Deconstructing the Paradox of Modernity: Feminism, Enlightenment, and Cross-Cultural Moral Interactions

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ABSTRACT

Feminist ethics has questioned the limits of and possibilities for the recognition of moral diversity within the Enlightenment legacy of Western rationality and modern universalism. I pursue this question by reading two contemporary theorists, Jürgen Habermas and Seyla Benhabib, who express a strong commitment to the recognition of diversity within a reason-centered reading of the Enlightenment. Despite their strong commitments, however, neither Habermas nor Benhabib can ultimately maintain a balance between the poles of egalitarianism and universalism within the framework of Western rationality. As a result, they fail to recognize diversity fully. Through these readings, I suggest a feminist ethics which subversively appropriates the Enlightenment tradition. This feminist ethics de-centers rationality and dis-locates modernity in order to find an alternate path toward the fulfillment of Enlightenment promises of emancipation.

THE EMANCIPATORY IMPULSES OF THE WESTERN ENLIGHTENMENT—the imperative to respect all persons and the valuing of freedom and equality—provide the moral impetus for much of Western feminist ethics and politics.[1] The Enlightenment heritage, however, has also

[1] I use the terms "modern" and "Western" to refer to a tradition of thought and action derived from the European Enlightenment, though I recognize that not all persons and communities located geographically in the "West" stand in the same relationship to this tradition. Thus, traditions which exceed the boundaries of the "Western" may be external traditions or may represent a diversity internal to the "West." Similarly, I use "modernity" to refer to the development of this specific tradition; hence, non-modern traditions and cultures may co-exist with the time period generally termed "modern." Moreover, these traditions may or may not follow the developmental path of the modern

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been widely criticized by feminists as reinscribing biases which block rather than facilitate emancipatory politics (Eisenstein 1981; Jaggar 1983). In particular, the modern legacy of the Enlightenment in its dependence on Western forms of rationality and universalism often seems to conflict with the feminist imperative, developed from the practice of feminist politics (but also in line with modern imperatives of respect and equality), to recognize the diversity and complexity of women as moral agents. This diversity is created by differences within and among persons, and a correlative complexity is created by the contradictions and power relations which crisscross societies and communities (Moraga and Anzaldúa 1983; Lorde 1984). Postmodernism, however, has not proved to be a simple escape from the problems of modernism for Western feminists—in part because postmodern discourses have not necessarily been more congenial to feminist concerns and in part because insofar as these discourses are "post"-"modern," they are in many ways dependent on the modern. Thus, the Enlightenment legacy remains one with which Western feminists must grapple.

Why does the Enlightenment legacy create contradictions for feminist ethics and politics? Many feminist critics have rightly located the problem in an inherent gender-bias in Enlightenment thought and its implicitly adult, privileged, male moral and political agent (Pateman 1988). There are even deeper problems, however, which are based on the ways in which Enlightenment-derived ethics attempts to resolve the contradictions of enacting universalist and egalitarian imperatives in a diverse and complex moral world where not all agents accept Western ethical warrants. The promise of the Enlightenment was that conflict, specifically the inter-religious conflict sparked by the Reformation, could be resolved while maintaining universal respect for diversity. The light of reason, a reason supposedly universal to all humanity, was to fulfill this promise. Thus, reason was thought to provide the key to maintaining a unified moral world, despite religious diversity.

Nonetheless, the promise of the Enlightenment remains unfulfilled as Enlightenment ideals are accompanied by gender domination and a historical period of Western domination in the form of colonialism and imperialism. This coincidence of the modern Western Enlightenment,

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West and, hence, the non-modern cannot be assumed to be either pre- or post-modern. Thus, a tradition within the geographic boundaries of the "West" and the temporal boundaries of the "modern" may still be non-Western and/or non-modern, and various feminisms developed both outside and within the "modern" "Western" world may not be implicated in Enlightenment in the ways that I will discuss.

which promises emancipation, and a historical period of domination provokes the suspicion that these historical processes are co-implicated. Are gender domination and Western domination simply the betrayal of enlightenment or is enlightenment a contributing factor to, or even an ideological legitimation for, domination? Are the contradictions raised by this historical coincidence internal to enlightenment?

I will explore these questions by considering the work of two theorists, Jürgen Habermas and Seyla Benhabib, who are committed to enlightenment as a source of potential emancipation. Both are further committed to developing the Enlightenment heritage so as to recognize diversity. By exploring their ability to maintain commitments to diversity and to the central Enlightenment premises, particularly the central role of reason, it is also possible to assess the limits and possibilities of such commitments. Thus, a close reading of these two authors surfaces possible answers to the questions raised by the contradictory nature of the Enlightenment legacy.

