
Introduction: A Multicultural Approach to the Philosophy of Social Science

This book approaches the philosophy of social science in a new way, one centered on the experience of sharing a world in which people differ significantly from one another. This approach is best called "multicultural" because it is multiculturalism that draws attention to the opportunities and dangers of a world of differences. A multicultural philosophy of social science poses new questions and employs new concepts to address issues inherent in the study of human beings; it also puts older questions and concepts in the philosophy of social science in a new light.

Why the need for a new philosophy of social science? Throughout much of its history the basic question in the philosophy of social science has been: is social science scientific, or can it be? Social scientists have historically sought to claim the mantle of science and have modeled their studies on the natural sciences. Consequently the philosophy of social science has traditionally consisted in assessments of social science's success in this regard, of the ways social science is like and unlike natural science. However, although this approach has yielded important insights into the study of human beings, it no longer grips philosophers or practitioners of social science. Some new approach more in touch with current intellectual and cultural concerns is required.

The question of the scientific standing of social inquiry has run out of steam in part because for many natural science no longer induces the kind of reverence it once did. Implicit in much previous philosophizing about social inquiry was the presupposition that natural science is the benchmark against which all cognitive endeavors must be measured. But in the current intellectual climate natural science has lost this privileged position. The reasons for this are complex: they include the abuses of Big Science by governments and industry in such areas as nuclear weaponry; the dangers of technology inspired by the natural sciences, dangers which

portend ecological disasters; widespread awareness of alternative forms of knowing; and the somewhat uninspiring picture that the sciences paint of humans existing in a cold and indifferent universe. But philosophically the demise of science as the paradigm of intellectual activity is tied to the death of positivism and the concomitant emergence of perspectivism.

We will explore positivism and perspectivism in more detail in upcoming chapters, since one of the main purposes of the book is to examine and put to rest concerns raised by perspectivism. At this point suffice it to say that, in opposition to positivism which conceives science as the method *par excellence* for seeing Reality directly, perspectivism asserts that every epistemic endeavor – including science – takes place from a point of view defined by its own intellectual and political commitments and interests. According to perspectivism we cannot see “directly” into anything, least of all Reality. All seeing is seeing from a particular perspective. Even in the natural sciences the influence of theoretical and cultural points of view now seems unquestionable.

For many, perspectivism has only been a midpoint on the journey from positivism to relativism. Since every act of cognition necessarily occurs within a particular perspective, relativism claims that no rational basis exists for judging one perspective better than any other. For example, most modern Euro-Americans may rate western medicine superior to voodoo as a way of dealing with disease. But this is done not on the basis of some neutral criteria of assessment. Criteria used to assess beliefs and actions are themselves dependent on a larger perspective; thus in valorizing western medicine all that is being said is that it fits better than voodoo with Euro-American conceptions and presuppositions (which isn't surprising since it was itself framed in terms of them!). From another, less scientific perspective, voodoo may be preferable.

On a relativist view, science is just one of a number of possible perspectives, no worse but certainly no better than any other. True, science is the preferred approach in the “West” where it has gained hegemony and in the process silenced many alternatives. But this just shows that those in the West value the sorts of achievements made possible by science (in particular, the technical control of nature). But this doesn't prove that science is inherently superior as a way of knowing.

Relativism undermines the traditional pre-eminent standing of science by subverting its claims to specialness. It also topples faith in science in another way. Relativism engenders a keen appreciation for the role political power plays in shaping what we think and do – including the frameworks we inhabit. (Here the names of Gramsci (1971) and Foucault (1977 and 1981) figure prominently.) This is not accidental. Since changes from one framework to another cannot be rationally justified, they must be

brought about and enforced by extra-rational means. Thus, a positivist might think that scientists are in power simply because their ideas are true (or appear to be so), or because they employ a method most likely to arrive at truth. However, since we know that assessments of truth-value must occur within a given perspective, the question becomes why one perspective rather than another predominates; and since perspectives cannot be shown true or better without invoking criteria of assessment themselves located within a perspective, causes other than satisfying some criteria of assessment must be at work. This is a reason why many recent studies of science concentrate on the extra-rational mechanisms by which scientific orthodoxy is enforced. Thus to relativists the “hegemony” of science (to use Gramsci's well-worn term) shows not its intellectual primacy but instead the power of certain groups to dominate intellectual and political institutions.

The upshot of this concentration on power is an inevitable debunking of science. In extreme relativism, little or no difference remains between science and propaganda; but even in moderate relativism basic epistemic commitments, including those of science, are necessarily non-rational. But this renders the endeavor to ascertain whether social inquiry is or can be like the natural sciences – an endeavor which presupposes that the natural sciences are the paragons of rational activity – pointless.

In this way relativism has radically undermined confidence that natural science can produce a truthful picture of the physical world, much less serve as the model for reliable knowledge of the human world. Indeed, relativism has called notions like truth and reliable knowledge into doubt. As a result, preoccupation with the issue of relativism has replaced concern with the scientific character of the human sciences.

To its adherents relativism is a Good Thing (at least from the modern Euro-American perspective!). In the first place it provides a way of speaking about others who are different from us and thereby sensitizes us to these differences. Since we all look at and live in the world from within our own particular framework, others must experience Reality differently from the way we do. In this way relativism is meant to guard against ethnocentrism (the view that everyone is just like us). In the second place, because we have no independent basis for criticizing the way others think or act, our attitude should be one of tolerance and appreciation rather than the judgmentalism that has so often marred human thought and practice. In this way relativism is meant to guard against chauvinism.

In this way relativism encourages multiculturalism. The term “multiculturalism” has become something of a trendy buzzword. This is unfortunate because multiculturalism refers to something crucial in the contemporary world: that people importantly different from one another

are in contact with, and must deal with, each other. All multiculturalists focus on understanding and living with cultural and social difference; but beyond this rather anemic commitment the nature of multiculturalism is a hotly debated topic. The most prevalent version is what might be called "the celebration of difference"; on this view differences among various groups of people should be highlighted and honored.

Multiculturalism so conceived poses profound problems for the study of human beings. Let me explain how. According to the construal of multiculturalism which celebrates cultural and social difference, each society or culture is a single unit separated from other units by boundaries that define it in part by distinguishing it from others. Moreover, individuals are reflections of the cultural and social units to which they belong. Personal identity is determined by the cultural and social units into which its members have been enculturated and socialized.

Because they are different, these cultural and social units often conflict with one another; indeed, some of them will inevitably attempt to undermine or dominate the others. Strong units attempt to overwhelm weaker ones, and in the end seek to make the weaker units just like them. In so far as they succeed they thereby annihilate the differences between the groups. The natural impetus in a world of differences is thus toward the obliteration of these differences.

Multiculturalism construed as the celebration of difference is a response to this natural impetus. It insists on cultural and social integrity and on esteeming this integrity in others. It urges each group to find and nurture its own center and at the same time to recognize and support the efforts of those in different units to do likewise. Each of us lives within a framework we share with a limited number of others and which differs from the frameworks of others. On this view our job is to realize and celebrate this fact, to applaud the mosaic of colors and shapes which comprise human life on this planet.

But multiculturalism so conceived poses an epistemic problem: *if others live within their own framework and we live within ours, how can we understand them?* We think and act in terms of our own framework and they in theirs, so that we are forced to consider them in terms other than their own. In so far as their terms differ fundamentally from ours, it appears that we are thus bound to misunderstand them. A multicultural world which stresses ethnic, gender, racial, religious, class, and cultural differences – where people are keen to discover and protect their own particularities – leads to a fragmentation of social knowledge. Ultimately it appears to say that only those of one kind can know others of that kind. Only women can understand other women; only African-Americans can know African-Americans.

Put succinctly, multiculturalism appears to say that it takes one to know one.

But this means that social inquiry is severely compromised. For if only women can write about women or judge what is written about them (and the same is true for Catholics, the Azande, homosexuals, and . . .), the idea of an open community of scholars engaged in dialogue in terms of public evidence is utterly vitiated.

