these or similar constitutive meanings. Thus, "the meanings and norms implicit in these practices . . . cannot be conceived as a set of individual actions, but . . . are essentially modes of social relations, of mutual action" (Taylor, 1985, p. 36).

It can be seen from this discussion of traditions and social practices how the multicultural outlook is also constituted by shared assumptions, conceptions, and values such as equality, human rights, authenticity, and tolerance. One could not speak meaningfully of, say, the demand for accurate and respectful recognition of differences without invoking these or similar constitutive meanings. Similarly, multiculturalists' discussions of oppression rely on our understanding of equality, autonomy, and distributive justice. Asymmetrical power relations and the unequal access to resources are only problematic in a culture in which equality is taken to be inherently right. All of this makes it clear that multiculturalism is a creative and valuable reinterpretation of some of the most important strands of Western ethical traditions.

Paradoxically, our *thrownness* (or contingent birth) in a particular culture makes our cultural identity appear arbitrary and accidental. Yet it is experienced as compelling and as the taken-for-granted truth. This brings one face to face with the modern sense that one's way of life might be arbitrary and without real meaning or worth after all. This moral vertigo may be definitive of our age, and it threatens to undermine all convictions and commitments. It is possible that this relativism may be ultimately irrefutable, but there is no reason to simply assume that it is the final word on moral questions without exploring other possibilities.

Truth Claims

A third tenet of hermeneutics is that cultures make moral claims, not only on those in the group, but potentially on all of us. The relative vitality of these claims can be illuminated only through the careful examination of differences among cultures or through contrasting the changes in a culture over time. These kinds of contrasts can help us to recognize what is of value in various forms of life through appreciating the goods that are central to them. Of course, sifting and comparatively evaluating different cultural or historical perspectives requires a profound commitment to openness and the willingness to place one's own perspective in critical dialogue with others, as we discuss below. Yet it is possible, perhaps even likely, that the outcome of this sifting will be greater clarity about what other cultures have to say to us. Moreover, one may come to recognize some genuine gains and losses in the ways one's own way of life has changed through contact and mutual accommodation with the other cultures. Fostering openness to cultural truth claims offers

a promising alternative to untenably objectivistic and enervatingly relativistic views of cultures.

The hermeneutic claim that it is appropriate to speak, in some sense, of the validity or "truth" of cultural or moral values presupposes that some norms and practices, in particular contexts, are better or more decent than others. How to clarify such truth or validity (if at all) is one of the most perplexing questions of our day. Certainly we will not resolve it in this article. But we do feel that it is possible to move beyond objectivism and relativism (Bernstein, 1983; Richardson & Fowers, 1994) in human science inquiry. Claiming objective truth for psychological explanations in a way that transcends the flux and struggle of history no longer seems credible to many. Psychological theory and research are inseparable from matters of cultural and moral significance in the life world of theorists and researchers. In other words, social theory is ultimately a form of practice (Richardson & Christopher, 1993; Taylor, 1985) and cannot transcend the struggle for understanding of which it is but a part.

Many postmodern, social constructionist, and multicultural theorists respond to these dilemmas by insisting that all standards of rationality and value are ultimately arbitrary conventions of a particular society (Gergen, 1994; Rorty, 1987), or are merely "truth effects" or the effects of power (Foucault, 1984). But it seems impossible to formulate such extreme relativistic viewpoints without making absolutistic claims that rival the pretensions of the scientism or objectivism they wish to displace. Such pronouncements of relativism can only be made from a detached "outsider's" position that is beyond all the contingencies of historical life. This illusory detachment is belied by these theorists' commitments to moral beliefs they do not appear to regard as entirely relative or optional, including familiar modern ideals of respect for persons and intense opposition to arbitrary authority. For example, these tacit convictions form the basis for multicultural theorists to select certain features of our own and other societies for blame or praise.

In the hermeneutic view, the human situation is such that we can neither escape genuine, self-defining commitments nor attain finality or certainty about them. Perhaps modern and postmodern thought both reflect a one-sided emphasis on the escape from oppressive traditions or false absolutes. The best cure for dogmatism and domination may not be to render all cultural value systems equal in the sense of equally meaningless, but to admit one's basic convictions and then let them really be challenged by other points of view.