1.   Jürgen Habermas: Rationality and Modernity

1.1   *Ethics in modernity*

Both Habermas and Benhabib recognize that moral reasoning can be constructed so as to exclude diversity and complexity. To that end, they have both been critical of certain aspects of the Western ethical tradition. In particular, they have criticized neo-Kantian and Hegelian-Marxian ethics for construing subjectivity as in some sense monological: either, as in Kantian ethics, the moral subject is an individual, reasoning alone to arrive at moral decisions or, as in Hegelian-Marxian ethics, the moral subject is a collective, but still singular, subject of history. In contrast, Habermas has attempted to incorporate philosophically the intersubjective nature of moral life by developing a dialogical model of moral subjects as participants in communication.[2] In moving from the monological to the dialogical, Habermas attempts to develop a universally applicable theory of communicative action by reconstructing the assumptions underlying all acts of communication. He distinguishes among types of communicative acts, each corresponding to a form of rationality. A particularly

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[2] I focus primarily on *The Theory of Communicative Action*, which contains both an ethics of communicative action and a theory of modernity, because I am interested in the connections between Habermas's ethics and his reading of modernity. Since the publication of this work, Habermas has further elaborated a theory of discourse ethics (1990, 1993).

critical distinction is that between *strategic actions,* which are ori-
ented toward influencing the outcome of events, and *communicative
actions,* which are oriented toward reaching understanding among the
participants.

The ethics embedded in Habermas's theory implies that ethical
questions can only be legitimately resolved through communicative
action. While conflicts may actually be resolved through strategic ac-
tions, such as the exercise of force, such resolutions are not legitimate.
When participants in communicative action submit only to the "force
of the better argument," the resolution of conflict is legitimate. By
configuring legitimacy in this manner, Habermas attempts to recog-
nize the multiplicity of moral subjects while still protecting the central
role of reason as that which can maintain the unity of the moral world
without erasing diversity. Despite its dialogical nature, communica-
tive action still may result in a single reasoned moral conclusion as
determined by the "force of the better argument."

While Habermas does not recognize the "force" in the "force of the
better argument" as implicated in domination, he does recognize that
domination can be effected through language. Legitimating, rather
than dominating, interaction through language can occur, however, in
a social space which allows all persons to articulate their conceptions
of reality freely and equally. In this space of intersubjectivity, free-
dom and equality are guaranteed by the requirements of reason-
giving with the purpose of reaching understanding. Because reasons
must be given to validate any claim which is questioned by any party
to communicative action, an eventual consensus based on reaching
understanding can be achieved, a consensus which can be trusted as
the result of rational interaction rather than as an inscription of domi-
nation.[3] Such a consensus is changeable since knowledge is accumu-
lated over time and new reasons may come into view. Until such a
shift in knowledge raises new reasons, however, a moral consensus
developed through communicative action can be trusted as legitimate.
With rationally achieved consensus as the ultimate moral arbiter,
Habermas argues that moral imperatives can be developed which are

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[3] Sometimes Habermas uses the terms "consensus" and "reaching understanding"
interchangeably (1984–87, 2:126); sometimes consensus appears to be the result of
reaching understanding (1984–87, 2:145). Benhabib is critical of the latter. She em-
phasizes instead the continuing *process* of moral conversation; with such a shift toward
process, "The emphasis now is less on *rational agreement,* but more on sustaining those
normative practices and moral relationships within which reasoned agreement *as a way
of life* can flourish" (Benhabib 1992, 37–38, emphasis in original).

universally applicable and historically (rather than metaphysically) constituted.

Habermas's theory of communicative rationality based on intersubjective action is intertwined with his theory of modernity. Modernity has opened possibilities for public discourse through increased abilities to name and discuss problems in a non-ideological manner. The modern period allows for this advance in non-dominating, communicative rationality in conjunction with increasing efficiency in social organization because of the differentiation of types of rationality. Habermas has distinguished between those realms of society geared toward efficiency (that is, directed by strategic rationality), termed "systems," and that realm organized by communicative action, termed "the lifeworld." In order for a government to be legitimate, the public sphere must include a lifeworld realm of communal decision-making which should be oriented to reaching understanding. The directives developed through the process of communicative action would then be carried out most efficiently by organized systems of action. As long as the realms remain differentiated, increasing efficiency through the modern period should not lead to increasing domination.