Both multiculturalism understood as the celebration of difference and the relativism behind it raise fundamental challenges to the quest to understand others. This is deeply disturbing not least for multiculturalism and relativism themselves. The power of these ideas depends on the ability to understand the ways people differ. But if their implications are that such understanding is impossible, then they seem to lead to their own demise. On reflection multiculturalism and relativism appear to be self-defeating.

Given the appeal of multiculturalism and relativism in contemporary intellectual and political life, and given the problems they raise regarding the possibility of understanding others, the basic question of philosophy of social science today ought not to be whether social inquiry is scientific; rather, it ought to be whether understanding others – particularly others who are different – is possible, and if so, what such understanding involves. This is precisely the central question of this book.

By framing the central question of the philosophy of social science in this way certain old topics in the field – such as the relation between reasons and causes; the nature of meaning; the character of interpretation and its relation to causal explanation; the role of social scientific laws; the possibility of objectivity – assume a new urgency. But more importantly, new questions and new ways to deal with them come to the fore. In particular, questions about what it means to know someone else (chapter 1); about "the" self and its relation to others (chapter 2); about the nature of human culture and society (chapter 3); about relativism itself (chapter 4); about rationality and intelligibility (chapter 5); about the complexities of cross-cultural understanding (chapters 6 and 7); and about the role of the past in understanding the present (chapters 8 and 9) move to center stage in investigations concerning social inquiry. These questions often are not found in treatises in the philosophy of social science, or are often relegated to peripheral roles. A prime contention of this book is that today they must be central to the discipline.

The organization of the book attempts to capture our situation of living in a multicultural world under the sway of relativism. Each chapter title poses a question which is intended to arise out of typical multicultural

experiences and which raises an important philosophical problem. For example, chapter 1 asks, "Do you have to be one to know one?" This question emerges out of typical multicultural experiences of difference: if I and those of my group live and think in our own distinctive way, how can I or we ever "really know" those in other groups who live and think in their own distinctively different ways? Perhaps only those in my group can really know what it's like to be us; perhaps, then, one has to be one to know one? Another example is the question of chapter 3: "Does our culture or society make us what we are?" This question too arises out of simple reflection on multicultural experience: if I am different from others because I belong to different groups from theirs, then is my identity essentially a function of my group membership? I hope it will be clear that the questions which focus the discussions in all the other chapters of the book also derive from multicultural experience. These questions set the agenda for a multicultural philosophy of social science in the way questions regarding the scientific status of social science set the agenda for earlier philosophies of social science. At least in the first instance, it is the questions it asks which makes a philosophy of social science multicultural.

Having commenced with a question, each chapter then proceeds to present a doctrine (an "ism") which answers the chapter's question. Each doctrine is meant to capture contemporary multicultural intuitions. Thus, in chapter 1 the doctrine of solipsism—that only I (and perhaps others like me) can know me—is meant to express the sense that only people of similar experience and background can "really know" one another, a sense encouraged by the multicultural experience of difference. Or again, the doctrine of holism—that individuals are solely a function of their place in a social group or a broad system of meaning—is intended to voice the idea that I am who and what I am by virtue of the groups into which I have been socialized or enculturated, an idea reinforced by my appreciation of the ways I differ from others who are members of different groups. A multicultural philosophy of social science is distinctively multicultural because of the doctrines it considers.

(Please note that many of the "isms" which are examined have become common parlance in social science and the philosophy of social science. But being so has meant that they have many different meanings to many different people; sometimes what I mean by a doctrine is not the same as what some other writer means by it. Consequently I explicitly define the doctrines so that they have a particular meaning in this text; also I sometimes refer to other meanings which they might have, and to other books in which these other meanings can be found. In my definitions I have tried to distill what I take to be the central core of a doctrine, leaving its more sophisticated variations and subtle shadings for other works which

have different purposes from those of this book. Sometimes this might lead proponents of a doctrine to say that it has been caricatured; but the risk of this charge is outweighed by the gain in clarity my method produces.)

Having begun with a question and a doctrine which answers this question both of which arise out of multicultural experience, each chapter than explores both what is wrong and what is right about its particular doctrine. In general, analysis shows that the "isms" aren't so much false as one-sided, that a fuller view needs to take into account both the "ism" and its criticisms, and that when this is done the presuppositions lying behind the chapter titles' questions are problematic. The upshot is to undermine these questions and the intuitions which support them.

In all of this the book argues that relativism in its strong forms, and multiculturalism understood as the celebration of difference, are mistaken though not entirely wrong. That is, something is centrally correct about both relativism and multiculturalism so understood but these doctrines as normally conceived are limited and one-sided; consequently they need to be re-thought. Part of the work of this book, therefore, is a re-definition of both relativism and multiculturalism.

Prevailing conceptions of relativism and multiculturalism emphasize difference, cultural integrity, and resistance to cultural domination; they think in rigidly dualistic categories of "self" vs. "other"; of "us" vs. "them"; of "sameness" vs. "difference"; of "assimilation" vs. "separatism"; and of "insider" vs. "outsider." The book subverts these conceptions and their attendant dualisms. In place of difference it emphasizes interchange; in place of integrity it emphasizes openness and interaction; in place of resistance it emphasizes learning. Throughout it replaces a dualistic mode of thought with a dialectical one. (Of course, how this is accomplished will be explained in the body of the text.) Besides entertaining certain questions and analyzing certain doctrines, then, a philosophy of social science is multicultural in that it underwrites a (dialectical) mode of thinking more apt for multicultural living than alternative ways of thinking.

In earlier intellectual and political climates a bright beacon by which social science ought to orient itself was clearly visible. Today, however, we live in a period which questions the very idea of science in particular and knowledge in general. Ours is a time of skepticism: skepticism about truth, objectivity, knowledge, and even the possibility of understanding those different from ourselves. Such skepticism is healthy; but taken to extremes it can degenerate into cynicism: that what passes for knowledge is merely the imposed views of the politically strong and the historically victorious ("History is simply the story told by the winners"). With this view social inquiry as a possible source of knowledge and wisdom vanishes.

Skepticism has consequences even more dangerous than the death of social inquiry. It leads to doubt about the possibility of rational analyses and solutions to pressing social problems. This doubt in turn encourages either social and political quietism, social withdrawal, self-absorption, and despair, or bellicose insistence on the worth of one's own perspective and culture. Not for nothing have critics of multiculturalism and relativism argued that these philosophical positions inevitably lead to "californization" (in which, to the world's cruelties, passive narcissists can only murmur, "Whatever"), or to "balkanization" (in which armed camps confront each other in mutual incomprehension and antagonism).

Underneath its technical analyses, this book is meant to provide a more adequate vision for a multicultural world. For though it hopes to do justice to relativism and multiculturalism understood as the celebration of difference, it also seeks to show how these views as normally conceived are self-defeating and debilitating. In their place it proposes a new conception of social science in the context of a new conception of multiculturalism—a conception it calls "interactionism" (chapter 11).

The issues raised by examining the nature of social inquiry from within the context of multiculturalism are thus profound, wide-ranging, and relevant to some of the most pressing problems of our time. The primary purpose of this book is to deepen and enliven the conversation about the nature of social inquiry. But beyond this its intention is to provide a view better suited to the exigencies of a multicultural world.

1

Do You Have To Be One To Know One?

1.1 Solipsism

We've all made or heard statements like the following: "You can't know what it was like because you weren't there"; "I had no idea what you were feeling until I had the same feeling myself"; "Only another woman can know what it's like for a woman to walk alone down a strange street at night"; and "I'll never *really* know what it was like to be a knight during the Crusades." These statements – and countless others like them – contain the germ of a thesis which many today think a truism and which many others trumpet as a great discovery that will liberate us from the narrow belief that everyone is just like us. This thesis consists of the claim that in order to understand another person or group one must be (or be like) this person or a member of this group. (Sometimes the thesis includes the term "truly", as in "in order to *truly* understand another one must be this other".) Thus, to (truly) understand women, one must be a woman; or to (truly) understand Catholics, one must be a Catholic oneself. I call this the thesis that "You have to be one to know one." (Its technical name is *insider epistemology*: to know other insiders one has to be an insider oneself.)