The Good

Fourth, on the hermeneutic view, every culture's traditions have some vision of the good life at their core that provide touchstones of meaning and direction for living. Taylor (1989) referred to them as "inescapable frameworks" (p. 3) that orient humans to what is worthy and meaningful in life. Our identities are constituted within these moral frameworks, and they form the necessary context for the intelligibility of our aims and ideals. The

spatial metaphor is important for Taylor because he argued that our relative position in this moral space allows us to orient ourselves to the good both in discerning our distance from desired aims and in recognizing what direction we must take.

The hermeneutic perspective regards the moral visions inherent in cultural traditions as legitimate claims to truth that have validity not only for those living in the tradition, but potentially for all of us. To the extent that all cultures are seen as expressions of some vision of the good life, multiculturalism, as a unique interpretation of a particular culture's traditions at a particular time, can also be legitimately projected into the world on that basis. But we as Americans do need to acknowledge that this multicultural viewpoint is, in important ways, embedded in our particular framework of meaning and may appear foreign to others.

An understanding of the centrality of the good in cultural traditions can help us to revisit the standard multicultural understanding of oppression. We noted above that oppression has been defined in terms of asymmetric power relations, which results in an unequal distribution of resources and a sense of psychological inferiority. This viewpoint tends to reify power and treat it as a constraining set of social arrangements, some form of force, or both. The hermeneutic perspective sees these power arrangements, in part, as an expression of the moral premises of a society. For example, unequal access to resources is seen as wrong in the United States (even though this ideal is imperfectly realized) because our contemporary view of the good privileges individual equality, rights, and dignity. This inequality would not be seen as wrong in a more strictly hierarchically organized society precisely because the recognition of differences in status is constitutive of that arrangement. Any distribution of resources and privilege requires a legitimating account, including one that emphasizes equal access. In other words, what counts as power or oppression varies across cultures because each culture has its own traditions and practices that constitute the social relations within it.

The moral premises that help constitute cultures take a variety of forms, including the promotion of nationalism, tribalism, economic theories (e.g., capitalism or Marxism), religion, and so forth. Power is an inherent part of the instantiation of any view of the good. It can be consistently exercised only as it is legitimized within a shared moral framework. Sustained expressions of power are always an expression of some common understanding of what is worthy in human life and are perpetuated because those understandings are widely shared.

Of course, these ideological viewpoints can be appropriated for primarily self-serving ends. They can also be shown to be inconsistent or expressive of false consciousness. Yet demonstrations of false consciousness or the narrow self-serving use of a culture's moral premises do not mean that perspectives on the good are only and always a sham. Humans simply do not have the option of standing outside of the moral frameworks that define

our lives. We can and should participate in their reinterpretation and revision as we recognize new difficulties. When power is exercised illegitimately, we are called on to question the moral sources of these dubious activities and seek to reformulate them rather than speaking of them as reified power structures.

We cannot argue for this view of power in detail here, but one further point is suggestive of its validity. In virtually all discussions of oppression there are calls for change—usually sweeping, comprehensive change. If power arrangements maintain the status quo, then what power is available to overthrow those arrangements? For example, one can argue that the success of the women's movement is largely due to the successful invocation of the core values of individual equality, rights, and dignity with respect to women. It is difficult to see overriding material force as the primary factor in the growth of equal rights for women in this country. Similarly, multiculturalism's impressive gains in psychology, education, and business (Bernstein, 1994) cannot be ascribed to exercises of force but to persuasive moral argument, even if that argument has been tumultuous, divisive, or even violent. This rough-and-tumble dialogue about the good is an essential part of every tradition's ongoing self-interpretation and is also characteristic of intercultural contact.

Cultural Dialogue

Dialogue is the fifth aspect of hermeneutics that can help reformulate multiculturalism. Americans tend to think of cultural traditions and their visions of the good as static, closed, and stultifying. This is a prejudiced view, for a tradition changes over time and is constituted from within by a welter of voices engaged in an ongoing debate about the meaning of its own core values. This is exemplified in the endless debate in the United States about the real meaning of freedom. Traditions are best seen as living conversations about what is worthy in human life that continually evolve in response to new interpretations, circumstances, and encounters. The development of multiculturalism is an example of this process. Clashes of values and perspectives between the majority culture and those from minority groups and cultures outside the United States have given rise to multiculturalism as a way to move beyond the self-satisfied superiority of Euro-American civilization. The multicultural reinterpretation of our cultural story has challenged us to reexamine and change some of our ideals and practices. Hermeneutics teaches us that individual and cultural identities are forged within this kind of unavoidable and ongoing dialogue within and between cultures.