1.2 *Two reformulations of Weber's paradox of modernity*

Despite the advances of the modern period, Habermas, like Max Weber, comes to recognize a paradox in the story of rationalization. Specifically, for Habermas, even as processes of rationalization allow for emancipatory communication, they may simultaneously (and, therefore, paradoxically) restrict or create new limits for such communication. I focus on the moment of paradox because it is the point at which the possibility of contradiction internal to enlightenment surfaces.

Habermas formulates this paradox as a restatement of Weber's thesis that modern rationalization leads to an unlivable "iron cage" (Weber 1958, 181). For Habermas, rationalization *per se* does not lead into the trap of the iron cage. Rather, it is the invasion of the lifeworld, a realm which should be organized through communicative action, by systems of social organization geared only to success that makes modern rationalization appear unlivable. Habermas names the problem of a public sphere narrowed by systems imperatives, which he understands as the central problem of the modern period, the "colonization of the lifeworld." If the lifeworld could be protected from systems invasion, it would provide the basis of a livable rationality:

> Thus there is a competition *not between the types of action* oriented to understanding and to success, *but between principles of societal integration*—between the mechanism of linguistic communication that is oriented to validity claims—a mechanism that emerges in increasing purity from the rationalization of the lifeworld—and those de-linguistified steering media through which systems of success-oriented action are differentiated out. The paradox of rationalization of which Weber spoke can then be abstractly conceived as follows: The rationalization of the lifeworld makes possible a kind of systemic integration that enters into competition with the integrating principle of reaching understanding and, under certain conditions, has a disintegrative effect on the lifeworld [Habermas 1984–87, 1:342–43, emphasis in original].

The paradox may run deeper than systems invasion of the lifeworld, however. Another restatement of the Weberian paradox shows that the effect of modernization itself—not just systems invasion—has paradoxical elements:

> The paradox, however, is that the rationalization of the lifeworld simultaneously gave rise to *both* the systematically induced reification of the lifeworld *and* the utopian perspective from which capitalist modernization has always appeared with the stain of dissolving traditional life-forms without salvaging their communicative substance. Capitalist modernization destroys these forms of life, but does not transform them in such a way that the intermeshing of cognitive-instrumental with moral-practical and expressive moments, which had obtained in everyday practice prior to its rationalization, could be retained at a higher level of differentiation. Against this background, images of traditional forms of life . . . retained the melancholy charm of irretrievable pasts and the radiance of nostalgic remembrance of what had been sacrificed to modernization. But more than this, modernization processes have been followed, as if by a shadow, by what might be called an instinct formed by reason: the awareness that, with the one-sided canalization and destruction of possibilities for expression and communication in private and in public spheres, changes [sic] are fading that we can bring together again, in a post-traditional everyday practice, those moments that, in traditional forms of life, once composed a unity—a diffuse one surely, and one whose religious and metaphysical interpretations were certainly illusory [Habermas 1984–87, 2:329–30].

In this second formulation, we see that paradox is created as the corrosive effects of modernization on traditional forms of life follow modernity "as if by a shadow." Habermas understands the loss to modernization as a loss of unity. Nostalgia for traditional life-forms is a longing for a unified social world and supporting worldview (including its "illusory" religious and metaphysical interpretations) which ex-

isted prior to contact with the processes of social differentiation which accompany rationalization. Habermas rejects this nostalgia because of its basis in non-rational "illusions," but there is also the "instinct formed by reason"—that the loss of traditional life-forms is a morally relevant loss which should be addressed. The progression of this second statement of paradox makes it appear that if unity could be reformulated "at a higher level of differentiation," then the "communicative substance" could also be "salvaged" despite the dissolving of particular forms of life. "Chances are fading," however, that such salvage can be achieved. For Habermas, this is a paradoxical result of rationalization because rationalization both causes the loss and provides the utopian perspective from which we can see that the loss is morally relevant.

What Habermas fails to articulate in this delineation of paradox is the loss not only of traditional unity in forms of life, but the correlative loss of multiplicity. The multiplicity and agency of "traditional life-forms" are elided, as they are either dissolved through modernization or attempts are made to salvage traditions in a new, modern, rationalized form. This either/or binary of development or salvage elides the possibility that non-modern/non-Western persons and communities might act differently in relation to processes of modernization.

1.3 *Critiques of Habermas's theory of modernity*

Habermas may be led to paradox precisely because his theory of modernity elides diversity. Habermas's possible, albeit unlikely, road out of paradox is the salvage and reformulation of the communicative substance of traditional life-forms; yet, the extension of domination through both development and salvage can be seen *within* Habermas's theory of modernity by reading for the loss of diversity. If neither development nor salvage can recognize diversity, then Habermas is bound to face paradox because the rationality which commits us to diversity, when extended through modernization, also destroys diversity.

