FRIENDS AND OTHER STRANGERS

STUDIES IN RELIGION, ETHICS, AND CULTURE

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2

ON MAKING A CULTURAL TURN IN RELIGIOUS ETHICS

THE PROMISE OF RELIGIOUS ETHICS

Reviewing the first twenty years of the *Journal of Religious Ethics*, Ronald M. Green credits the authors and editors for publishing work of enduring importance in philosophical, comparative, and historical ethics and for creating the preferred venue for scholars who wish to capture the attention of readers familiar with, or interested in, religion and ethics. Despite its success, he goes on to argue, the *JRE* needs to diversify its range of publications and topics of scholarly analysis. In Green's mind "the problem of parochialism and Western bias"—a problem that the inaugural editors hoped the journal would overcome—is considerable.[1] That problem "has expressed itself in the way in which *JRE*'s basic agenda, the problems that are viewed as significant and the issues that merit attention, is still predominantly shaped by the concerns of Christian ethics and theology."[2] A related problem turns on *JRE*'s theoretical and methodological narrowness. Green observes that few articles address issues in humanistic psychology or ethics and aesthetics, and even fewer draw from authors who are trained in cultural anthropology or who deploy methods of original fieldwork.[3] In his judgment the original interdisciplinary goal of the *JRE*—to stimulate discussion between religious ethicists and "normative political theorists, cultural anthropologists, developmental and humanistic psychologists, sociological theorists, and interpreters of the aesthetic"—remains unfulfilled.[4]

In this chapter I want to take up Green's bid for greater interdisciplinarity in religious ethics, focusing on developments in cultural studies,

moral psychology, and anthropology.[5] I will defend interdisciplinary work not for the sake of methodological diversity alone but on the conviction that it can open doors for religious ethicists to examine neglected features of experience and craft an ethics of ordinary life. Considerable work in religious ethics neglects the routine culture of everyday experience—customs and codes, socialization processes, ritual practices, kinship systems, criteria of expertise, folk wisdom, divisions of labor, and the contested ways in which these forces interact. Religious ethicists are lamentably uninterested in the workings of culture, and what little reference they do make tends to equate "culture" with "ideas." That fact crowds out an enormous range of meaningful human activity and puts considerable distance between religious ethicists and colleagues in the scholarly study of religion. Scholars of religion and ethics risk losing opportunities for intellectual engagement in their own departments and schools along with an appreciation for ethical genres and rhetorics that might capture the moral imagination of the lay intellectual. Perhaps if religious ethicists would critically examine the local knowledge and vernacular traditions of persons who are affected by the claims that religious communities make, they would widen the orbit of their work.

Developing an ethics of ordinary life invites scholars to consider how religious ethics might proceed "from the bottom up," drawing on cultural ethnography and social theory as resources for social and cultural criticism. This trajectory might develop on the premise, embraced by some moral particularists, that there are goods internal to a practice. On that premise social critics should develop skills of participant observation or cultural analysis so as to familiarize themselves with standards of virtuous activity in particular contexts. Assuming that contextual knowledge is necessary to make sense of others' habits, cooperative activities, and communal relationships, social critics would acquaint themselves with standards of excellence that are indigenous to particular communities and traditions.[6] Or a research trajectory might proceed on the premise, important to the task of connected criticism, that acquiring local knowledge is a condition for holding a culture to its own standards of fairness and that morality is inescapably interpretive of shared meanings.[7] Cognate accounts might hold that relatively abstract, independent moral principles can be developed for social criticism on the assumption that "abstract"

ideas are entirely compatible with attention to local goods and traditions and that abstract ideas, as opposed to "idealized" claims, are immune to recent challenges from moral particularists.[8] Yet another trajectory might assess how power assumes its own "microphysics," suffusing and sensualizing our desires, interpersonal relationships, cultural images of the body, and institutional settings.[9]

In any case, whatever research those trajectories might produce, my basic point is this: attention to cultural practices and their relationship to character and conduct can stimulate new work in religious ethics. I do not wish to gainsay the merits of studying specific religious traditions; describing, analyzing, and comparing the ethical dimensions and teachings of religious traditions; clarifying philosophical and methodological assumptions in the guild; or connecting normative principles to cases—the four trends to which James Gustafson calls attention in his overview of religious ethics, as I noted in the previous chapter. I propose that we broaden the agenda of religious ethics beyond these trends by identifying and commenting on cultural forces and institutional settings with which persons identify themselves and find meaning and moral direction.[10] Indeed, I want to show that attending to issues in cultural studies can broaden the agenda of religious ethics and deepen our appreciation of some basic tenets and assumptions in the field. Work at the intersection of religion, ethics, and culture can open up uncharted terrain and stimulate new questions about areas of ongoing interest in the guild. In keeping with a general trend since the 1980s to expand the domain of morality beyond what is characteristically envisioned in Anglo-American moral philosophy that is styled on scientific assumptions, a cultural turn suggests ways of viewing the moral life and human agency to include our dependence on friends and strangers for received sources of wisdom and patterns of self-reflection.[11] To illustrate this point, I will focus on three specific areas of academic inquiry: comparative inquiry, virtue theory, and methodological implications of post-Enlightenment philosophy.

By *culture* I mean, as I noted in my introduction, the total of the inherited beliefs, values, knowledge, and material products that habituate a people, constitute the shared bases of individual and collective identity and action, and provide the milieu in which persons relate to historical and natural events. My definition aims to include not only the ideas,

customs, habits, and values of a people but also its characteristic artifacts, buildings, visual heritages, and material designs that help to constitute its lifeworld. Culture thus constitutes a symbol system—both material and nonmaterial—that expresses values and gives life meaning. On this account culture encompasses everything from ballet to civic celebrations to soap operas to architectural design to moral and religious argument to various forms of body art. Culture ranges from works of elites to alternative or nonmainstream actors who contest and recreate dominant cultural forms.[12] Summarizing Plato's capacious view of culture, about which I will say more below, Myles Burnyeat captures part of what I am gesturing toward here:

> Forget about reading T. S. Eliot to yourself in bed. Our subject is the words and music you hear at social gatherings, large and small. Think pubs and cafes, karaoki, football matches, the last night of the proms. Think morning service at the village church, carols from King's College Cambridge, Elton John singing to the nation from Westminster Abbey. Think popular music in general and, when Plato brings in a parallel from the visual arts, forget the Tate Gallery and recall the advertisements that surround us everywhere. Above all, think about the way all this is distributed to us by television, the omnipresent medium at work in every home.[13]

This account of culture does not presuppose that it is static, geographically bounded, or an integrated whole. Cultures are dynamic, not unchanging, and they disperse themselves across barriers of state, religion, and class. Moreover, they exhibit internal diversity, argument, and conflict. "Jewish culture," to take one example, inhabits no single locale or geographical area and is characterized by considerable debate and internal diversity. To properly understand cultures, we must see them as protean, contested, and capable of migrating their materials and traditions across social, political, and economic boundaries. I will be presuming this inclusive, diasporic, and dynamic view of culture as I proceed.

To advance my proposal, I will develop my argument in four parts. In part 1, I will explore a work in cultural anthropology that poses important questions for comparative and cultural work in an age alert to "otherness,"

asymmetries of power, the end of value-neutrality in the humanities, and the formation of identity. That section charts an experimental moment in cultural anthropology that provides a challenge to and an invitation for parallel work among religious ethicists. Part 1 is thus metadisciplinary, regarding research trends and genres in the humanities that might stimulate cognate work in religious ethics. In part 2, I will deepen my argument by making a foundational case for the importance of culture as a topic of normative analysis. Part 2 will thus take up ontological and moral issues with an eye toward strengthening the case for normative work in religious and cultural studies and will render intelligible some of the questions I raise about anthropological inquiry in part 1. In part 3, I will describe works by Wayne Meeks, Margaret Trawick, and Charles Taylor that carry out a cultural turn in ways that can instruct work by religious ethicists. In part 4, I will conclude by sketching some implications of the first three parts for future work in religious ethics.

EXPERIMENTAL MOMENTS (AND THEIR LIMITS)

CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

One source that might spark a cultural turn and open up new genres in religious ethics is the work of ethnographers George E. Marcus and Michael M. J. Fischer, especially their account of the "experimental moment" that has characterized work of the social and human sciences since the 1980s. According to Marcus and Fischer, anthropologists have become increasingly open to experimental research and writing because they are dissatisfied with grand theories that aspire to provide a comprehensive account of human conduct—"a general science of Man."[14] As an alternative, humanists and social scientists have sought to orient their attention toward describing "difference" and its political implications in local contexts. The acutely felt need for difference and description, Marcus and Fischer add, makes our intellectual situation ripe for "an ethnographic moment in the human sciences."[15] The basic aim is to pursue *heterology*, salvaging voices and practices that resist the homogenizing forces of capitalism in Western culture and across the globe.[16]

Such attention to difference does not necessarily entail traveling to regions that seem culturally distant and exotic from a Western, middle-class perspective. Instead, as James Clifford observes, "ethnography is moving into areas long occupied by sociology, the novel, or avant-garde cultural critique, rediscovering otherness and difference within the cultures of the West."[17] Whether at home or abroad, ethnography identifies distinctive ways in which we fashion identity, develop customs and codes according to which social practices can be evaluated, and resist the leveling forces of consumer culture.