This thesis is an instance of a more general philosophical position called *solipsism* (literally "one-self-ism"). Solipsism is the theory that one can be aware of nothing but one's own experiences, states, and acts. If "one" is defined narrowly to mean a single individual person, then the thesis that "You have to be one to know one" becomes the claim that only you can know yourself. If "one" is conceived more broadly to mean those in a particular group, then the thesis "You have to be one to know one" transmutes into the assertion that only those of a certain group can understand members of this group.

early 1970s; see, for instance, Fabian's (1971) "methodology of dialectical dialogue," a "dialectical interaction between the researcher and his or her subjects." Three important works in this regard are the edited volume of Clifford and Marcus (1986) cited above; Dumont (1978); and Marcus and Fischer (1986). A brilliant discussion of cartography is Monmonier (1995).

Conclusion: What's to be Learned from a Multicultural Philosophy of Social Science?

11.1 Beyond Pernicious Dualisms

A dualistic way of thinking predominates in the philosophy of social science. That is, questions are conceived in terms of *either* one option *or* another and then one of them is defended as the correct one. This has indeed been the case in the debates examined in this book. The questions posed in the chapter titles invite a "yes" or "no" response, and the major positions in the field have opted for one or the other of these responses.

One of the main lessons of our analyses has been to call this dualistic way of thinking into question. Time and again we have seen that options posing as competing alternatives are not in fact in necessary opposition; that positions masking as complete answers are only partial and one-sided, requiring their supposed opposite for completion; or that questions which invite a choice between two possibilities are better answered by questioning their presuppositions and thereby undermining them rather than answering them in their own terms. Throughout the book a plea to avoid pernicious dualisms has been a constant motif.

Consider the following dichotomies we have encountered in the preceding chapters:

Some (Pernicious) Dualisms

Self	vs.	Other
Atomism	vs.	Holism
Our Culture	vs.	Their Culture
Sameness	vs.	Difference
Agency	vs.	Social System
Autonomy	vs.	Tradition
Insider	vs.	Outsider

Self-knowledge	vs.	Knowledge of others
Observer	vs.	The Observed
Understanding them in our terms	vs.	Understanding them them in their terms
Understanding Others	vs.	Criticizing Others
Present	vs.	Past
Meaning	vs.	Cause
Relativism	vs.	Objectivism
Subjectivity	vs.	Objectivity
Tell Stories	vs.	Live stories

These dualisms are not all of the same sort, nor do they fall into neat categories themselves. But if our reflections have been cogent these dichotomies and the dualistic mode of thinking which underlie them are simplistic. Dualism sets up a confrontation between two entities and forces one to choose in terms of this opposition: either this side or that side. It does not allow for the possibility that each of the terms of the "opposition" in fact requires and draws upon its supposed opposite. Consequently it does not allow for the option of adopting both sides, of seeing them in terms of "both/and" rather than "either/or."

Our analyses have employed a dialectical mode of thinking. In a *dialectical* approach, differences are not conceived as absolute, and consequently the relation between them is not one of utter antagonism. Indeed, on a dialectical view, alternatives, while genuinely competing, only appear to be completely "other" to each other. They are in fact deeply interconnected, and the confrontation between them reveals how these differences can be comprehended and transcended (transcended not in the sense of being obliterated but in the sense of being held in tension within a larger framework). Competing alternatives originally thought to have exhausted the possibilities can then be replaced with a wider viewpoint which recognizes the worth in the original positions but which goes beyond them.

Thus, in chapters 2 and 3 atomism and holism appeared as two antithetical approaches to the study of society, atomism insisting that the basic elements of social analysis are individuals, holism countering that the basic elements are society and culture. But both of these views are not only one-sided but need insights from each other to produce an adequate view. Atomism correctly insists that societies are comprised of individuals, and that individuals are unique agents; but atomism also neglects the fact (insisted by holism) that individuals need others to be what they are. Holism correctly highlights the ways culture and society enable and constrain, but it goes too far in this, neglecting agency, reifying culture and

society into things which directly imprint their members rather than processes of enculturation and socialization, which are processes of active appropriation. Thus to the question, does our culture and society make us what we are?, the proper response is to subvert the presupposition of this question, namely, that *either* we make our culture and society *or* they make us. *We both* make our culture and society and they in turn make us.

In chapter 6 the opposition between interpretivism (which claims that others must be comprehended in their own terms) and anti-interpretivism (which claims that others must be comprehended in the terms of social science) also bespeaks a false dualism. Here the dualism rests on a false dichotomy between meaning and cause. Philosophers have often argued that understanding meaningful phenomena consists of grasping their sense not explaining their causes, and that consequently social science should consist of interpretations not causal theories. But this argument is one-sided: interpretation is necessary but not sufficient for the explanation of intentional phenomena. Ascertaining the identity of intentional phenomena characterized as such does require uncovering the meaning these phenomena have for those experiencing, performing, or producing them. But social science also needs to ascertain the conditions which produced these meaning-laden processes and products, and to accomplish this it must develop causal theories which go beyond the terms of those it studies. Moreover, social science also needs to discover the competencies in virtue of which agents can form intentions and perform intentionally. Competence theories also transcend the terms of those being analyzed. The result is that social science will *both* comprehend others in their own terms *and* in the terms of social science.

We also saw in chapters 5 and 6 that the opposition between understanding others and criticizing them is often a false one. Typically, to understand is one thing, to evaluate is another. Since social science is concerned to understand others and not to judge them, philosophers have often claimed that assessments of the merits of others' thoughts, actions, or relations has no place in scientific analysis. But this is simplistic. In the first place, the explanation of intentional actions and their products will assume a different form depending on whether they are rational or not. Intentional actions adjudged irrational must be explained in terms of principles other than those of ordinary rational connection, and they must include some account of how these non-standard principles operate. (An example of this is Freud's theory of the unconscious and the peculiar principles which govern its "primary processes," such as displacement and condensation, by means of which thought and action are connected.) Because the explanation of rational actions and products differs from the

explanation of irrational ones, social scientists cannot refrain from assessing whether an action is rational or not.

In the second place, certain forms of thought, though underwriting ongoing practices and relations, are systematically illusory. Indeed, these practices and relations are possible only because of the illusory character of the thought which engenders them, so that to understand them social scientists must unravel the ways agents are systematically unclear to themselves. (As we saw in chapter 6, an example of this from Marx is the religious practices associated with a Christian God and what he claimed to be the alienation inherent in the belief in such a God.) Here such notions common in critical social theory as manifest and latent content, false consciousness, ideology, repression, sublimation, and hegemony play a substantial role in the explanation of social phenomena. These notions as well as many others all involve critique in the sense that their use rests on a criticism of the social practices and intentional states of certain groups of people. Here again assessment is a crucial and unavoidable element in social scientific explanation.

Another false dichotomy is that between nomological and genetic explanation. On the basis of these supposedly mutually exclusive choices, historicists (those who have claimed that the explanation of intentional phenomena must be genetic in character) have argued that the social scientists are fundamentally historical. On the other hand, nomologicalists (those who have argued that the explanation of social phenomena is no different from that of natural phenomena, namely, nomological in form) have asserted that the social sciences are no more historical than physics or chemistry. But as we saw in chapter 8, nomological and genetic explanations are incomplete in themselves; indeed, they require the other in order to provide a full explanation of social phenomena. Thus the social sciences need *both* nomological *and* genetic explanations, not one *or* the other. And thus such sciences are historical in one important sense, but not so in another.