Benhabib has convincingly argued that in telling the story of development within modernity, Habermas fails to recognize diversity when he "naturalizes" the path of development by turning this story from an empirical—and therefore verifiable—research hypothesis into a philosophical narrative which has normative implications already written into it.

> Habermas reverts to the discourse of the philosophy of the subject at those points in his theory when the reconstruction of the species competencies of an anonymous subject—humanity as such—does not remain merely an empirically fruitful research hypothesis but assumes the role of

a *philosophical narrative* of the formative history of the subject of history. Much like Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, reconstruction then begins to speak in the name of a fictional collective "we" from whose standpoint the story of history is told. This fictive subject appears both as the subject of the past and of the future; it is empirical and normative at once [Benhabib 1986, 330–31, emphasis in original].

Thus, there are two crucial points at which Habermas's narrative elides diversity. First, it tends to naturalize the history of the species, rather than maintaining its constituted and, thus, contingent character. This naturalization presents the future as an apparently natural outcome of developmental processes; thus, the future loses the possibility of difference as an underdetermined and contingent future becomes dogmatically overdetermined in the story of development. Second, the naturalization of developmental history asserts humanity as a singular "we" which is the subject of this story. Thus, Habermas's naturalized reading presents modernization as the singular developmental path of a homogenized "we" whose unity is theoretically assumed, rather than empirically and historically established. Benhabib argues, to the contrary, that any collective "we" must be historically constituted: "This shift to the language of an anonymous species-subject preempts the experience of moral and political activity as a consequence of which alone a genuine 'we' can emerge. A collectivity is not constituted theoretically but is formed out of the moral and political struggles of fighting actors" (Benhabib 1986, 331). Habermas's assumption of a homogenized "we" also elides the possibility of diverse responses to modernity and alternative paths of "development."

Habermas's appeal to "salvaging the communicative substance" of traditional cultures "at a higher level of differentiation" is simply the other side of a developmental story which is structured so as to deny diversity. Anthropologist James Clifford (1989), among others, has argued that the effort and hope to "salvage" traditional cultures is as much a part of the dynamics of Western domination as is enforced and induced modernization and development. As is apparent in the Habermasian text quoted above, the salvage paradigm focuses on an idea of traditional or authentic cultures which are frozen in time, a time before penetration by the modern West, which the West now hopes to save in spite of itself. For Habermas this moment is one of longed-for unity. By freezing "traditions" at a moment before modernism and assuming a singular developmental path through modernization, the interdependent approaches of development and salvage miss the multiple ways in which various cultures both within and outside of

the West have responded to modernity. Thus, Clifford's argument
suggests that Habermas's evocation of the fading hope of salvaging
communicative substance and creating a post-traditional unity is it-
self part of the modern paradigm's inability to recognize multiplicity.
Clifford suggests that contemporary non-Western cultures are "newly
traditional," dynamically responding to contact with the West without
either "dissolving" or allowing for the "salvage" of communicative sub-
stance within a Western framework. Clifford's argument suggests
that recognition of multiplicity in relation to modernity necessitates
expanding the boundaries of this Western framework. Habermas is
unable to do so and, as a result, is led into paradox: modern reason
tells us that we should respect diversity, but blocks modern agents
from fulfilling this commitment because its framework is too narrow.

Is this paradox necessary? Habermas faces paradox because the
moral development of modernity is based on the "increasing purity" of
the mechanism of communicative action through rationalization, as
indicated in the first statement of paradox. This purification is cre-
ated by the exclusion from the moral point of view of the concerns of
material life, such as embodiment, desire, particularity, and history—
the very concerns which make for diversity and complexity.
Habermas is able to recognize concerns of embodiment and desire only
when these concerns are restricted to "countermovements" which can-
not challenge the dominance of rationalized morality.

> In each of these spheres [of differentiated rationality—truth, justice, and
> taste/aesthetics], differentiation processes are accompanied by
> countermovements that, under the primacy of one dominant aspect of va-
> lidity, bring back in again the two aspects that were at first excluded. . . .
> Within universalistic ethics the discussion of the ethics of responsibility
> and the stronger consideration given to hedonistic motives bring the cal-
> culation of consequences and the interpretation of needs into play—and
> they lie in the domains of the cognitive and the expressive; in this way
> materialist ideas can come in without threatening the autonomy of the
> moral [Habermas 1984–87, 2:398].