In this period of experimentation no definitive research program has emerged as an alternative to grand theory. As Marcus and Fischer observe, "a period of experimentation is characterized by eclecticism, the play of ideas free of authoritative paradigms, critical and reflexive views of subject matter, openness to diverse influences embracing whatever seems to work in practice, and tolerance of uncertainty about a field's direction and of incompleteness in some of its projects."[18] The result is a situation in which work in the humanities and social sciences can be creatively interdisciplinary. Hybridizing currents in intellectual life invite scholars to draw on a wide range of tools to interpret and represent social reality and to do so without worrying about whether their writing carries the prestige that accompanies work of a more theoretical bent.

In addition to its eclecticism anthropology's "experimental moment" has a critical component, for it points to lay sources of normativity that resist reigning values and institutional power. Hence the title of the book in which Marcus and Fischer survey experiments in ethnography: *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*. Seeking to show how local cultures depart from bourgeois, middle-class Western life, anthropologists have directed their aims toward social and cultural criticism. The experimental goal is not only to affirm the merits of ethnography as a research tool for those who are interested in context and local practices but also to craft a *critical ethnography* that recognizes the evaluative dimension of comparative research in the interpretive social sciences. As described (and endorsed) in *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*, that critical agenda has a twofold component: first, to relativize our "taken-for-granted concepts such as the family, power, and the beliefs that lend certainty to our everyday life," thereby "disorienting the reader and altering perception," and, second, to

locate "alternatives by unearthing . . . multiple possibilities as they exist in reality."[19] In other words critical ethnography as conceived by Marcus and Fischer is epistemological and quasi-utopian. Challenging readers' conceptual schemes and offering up alternatives to established practices and norms, it potentially demystifies and liberates.

For ethicists and social critics *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* extends an invitation and a challenge. The invitation is to move across academic boundaries with an eye toward examining a wide range of experiences in familiar and unfamiliar settings and to experiment with genres of writing and representation that depart from established approaches. In general, Marcus and Fischer describe pathbreaking social and humanistic thought as involving intellectual poaching, in which scholars steal tools, terms, categories, and methods from others' research traditions. Moreover, their work provides a rationale for comparative inquiry. Marcus and Fischer argue that comparative study should demystify settled ways of thinking and propose constructive alternatives. Whatever else one makes of their epistemological and quasi-utopian stand, it is an important one for religious ethicists to consider, especially comparative religious ethicists. Comparative religious ethics in some respects echoes the legacy of ecumenism, according to which intellectuals and religious leaders seek to generate better understandings among different faiths in a world that is increasingly interdependent and prone to misunderstanding or violence. However, an ecumenical rationale seems to export the paradigm of interreligious dialogue into an altogether different social and intellectual context, and it focuses on negotiating areas of potential divisiveness rather than on comparing basic concepts or producing finely grained comparative studies of vernacular practices and idioms. Only a few works in comparative religious ethics have developed a clear rationale or normative agenda that moves beyond the metanarratives of religious traditions.[20]

The challenge is to consider whether the epistemological and quasi-utopian aspects of critical ethnography are satisfactory. For reasons that I will develop soon, I believe that, in Marcus and Fischer's hands, they are not. Before we get to that judgment, however, we should turn our attention to recent developments in ethics. Those developments suggest why religious ethicists should accept the invitation to cross boundaries

into ethnographic and cultural inquiry as a way of exploring the ethics of difference, moral formation, and everyday life.

PERSONAL AND IMPERSONAL PERSPECTIVES IN ETHICS

Readers familiar with recent developments in religious studies and philosophy know that the trends to which Marcus and Fischer allude have parallels outside anthropology. Many ethicists are dissatisfied with the Enlightenment quest for a comprehensive theory of morality or for a science of ethics—philosophy's equivalent to "grand theory" in the social sciences. One problem is that general, idealized theorizing often requires empirical reality to stretch exceedingly far to accommodate theory's reach. Additional worries claim that impersonal, comprehensive standards are motivationally insufficient insofar as they fail to move or inspire the agents to whom they are addressed. At the same time, there is (or ought to be) a reluctance simply to rehearse the lessons of experience, as if facts were self-interpreting or personal testimony is equivalent to Truth. As an alternative to these tendencies, ethicists and social critics have turned toward normative traditions that either precede Enlightenment philosophy or seek to amend its traditions in light of questions posed by local practices and insights garnered from new developments in the humanities and the social sciences. Hence we are met with increasingly sophisticated work that explores the promise of historicism and narrative ethics, comparative ethics, virtue theory, pragmatism, casuistry and practical reasoning, hermeneutical theory, feminist social criticism, critical social theory, and the like. If the prestige of crafting grand theory has decreased in the social sciences, its luster has diminished no less in religious and moral philosophy.

One contribution to these revisionist efforts is a methodology that supplements an "ethics-near" with an "ethics-distant" orientation, building on a distinction that parallels the difference between "experience-near" and "experience-distant" concepts in the social sciences. "An experience-near concept," Clifford Geertz writes, is "one that someone—a patient, a subject, . . . an informant—might himself naturally and effortlessly use to define what he or his fellows see, feel, think, imagine, and so on, and which he would readily understand when similarly applied by others."

An experience-distant concept, in contrast, "is one that specialists of one sort or another—an analyst, an experimenter, an ethnographer, even a priest or an ideologist—employ to forward their scientific, philosophical, or practical aims."[21] Following Geertz, we can say that an ethics-near approach is one that immerses the researcher in the vernacular moral vocabularies of individuals and institutions. The goal is to attend to local idioms, moral particulars, and the challenges of moral decision making. An ethics-distant approach, in contrast, abstracts from moral particulars to craft impersonal principles as guides for individual or social criticism, policy assessment, and the like. Often the goal is to construct norms that are free of complicity in any specific account of the good life, an impartial set of requirements that privilege no single tradition or point of view. An ethics-near orientation might talk about love as a tireless passion for and attachment to persons or causes, or it might address issues of social justice by providing a fine-grained account of economic hardships felt by minorities in the American inner city.[22] An ethics-distant orientation speaks of love as equal regard for individuals qua human beings, a form of agent-commitment and neighbor-evaluation. Or it speaks of justice as the lexical ordering of basic liberty and the difference principle, the latter of which aims to justify certain inequalities among representative individuals in a society marked by economic disparities.[23]

The respective danger of each orientation is to privilege either vernacular customs, leaving the researcher "awash in immediacies," or detached, impersonal perspectives, leaving the researcher "stranded in abstractions and smothered in jargon." To correct for these problems, Geertz recommends deploying experience-near and experience-distant concepts dialectically, enabling each concept to restrain the other. As Geertz notes, intellectuals must produce "an interpretation of the way a people lives which is neither imprisoned within their mental horizons, an ethnography of witchcraft as written by a witch, nor systematically deaf to the distinctive tonalities of their existence, an ethnography of witchcraft as written by a geometer."[24] The challenge to ethicists is artfully to tack back and forth between personal and impersonal perspectives in the process of crafting arguments and judgments. Coordinated in that way, ethics-near approaches draw on ethics-distant theories to illuminate what is discovered about local knowledge. They do not invoke ethics-distant theories to

add prestige to their ethics-near approaches or to cast ethics-near data as mere instances that illustrate comprehensive, ethics-distant orientations. Ethics-distant approaches function, in part, interpretively, to ensure that our perceptions of morally relevant details are clear and perspicuous. In this view ethicists must deploy features of ethics-distant orientations to lift up and refine salient features that emerge from our attention to moral particulars. In the process our understanding of ethics-distant orientations will be illumined and enriched. The relation between ethics-near and ethics-distant orientations is an instance of the hermeneutical circle, in which the tensions between impersonal and personal perspectives remain creatively synergistic. So long as this circle envelops and is informed by local knowledge and practices, it departs from Enlightenment aspirations to construct a general, abstract science of ethics.

IS CULTURAL CRITICISM ETHNOCENTRIC?

What I have said thus far is not meant to romanticize ethnography or cultural anthropology as a research method, only to indicate how those areas might point to analogous developments in religious ethics or stimulate new genres and research trajectories in the field. For social critics interested in coordinating descriptive and normative cultural inquiry, however, difficult questions exist. How, and on what basis, can we incorporate normative ideas within what is otherwise an interpretive, descriptive account? More accurately, what is the proper place of norms or values in hybridized research? May we criticize the culture and practices of those whose world is under review? If we do so, are we insensitive to the challenges of multiculturalism?