In chapter 9 the apparently exhaustive and mutually antagonistic alternative of narrative realism and narrative constructionism was shown to rest on certain assumptions which if transcended yielded another view – narrativism – which keeps elements of both but in a higher synthesis. The question is not whether we live stories *or* whether we merely tell them. To conceive of the matter in this way sets up a false choice, thereby preventing us from seeing that we *both* live and tell stories, and in precisely what ways we do.

The dichotomy between the past and the present is another one which has bedeviled social thought. But as we saw in chapter 7 and chapter 9

when discussing the meaning of intentional phenomena, the past and the present interpenetrate one another. As Faulkner so well put it: "The past never was; it is." The present is the continuation of the past, and the past lives on in the present. Moreover, what we take to be the nature of the past is in part a function of what we take to be the present. The past and the present, far from being separate time periods, commingle and define themselves in part in terms of the other.

Or again, in chapter 10 the options between objectivism and relativism, despite their apparent mutual incompatibility, were shown to presuppose a broadly positivist epistemology and realist ontology which conceive knowers as mirrors of an independently structured Reality. In that chapter we attacked these positivist and realist presuppositions, and in the process opened up the possibility for another way of conceiving of knowledge, namely, fallibilism. Fallibilism, in turn, suggests another conception of objectivity – critical intersubjectivity – a conception which attempts to do justice to the insights of both objectivism and relativism.

In all these cases we have replaced a dualistic with a dialectical view. This is much easier to accomplish if a *processural* conception of identity replaces a substantivist conception. In chapter 2 the notion of self as only externally related to others, as over and against them, was undermined when it was conceived as a temporal flow unified relationally rather than a thing unified substantively. Also in chapter 2, when ethnography was seen not to be the portrayal of independently existing social interactions but the result of an interactive process between the ethnographer and the social agents themselves, the dichotomy between the observer and the observed was rendered nugatory. In chapter 3 the dichotomy between culture and individual lost its grip when culture was thought of as an ongoing process of interaction rather than an entity which shaped its participants, a welter of heated conversations rather than a template or a text. In chapter 7, when an interpretation was conceived as a moment in an ongoing process in which ever fresh meaning-potentials are actualized for particular audiences in particular settings rather than as a finished product which captures an already existing meaning, then the antagonism between "interpretation in their terms" and "interpretation in our terms" broke down. And in chapter 10, when objectivity was understood as a process of intersubjective dialogue following fallibilistic principles rather than being in touch with Reality As It Is In Itself then the ground which supports the opposition between relativism and objectivism washed away.

Self, culture, interpretation, objectivity – even though these are all quite different sorts of entities, we tend to think of them as things rather than as processes and therefore to see them in opposition to other things

which supposedly confront them. But think of them as verbs rather than nouns, as ongoing activities rather than as fixed entities, and at least one of the major sources of the tendency to conceive them in dualistic competition with their supposed opposite will lose its force.

11.2 Interactionism

Nowhere has the dualism in the philosophy of social science been more critical than discussions of the relation between self and other, and the related topic of the relation between sameness and difference. In chapter 2 we saw that atomism, reinforced by the solipsism of chapter 1, pictures the relationship between self and other as one of radical distinction (figure 11.1):



Figure 11.1

To this picture the holism of chapter 3 and the relativism of chapter 4 can be added, enriching atomism by explaining why self and other should be conceived as separate: since both self and the world in which it lives are a function of the cultural paradigm and society which shapes them, each self-world must be distinct. The result is a more elaborate picture of the opposition between self and other (figure 11.2):

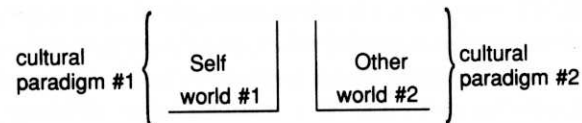


Figure 11.2

But solipsism, atomism, holism, and relativism are all deeply problematic. They overstate difference and understate what is shared and similar; they overstate the power of the group and understate the power of agency; and they overlook possibilities of interaction. We all live in the same world (though we do so differently); the identity of the self is bound up with its relations to others; and selves necessarily share certain fundamental capacities and dispositions not least of which is the capacity to act. Factoring in these considerations, a less separatist portrayal of the relation of self and other begins to emerge (figure 11.3):



Figure 11.3

However, even figure 11.3 is misleading. Understanding others (especially via the critically intersubjective procedures of social science) is deeply interrelated with understanding ourselves. Changes in our understanding of others lead to changes in our self-understanding, and changes in our self-understanding lead to changes in our understanding of others. Moreover, because forms of social life are in part constituted by self-understandings, changes in self-understandings ultimately mean alterations in the way we live. Figure 11.3 is too static; it fails to capture the dynamic quality of the relation of self-understanding and other-understanding and thus of self and other, and consequently the processual, animated nature of personal identity.

A little reflection will help point the way to improve figure 11.3. Begin with a basic category of multicultural analysis, that of identity and difference. Notice the "and": identity and difference are not antagonistic categories. They are mutually necessary for each other, dialectically interrelated both epistemologically and ontologically.

Epistemologically all understanding is comparative: there is no *self*-understanding if no *other* understanding. Only through interaction with others do I learn what is distinctive and characteristic about myself. This is why travelling in a foreign country or reading biographies of others is so *self*-revealing. For instance, you might think of yourself as "weird" in some way because you think no one else feels or acts as you. (Note that this initial judgment is essentially comparative; we are social from the start.) But then you discover others have felt or done what you do. This discovery can release you from the feeling of being peculiar or abnormal, thereby transforming your experience. The same is true in reverse. We've all had the experience of thinking that what we do or value or condemn is the norm, and then being shocked to discover that this isn't so: do you mean to say the classical Greeks practiced sodomy? This discovery changes our perception of who we are by removing our sense of moral certitude.

Identity and difference are also interrelated ontologically. To be an *x* is precisely not to be a *y* or *z*. What makes you an *x* – a Muslim, say, or a white male, or a heterosexual – is that you are not something else (a Catholic or a black woman or a homosexual). In this way your identity is shaped by your relations to entities from which you differ. A classic

example of this is the identity of those in post-colonial societies. These tend to stress that which does not derive from the colonizers – the indigenous, the local, the traditional. But in this the colonizer obviously remains an ever-present negative influence. Even the designation “post-colonial” expresses the essentially relative nature of the identity of newly emerging societies.

Because of the interrelation of identity and difference an ineradicable tension between the self of the social scientist and the other of those under study will pervade any social inquiry sensitive to cultural and social difference. This shows itself in a number of ways in multicultural social analysis:

(1) As shown in chapter 6, in understanding others social scientists must try to understand them in their own terms; but they must also use categories which go beyond those employed by those being examined.

(2) As revealed in chapter 2, the interviews, participant observations, and other ethnographic techniques by which social scientists observe others are social interactions which precipitate out certain forms of behavior. In this way social scientists are not mere observers of totally independent objects, but active shapers of that which they study.

(3) As demonstrated in chapter 7, the same is true even when no physical interaction occurs between interpreter and interpreted. Meaning itself is dyadic either because the meaning of an intentional act, text, relation, or product is in part actualized in the process of interpretation itself (when “meaning” means “significance for”), or because the rendering of others’ intentions requires translating them into the interpreter’s terms (when “meaning” means “the intentions with which”). Social scientific interpreters are thus actively engaged in that which they study even when what they study occurred long ago.

(4) Also in chapter 7, in discussing the hermeneutic circle, we learned that the relation of social scientists and those under analysis is dynamic and continuing. A new understanding of others changes social scientific conceptions; but every change in these conceptions produces changes in the way others are interpreted, triggering new forms of understanding. This interactive process is ongoing, a continual round of ramifying changes in comprehension.

Given this, social science must be “reflexive.” That is, social scientists must be aware of who and what they are, what they bring to social analysis, how they are seen by those they study, what behavior their presence precipitates (including provoking self-consciousness) and in this way altering, heightening, or dampening certain forms of emotion, relation, or

activity. Social scientists must be aware of the reverberations they create in others (and themselves), and be so in a way described in chapter 10 as “accountable.”