The autonomy of the moral, an autonomy based on communicative ra-
tionality, depends on an exclusion which can only be relaxed once the
moral point of view has been established. The moral concerns of mate-
rial life must always take place *within* this pre-established frame-
work. This structure reveals a possible source of internal
contradiction (leading to paradox) within the Enlightenment heritage.
The dual commitments to modern (communicative) rationality and
equal recognition of diverse persons and cultures are not commensu-
rate commitments but, rather, are hierarchically ordered. Recognition

of diversity can only happen within the bounds of communicative rationality. Moralities which fulfill commitments to diversity through a focus on material life may be recognized, but only within this hierarchical structure.

The exclusion of embodiment and desire from moral discourses has been widely criticized by feminists as reflective of a typical Western gender division and a source of male bias in Western ethics. The connection between the exclusion of material concerns from morality and the exclusion of women from public life is well documented (Eisenstein 1981; Landes 1988). In Habermas's schema, a dominant public-sphere morality is established through this exclusion; then the concerns which have been excluded are readmitted to serve, without challenging, the dominant ethics. Thus, the concerns of material life, frequently women's concerns, are always maintained within a structure established on the basis of their initial exclusion. Moreover, this structure parallels Habermas's understanding of modernity in relation to non-modern cultures. Non-modern cultures are promised recognition, but only once they enter a discursive space which has been previously structured by modern Western rationality. Thus, the space of intersubjective communication is not a free and equal meeting place of diverse persons and cultures, but is rather hierarchical space structured by the modern Western tradition.

Habermas has defended his theory of discourse ethics against this charge in his more recent work, arguing that the practice of exclusion is necessary only to establish the moral point of view and is not an exclusion from moral life as a whole (1990, 195–215). It is not his purpose to prescribe a particular understanding of the good life; rather, he proposes a moral theory which allows for the legitimate resolution of moral conflicts among persons who hold different conceptions of the good. Thus, he argues that the exclusionary structure of rationalization is undertaken specifically to protect diversity:

> It is incumbent on moral theory to explain and ground the moral point of view . . . [not] to make any kind of substantive contribution. By singling out a procedure of decision making, it seeks to make room for those involved, who must then find answers on their own to the moral-practical issues that come at them, or are imposed upon them, with objective historical force [Habermas 1990, 211].

Thus, according to Habermas, a broad view of moral life, such as the one advocated by feminists, is only excluded from the grounding of the moral point of view, not from moral life as a whole.

1.4   *Memory: reconstructing the moral point of view*

Habermas's defense, which narrowly defines the role of discourse ethics, is not ultimately successful, however. Discourse ethics is intended to accomplish its narrowly defined task in a legitimate manner by taking into account arguments among diverse and complex persons. If, however, the decision-making procedure involves the denial of differences, then it fails in its legitimating purpose by denying the very diversity which necessitates such a theory.

In order to demonstrate that moral concerns that are developed outside the narrowly defined moral point of view are critical to the maintenance of the intersubjectivity, I would like to consider yet another paradox of communicative ethics. In *Science, Action, and Fundamental Theology*, Helmut Peukert has formulated the question of diverse subjects in relation to communicative ethics in terms of a paradox presented by the relationships among persons in the past, present, and future. If the story of modernity is a developmental story which will ultimately lead to emancipation, what is the relationship between past victims of oppression, present persons who struggle against oppression, and those liberated in the future? If all past suffering were resolved in future liberation, then the specificity of the past would be lost. If, however, this suffering is not completely resolved, can the future truly be liberated? How can future generations be happy in their liberation and yet remember the unresolved suffering of past generations? Is the happiness of the future dependent on a forgetfulness, a denial, of the suffering of the past? If so, the difference of the past from the present and future—its "conclusive, irretrievable loss of the victims of the historical process" (Peukert 1984, 209)—is dissolved into the subjectivity of the present and future. A similar problematic can be delineated with regard to contemporaneous differences in subject position. The suffering of others must be recognized in its distinctness, yet if allowed to overwhelm chances for happiness by those who do not suffer, or who suffer differently, the distinctive subject positions of intersubjectivity are dissolved.