Marcus and Fischer reply to these questions in two ways, referring to what they call epistemological and cross-cultural techniques of cultural criticism. Each technique seeks to carve out a place for critical evaluation. The first sets out to describe different cultural practices in order to demystify familiar ways of knowing. Ethnography that informs cultural criticism "is to bring the insights gained on the periphery [of the Eurocentric world] back to the center to raise havoc with our settled ways of thinking and conceptualization." The idea is to reveal how our own practices are

as culturally constructed as those of others. "Once this fundamental unity between them and us is recognized," Marcus and Fisher add, "there is a more valid basis for *then* considering substantive differences." The second technique, cross-cultural juxtaposition, attempts to defamiliarize Western readers by using "substantive facts about another culture as a probe into the specific facts about a subject at home." Weak versions of this model use materials from one culture to relativize attitudes or claims within our own; strong versions, which Marcus and Fischer encourage, carry out ethnography at home and abroad and seek to establish strong linkages between the two. In either case—as a form of epistemological demystification or cross-cultural juxtaposition—the goal is to make us conscious of difference by disrupting "common sense, doing the unexpected, placing familiar subjects in unfamiliar, or even shocking, contexts."[25]

I focus on Marcus and Fisher's work because their views enjoy a wide consensus among liberal academics who champion the merits of cross-cultural work and the importance of discovering difference. That consensus stands at considerable remove from—and offers a critique of—political currents in contemporary culture that homogenize cultural identity, encourage anti-intellectualism, and create wedge issues around matters of commitment, tradition, and difference. Yet Marcus and Fischer pull back from advocating cultural criticism to their colleagues in anthropology, exhibiting a resistance if not inarticulacy about ethics that is also widespread in the academy today. When Marcus and Fischer address the place of values in critical ethnography, they erect their own boundaries between descriptive and normative inquiry, endorsing an asymmetric understanding of the relationship between anthropology and other human sciences. "The acutely felt problem of description," they write, "makes this generally an ethnographic moment in the human sciences, for which anthropology has great potential relevance." Humanist scholars interested in alterity are encouraged to poach from anthropological methods. The relationship is, however, not reciprocal; *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* does not encourage anthropologists to borrow from disciplines that are self-consciously reflective and normative. Arguing on behalf of "engaged relativism" in which difference is "redeemed, or recovered as valid and significant, in an age of apparent homogenization," Marcus and Fischer conclude their book by noting that "the statement

and assertion of values are not the aim of ethnographic cultural critique." Rather, that aim is "the empirical exploration of the historical and cultural conditions for the articulation and implementation of different values."[26] We are left with the idea that anthropology provides resources for self-criticism but that criticizing others is ethnocentric.

Putting aside the idea that ethics reduces to "a matter of the statement and assertion of values," Marcus and Fischer's desire to bar ethnographers' migration into ethics is a function of two preconceptions, both of which are mistaken. One is their idea that normative domains rely exclusively on experience-distant concepts. Art and philosophy, they write, "thrive on a self-conscious detachment from the world to see their issues clearly. They may draw upon empirical research, but they leave the task of primary and detailed representations of social reality to other kinds of thinkers" (167). Yet as I have indicated, currents in normative discourse have sought to avoid the kind of distance and generality to which Marcus and Fischer refer. A more fulsome understanding of ethics, in other words, would suggest that something other than a unilateral relationship between descriptive and normative discourses is in order.

Their second preconception draws on the connection between relativism and cultural criticism: "In the face of undeniably global structures of political and economic power," they write, "ethnography, as the practical embodiment of relativism and interpretive anthropology, challenges all those views of reality in social thought which permaturely [*sic*] overlook or reduce cultural diversity for the sake of the capacity to generalize or to affirm universal values, usually from the still-privileged vantage point of global homogenization emanating from the West" (32–33). That is to say, cultural criticism must resist the temptation to use ethnographic descriptions as occasions for applying Western values in ways that end up only confirming Western biases. It is better to use cultural differences to demystify putative "universals" and show where they are relative to a particular time and place.

I agree that comparative work serves an invaluable demystifying function. Yet one problem with this attitude for Marcus and Fischer is that they don't say whether some forms of difference are worth redeeming more than others or whether some forms are worth redeeming at all. It is by no means obvious that all forms of cultural expression will

demystify settled habits and customs or that they ought to. Indeed, to suggest that appeals to difference somehow contribute to Western critical self-reflection begs the question: Why should they?

This question is important for cultural critics who wish to avoid a problem that *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* rightly identifies, namely, the danger of romanticizing otherness or providing what might be called "recognition on demand." Recognition on demand produces a reverse ethnocentrism, an uncritical acceptance if not valorization of other cultural practices simply because they are different. As Charles Taylor observes, concerns about recognition grow out of the putative connection between recognition and identity, the idea that "our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the *mis*recognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves."[27] Yet, as Taylor rightly adds, this concern for recognition is not without its dangers, especially the fact that, in trying to avoid misrecognition, one might abdicate the effort genuinely to understand and assess others on terms different from those they use to understand themselves. Seeking to avoid the problem of demeaning recognitions, we can be naive in accepting "an ethnography of witchcraft as written by a witch."

Marcus and Fischer seek to avoid the problem of naively valorizing otherness in their account of how cross-cultural comparison can serve critical ethnography. In their view we should engage in a kind of reflective equilibrium wherein observers and observed relativize each other's cultural norms in a dialectical interchange. Different norms and practices are assigned equal status as a condition for comparison. Romancing otherness is avoided insofar as the other's cultural practices are scrutinized by "our" standards, which are themselves relativized in light of the other's cultural norms. Putting different cultural norms and practices on an equal footing, cross-cultural juxtaposition can say that it enshrines the virtue of reciprocity.

Readers familiar with Taylor's discussion of "a fusion of horizons" in his treatment of multiculturalism will detect something similar at work in *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*. According to Taylor, in fused horizons "we have been transformed by the study of the other so that we are not simply judging by our original familiar standards." Rather, we "learn

to move in a broader horizon, within which what we have formerly taken for granted as the background to valuation can be situated as one possibility alongside of the different background of the formerly unfamiliar culture." We thereby develop "new vocabularies of comparison," leading to judgments that presuppose transformed standards of worth.[28]

Perhaps Marcus and Fischer have something like this fusion in mind in their account of cross-cultural juxtaposition. For Taylor and for Marcus and Fischer one's own canons of evaluation are revised as they are deployed to assess other cultural standards. Neither set of standards enjoys a privileged status because both are presumably syncretized into a new set of criteria. Nonetheless, if by fusing horizons we are to avoid ethnocentrism or its reverse, then it remains unclear whether Marcus and Fischer's first technique, epistemological demystification, actually succeeds, since such demystification makes no reference to reciprocal interchanges or new vocabularies of comparison. More to the point, reference to fused horizons or cross-cultural juxtaposition does not enable us to carry out a full-fledged criticism of others. This is because the main goal of *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* is to fashion a theory for using ethnography as a vehicle for self-criticism. Marcus and Fischer leave little room for finally judging certain cultural practices as unworthy of acceptance. Instead, they suggest that arriving at such judgments violates the canons of tolerance and "engaged relativism."

Equally pressing is the fact that Marcus and Fischer seem unable to avoid a more subtle problem in their account of cultural criticism. Consider again their model of cross-cultural juxtaposition. According to *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*, such juxtaposition attempts to defamiliarize Western readers by using "substantive facts about another culture as a probe into the specific facts about a subject of criticism at home."[29] On that account values and practices from different settings do not retain their original integrity in cross-cultural juxtaposition. In the strong version of cross-cultural juxtaposition, each culture's values are transformed by the other's, thereby producing a *tertium quid*. If that is true, however, the fusion is syncretistic, thereby spoiling the integrity of the "different" culture's customs and standards. While this solution is far less imperialistic than conventional forms of ethnocentrism, it hardly ensures respect for unadulterated versions of "different" beliefs. Marcus

and Fischer's technique of cross-cultural juxtaposition should not be viewed as expressing unqualified respect for another's cultural standards, for in strong versions of cross-cultural juxtaposition those standards will not retain their original identity.[30]

The most we should expect in social and cultural criticism is that we avoid denying or assigning esteem in an a priori way. Properly understood, responsible heterology means only that we should not discount a priori the value of other cultures. The idea is to be presumptively open to the merits of other cultural practices without becoming inarticulate or double-minded when wishing to express moral judgment. In that way we can rightly grant others the benefit of the doubt. Antiethnocentrists can be presumptively open to the value of other cultures without also having to transform their standards when evaluating others. Such a presumptive openness, as described by Taylor, "is a starting hypothesis." However, its validity, he rightly observes, "has to be demonstrated concretely in the actual study of the culture."[31]

Normative criticism that poaches from ethnography rightly urges humility when evaluating other cultures. This does not mean, however, abdicating a hermeneutics of suspicion. In the final analysis it leaves open the possibility of judging other practices as worthy or unworthy of approval, recognizing that other cultural practices are no less prone to rationalization than are one's own. When confronted by patriarchy, racial supremacism, religious discrimination or zealotry, ecologically doubtful customs, or other illiberal sentiments, it is not clear why liberals would want to engage in cross-cultural juxtaposition of the sort that Marcus and Fischer describe. Many of these sentiments can be found among ethnic and indigenous cultures whose values challenge the homogenizing effects of Western beliefs and practices. Engaging in cross-cultural juxtaposition may paradoxically require feminists, antiracists, religious liberals, or environmental advocates to narrow the range of values they want to defend.[32]

The issues of cross-cultural criticism, ethnocentrism, engaged relativism, and "respect on demand" are central issues for religious ethics, especially of a comparative sort that seeks to navigate a cultural turn. Religious ethicists would do well to study works such as *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* in order to learn from the invitation it provides and the challenges it raises.

CULTURE, PSYCHE, AND ETHICS

INTERNALIZATION AND EXTERNALIZATION

Lying beyond concerns about interdisciplinarity, cultural criticism, and an ethics of everyday life lurk more fundamental ideas. Here I want to consider topics in cultural theory in light of some familiar issues in religious ethics, focusing not on intellectual poaching but on morality itself. My impulse above was experimental and methodological; my concerns here are more traditional and substantive. One of my aims is to show how the relative inattention to culture ignores something fundamental about our humanity, namely, that we are culture-producing and culture-absorbing creatures. Another aim is to indicate how work in religious ethics too easily assumes that moral norms and virtues are unmediated—the result of individual work, personal experience, or the response to direct divine communication. In contrast to these assumptions, religious ethics that takes a cultural turn rests on the idea that moral thought and experience are mediated and thus dependent on cultural patterns of thought and action. I want to develop these points by focusing on the connection between culture and moral psychology and on the implications of that connection for character and conduct. Typically in religious ethics, attention to moral psychology (such as it exists) pays little attention to the synergism between psyche and culture, between self and society. A cultural turn in religious ethics might alter that inattention and deepen our understanding of some basic issues regarding moral agency, the affections, and the virtues.