Gadamer (1975) characterized the finitude of human understanding in terms of a *horizon*, which is the range of vision that includes "everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point" (Gadamer, 1975, p. 269). Whereas a person who has no horizon is a person who does not see far enough and therefore overvalues what is near, "A person who has a horizon knows the relative significance of everything within this horizon, as near or far, great or small" (Gadamer, 1975, p. 269). Horizons

are never fixed, but are continually being formed in our ongoing dialogue with our traditions and with other forms of life. The closed horizon is thus an abstraction because the horizon is actually something into which we continually move and that moves with us. At the same time, our particular vantage point is the only possible basis for our judgments, perspectives, and actions. Thus, the limitations of our vantage points are not just a mark of our incompleteness, but a condition for our humanity.

Gadamer (1975) characterized the genuine attempt to understand and appreciate another cultural group as a "fusion of horizons" (p. 273). The fusion of horizons goes beyond the simple effort to understand the other and requires the development of a shared language. This means that the other's truth claims must be taken seriously, as having potentially valid and important things to say. Developing a shared language means that one's cultural understanding of what life consists of and what is of worth may become but one possibility among others. Genuinely and openly engaging in this exploration of what is of value does not involve rejecting the idea of standards or ideals in a relativistic manner. Rather, this kind of encounter often leads to a transformed set of standards that was not possible prior to the dialogue (Taylor, 1992). This profound openness is necessary to develop a shared language with the other, and it requires one to hazard one's deepest beliefs in the flux of the conversation.

The term *conversation* may be somewhat misleading because it implies explicit verbal interactions. The most common way to participate in this conversation is in living one's culture. Although much intercultural interaction is verbal and interpersonal, hermeneutics uses conversation metaphorically, and it therefore includes exchanges ranging from the personal to the economic and political. For much of the contact between cultures takes place through such diverse channels as advertising, commerce, music, art, foreign policy, and so forth. Hermeneutics would indeed be naive and narrow if its emphases on dialogue and shared understanding were limited to the verbal and interpersonal. Politics of all forms are, in part, dialogue about the sorts of family, community, or nation that are worth having. The dialogical nature of politics as an interplay of meanings and convictions remains central even when those politics become volatile, divisive, or characterized by coercion.

If we as psychologists and citizens of the United States accept the idea that all ways of life are largely constituted by the goods central to their traditions, then we must take the inevitable moral clashes between cultures seriously. We cannot blithely smooth them over with protestations of tolerance and respect nor maintain the stance of a cultural connoisseur who attends to cultural differences with serene detachment and benign approval. Moreover, this pretension of neutrality tends to truncate the discussion of real dissimilarity in a naive and forced acceptance of differences that is neither illuminating nor enriching. Indeed, this is what makes the dilemma that multiculturalists face with issues such as female circumcision and forced virginity tests so wrenching. We find

our deeply held moral principles of cultural tolerance and human rights in profound conflict. If we cannot find a way to seriously and thoughtfully address the inevitable and wrenching moral clashes in cross-cultural contact, we are forced to choose between an unacceptable moral objectivism and a debilitating relativism.

Of course, some of us may feel that there are certain beliefs or practices that are so unacceptable that we are unwilling to enter a genuine dialogue with those who engage in them. In this situation, we must recognize that our own moral commitments prescribe this stance for us. We must resist the temptation to reflexively classify the alien practices as primitive, barbaric, or immoral. We may think they are. But this judgment may reflect the limits of our horizon, rather than the truth of some unassailable point of view.

Hermeneutic philosophy would encourage us to deal with these intercultural moral conflicts through attempting a fusion of horizons with the other culture. For example, we would allow our principles of human rights and gender equality to be questioned by the moral framework that includes the social practice of forced virginity tests of females in Turkey. Understanding these practices requires us to bracket our extreme repugnance toward (what we see as) the invasion of the personal space and privacy of young women for the (to us) apparent purposes of perpetuating (what we see as) a patriarchal domination of women.