Peukert responds to this paradox theologically (1984, 210 ff.). While not excluding the theological, I would like to consider whether this paradox can be resolved within the boundaries of the ethical by expanding these boundaries to include the type of material concerns which are excluded by Habermas from the moral point of view. If these concerns are necessary to recognize the intersubjectivity of past-present-future relations, in particular the difference of the past from

the present and future, then Habermas's exclusions for the sake of a reasoned theory of the right are unsuccessful.[4]

As Peukert notes, action in the present to end domination is a necessary response to past suffering, a response that is articulated in the imperative "Never again!" In order to ensure the integrity of those persons who have experienced suffering, the work of remembering a now unchangeable past is also necessary. Unchangeability marks the distinctiveness of the past in relation to the present and the future, a distinctiveness which must be preserved even within the moral point of view if it is to allow for diversity across time. Remembrance of past suffering alone, however, presents the additional possibility that the distinctiveness of past and present will be lost as the pain of the past overwhelms the present. Thus, remembrance alone carries dangers of dissolving the diversity of moral subject positions by precluding the possibility of happiness for persons in the present.

If diversity is understood to carry with it material concerns, however, remembrance or the recognition of those who suffer differently does not have to preclude happiness. The work of mourning provides a material form of moral labor in addition to remembrance which can lead to healing and empowerment in the present (Santner 1990, 30). Mourning implies an embodied process which must be experienced, as well as discussed. While it may be partly discursive, it may also involve aspects of spectacle, enactment, and ritual. Andreas Huyssen has suggested that mourning needs to include a social working through of emotions. Mourning is itself a social process that requires solidarity as well as the recognition of difference among persons. Eric Santner, in a study of post-Holocaust Germany, concludes that "[m]ourning without solidarity is the beginning of madness" (Santner 1990, 26). While mourning can never completely resolve past hurt, it can enable the co-existence of happiness and remembrance (Huyssen 1986, 97). Thus, this material activity must accompany the recognition of diversity through remembrance if that diversity is to be maintained.

If mourning is necessary to intersubjectivity in relation to those who suffer (whether in the past or present), and if mourning cannot be successful without embodied practices and social solidarity, then the moral point of view cannot protect intersubjectivity within the bounds of communicative rationality as established by Habermas. Rather, a

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    [4] Habermas briefly responds to Peukert in *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* (1990, 210–11) by stating the limits of grounding the moral point of view. I am suggesting, however, that Peukert's delineation of paradox challenges the maintenance of intersubjectivity even within the narrow limits which ground the moral point of view.

multiple set of practices which push the boundaries of the moral point of view become necessary to intersubjectivity and the recognition of diversity.

In offering this constructive revision of the moral point of view and intersubjectivity, I am expanding a critique of Habermas and gender-bias made by Nancy Fraser (1987). Fraser argues convincingly that Habermas fails to recognize the patriarchal values of lifeworld rationalization and, hence, misdiagnoses gender domination as a border skirmish between system and life world. An analysis of gender domination alone cannot explain the paradox of modernity, however. Both male domination and Western cultural domination, through the exclusion from the moral point of view of embodiment, desires, and history—an exclusion paralleled in public life—stand at the center of the paradox of modernity. This exclusionary practice explains why Western modernity, grounded in Enlightenment imperatives of freedom and equality, has historically been shadowed by non-freedom and inequality in many forms. The dominations which have been consistently intertwined with the move to modernity point to areas of life which have been "purified out" by processes of rationalization. Only an alliance across these various sites of critique can effectively explicate and address the "paradox of modernity."

Habermas does not recognize the need for such an alliance because his systematic explanation for the paradox of modernity—systems invasion of the lifeworld—subsumes multiple sites of critique. He, thus, loses sight of diverse responses to modernity, including opportunities for resistance to the disintegrative aspects of modernization. These opportunities become apparent only when moral life is conceptualized in such a way as to dis-locate modernity.

Thus, in responding to the paradox of modernity, I share, in one sense, Weber's pessimism over against Habermas's attempt to retrieve lifeworld rationalization from paradox. Even in lifeworld rationalization, diversity and complexity are lost in the process. In another sense, I am more optimistic than is Habermas in his concern that processes of "purification" are necessary, but lead to paradox. My position is that the "purification" of communicative rationality is undesirable and unnecessary for moral life. By developing an ethics that includes in the moral point of view those concerns which are traditionally excluded, it is possible for Western feminists to appropriate the promise of Enlightenment ideals without becoming trapped in Enlightenment paradoxes. This enrichment of the moral point of view would de-center the role of reason as other aspects of moral labor necessary to the maintenance of intersubjectivity cease to be marginalized. It would also dis-locate modernity as the singular framework for

the ethical. While the modern heritage provides promises of universalism and egalitarianism, thus leading to a commitment to intersubjectivity, it is not necessarily processes of modernization that can realize these promises.