In an important argument about Plato's *Republic* Jonathan Lear gives good reasons to pursue this link between psyche and culture. Lear argues that the analogy between the soul and the polis in the *Republic* has less to do with structural parallels between microcosmic and macrocosmic order than with the synergism between self-formation and cultural formation. Early in the *Republic* Plato draws an analogy between the soul and the polis in order to show what the larger picture—the polis—teaches us about the structure of the soul. "We think of justice as a quality that may exist in a whole community as well as in an individual, and the community

is the bigger of the two," Plato writes. "Possibly, then, we may find justice there in larger proportions, easier to make out."[33] Justice in the city-state can tell us a lot about justice in the individual—most importantly, about how to order parts in relation to the whole. Lear shows, however, that Plato's putative rationale is deceiving, for it suggests a firewall between the soul and the city-state. According to Lear, Plato's more important aim is to track the movement—the creative and destructive exchanges—between psyche and polis. That is to say, Plato provides "a dynamic account of the psychological transactions between inside and outside a person's psyche, between a person's inner life and his cultural environment, between *intra*psychic and *inter*psychic relations."[34]

Key to these transactions are two processes, what Lear calls internalization and externalization. *Internalization* refers to the process by which young people appropriate the values passed along by parental and other authorities, pedagogical practices, and cultural processes. In Plato's account, Lear observes, "the young human psyche is like a resin, able to receive the impress of cultural influences before it sets into a definite shape."[35] We internalize much from our local worlds before we fully understand what we have received. Hence the crucial importance of education and imitation for the Greeks.

Externalization refers to the process by which a person fashions something in the cultural world according to the drives and interests of his or her psyche. For Plato the key cultural construct is the political community. Such communities have a character that is built up from the predominant characters of their citizens. Remarks Lear: "For Plato, the polis is formed by a process of externalization of structures within the psyches of those who shape it. And, more generally, externalization is a basic psychological activity. For Plato suggests that cultural products in general are externalizations."[36]

Lear notes that in Plato's idea of the polis these two processes operate in relation to different generations. "After we internalize our cultural roles by a process of education, we externalize them in our social roles. . . . Internalization is going on primarily in uninformed youths; externalization is going on primarily in adults who have already formed themselves through prior cultural internalizations."[37] But that generational point should not obscure a more basic one: the traffic between inner states and

outer roles blurs the boundary between self and society and, contrary to the idea that the ideal polis is static, shows that psyche and culture are inherently isomorphic.

ETHICS AND THE EMOTIONS

Following Lear, religious ethicists have two reasons for thinking normatively about culture, each of which tracks the implications of internalization and externalization—what might be called the ethics of psyche, culture, and their transactions.

Consider the psyche side of this synergism first. The fact of internalization highlights the dynamics of moral formation and the social construction of the emotions. That is to say, Plato gives us good reasons to believe that our dispositions do not arise sui generis but as a result of psychic struggles with cultural authorities. On this account emotions are cognitive, rule-governed interpretations of moral experience. That idea may seem counterintuitive, given the prevailing notion—often attributed to Plato—that emotions are sensations that resemble itches, throbs, or twitches. In a noncognitive account, emotions are drives that are generated by outside stimuli and, without the coercive control of reason, are at the mercy of external, contingent forces. The emotions are often seen to oppose rationality and expose our deepest vulnerabilities. For that reason they have been deemed inferior wellsprings of agency, the source of incontinence and poor judgment. Viewed in that way, emotions are a kind of raw energy—unprincipled, tyrannical, and teeming with power. Lear reminds us that for Plato this account of the emotions pertains largely to those whose dispositions develop in nonideal contexts—in cities ruled in oligarchical, democratic, or tyrannical ways. In a well-ordered society the appetites can be ruled by reason and integrated into the experience of *eudaimonia.*

Plato's notion of the unruliness of emotions seems to view them negatively, for which Aristotle sought to provide a corrective in his account of human flourishing.[38] But both of these philosophers understood that a noncognitive account of the emotions does little to capture our subjective experience or explain why emotions differ across cultures. If we consider such facts, we can see that viewing emotions as itches and throbs

is deceiving. Consider, Taylor argues, the experience of shame.[39] Shame is the feeling that there is something about myself that I should conceal. It derives from a sense of being undignified for having certain qualities. Such emotions cannot occur outside of a horizon of expectations, a moral world in which our conduct is indexed against a hierarchy of values and social norms. Shame flows from a sense of unworthiness, but that sense cannot occur without having standards for distinguishing between honorable and dishonorable qualities. In this way emotions are rule-governed and depend on a wider system of shared meanings. They are expressions of agency shaped by standards of worth, what Taylor calls norms of "strong evaluation."[40] Such norms articulate goods toward which persons order their commitments and from which they derive their bases of self-interpretation.

Viewing emotions as cognitive activities enables us to understand them as intentional. We feel fear *of* danger, grief *over* a loss, hope *for* a happy outcome, umbrage *about* being wrongfully accused. Emotions have an object toward which they are aimed and from which they gain intelligibility. As rule-governed and purposeful, emotions flow from a commitment to a good, and on that basis they express an evaluation of states of affairs. "Experiencing an emotion," Taylor remarks, "involves experiencing our situation as being of a certain kind or having a certain property."[41] That is why emotions should be understood as cognitive. They reflect one's affective awareness of a situation and its bearing on oneself and the world.

If this account of emotions is correct, then we should understand them as moral *and* cultural. They represent how we have come to understand human conduct as measured against a background of standards. We feel in a certain way after having internalized a system of values and ways of seeing. The emotions are "a kind of cultural artifact," as Paul Lauritzen observes.[42] They are structured by codes and expectations that enshrine a culture's account of the good. Grief over a broken friendship is not, on the cognitive account, a crushing flow of indeterminate affection or a release of sadness from an oceanic well of feeling. Rather, such grief derives from esteeming the worth of that friend—from recognizing the value that I placed on her and the profound affection that such esteem evoked. A "sense of loss" could not occur without a prior judgment about the great goods that such friendship brought into one's life.

A cognitive and interpretive account of the emotions suggests a point about their development: they are learned. Consider Plato's view of courage. That virtue, he writes, is "the conviction, inculcated by lawfully established education, about the sort of things that may rightly be feared."[43] One might say, echoing Aquinas's account of the natural virtues, that emotions are "acquired." As culturally mediated, they are transmitted by those who powerfully articulate a society's standards of value. Emotions are learned through interchanges with family members, friends, religious and civic teachers, and cultural authorities. In acquiring a sense of a culture's norms, we gain a sense of how to respond to life's contingencies.

This account of internalization is paradoxically an endorsement of and an embarrassment to much contemporary religious ethics, especially virtue ethics. It is an endorsement in that it focuses our attention on basic commitments and objects of loyalty—what might be called the religious dimension of human affect and identity when such commitments have the sacred as entitled to certain attitudes and behaviors. Such topics are central to religious ethics and provide a research agenda in which philosophers are generally not interested. This account of the emotions is an endorsement of virtue ethics, moreover, in that it points to the moral importance of human dispositions and how we might distinguish between proper and improper ways of feeling.

It is an embarrassment to much contemporary religious ethics because often what goes by virtue theory pays little attention to the wider cultural forces that contribute to the formation of our dispositions.[44] Like the emotions, culture is often seen in noncognitive terms—as neutral if not recalcitrant to reason—a source of contingency, aesthetic arationality, or psychic irrationality that produces goods for privatized consumption. And virtues are thus discussed as if they are self-originating, a property of an individual's "emotional work," voluntary and unmediated. A tacit works-righteousness pervades virtue ethics that ignores the synergism between psyche and culture. The entire thrust of Plato, Lear, Taylor, and Lauritzen is to blur the boundary between self and society, inner states and outer states, psyche and culture, moral and political psychology—viewing both items in each pair as cognitive and intentional.

CULTURE AND MEANING

So much, then, for internalization and some of its implications for an ethics of the emotions in virtue theory. Consider the culture side of this dynamic—what might be called the ethics of externalization. Given what I have already said, this "side" should not be sharply distinguished from the first. The fact that culture is the product of externalization means that cultures—or cultural products—are the result of human creativity. A culture is not morally neutral but a function of human interests and desires.