The relation between social scientist and those under scrutiny is thus dialectical. As we saw in chapter 3, the same is true for cultures themselves. Human history involves a constant process of interaction and exchange, of isolated groups coming into contact with one another, fighting, borrowing, altering, changing and being changed. Not encapsulation but exposure to others through trade, transfers of technology, cultural interchange, skirmishes, and even wars is at the heart of human societies and their history. Human history is in part the story of ever-evolving forms of intermingling among strangers who through often enforced association become partners or enemies or some new hybrid. Even in long-term conflicts marked by hatred and threat traditional enemies become part of each others’ identities at least negatively. The ancient conflicts between Jews and Muslims in the Middle East show this dramatically.

Far from being static, enclosed, coherent entities, cultures are crossroads in which critical skills and resources are traded, stolen, improved upon, passed along to others. Human history is as noisy as a bazaar as different ways of life clash and their participants argue, pilfer, plagiarize, subordinate, enslave, but always interact with and alter each other. This is why so much can be learned by focusing on the liminal, on borderlands, on the clashes of groups and ideologies forced together to mingle and to confront.

The notion of a “pure culture” in which some integral, isolated whole forms itself out of itself and resists the influences of others is an utter myth. All cultures result from encounters with others in which attractive or threatening novelties are taken in, digested, and made part of the culture even as they are subtly transformed, or are resisted in a way that hardens certain activities and practices which were originally “natural” and spontaneously performed but are now self-consciously undertaken. Cultures are better conceived as interactive zones of activity than as individual things.

This does not mean that the history of cultural interaction should be understood simply as a process of cultural diffusion in which new ideas are communicated from one group to another. The spread of ideas, techniques, and forms of organization always involves power between groups differentially placed. Cultural interaction is not like an ideal student study group; it includes threats, manipulation, and coercion as much as rational analysis and reflection. But nor is cultural interaction just a process of domination in which the stronger enslave the weaker (either directly through external imposition, or indirectly by managing the minds of the dominated by controlling access to the stream of ideas available to them (so-called

"hegemony"). Attempts at imposition invariably provoke resistance. As explained in chapter 3, following rules is never automatic; it requires adaptation and interpretation which opens up a space for controversy and defiance. Cultural and social interaction involves complex patterns of appropriation and negotiation among groups which differ as to their power, and the study of this interaction requires sensitivity to the interplay among intricate processes of imposition, resistance, conflict, and adaptation over time.

What occurs between cultures and societies is also to be found within single cultures or societies. As we saw in chapter 3, cultures are never simple, consistent entities. The schemes of meaning which organize social life are not fixed texts but are more like heated conversations in which rival interpretations and conceptions compete in an ongoing process of cultural formation. Societies, too, are comprised of conflicting processes of structuration in which individuals and groups with different resources and skills seek to fashion lives satisfying to them. The result is that differences within a society or a group are often as great as differences between them, and intrasocial relations are characterized by complicated patterns of arbitration and appropriation.

Even single individuals are not coherent monads separated from others. As we saw in chapter 2, the self is not a thing but a process, and not an inner process of isolated self-creation and self-direction but an interactive process in which relations with others are crucial. Selves are selves only in and through interactions with others. And just as these interactions are often conflictual, unclear, or very much of the moment, so also selves are changeable, multivocal, full of ambivalences, self-conflict, and self-alienation.

Given all this, a more dynamic and interactive picture of the relation of self and other is required than that of figure 11.3:

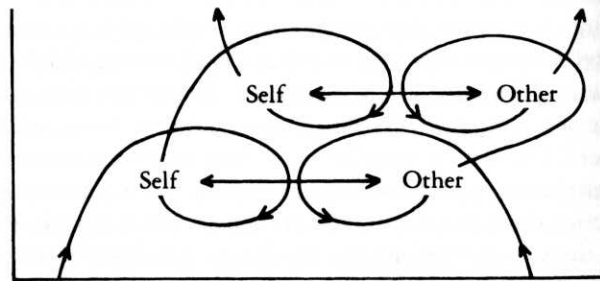


Figure 11.4

Figure 11.4 attempts to portray the essentially dialogical and essentially dynamic character of self and other through time in which the interaction among selves and others shapes the ongoing processes which are their identity.

Conceptions of social and individual identity are not of merely academic interest. Indeed, they are crucial for the multicultural politics of our time. Members of minority groups have often conceived their lives as a choice between assimilationism and separatism (notice the dualism here). For example, this way of thinking dominated nineteenth-century discussions of how Jews should relate to the dominant Christian cultures of Europe; it also continues to provide the terms for debates as to how African-Americans should relate to white society. According to this scheme the choices for minorities are those of sameness (in which they attempt to become indistinguishable from the majority), or difference (in which they attempt to preserve and perpetuate what distinguishes them as a minority). Thus assimilationist Jews in Europe were eager to shed their Jewish particularity in which differences in speech, clothing, kinds of employment, manners, food, and so forth would be obliterated; separatist Jews, on the other hand, argued that they must preserve their distinctive practices as a way of maintaining their identity derived from their unique historical heritage. According to the dichotomy presented to them the issue was either for the self and other to become identical, differences disappearing (the "melting pot"), or for them to remain segregated, differences hardened and reinforced (the "mixed salad"). Note that both alternatives assume a static, merely oppositional conception of the relation of self and other.

But there is a third alternative: interactionism. *Interactionism* is both a view of human history and culture, and an ethic recommending a certain attitude and response to multicultural exchange. As a view of human history and culture interactionism conceives of the relation of the self and other dialectically; it denies that "at bottom" the self and the other are essentially distinct and fixed, or that a particular identity means utter difference from that which it is not. Instead it insists that the identity of the self is intimately bound up with the identity of the other (and vice-versa), that self and other are constantly in flux, and that they are both similar as well as different. (Figure 11.4 is the way interactionism conceives the relation between self and other.) Consequently interactionism focuses on the points of contact between different groups, especially on those bridgeheads which serve as the basis for exchange. ("Exchange" should not be understood as always a pleasant and willing sharing; provocations, threats, and resistances are all forms of exchange which involve being forced to evaluate and sometimes to abandon or to alter old ways.)

As an ethic interactionism urges us to search not *beyond* cultural and

social differences but *within* them for new forms of identity. Interactionists believe that cultural and social exchange does not nor should not necessarily result either in obliteration of difference (as in assimilationism) or its continuation (as in separatism), but to self-challenge, learning, and consequent growth. (Continuing the food metaphor, a good symbol of interactionism is the stir fry in which various ingredients change their individual flavors and textures in the process of being cooked together, but which continue to be recognizably different entities.)

Interactionism doesn't envision the transcendence of difference (something it thinks is impossible in any case). Nor does it envision the safeguarding of the "essential" or the "pure." Instead it envisions and encourages a dynamic commingling in which parties constantly change. In this differences aren't overcome nor are they simply maintained; instead they are recognized, scrutinized, situated, challenged, and perhaps transformed. In encounters between selves and others, between similarity and difference, the choice is not to adopt one or the other, but to hold them in dynamic tension.

One must be careful here. Intercultural contact is not always benign; indeed, it can sometimes be devastating. Consider the Native Americans of North America and their "interchange" with white settlers from Europe. Here cultural contact occurred in the context of a brutal fight over land and resources in which the whites held great superiority in military power, the Native Americans were susceptible to new diseases, and in which ways of life were incompatible. The result was not a "stir fry" but a slaughter of millions and a cultural, economic, and political impoverishment for those who remained. (Of course, history is littered with these sorts of "exchanges.")

But even here the value of interactionism is confirmed, albeit ironically. The principal lesson of the ethic of interactionism is: engage, learn from, adapt – or perish. Intercultural contact – usually in the context of profound differences of power – is going to occur no matter what the participants wish. (As we have seen, even closing borders behind "iron curtains" and the like fails to keep the "enemy" outside.) The question is how to conceive of this contact and how best to respond to it.