2.   Seyla Benhabib: Solidarity within a Reason-Centered Enlightenment Framework

Benhabib establishes the starting point for a feminist reconfiguration of the Enlightenment heritage, arguing that its promise depends on moving the moral concerns of material life from margin to center. Benhabib maintains a commitment to intersubjectivity and diversity as the necessary conditions for emancipation. She also remains committed to a reason-centered reading of the Enlightenment. Thus, exploring her texts will allow further consideration of the role which rationality and modernity play in the contradictions between the promises and the historical enactments of enlightenment.

2.1   *Transfigured communicative rationality*

In order to maintain her commitment to diversity, Benhabib argues that it is essential to place at the center of moral reasoning those material particularities which Habermas allows only as countermovements. This inclusion of particularity establishes two poles of moral reasoning, both of which are necessary to the moral point of view. The two poles, representing respectively the standpoint of the "generalized and the concrete other" (Benhabib 1987), imply two types of moral community, one a "polity of rights and entitlements" and one "an association of needs and solidarity" (Benhabib 1986, 351). Unlike Habermas, whose texts sit ambivalently between these two poles/communities as he embraces the former without fully grasping the potential of the latter, Benhabib maintains both of these poles in complementarity and tension within communicative rationality.

Returning formerly excluded particularities to the center of the moral realm requires a rewriting of the story of moral development and a change in the meaning of universalism. For Habermas, universalism is the ability to adopt the stance of the generalized other as *the* moral point of view. For Benhabib universalism means the ability to adopt the stance of both the generalized *and the concrete other.* Habermas fails to see the necessity of the standpoint of the concrete other, in part because of his naturalization of moral developmental processes. In his naturalization of the past and overdetermination of the future, Habermas assumes one version of universalism—communicative ethics—must be the outcome of moral development.

Benhabib argues, however, that the choice among various post-conventional universalisms, such as those of John Rawls, Alan Gerwirth, or Kurt Baier, is, like the future, underdetermined (1986, 332). She maintains that the choice among universalisms is dependent on "a certain anticipatory utopia, a projection of the future as it could be" (1986, 331).

Although this utopian moment is found implicitly in Habermas's final stage of development, its full realization transfigures the developmental process. According to Habermas, moral discourse ultimately "permits determinate groups and persons, in given circumstances, a truthful interpretation both of their own particular needs, and more importantly, of their common needs capable of consensus" (Benhabib 1986, 332, citing Habermas 1973, 252). The assumption of "common needs capable of consensus" must be transfigured, however, in order not to revert to a pre-determined "we," waiting only to be discovered. Just as the "we" must be historically constituted, so must "common needs." Benhabib argues that actions and needs are "interpretively indeterminate," meaning that "human actions and the intentions embedded in them can only be identified by a process of social interpretation and communication in the shared world" (Benhabib 1986, 136).

Social interpretation for Benhabib implies a "moral transformative process" by which concrete others speaking from their particular positions are able through a process of communication to transform their particular needs to generalizable needs without merely submitting to the force of dominant social actors. It is not just that in recognizing the claims of concrete others, particular interpretations of needs are transformed to recognize an already existing, but obscured, harmony of generalizable interests; rather, the needs themselves are transformed. Hence, generalizable interests are created through the social process of needs transformation rather than through a Habermasian commitment to the "generalized other."

The intersubjective process of needs transformation represents both a fulfillment and a transfiguration of the tradition of modern rationalist ethics because particular needs, which are traditionally separated from the public sphere of generalized common needs, are brought into public processes. The inclusion of the standpoint of the concrete other in the moral realm of public communication allows for a mutual critique of each standpoint from the perspective of the other, a critique which is lost if either standpoint is the singular focus of the moral point of view. The stance of the concrete other calls into question "the needs which drive the actions through which rights are exercised [and] the concept of entitlement which the *ethos* of a right-bearing and invariably adult male implies" (Benhabib 1986, 336). The stance of

the generalized other provides a critique of a singular focus on the concrete by raising questions of legitimacy. For Benhabib, adopting the stance of the generalized in relation to the concrete other provides criteria of validity and, thus, distinguishes communicative ethics from those postmodern ethics which focus only on the "local."