Yet tracking this side of a cultural turn seems unwieldy if not impossible. Given the ubiquity and amorphousness of culture—the fact that, as an environment, culture surrounds us—it is difficult to identify which of its properties to isolate and evaluate. Culture seems everywhere and thus nowhere in particular. That said, given the affinity between religion and culture, religious ethicists seem uniquely poised to make some headway into cultural interpretation and criticism. Following Geertz, we can say that both religion and culture are symbol systems, expressing and shaping the "world's climate."[45] When cultures develop rites, holy days, codes, images, lore, leaders, icons, scents, music, heroes, and saints, they do so to imbue everyday existence with a sense of importance. Symbols express patterned ways of disposing people toward each other and the world by passing along claims about how experience, especially suffering, is ultimately to be interpreted. Such patterned ways of seeing and feeling contribute to a group's sense of "at-homeness," providing ways for their members to connect with themselves, others, and the natural world. Like religion, cultures provide signs, artifacts, customs, and practices that attempt to give life meaning. And as a system of symbols, cultures seem ripe for analysis by scholars of religion. There are energetic, interpretive, and creative dimensions to existence that explain the proliferation of cultural products. Indeed, given the affinity between culture and religion, it seems odd that few scholars in religious ethics have sought to address the wide gamut of materials that cultures provide for analysis—film and electronic media, drama, civic rituals, art, music, athletic culture, and literature.[46]

Seen as a function of human interests and desires, culture is an embodied rhetoric, a diffuse but ubiquitous web of influences, relationships, and social practices that cultivate a way of being. No less than the emotions, cultures are intentional acts, or the product of intentional acts, that help to form intentional acts among their members. They express the creative and destructive results of intrapsychic struggles in the synergism between psyche and culture. And, as creative and destructive, cultural products cry out for normative analysis, for they provide the repertoire of materials out of which a people habituates itself. Cultures parade appearances of the right and good before us, thereby demanding reflection and evaluation. From Plato's perspective this link between rhetoric and culture requires intellectuals to perform cultural criticism. Without such criticism we would be ill-equipped when trying to distinguish between deceptive and reliable visions of the good life.

Moving religious ethics more directly into cultural criticism means evaluating symbolic forms and what Taylor calls "the social imaginary" to designate how societies attempt to create meaning and memory.[47] This move suggests a broader agenda for religious ethics, one that moves beyond the materials provided by ostensive religious traditions (for example, Christianity or Hinduism) to include the discursive mix of symbols, images, idioms, and values according to which identity and meaning are fashioned in public culture. The idea is to give up the notion that people draw only on traditional religious materials to formulate their account of what is meaningful, right, and good. Viewing religious ethics as a form of cultural criticism thus means tracking individuals' or groups' diverse idioms and practices in their search for meaning and, on that basis, thinking about how traditional religious materials factor into that search. Such a procedure differs considerably from the assumption that religious ethicists should comment on traditional religious texts or elite commentary on the premise that those materials suffice to provide the final vocabularies of religion viewed as a kind of practice. Too much syncretism and inventiveness characterizes the quest for meaning for scholars to assume that only ostensive religious traditions and metanarratives speak to everyday practitioners. At the very least, a "cultural turn" ought to spark reflection about what the concept of *religion* comprises in the work of religious ethics today.

ILLUSTRATIVE WORKS

Intellectual work at the intersections of religious studies, cultural studies, and moral analysis is not entirely absent in religious ethics, although the publications I have in mind operate at the margins of the field. Here I want to discuss three works that reflect hybridizing currents in the humanities, works that examine everyday life, cultural processes, and social institutions and that heed the traffic between internalizing and externalizing forces.

The first, Wayne Meeks's *The Moral World of the First Christians*, probes the moral teachings of first- and second-century Christianity by focusing not on an "ethics of Jesus" or ensemble of New Testament imperatives but on the symbolic and social universe in which early Christian teaching made sense. Meeks explores the intellectual and cultural traditions that early Christians received and reworked as their religion expanded from Palestinian villages to Greco-Roman cities. His analysis proceeds not from the top down, as if morality were chiefly a set of moral rules and arguments, but "from the bottom up," drawing on ideas and methods shared by anthropologists and philosophers. Echoing Plato and Lear, moreover, Meeks attends to "the essential dialectic between community and self." Because the early Christians were converts from one set of cultural and communal values to another, a history of early Christian morality must concentrate on how those converts discovered a new identity and built new "communities of character."[48]

This "bottom up" approach conceives of religion as a framework of meaning, moral formation, and communal edification. Drawing on Geertz's essay "Ethos, World View, and the Analysis of Sacred Symbols," Meeks examines the taken-for-granted patterns of seeing and feeling, the habits by which early Christians disposed themselves to each other and the world. Hence attention to ethos, as defined by Geertz: "the tone, character, and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood; it is the underlying attitude toward themselves and their world that life reflects." For Geertz religion is less a set of authoritative propositions than a set of symbols "dramatized in rituals or related in myths, . . . felt somehow to sum up, for those for whom they are resonant, what is known

about the way the world is, the quality of the emotional life it supports, and the way one ought to behave while in it."[49]

Viewing early Christianity in light of its symbolic and social universe, Meeks situates his material within a set of concentric circles. The outer perimeter was etched by "the Greek-varnished culture of the eastern Mediterranean, transformed by the power and order of Rome." Within that orbit "the Jewish communities of homeland and Diaspora were a special case. Within the manifold adaptations of Judaism to that larger world, the small circle of Jesus's followers appeared, spread, and became multiform itself."[50] Early Christians thus found themselves positioned within complex strata of influences, customs, and worldviews. From the great traditions of Greece and Rome—the teachings of the Stoics, Epicureans, Platonists, Cynics—early Christians received beliefs about moral formation, wisdom and foolishness, nature's norms, and the moral quality of the emotions. From the great traditions of Israel—Ben Sira, Plutarch, Plotinus, the Essenes—early Christians inherited beliefs about covenantal obedience, sectarian perfection, worldly wisdom, the importance of law, and the authority of scripture. In the preaching, initiation rituals, and institutionalizing of the early Jesus movement, all of these beliefs gained different emphases and direction, depending on the challenges that Christians encountered in specific locations.

At its inception Christianity surfaced as "a deviant movement within a cohesive culture."[51] Early Christians began as a sect within the dominant Jewish culture of Palestine and, like the Essenes at Qumran, were one of a number of eschatological renewal movements that sprang up in Israel under Syrian and Roman rule. The morals that emerged from this apocalyptic sect emphasized separation from the world and concentrated on "the internal cohesion and harmony of the sect itself and with the correlative value of maintaining its boundaries sharply against the rest of the world."[52]

Early Christian morality changed considerably as it migrated from rural to urban settings, and Meeks charts such alterations in social scientific terms. In Palestinian villages early Christians set out to produce a sectarian ethos that emphasized separating from the world and embarking on itinerant, charismatic teaching. In this context ascetic ideals emerged not as marking a path to salvation but as a means of

carrying out an evangelical mission. As Christianity moved to cities, Meeks observes, unexpected challenges occurred. New institutional contexts—the synagogue, household, cult, school, church—presumed not the initial encounters between early preachers and a rural culture but the task of maintaining and correcting the faith of early Christian groups in the Greco-Roman polis.

Focusing on ethos, worldview, and morality in this way enables Meeks to spot connections between social context and literary style. He thus highlights diverse rhetorical strategies and genres that early Christians used when addressing different audiences as their religion spread across the eastern Mediterranean.[53] In 1 Thessalonians, for example, we find admonitions from Paul that aim to deepen Christians' view of holiness and their sense of solidarity within a common fellowship; few controversies seem to have vexed the early church in Thessalonica. In 1 Corinthians, in contrast, we see Paul try to resolve moral debates that emerged as the church in Corinth became increasingly institutionalized. The author of the Gospel of Matthew draws on the genre of narrative as opposed to the rhetoric of admonition or quandary resolution to develop what Meeks describes as a sectarian, relational, perfectionist ethic. A quite different genre and set of themes are found in Apocalypse, which seeks to challenge common sense as a guide for life. The *Didache*, a second-century handbook for catechumens, sharpens the distinction between two ways of life to frame rules for church order. The writing of Irenaeus near the end of the second century draws on the Bible to develop a theology of salvation history and symbol system that emphasizes salvific union with God and participation in a great struggle between God and Satan. The effect of Meeks's study is to expand what counts as morally relevant literature in early Christianity, paying special attention to the poetics of Christian moral formation and institutionalization.

In its use of cultural and anthropological tools to show how early Christian morality was mediated through received symbols, patterns of thought, and different social contexts, *The Moral World of the First Christians* is a paradigm of interdisciplinary work. Meeks's turn to culture enables him to capture the aesthetic and affective dimensions of early Christian symbolic systems, the individual and corporate character to which they gave rise, and the rhetorics and genres in which they found

expression. Along the way he spotlights the internal diversity and "otherness" of a tradition that, for many religious ethicists, is considered seamless and familiar. Part of that strangeness turns on the fact that early Christians were scarcely interested in careful and elaborate explications of moral values as these might contribute to public philosophy. Instead, their worries were rather pedestrian, focusing on practical questions that arose in the ordinary lives of early converts and communities. Early Christians were trying to resolve questions about whether to eat meat, pay taxes, give alms to itinerant preachers, require circumcision, listen to speakers-in-tongues, and the like. One effect of *The Moral World of the First Christians* is to expose an enormous difference between first- and second-century Christian moral teaching and Christian ethics as it is widely practiced today.

A second work, Margaret Trawick's *Notes on Love in a Tamil Family*, is an ethnographic study of the emotions and family relationships in the Hindu culture of South India. Drawing on fieldwork conducted in 1975, 1976, 1980, and 1984, Trawick examines various meanings and uses of *apnu* (love) in an extended family in a village in Tamil Nadu state near Madras (now called Chennai). She enters the village as a student of S. R. Themozhiyar, from whom she sought to study the epic poem *Tirukkovaiyar*, and eventually moves into his household with her husband and son. Out of that immersion she provides a detailed account of how adults interacted with each other, their children, and their servants in a cramped household of twenty-two people.