Interactionism as a view of human history concentrates on contact among different groups and individuals, and the mutations which result. It identifies as a central task for social science to uncover precisely how earlier webs of ideas and practices internalize, adapt, exploit, or re-see what was once alien and perhaps more powerful. Interactionism as an ethic urges people to engage differences in ways that explore possibilities for productive and positive learning from each other. People can learn *about* others and *from* others, thereby not only learning about them and themselves but

also opening up new possibilities for themselves and others in the processes of engagement.

11.3 Recruitability and Engagement

How does social science understood in the terms we have been using contribute to the idea and the ideal of interactionism?

Historically the usefulness of social science has been conceived in terms of social control. Comte's famous epigram puts this conception succinctly: "From Science comes Prevision; from Prevision comes Control." We've already examined the basis for this conception in chapter 8. Science paradigmatically has been taken to be nomological in that it seeks to discover general laws of the form "If X, then Y" or "if no X, then no Y." Knowing that X-type events relate to Y-type events in these ways opens the possibility of producing or preventing Y-type events: initiate x (an increase in the basic interest rate, for example), and y will occur (a decline in the level of aggregate demand); or prevent x (do not increase the money supply and hold its velocity and the level of transactions constant), and y will not occur (a rise in prices).

Unfortunately, if what we've said in chapter 8 holds water, predictions in the social sciences are so highly circumscribed that they provide only a limited basis for social control. Social scientific generalizations expressed in intentional terms – and these comprise the vast majority of social science – hold good only within narrow cultural horizons. Those generalizations expressed in non-intentional terms (like those in sociobiology), while possibly general laws, are either so abstract or refer to elements beyond the control of social engineers so as to be of restricted use for the purposes of social management.

Historically, successful interventions underwritten by social scientific knowledge have been confined to sharply delineated time periods. This has been true even of economics, the most highly productive social science in developing causal generalizations. Economic forecasting and policy recommendations based on econometric models of a whole economy or of sectors within it have been effective but only in a highly qualified sense: they work only within limited time-frames. The longer the time period the more people's beliefs and calculations change – in part as a result of internalizing what economic planners are up to – and the more their behavior changes as a result. The upshot is that economic predictions and policies become less and less effective. In this and other areas the dream of Comte has proven to be unrealizable.

This is not to deny the worth of predictions, even if they are rough and

ready and temporally situated. But the limited value of such knowledge raises the question of other uses of social science. Fortunately, a multicultural philosophy of social science conceives usefulness in ways other than knowing how to control and manipulate. Three in particular stand out.

The first and most obvious is improving possibilities for communication. By revealing what others are doing and feeling, that is, by revealing the rules and assumptions upon which they think and act, social science makes it possible for people to engage in dialogue. Such a science helps to clarify the vocabulary and the grammar of social and psychological lives originally merely mysterious or misunderstood, and therefore essentially mute. By revealing the point of apparently strange practices, by translating the language of so-called deviants, by uncovering the concerns, hopes, and fears of those in different classes, religions, genders, or racial groups, social science can unearth the reasons for apparently odd behavior and in this way render it intelligible and thus something about which people can talk.

Moreover, significant in this is not just the ability to communicate with others heretofore silent. Learning new concepts by which to grasp the sense of others' behavior and mental lives affords new means of self-comprehension. In learning about others people necessarily learn about themselves – at least what is distinctive about their lives, and sometimes the ways they are related to groups of people they thought radically different; in these ways they may come to redefine themselves. A second use of social science is thus to increase self-knowledge. (This brings us full circle from chapter 1, in which solipsism assumed that it takes one to know one because only we know ourselves. We now see that this thesis is completely impoverishing and stultifying.)

A third use of social science is the enlargement of moral imagination. Social science can extend the reach of reason-explanations to areas of human behavior and feeling where it had previously seemed sense could not be found. (Freud is as obvious example of this, but anthropology is full of such instances.) In this way what constitutes rational or intelligible behavior is extended beyond the familiar. Moreover, others may have discovered questions you haven't even posed, or have developed ideas to answer these questions which haven't occurred to you, or have seen the point in practices and relations which have heretofore eluded you, or have constructed schemes of meaning which reveal aspects of yourself and the world closed to you. In these and other ways encountering others can enrich the possibilities for our own lives.

These three uses of social scientific knowledge emphasized by a multicultural philosophy of social science can be summarized by means of

a concept developed by Robert Kegan to discuss human development, namely, recruitability. *Recruitability* refers both to the capacity to elicit another's regard in you and your capacity to become invested in the lives of others. Recruitability varies substantially among people. Babies have an inborn ability to evoke others' interest in them, but they lose the naturalness of this ability as their bodies mature and they no longer are "cute"; moreover, they have virtually no interest in the lives of those around them (in part because they don't distinguish between what is and what is not themselves). Some adults are inept at eliciting the interest of others, and others (sociopaths and narcissists in particular) are not interested in others except as extensions of their own desires. Kegan claims that developing both aspects of recruitability – the ability to elicit others' regard and to have regard for others – is fundamental to human development, necessary to achieving mature relationships between oneself and what is not oneself.

Kegan also claims that recruitability is a power that can be developed through education in which our capacity to see ourselves as distinct but related to others who are different is heightened. This ability to see others as both distinct and yet related is precisely what is fostered by social science. By learning about the ways others are like and unlike us, and we are like and unlike them, about the nature of lives organized along different but relevant lines to those of our own, we increase the possibility of becoming engaged by others. In learning their vulnerabilities and their strengths as they confront the human exigencies of birth, death, work, sex, the search for ultimacy, and so on – indeed, in learning the different ways they conceive of vulnerability and strength – we are opened up to them. At the same time we learn how to appeal to them, how to trigger their interest in us.

Recruitability actualizes all three of the uses highlighted by a multicultural philosophy of social science: an enhanced ability to listen and to respond to others; a deepened appreciation of the ways others contribute to our own self-knowledge; and an enlargement of our moral imaginations. By activating the desire and ability to recognize and be drawn into the states and doings of others, as well as the ability to evoke in others the desire to recognize and be drawn into our own states and doings, social science can contribute to our development as mature human beings who both recognize our own distinctiveness from and our inter-relatedness to others, eager to mutually share with others in the struggle and joy of living.

A multicultural philosophy of social science also highlights values often not associated with science. Traditionally the philosophy of social science has accentuated those values implicit in nomological theorizing: clarity, or-

der, control, similarity, and generality. These *are* values, but they are not the only ones. Multicultural philosophy of social science should attune us to other values which have often been ignored when discussing social science: ambiguity, tension, change, difference, and particularity.

These sometimes neglected values of multiculturalism are nicely captured in Gloria Anzaldúa's notion of *mestizaje consciousness*. *Mestizaje consciousness* is that way of being typical of those living in what she calls borderlands – places in which people of different cultures perforce rub against one another, intermingle, and interbreed:

The new *mestiza* (person of mixed ancestry) copes by developing a tolerance for contradiction, a tolerance for ambiguity. She learns to be Indian in Mexican culture; to be Mexican from an Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode – nothing is thrust out, the good the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does she survive contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else. (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 79)

Mestizaje consciousness is not mere cultural bricolage in which various cultural elements are adopted as bric-a-brac to ornament one's personality. Instead it involves an ongoing practice of cultural negotiation in which multiple, often opposing, ideas and ways of being are addressed, appropriated, and negotiated in the course of which both they and their appropriators are transformed. Social science not only provides means by which to engage in this process of negotiation, but should instill an appreciation of the pleasures and benefits from living in a polyglot world rich with opportunities for growth and mutual learning.

Of course we must not be Pollyannish here. The gains from social science are not won without cost. In the first place, social scientific explanations are often unsettling, especially if to explain means to unmask. Participants discover the nature and limits of what they have unselfconsciously been doing, and in this way are often rendered too self-conscious, too aware of alternatives, too unsure of their activities and relations to continue them with the ease and self-assurance they once had. Social scientific knowledge forces people to live with a sense of the ultimate contingency of their arrangements, of options they now have to consider, of ways of living that need to be defended and rationalized rather than just performed. All of this confuses and disorients.