Although we see something like forced virginity tests as loathsome, those who participate in this social practice do not. A fusion of horizons would involve seeking to comprehend the social and moral motivations for the practice within their framework of meaning and the ways this practice embodies their culture's vision of the good. The constitutive meanings of this social practice might include the sacredness of the body, particularly with regard to sex and procreation, the exclusive legitimacy of sexual intercourse in marriage, the family's duty to protect female children from the taint of illegitimate sexual contact, and the necessity of demonstrating that the family has fulfilled its function in preserving the child for a fully sanctioned marriage. Indeed, the refusal of a virginity test might result in social ostracism and public shame. The gender inequity inherent in the procedure would also be a meaningful part of the cultural whole because of the sacredness of the female body as the bearer of life, the responsibilities attendant on men to protect and honor this chastity, and the cosmic significance of a hierarchical order of being that places men in this protective role.

Those insights will certainly not persuade us to sanction this practice. Yet a fusion of horizons requires us to go beyond seeing the meaning in a practice that we previously interpreted as nothing more than the barbaric physical domination of women in a patriarchal culture. We must place our standpoint in dialogue with theirs. For example, we would want to impress on them the importance of gender equality and the individual's right to privacy. Our interlocutor might recognize the value in these principles, but ask us about the turmoil and con-

fusion in our culture regarding gender roles and the very definitions of masculinity and femininity. He or she might want to know how we cope with the isolating and alienating aspects of our insistence on individual rights and privacy. How do we find direction, assurance, and belonging in life when there is no taken-for-granted cosmic order in which we find our place and purposes?

We might rejoin that individuals are free to find their own meaning and that we have done a great deal to eliminate the repression of sexuality that virginity tests so clearly represent. We might, in turn, be questioned about our high rate of teenage pregnancy, our casual use of sex to sell products, and our overemphasis on sex as central to life, all of which seems to diminish social ties and repress meaningful spiritual life, from our interlocutor's perspective.

This sketch helps to highlight several points in spite of its brevity. First, exploring the framework of meanings that animate social practices that we find revolting allows us to recognize that they are a meaningful part of a more or less coherent cultural whole. We come to see that our initial interpretation of the practice is not absolute. Second, by placing our standpoint in dialogue with the others', we see the particularity of our cultural view of the good life even more clearly. We find that what we take for granted as true and right can also be interpreted differently from another point of view. Third, we cannot but reflect on our own practices and ideals as they are contrasted with those of the other culture. In this brief example, we would be called on to, at a minimum, reconsider our beliefs about sexual freedom and individual autonomy. Our fundamental point of view may or may not be changed by this dialogue, but if we have truly engaged in it, we can never look at these issues in quite the same way. Seeing intercultural contact in terms of a fusion of horizons can help us to both preserve the ideal of appreciating cultural differences and avoid the paralysis inherent in the limp, relativistic acceptance of differences that offers no basis for dialogue and calls neither group to serious reflection on their way of life.

Conclusion

We began this discussion by asking why multiculturalism is good. The multicultural vision of the good life appears to be a creative reinterpretation and universalization of parts of the liberal philosophical tradition of Western culture. The multicultural perspective increasingly informs contemporary psychological theory, research, and practice. In many ways, this change appears to offer significant insights and gains in our ability to understand and enhance human life.

We have argued that current formulations of the problem of culture in psychology are seriously flawed in ways that might subvert the multiculturalists' worthy aims for psychology. It is essential that psychology confronts these issues thoughtfully rather than rushing pell-mell to embrace multiculturalism, even in the service of important aims. We have argued that multiculturalism's promotion of tolerance and respect for authentic differences

is undermined by several crucial self-contradictions. These tensions within the multicultural perspective derive largely from its denial of its roots in Euro-American cultures. A hermeneutic reading of multiculturalism provides a way to both recognize its moral sources in Western traditions and improve the chances for intercultural understanding. We believe that contextualizing and making the multicultural vision of the good more explicit helps to illuminate its venerable historical and moral foundations clearly. Although the multicultural outlook does not represent the final truth on cultural differences, its ideals and aspirations constitute a compelling claim to truth that can be legitimately projected into the world. Although it is but one outlook among others, the ongoing dialogue about what is worthwhile in human living can clearly be enriched by multiculturalism. Yet it appears essential for multiculturalists to acknowledge that multiculturalism itself may be at variance with other cultures' views on the good (as well as some American viewpoints). It is increasingly apparent that the value and validity of psychological theories and practices depend on how they fare in genuine intercultural dialogue. The full measure of this dialogue takes us significantly beyond respectful acknowledgement of differences to a fusion of horizons in which we both learn from others and are grounded afresh in our own best values.

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