For religious ethicists one value of Trawick's work lies in her ability to track love's many expressions in a village economy and elaborate kinship system. *Notes on Love* shows how *apnu* blurs the boundaries of role relations that are especially charged in Tamil culture: husband and wife, brother and sister, mother and daughter, and father and son. Complicating all of these relationships is the practice of cross-cousin marriage,[54] the widespread practice of adoption and exchange of children among family members, reversed gender roles, and the extremely strong bonds that develop between brothers and sisters early in their lives. The overall picture stands in stark contrast to Western ideals of the nuclear family and bourgeois "family values."

Trawick characterizes *apnu* as multilayered and fluid, involving hiddenness, harshness, dirtiness, humility, poverty, servitude, and blinding intoxication. Attending to these personal and interpersonal affections, she avoids sentimentalizing or essentializing love and looks instead at how *apnu* finds expression—often by way of conflict—in kinship relations. Trawick thus shows how desire is both internalized and externalized as it suffuses intergenerational ties. Arguing against the idea that kinship functions in the interests of solidarity, longings for which can be fulfilled, she claims that the institution of cross-cousin marriage is premised on "the fact that it creates longings that can *never* be fulfilled" (152). Kinship is more than a set of patterned relationships, an impersonal structure; it also draws from and imparts a set of yearnings, providing a powerful emotional dynamic in Tamil families.

Notes on Love provides a detailed account of the everyday practices of love—discussing, among other things, the meaning of doing another person's chores, the power that accrues to those who feed others, and the agonizing power-dynamics of offer-and-refusal in overtures between spouses. *Apnu* is intense, fluid, and connected to the most elementary needs and wants. Its ambiguity defines its core because none of *apnu*'s features is straightforwardly felt or practiced as an ideological norm. Instead, Trawick finds, love is routinely complicated by change and paradox. *Apnu* is thus open-ended, generating changing expectations, rivalries, and responses among lovers. In Tamil culture "the closest bonds were concealed by denial of bonds, tenderness was transformed into cruelty, humility could be an expression of pride, servitude a means toward mastery" (112–13). Love was agonistic and fraught with argument in some relationships; it was pacific, supportive, and conciliatory in others.

Ambiguities and paradoxes surrounding *apnu* are mirrored more cosmically in the relations between South Indian gods and goddesses. "South Indian deities . . . are not consistent," Trawick observes: "Each has a dual nature; each is split. In Sri Lankan Buddhism the king of the demons Mara is the mirror image and cross-cousin of Buddha the king of the gods. As cross-cousins, Buddha and Mara are affines. They are welded together as male and female. They need each other. When Mara

is conquered he is not expelled from the kingdom of the Buddha (as the devil is expelled from the Christian God's heaven), rather he is enfolded within it" (37–38).

Complementary antinomies likewise characterize Hindu deities: "The Hindu gods, Siva and Vishnu, the light one and the dark one, like Buddha and Mara are rivals and affines: in South Indian myth, Siva is the husband of Vishnu's sister. Siva even begets a child upon Vishnu him/herself. Not long ago the worshippers of Vishnu and Siva fought each other. Each was evil to the other. The more they fought, the more they became alike" (38). These and other religious symbols point to the hiddenness, ambiguity, and paradoxical nature of the sacred. As described in *Notes on Love*, the sacred lies beyond all forms, and any attempt to assign it form involves ambiguity and discrepancy.[55]

In addition to residing in a symbolic universe, love exists in a social one. Trawick enables us to see the patterning of love and how social roles mediate the affections. She notes, for example, that fathers desire continuity through their sons but that sons long for independence. Mothers devalue daughters, but daughters are reluctant to sever ties with their mothers. Brothers and sisters are closely attached and experience their respective marriages to "outsiders" as betrayal; brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law can be extremely close and emotionally intimate, more so than wives and husbands. Trawick notes as well that "mothers do not value daughters as highly as daughters value mothers, or as highly as fathers *and* mothers value sons. However, daughters value mothers very highly. Hence, while men (and some women) worship young, childless male deities and seek refuge in them, women (and some men) are more likely to worship the goddess as mother and seek refuge in her in that form" (169). Viewing love in this way gives depth and texture to the emotions and links personal desire to wider symbolic patterns.

At the same time, *apnu* is not limited to or exhausted by formal structures. According to Trawick, love among Tamils might seem to involve pairing, but soon it extends beyond pairs into a complex skein of relationships: in-laws, servants, children, grandparents, and so on. "Love went beyond pairing," she writes: "Ultimately . . . it negated pair-bonds, especially exclusive ones, and embraced everybody. Then it took the form of the confusion of plurality, when one lost one's identity, and one's loved

one's identity, in the crowd. . . . The most strongly maintained value of Anni's household was the value of communal plurality, in which all that stood for self and other, mine and yours, was deliberately, creatively, repeatedly overturned. No single rule was absolute, no single order held eternal sway" (257).

As if to echo Marcus and Fischer, Trawick's account of *apnu* uses anthropological tools to develop cultural criticism, especially cross-cultural juxtaposition. Recall that for Marcus and Fischer cross-cultural juxtaposition attempts to defamiliarize Western readers by using "substantive facts about another culture as a probe into the specific facts about a subject at home."[56] One goal is to make us conscious of cultural differences by disrupting common sense. Such features of cross-cultural juxtaposition appear when Trawick paints different pictures of the self that lie behind ideologies of love and marriage. In Tamil culture marriage is considerably more corporate than in Western, liberal cultures, focusing as the latter do on the needs and desires of individuals. In Tamil Nadu, marriages occur not merely between two people who join together out of shared loyalties and affections and who then learn to handle in-laws and other extended family members. In South India one marries into an extended family and contributes to the reweaving of kinship ties and domestic responsibilities. Marriage is more obviously an "institution," mediating and imposing limits on what can be expected in interpersonal interactions. One marries, in short, not only another person but into a household.[57]

Such facts of life reflect a different picture of the self. Whereas Western individuality is often concerned to define boundaries and autonomy, the Tamil looks for fluidity and intersubjectivity, a self with blurred boundaries. Trawick writes:

> As we speak of "intertextuality" among poems or myths in South India, so we may speak of "interpersonality" among human beings there. Considered in himself, a lone man has no meaning. He is suffused with the feelings, the spirits and substances, of those who live near him, and they are suffused with his. We Americans place so much faith in the boundary drawn by our skin, that thin physical membrane, that we build our whole concept of personhood there. Most Indians . . . do not, so they seem strange to us. Because, for them, their living with one another is a

> concrete, physical fact, we cannot grasp what they are to themselves. . . . The more we fail to face their ambiguity, the ultimate unboundedness of their being, the less we are able to see them. (252)

This picture of "interpersonality," in turn, reflects a wider set of metaphysical beliefs. South Indians are considerably more open than Westerners to indeterminacy, surprise, and lack of control. That fact grounds Tamils' relationships and enhances their ability to handle what might seem to be exceedingly difficult emotional and physical contexts to their Western counterparts. One idea that Trawick asks us to consider is this openness to vulnerability and surprise: "It may help if we can learn to accept the reality and the power of chaos—the unpredictable, the uncontrollable, the contradictory, the illogical, the unexplainable. It may be that chaos works best if our goal is truly *ahimsa*—to let all the living live, to let each one speak and see in its own way. We do not want to consume all others, leaving nothing but our own self. If our own particular vision of truth can take its place among the multitude, then really we have not done so badly" (258).

Though not without limits—Trawick fails to comment on the routine beatings of Tamil children—*Notes on Love* can greatly enhance standard accounts of the ethics of love in two ways. First, Trawick resists dichotomies that typically frame Western (especially Christian) accounts, such as that between preferential and nonpreferential love. To represent the world of Tamil Nadu, that distinction is not terribly instructive. *Apnu* routinely and unpredictably oscillates between those categories in, for example, the widespread practice of adoption and exchange of children. Second, *Notes on Love* invites comparative discussions with Western accounts that have examined the rise of expressive individualism and bourgeois, therapeutic attitudes toward love and marriage today.[58] Trawick shows how love in Tamil culture falls into and energizes patterns and structures. Love is not merely a matter of will and unmediated desire, and it does not seek out "lifestyle enclaves" in which expressive individuals find intense companionship, psychic gratification, and personal authenticity by fencing themselves off from corporate ties and obligations.[59] In Tamil Nadu, love requires a social framework for expression and direction. Moreover, *apnu* does not focus exclusively on the intimate relationship between two

persons and their immediate dependents, as is often the case in Western attitudes toward love and marriage. However paradoxical and difficult to track, there is an elaborate "order of *apnu*" in Tamil society that reflects the diversity of love's objects across an extended family of grandparents, in-laws, siblings, cross-cousins, and servants.

A third work, Charles Taylor's *Varieties of Religious Experience Today: William James Revisited*, steps back from particular traditions to track the interaction of cultural attitudes and religious experience in contemporary life. Taking as his point of departure William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Taylor embarks on a subtle examination of religion's changing place in individual commitment and public culture. According to Taylor, James's thoughts on religion were remarkably prescient, and in many ways (not all of which Taylor approves) his account of religious experience seems remarkably contemporary.

Foremost among James's insights is the idea that religion has become radically individualized and personalized, stripped of theological claims, institutional ties, and shared rituals. The "primordial thing" for James was unmediated religious experience, by which he meant "*the feelings acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider divine.*"[60] Religion is a matter of the affections, the "inner" emotional realm, private and precious to the self. Attending to James in this way, Taylor is able to highlight aspects of Western individualism to which Trawick refers in *Notes on Love in a Tamil Family*. Taylor takes issue with James's account for its disparaging attitude toward social ties and collective experience. Yet as a descriptive matter, Taylor observes, James's work accurately anticipated modernity's emphasis on individuality, authenticity, and inwardness.