Learning about others and oneself can also produce tension and fear as much as openness and willingness to explore alternatives as a way to growth. All of us are threatened by what is different or strange, and all of us are perturbed by challenges to what we consider essential to who and what we are. Anxiety and defensiveness can result from social science;

indeed, sometimes these may lead people to become more rigid rather than less. The growth achieved as a result of an increase in self-knowledge and knowledge of others is achieved only by bearing the costs of these feelings. (Of course, one of the most important areas of research for social science in a multicultural world is exploring the ways humans can positively respond to knowledge of, and interaction with, those who are different.)

To close this discussion of the use and value of social science understood from the multicultural – and hence interactionist, if I am right – perspective, I should note that the emphasis on mutual learning which I take to be central to multiculturalism has not always been prevalent in the writings of multiculturalists themselves. Instead, they have often conceived the multicultural perspective as the “respect for difference” and they have defined this respect as the “acceptance of every culture's various practices.” Cashed out in this way respect for difference does not include or esteem mutual interchange and education.

But respect understood as unconditional mutual acceptance is a bad idea. I don't respect a student by accepting everything he or she says; students don't respect me by mimicking me. Respect demands that we hold others to the intellectual and moral standards we apply to ourselves and our friends. Excusing others from demands of intellectual rigor and honesty or moral sensitivity and wisdom on the grounds that everyone is entitled to his or her opinion no matter how ill-formed or ungrounded, or – worse – on the grounds that others need not or cannot live up to these demands, is to treat them with contempt. We honor others by challenging them when we think they are wrong, and by thoughtfully taking their criticisms of us. To do so is to take them seriously; to do any less is to dismiss them as unworthy of serious consideration, which is to say, to treat them with disrespect.

Respect means the willingness to listen, openness to the possibility of learning from, responsiveness, criticizing when necessary. Respect means to engage with intelligence, sensitivity, and openmindedness. So if respect is to be the chief value of multiculturalism then it cannot simply mean acceptance; rather, it must mean the refusal to judge peremptorily, to quickly classify by means of already determined categories, to consign to some category of Otherness by which to keep others at arm's length and thereby contain and dismiss them. Respect does not mean that everything they do is “fine for them” or beyond the pale of critical judgment.

Emphasis on the acceptance of difference is meant to express and encourage tolerance. Sometimes it succeeds in this. But sometimes it can have the opposite effect. Valorized differences can harden into Difference.

Those different from us in particular ways can quickly become an "Other" quite unlike us. This is the beginning of the downward slide which starts with "they don't think the way we do," moves on to "they don't feel pain or love the way we do," graduates to "they behave more like animals," and concludes with "they are monkeys, pigs, vermin." The first step toward hatred is the dehumanization of those who are strange, odd, unlike us; and the first step toward dehumanization is the insistence on absolute and irreconcilable difference. In this way an insistence on difference can lead to intolerance. Balkanization is a genuine danger of multiculturalism.

Respect conceived as the mere acceptance of difference stymies interaction, dialogue, and mutual learning. It enjoins us to appreciate others but not to engage them in mutual critical reflection. The end product of multiculturalism misinterpreted as mere acceptance can thus be isolation ("We're us and They're them"). This is not respect but neglect.

In a double irony, sometimes the emphasis on difference is a result of scapegoating in which we project parts of ourselves we abhor onto others who are black (when we are white), foreign (when we are American), female (when we are male), devils (when we are upright). In this case it is not really *their* difference to which we are responding but to differences *within ourselves* which we cannot accommodate and with which we deal by denying their source in us by seeing others through the hated category we despise. Here the emphasis on difference has the vehemence it does because it stems from ourselves. In this case the insistence on difference is not a way of seeing others but a way of mis-seeing them (in fact is a case of actively *not* seeing them and of seeing ourselves in a self-deceptive way). Here the emphasis on difference is not a mark of respect for others but a mark of disrespect for (aspects of) ourselves.

Because of these problems with the concepts of respect and acceptance multiculturalism is better defined by means of the concept of *engagement*. Engagement suggests that mere acceptance of differences is insufficient. Social science sensitive to the demands of living in a multicultural world is devoted to understanding the nature of these differences; it seeks to learn *why* people differ and *how* these differences sprang up over time and in what manner they *relate* to us. Attempting to explain differences is one way to begin critically appropriating cultural differences: what is the meaning of that practice? why do it this way? how does it compare with the way we do it (if we do something analogous to what they do), or why do they do this and we don't? What if they (and we) did things this way rather than that? Questions like these open up for us (and maybe for them) the possibility of recognizing that we or they may be limited or deficient in

certain ways, as well as a way of appreciating our or their strengths. Asking these questions is the beginning of the process of enlargement, of learning about others and ourselves, and of growing in the process of trying to understand others.

"Recognize, appreciate, and celebrate difference" is too restrictive and too static a slogan. "Engage, question, and learn" better captures the dynamic character of social science and the synergistic character of genuine multicultural interaction.

11.4 Summing Up

Twelve theses of a multicultural philosophy of social science:

(1) *Beware of dichotomies. Avoid pernicious dualisms. Think dialectically.*

Much social thought consists of oppositional categories – self vs. other; particular vs. universal; subjectivity vs. objectivity; insider vs. outsider; civilized vs. primitive; male vs. female; homosexual vs. heterosexual; white vs. black. The same dualistic thinking mars metatheories in the philosophy of social science: atomism vs. holism; cause vs. meaning; interpretive social science vs. causal social science; historicism vs. nomologicalism; narrative constructionism vs. narrative realism. Such thinking promotes an "either – or" mentality in which one category precludes its supposed opposite. But many categories are fluid and open. Often one side of a dichotomy depends on and invokes the other – in which case the dichotomy is subverted. Frequently an entity can be in both categories; or one category gradually slides over into its supposed opposite; or binary alternatives rest on fallacious presuppositions which mistakenly restrict the range of possible choices.

(2) *Don't think of others as Other. Conceive of similarity and difference as relative terms which presuppose each other.*

It is very easy to exaggerate the differences between self and others, between us and them, between members and non-members. But sameness and difference require each other. We are the persons we are in virtue of our relations with others; indeed, all personal identity is essentially dialogical in character. There is no self-understanding without other-understanding, and the extent of our self-consciousness is limited by the extent of our knowledge of others. To identify others as different requires that we also identify the ways we are similar.

(3) *Transcend the false choice between universalism and particularism, assimilation and separation. Instead of trying to overcome differences or hardening*

them, interact with those who differ by means of these differences with an eye toward ongoing mutual learning and growth.

A misleading dichotomy: the particular (understood to mean the ways people differ) and "the" universal (understood to mean what is common to all people (the "simply human")). Conceived in this way, the alternatives appear to be assimilationism (in which differences are obliterated and the universally human is instantiated) or separatism (in which differences are emphasized and maintained and the particular is highlighted). But this is a false choice. On the one hand, "the" universal only exists in and through particulars, "the human" only in particular human beings. On the other hand, a particular is never simply a particular, utterly different from other particulars; particulars express what is human in individual ways, though no single particular exhausts the meaning of "the human."

The notion of "the" universal reifies what is fluid and changeable. "The" universal exists in an open and changing set of particular embodiments each of which expands its content and range. Thus talk of "the" universal is misleading. Put another way: the "simply human" is not just what is common to all humans; their differences also embody their humanity and extend "the human" in novel ways. In every action and relation humans at the same moment partake of the universal and the particular.

(4) *Think processurally, not substantively (that is, think in terms of verbs, not nouns). Include time as a fundamental element in all social entities. See movement – transformation, evolution, change – everywhere.*

Much social thought reifies activities and processes, turning them into things with fixed identities: "the" self or "this" society or culture are treated as objects with definitive boundaries and essential structures. This in turn encourages a synchronic rather than diachronic conception of social interactions and practices. But social and psychological entities are activities, not things. Consequently they are better described by means of verbs rather than nouns. We talk of human beings as if they were entities like stones, and not continuous processes of activity – forgetting that "being" is a gerund, and that it refers to an ongoing process.