James's 1897 essay "The Will to Believe" dimensionalizes his view of religious experience by paying special attention to the psychology of faith and doubt. In a time when the grounds for certitude were increasingly seen to reside in scientific rationality, he argued that certain truths cannot be discovered until one opens oneself to them—prior to attempts to prove or disprove them. He did not set out to defend religious belief, only the idea that those who are religious are not necessarily irrational. For James it is wrong to think that faith is premised on the grounds that truth has

already been found, as if truth had chronological priority to faith. Rather, the order is reversed: certain truths are accessible only to someone who is open to their possibility. More akin to hope than to assent for James, faith has chronological priority to truth. Those who accept unbelief close themselves off from experiences that might expand and enrich them. Taylor writes, "The agnostic's closure is self-inflicted, the claim that there is nothing here which ought to interest us a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy."[61] Those who close themselves off to religion risk losing truth out of fear for a certain kind of error. Taylor calls James our "great philosopher of the cusp" because he enables us to hover over belief and unbelief by exposing the trade-offs of each. James was able to sharpen our focus in this way, Taylor adds, because he stripped his subject matter down to the psychology of individual experience, shorn of collective connections and ritual practices.[62]

Taylor sets out to show how we have arrived at this celebration of individualism by developing a typology of "dispensations" that capture religion's changing public status in the history of Western culture: "paleo-Durkheimian," "neo-Durkheimian," and "post-Durkheimian."[63] Stated simply, Western culture has moved from (a) a premodern worldview in which "the presence of God was unavoidable . . . and various invocations of God were inseparable from public life" (64) through (b) a modern regime in which religious beliefs were increasingly separated from the public square but nonetheless evident in various forms of civil religion, to (c) a postmodern culture of expressive individualism in which the spiritual is radically divorced from political and social formations but not absent from individual yearnings for meaning and moral direction. Taylor then develops this account in insightful directions for thinking about the contemporary scene. Especially subtle are his views of the changes in our self-interpretations wrought by the transitions from premodern to modern to postmodern dispensations.

Take, for example, the experience of melancholy. Taylor alleges that we now experience melancholy and the threat of meaninglessness in a radically different way than people did in James's time. Melancholy, Taylor writes, "used to be experienced in a framework in which the meaning of things was beyond doubt. God was there, good and evil were defined."

Contemporary melancholy, in contrast, occurs in a world in which "the guarantee of meaning has gone, where all its traditional sources, theological, metaphysical, historical, can be cast in doubt." This melancholy cuts deeper, Taylor alleges, because it now touches not only me, but everyone and everything. In the present age we experience "the intimation of what may be a definitive emptiness, the final dawning of the end of the last illusion of significance" (39–40).

In part to respond to these developments, Taylor adds, we have created "new ways of being together in society" in our quest for authenticity. After World War II "this ethic of authenticity began to shape the outlook of society in general. Expressions like 'do your own thing' became current; a beer commercial of the early 1970s enjoined us to 'be yourselves in the world of today.' A simplified expressivism infiltrated everywhere. Therapies proliferated that promised to help you find yourself, realize yourself, release your true self, and so on." Observe, he writes, how in urban contexts what once passed as common space has eroded into spaces in which "large numbers of people rub shoulders, unknown to each other, without dealings with each other, and yet affecting each other, forming an inescapable context of each other's lives." In such contexts "a host of urban monads hover on the boundary between solipsism and communication." Taylor's reference to wearing a hat recalls other individualistic modes of communication—the tattoo, the baseball cap, the souvenir T-shirt, the Facebook page, or pierced body—as features of our current attempts to communicate "authentically" in public:

> I wear my own kind of hat, but in doing so I am displaying my style to all of you, and in this I am responding to your self-display, even as you respond to mine. The space of fashion is one in which we sustain a language together of signs and meanings, which is constantly changing, but which at any moment is the background needed to give our gestures the sense they have. If my hat can express my particular kind of cocky understated self-display, this is because of how the common language of style has evolved between us up to this point. . . . The resulting general structure is not that of a common action, but rather of mutual display. (85)

Taylor then uses this account as a framework for commenting on how particular forms of Western self-interpretation have changed from premodern to modern to postmodern dispensations. Common experiences remain possible, he observes, but they are ephemeral and disjointed, as when we rise up to cheer our favorite sports team or join the raucous crowd at a rock concert: "There is a heightened excitement at these moments of fusion, reminiscent of Carnival or of some of the other great collective rituals of earlier days. . . . These moments seem to respond to some important felt need of today's 'lonely crowd'" (88).

Varieties of Religious Experience Today is an apt illustration of work that takes a cultural turn, but it differs from the preceding two examples. It is apt because Taylor coordinates resources from several disciplines to interpret contemporary religion, culture, modern psychology, and their expressions in everyday life. It is different because Meeks and Trawick explore an ostensive religious tradition. Taylor's account has less to do with a religious tradition than with how broad historical and cultural transformations have affected, and have been affected by, religious experience and piety. Using James's thought as a springboard, Taylor looks at developments in Western society, tracking what he calls "the social imaginary." His main questions are, How do Westerners see themselves now? How is that self-image different from prior images? And how does that self-image find expression and reinforcement in cultural forms? As he attempts to answer these questions, he examines how the externalization of a religious psychology, presciently foreseen by James, has altered our individual and collective self-interpretations.

* * *

Meeks, Trawick, and Taylor draw on the ideas of "normative political theorists, cultural anthropologists, developmental and humanistic psychologists, sociological theorists, and interpreters of the aesthetic" in ways that suggest new avenues for religious ethics. Their works build on developments in cultural studies, postmodern discussions about the poetics and politics of representing "other" cultures and practices, and cultural and psychological theory—intellectual movements that have affected virtually all of the humanities (including religious studies) during the

past several decades. If nothing else, their works show how connections between religious ethics and currents in the academic study of religion can be strengthened. What do these works, and the idea of taking a cultural turn, suggest more generally for the field of religious ethics?

Put briefly, a cultural turn in religious ethics as I have described it here is likely to become more Greek and Hegelian than is currently the case. I say "Greek" because it will be more attentive to moral psychology and the conditions of human flourishing than we generally witness in religious ethics today. That is to say, religious ethics that makes a cultural turn of the sort I have described is likely to identify and compare local vocabularies of *eudaimonia*, their articulations, and their formations.[64] What energizes the transactions between psyche and culture are visions of the good life, a life of human flourishing. For that reason religious ethics that makes a cultural turn is likely to be more naturalistic than nonnaturalistic, focusing on goods to which persons attach themselves as providing constituents for human well-being.[65] I say "Hegelian" because religious ethics will have to view culture not as inert or irrational but as externalizations of the human spirit, with all of its creative and destructive capacities. Culture is nonneutral and should be subject to moral evaluation because its institutions enshrine, perhaps successfully, aspirations to the good. If nothing else, a turn to culture will open up attention to patterns of creativity and consumption as proper subjects of social criticism.

Taking together these various ideas, we can say that a cultural turn in religious ethics focuses our attention on how our lives are mediated—on how transactions between self and other, individual and society, and persons and institutions are mutually formative. Advancing work that reflects a cultural turn will mean developing undergraduate and graduate education in a more interdisciplinary way than is currently the case in religious ethics. Moreover, a cultural turn suggests something about the work of ethics itself. That is to say, we cannot assume that questions in ethics disclose themselves ahistorically, as if they arrived untouched by cultural forces, social processes, and institutional contexts. In religious ethics, no less than elsewhere, reason has a material, embodied life. Our questions and privileged research agendas themselves arise from the transaction between psyche and culture. Religious ethics thus occupies a paradoxical and reflexive space, for it both emerges from and

attempts to monitor efforts to create meaning and direction in personal and public life.

Religious ethics that makes a cultural turn will thus be characterized by three distinctive features. First, it will endeavor more vigorously to provide an ethics of ordinary life, drawing from and assessing vernacular traditions, folk heritages, popular culture, and lay perspectives in the lifeworld of a people. Second, it will recognize that such traditions materialize from the intrapsychic struggles between soul and polis and thus disclose properties of culture more generally. Finally, it will draw on an eclectic array of tools in the human and social sciences to assess idioms of the right and the good. In that capacity religious ethics might provide its own experimental moment while deepening our understanding of cultural differences, the emotions, and the moral quality of everyday life.

34. See, e.g., William R. LaFleur, *Liquid Life: Abortion and Buddhism in Japan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994); Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); Stalnaker, *Overcoming Our Evil*; John Kelsay, *Arguing the Just War in Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); and Elizabeth A. Bucar, *Creative Conformity: Feminist Politics of U.S. Catholic and Iranian Shi'i Women* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2011).
35. I will examine exceptions to this generalization over the course of this book, especially in the epilogue.
36. See Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1997), 27–28.