(5) *Insist on the agency of those being studied.*

Expressions of cultural and social life are produced by agents and their activities, not by passive objects or nodes in a mechanical system. Members of social groups are not interchangeable units whose behavior merely fulfills certain social functions or roles in a "system." Culture doesn't stamp out those who embody it like a cookie-cutter, and society doesn't determine its members the way a furnace determines heat output. Human beings appropriate their culture, they don't reproduce it. They apply old rules to new situations and in the process change the rules; they

give new point to the old, and beget the new. They learn, adapt, alter, create.

(6) *Recognize that agents are agents only because they are situated within systems which simultaneously empower and limit.*

Agents are not free floating. Without their culture they would have no being and no capacity. Agents are also subject to all sorts of constraints imposed on them by others and by the systems of meaning and power within which they think and live. Culture and society both limit and enable – and sometimes enable by limiting.

(7) *Expect more light from whatever human act or product you are trying to understand.*

Interpreters wish for closure. They want to settle once and for all the meaning of actions and their products (texts, buildings, institutions, and so on) in which they are interested. Some have sought to satisfy this wish by discovering the meaning an act or its products had for those who did or made it. However, even in discovering others' intentions they must be translated into terms meaningful for interpreters, and as interpreters change so will these terms. Moreover, interpretation cannot stop with authors' intentions. The meaning of intentional entities also refers to their significance, and significance arises out the interaction between them and their interpreters. Consequently meaning itself changes over time.

(8) *Do not conceive of societies as integral monads isolated from one another, or others simply as members of a particular culture or group. Attend to borderlands in which different peoples rub up against one another and change in the process. Focus on the hybrid. Pay heed to internal stress, to resistance, to struggle, to the failure of the center to fix and control those in the periphery. And see ambiguity, ambivalence, contradiction everywhere.*

A great temptation in social science is the lure of clarity, fixity, order. Social scientists sometimes seek to discover the essence of that which they are studying, hoping thereby to comprehend it. Thus they are particularly prey to the equation of one culture = one society = one set of constitutive meanings: the notion of society as an "organic unity." But this notion is mistaken. Even the most apparently homogeneous societies are marked by important internal differences (of religion, sex, class, caste, ethnicity, and so on). Even the most isolated societies are influenced by foreign ways (especially today, impacted by the global economy and the cultural ecumene).

(9) *Acknowledge the past's role in empowering you. But recognize the ways you make the past what it is.*

The past is not past: it lives in the present, in the resources tradition provides to its bearers, in the effects which continue to ripple through time long after an event has occurred, in the minds of self-conscious creatures

bent on understanding who they are by grasping where they have been, and in the genetic explanations of social scientists and historians. In this way the past changes as the present changes. Nor is the present just the present: to be an act every act anticipates a projected outcome and looks backwards to what preceded it for its motivation. The present thus contains within itself the past and the future.

(10) *Attend to the historical and cultural embeddedness of social scientific knowledge. Expect that what we know today will be outmoded by conceptual and other changes in our own lives as well as the lives of those we study.*

Another great temptation of social science is the aspiration to universality, sameness, and repetition. Here explanatory success is conceived as the discovery of constantly recurring causal patterns, general laws fundamental to the workings of all humankind (rather like the cosmic patterns of the heavens). But generalizations about intentional phenomena so described are inescapably historical in character, and the general laws that can be discovered about human doings will inevitably be at such an abstract level that much of what social science wants to know cannot be answered by these general laws.

(11) *Don't hide behind an illusory façade of neutrality to convince yourself or others that you are objective. Acknowledge the intellectual equipment you bring to the study of others; be aware of the ways you change those with whom you interact; and make your assessments of what others do explicit. But always do so in a way that is responsive to the evidence as best you can determine it, and accountable to those whom it is writing for and about. Seek out the criticism of others.*

The objectivity of science has typically been defined as the separation of scientists from their field of study – separation physically as not interfering with it; separation emotionally and evaluatively as being neutral with respect to its doings; and separation intellectually as being without preconceptions regarding it. But this is an outmoded conception of objectivity. No social scientific investigation can occur without deploying prior conceptual resources; all ethnography involves the interaction of observers and observed, each changing the other; and neutrality can often preclude the sorts of critical judgments necessary to understand others. Objectivity requires fairness and accountability, not neutrality; it is a way of conducting research, not a mirroring of Reality As It Is.

(12) *Acceptance or celebration is not enough. Engage others.*

Advocates of multiculturalism frequently claim that the scientific study of others will lead to a respect of those who are different – to an appreciation of the integrity of alien ways of life, and a celebration of their difference from us. But this is too static and too distanced. In the first place, distinctions of “we” and “them” are fungible, relative, and dynamic. In the second place, everything others do is not acceptable (any more than

is everything “we” do). Sometimes understanding others demands that we criticize them and/or ourselves. And what we gain from them should not be limited to mere “appreciation”: in coming to understand them we open up the possibility of learning about others and ourselves, of questioning and borrowing, of connecting with them, all to the end of altering and enlarging ourselves and them.

Appreciation, agreement, consensus – none of these is the goal. Interaction and growth are the ends of social science understood from a multicultural perspective.

Further Reading

An important inspiration for this chapter is Kegan (1982).

The anti-dualist, dialectical position urged in this chapter derives from Dewey (see Dewey (1938); Bernstein (1966)), and behind Dewey, Hegel (see Hegel (1977) and Taylor (1975)). See also Bernstein (1971); Putnam (1978; 1981; and 1992, part II); and Rorty (1991). Basseches (1984) presents the psychological dimensions and requirements necessary for dialectical thinking. See also Senge (1990) for an interesting application of this to business planning. Rich (1979) offers a provocative feminist reconstruction of education and rationality along interactionist, dialectical lines.

Another source for non-dualist thinking is post-structuralism which is devoted to deconstructing binary oppositions and replacing them with open fields of “contestation.” See Lyotard (1984); Derrida (1973a; 1973b; 1981); Rosenau (1992); and Seidman (1994).

For a discussion of multiculturalism, see the essays collected in Lemert (1993), especially part V, and in Goldberg (1994). See also Said (1978 and 1993), Appiah (1992), Anzaldúa (1987), West (1993), Weeks (1991), and the essays collected in Fuss (ed.) (1991) and in Ferguson, Gever, Minh-ha, and West (eds) (1990).

On the dangers of multiculturalism, see Schlesinger (1992) and the fascinating Finkelkraut (1995).

For a discussion of the political meaning of difference, see Taylor (1992), Young (1990), Benhabib (1992), and Walzer (1992 and 1994).

MacIntyre (1989) discusses the border status of persons in two rival linguistic communities, the problems of translation, and possible ways for these problems to be resolved.

Interactionist approaches can be found in a number of social sciences. For an attempt to describe gender differences in moral thinking in a way which attempts both to do justice to these differences and yet to transcend them, see the classic Gilligan (1982). (Note that Gilligan's work is not always read in this way, that it is sometimes read as proposing an alternative that is wholly different from the dominant masculine way of moral thinking. I think this is a dualistic reading of non-dualistic work.) The work of the anthropologist Marshall Sahlins (1985 and 1995) is very much in line with the interactionist approach. Sahlins studies the ways conceptual schemes and social practices of one people change

with a new encounter, especially the arrival of a colonial power. For an interesting use of interactionist thinking applied to the experience of the exile, and particularly composers exiled during World War II, see Goehr (forthcoming). For a deconstruction of the category "woman," see Butler (1990). The strategy pursued by Butler in which traditional categories are opened up, called into question, subverted as a way of opening up the possibility of newer forms of activity, relationship, and identity is what I envision social analysis doing when carried on within an interactionist perspective.

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