2. ON MAKING A CULTURAL TURN IN RELIGIOUS ETHICS

1. "Editorial," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 1, no. 1 (1973): 3.
2. Ronald M. Green, "The Journal of Religious Ethics, 1973–1994," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 25, no. 3 [25th Anniversary Supplement] (1997): 221–38, 232.
3. Ibid., 230.
4. Ibid.; Green is quoting from the 1973 "Editorial," 3 (see note 1 above).
5. The inaugural editorial of the *JRE* invites "'state of the discipline' essays . . . that will explore the critical issues of the moment and make suggestions for the future agenda of religious ethics." To those concerns this chapter is devoted. See "Editorial," 4.
6. See Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), esp. 175–76, 188–89.
7. See Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality* (New York: Basic Books, 1983); and Michael Walzer, *Interpretation and Social Criticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).
8. Onora O'Neill, *Towards Justice and Virtue: A Constructive Account of Practical Reasoning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 38–44.
9. See Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–77*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980); and Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, *An Introduction* (New York: Vintage, 1980).
10. Ethicists' appeals to the authority of culturally unmediated experience suffer from pure subjectivism or naive realism.
11. See, e.g., Bernard Williams, *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); MacIntyre, *After Virtue*; Charles Taylor, *Philosophical Papers I: Human Agency and Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); and Martha C. Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

12. For instructive discussions see Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treichler, eds., *Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Simon During, ed., *The Cultural Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1993); and John Storey, *An Introduction to Cultural Theory and Popular Culture* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1993). An introductory survey of cultural theory for Christian theologians is provided by Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1997). For constructive engagements with many of the trends I examine in this chapter see Delwin Brown, Sheila Greeve Davaney, and Kathryn Tanner, eds., *Converging on Culture: Theologians in Dialogue with Cultural Analysis and Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). The essays in that volume connect the cultural turn in the humanities with historicist and postmodern accounts of the self and modes of knowledge. The present chapter aims to show why that account, and the distinction between classical and contemporary thought on which it rests, is simplistic.
13. Myles Burnyeat, "Culture and Society in Plato's *Republic*," Tanner Lectures on Human Values, Harvard University, Dec. 10–12, 1997, http://tannerlectures.utah.edu/_documents/a-to-z/b/Burnyeat99.pdf.
14. George E. Marcus and Michael M. J. Fischer, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 17.
15. Ibid., 165.
16. See William A. Barbieri Jr., "The Heterological Quest: Michel de Certeau's Travel Narratives and the 'Other' of Comparative Religious Ethics," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 30, no. 1 (2002): 23–48.
17. James Clifford, "Introduction: Partial Truths," in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, ed. James Clifford and George Marcus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 1–26, 23.
18. Marcus and Fischer, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*, x.
19. Ibid., 111, 116. In a similar vein Clifford observes that however much ethnographers must enter into power relations as part of their own research, their labors are "potentially counter-hegemonic" ("Introduction," 9).
20. See, e.g., David Little and Sumner B. Twiss, *Comparative Religious Ethics: A New Method* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978); Lee Yearley, *Mencius and Aquinas: Theories of Virtue and Conceptions of Courage* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990); Sumner B. Twiss and Bruce Grelle, eds., *Explorations in Global Ethics: Comparative Religious Ethics and Interreligious Dialogue* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998); Barbieri, "The Heterological Quest"; and Aaron Stalnaker, "Comparative Religious Ethics and the Problem of 'Human Nature,'" *Journal of Religious Ethics* 33, no. 2 (2005): 187–224. Twiss and Grelle seek to "bring the discipline of comparative religious ethics into constructive collaboration with the community of interreligious dialogue" (3). Twiss's introduction in that volume provides a helpful overview of comparative religious ethics as a background for developing this constructive collaboration.

21. Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 57.
22. See, e.g., Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge*; and Alex Kotlowitz, *There Are No Children Here: The Story of Two Boys Growing Up in the Other America* (New York: Doubleday, 1991).
23. See, e.g., Gene Outka, *Agape: An Ethical Analysis* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 1972); and John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Belknap Press, 1971).
24. Geertz, *Local Knowledge*, 57.
25. Marcus and Fischer, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*, 137–39.
26. Ibid., 165, 167.
27. See Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 25.
28. Ibid., 70, 67.
29. Marcus and Fischer, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*, 138.
30. I discuss these problems as they relate to Taylor's views in *Terror, Religion, and Liberal Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 84–99.
31. Taylor, *Multiculturalism*, 72–73, 66–67.
32. See Susan Moller Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* ed. Joshua Cohen, Matthew Howard, and Martha C. Nussbaum (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).
33. Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, translated with introduction and notes by Francis Macdonald Cornford (London: Oxford University Press, 1941), 55.
34. Jonathan Lear, *Open Minded: Working Out the Logic of the Soul* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 219–20.
35. Ibid., 221.
36. Ibid., 225.
37. Ibid., 226.
38. See Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); and Nancy Sherman, *The Fabric of Character: Aristotle's Theory of Virtue* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989).
39. Taylor, *Philosophical Papers I*, 53–55.
40. Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 4.
41. Taylor, *Philosophical Papers I*, 48.
42. Paul Lauritzen, "Emotions and Religious Ethics," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 16. no. 2 (1988): 307–24, 308. Lauritzen elaborates on this cognitive or constructivist account of the emotions: "According to a constructivist view, emotions are culturally mediated or constructed experiences that are shaped by, and crucially dependent upon, cultural forms of discourse such as symbols, beliefs, and judgments. What a constructivist theory seeks to capture is the way in which emotions embody a sense of ourselves and our situations, the way in which they embody self-understanding and become intelligible when self-understanding is stripped away" (308 .

Lauritzen proceeds on this account to raise questions about William James's moral psychology that seem sympathetic with, but go beyond, those developed by Charles Taylor, which I discuss below. See ibid., 309–13.

43. Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, 123.
44. One exception is the work of Stanley Hauerwas, who writes about the formation of distinctively Christian virtues within the Christian community. See, e.g., Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983). Lauritzen engages Hauerwas on some substantive points regarding emotions in Lauritzen, "Emotions and Religious Ethics," 316–20.
45. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 95.
46. For an exception see Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).
47. Charles Taylor, *Varieties of Religion Today: William James Revisited* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 88.
48. Wayne Meeks, *The Moral World of the First Christians* (Philadelphia: Westminster/John Knox, 1986), 11–13.
49. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 127.
50. Meeks, *The Moral World of the First Christians*, 97.
51. Ibid., 98.
52. Ibid., 100–103.
53. Ibid., 124–60.
54. In cross-cousin marriage, Trawick notes, "a man marries a woman in the category of his father's sister's daughter, his mother's brother's daughter, or in a few cases, his own sister's daughter." See Margaret Trawick, *Notes on Love in a Tamil Family* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 118. Subsequent citations of this source are referenced parenthetically in the text.
55. Ibid., 40.
56. Marcus and Fischer, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*, 138.
57. Trawick, *Notes on Love in a Tamil Family*, 188.
58. See Robert Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 85–112.
59. See ibid., esp. 72–75.
60. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (New York: Collier, 1961 [1902]), 42 (James's emphasis).
61. Taylor, *Varieties of Religion Today*, 55.
62. Whether Taylor's reading of James is entirely accurate is another matter. James's descriptions of religious practitioners in *Varieties of Religious Experience*—saints, mystics, and ascetics; Christian Scientists, Roman Catholics, Unitarians, and Methodists, for example—include reference to their respective theological idioms, practices, and beliefs (e.g., faith, evil, grace, confession). James's descriptions would be unintelligible without these references to contextual and communal facts.

63. Taylor, *Varieties of Religion Today*, 75–107. Subsequent citations of this source are referenced parenthetically in the text.
64. See, e.g., Lee Yearley, "Conflicts Among Ideals of Human Flourishing," in *Prospects for a Common Morality*, ed. Gene Outka and John P. Reeder Jr. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 233–53.
65. See, e.g., Robin W. Lovin and Frank Reynolds, *Cosmogony and Ethical Order: New Studies in Comparative Ethics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

3. MORAL AUTHORITY AND MORAL CRITIQUE IN AN AGE OF ETHNOCENTRIC ANXIETY

1. Stephen Prothero, "My Take: Dalai Lama Should Condemn Tibetan Self-Immolations," http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2012/07/12/my-take-dalai-lama-should-condemn-tibetan-self-immolations.
2. Bruce Lincoln, *Authority: Construction and Corrosion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 4.
3. On locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts see J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962).
4. Cited in Choong Soon Kim, "The Role of the Non-Western Anthropologist Reconsidered: Illusion Versus Reality," *Current Anthropology* 31, no. 2 (1990): 196–201, 196.
5. Benson Saler, *Conceptualizing Religion: Immanent Anthropologists, Transcendent Natives, and Unbounded Categories* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993), 9.
6. Of course *expressing disapproval*—in either impersonal or interpersonal terms—and *intervening* to change or eliminate the practice in question are different. Nothing about disapproval is sufficient for justifying interventions to change or eliminate a practice. Decisions to intervene involve moral and practical considerations about the potential effectiveness of an intervention, methods of intervening, the collateral effects of intervening, and the timing of an intervention, among other matters. But what I say about disapproval is necessary when considering whether to intervene to change or eliminate a practice. Otherwise the decision to intervene appears morally arbitrary. In those instances, to be sure, suspicions of chauvinism are warranted.
7. Here, and below, I follow a line of argument developed by G. A Cohen, "Casting the First Stone: Who Can, and Who Can't, Condemn the Terrorists?" *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 58 (May 2006): 113–36.
8. Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (London: Routledge, 1990), 35–37. Adorno's idea is that relativism is a form of reason limiting itself, a self-imposed prohibition necessary to block awareness of the modes of production that underwrite bourgeois existence. In this way Adorno connects relativism with anti-intellectualism. On that premise he writes: "The perennial anti-intellectualism is more than an anthropological trait of bourgeois subjectivity. It is due to the fact that under the existing conditions of production the concept of reason, once emancipated, must fear that its consistent pursuit will explode those conditions.