In order to provide criteria of validity, the process of needs interpretation must take place through communicative rationality, which then guides interpretation and ethical action based on interpretation. Benhabib, once again, transfigures the tradition of critical theory in order to establish the relationship between truth and ethics in the process of needs interpretation. Previous critical theorists restricted the realm of needs to the private sphere because of the difficulties presented by attempts to distinguish between true and false needs (Benhabib 1986, 336–37). In the absence of such a distinction, individual needs must be configured as personal preferences and removed from public discourse. In order to overcome the problematic split between public and private, Benhabib argues that a distinction between true and false needs is possible if needs are considered not to be individual impulses, but "fundamentally linguistic and social in character." She explains, "False needs would then be viewed as those aspects of inner nature which resist verbalization and articulation, leading instead to distorted communication and action. . . . Epistemically, we cannot say that *all* needs that permit linguistic articulation are true, but only that those which do *not* permit linguistic articulation cannot be true" (1986, 338, emphasis in original). This distinction between true and false needs allows the process of needs interpretation to enter the moral and public realms and, in so doing, extends the Enlightenment promise of emancipation. Those persons and needs which have been condemned to silence in moral and public discourses can now participate in the communicative rationality which promises autonomy in moral action and emancipation in public life (1986, 341–42). In other words the level of repression toward "inner nature" which is traditionally required in Enlightenment ethics has been lowered (1986, 336).

2.2 *Does Benhabib's transfiguration go far enough?*

The transfiguration of enlightenment offered by Benhabib is crucial for the possibility of a feminist appropriation of the Enlightenment heritage because it addresses the connection between the exclusion of women from participation in public discourse and the repression of inner nature, needs, and affect. In relying on articulation as the point of distinction between true and false needs, however, Benhabib main-

tains certain aspects of the Enlightenment heritage in a manner which limits the emancipatory potential of this transfiguration. In effect, Benhabib depends on a form of the "repressive hypothesis," and by addressing the problem of domination through repression without addressing the problem of domination through the incitement to tell the "truth" of oneself (Foucault 1980–86, 1:58–63), Benhabib's transfiguration of the Enlightenment is still insufficient to a full recognition of diversity.

Perhaps the most trenchant and persuasive of those critics (Kofman 1985; Kristeva 1987) who address the problem of domination through the incitement to speak, is Gayatri Spivak in her groundbreaking article "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988).[5] Spivak is specifically critical of Michel Foucault (1977), who, despite his critique of the "repressive hypothesis," also depends on the articulation of "subjugated knowledges" as a resistance to domination. Spivak questions whether the "subaltern" can merely step forward and express her "true" self (as a subjugated knowledge) or whether the request (demand?) that she speak herself does not merely induce her to become the subject of an existing and dominating discourse. In order to show how the inducement to articulation can enact and extend domination, Spivak reads case histories of British concerns for the "true" Indian woman during British colonial rule of India. By interviewing, recording, and counting "the" Indian woman and her oppression by Indian men, particularly through the practice of *sati* (transcribed by the British as "suttee" [Spivak 1988, 297]), the British were able to legitimate and extend colonial domination in the name of protecting this woman from oppression (Spivak 1988, 300–301). On the basis of Indian women's "speech," thus codified, British officials were able to claim an opposition to the oppression of Indian women which justified colonial rule, but which did little, if anything, to address women's oppression.[6] These claims were legitimated through appeals to Enlightenment-based universalist ethics. On the basis of such claims in relation to Indian women's speech, the British offered Indian women a form of recognition which also elided the complex dominations which they faced—both patriarchal and British colonial. The question which Spivak's text raises for Benhabib's model of truth-as-articulation is whether the requirement that needs must be articulable in order to be

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[5] Spivak develops the concept of the "subaltern" from Antonio Gramsci's work on the "subaltern classes" (1978) as it has been extended by the Subaltern Studies Group (1982; 1983).

[6] There are, for example, currently debates in the literature about whether the practice of *sati* increased or declined during the colonial period (Yang 1992).

considered true contributes to making communicative rationality "a rational understanding which, by the very act of its recognition of the other, also efface[s] the other" (Radhakrishnan 1992, 91, citing Chatterjee 1986, 150).

In her more recent text *Situating the Self*, Benhabib further develops the dialogic model of ethics as a conversation among selves whose identities are articulated through a "narrative unity" (1992, 198). This development of her theory also fails to address the problem of domination through the inducement to speak, because it fails to address the possibility that the production of a coherent identity through narrative unity allows diverse persons the opportunity to enter modern life, but at the cost of sacrificing the differences which initially led to their exclusion. Biddy Martin has analyzed this phenomenon in relation to lesbian autobiographies in the form of "coming out" stories. Martin argues that while "coming out" stories are an important avenue of visibility and empowerment for lesbians, they also tend to produce lesbian identity within a singular and narrow framework. In order to "come out," the individual must fit her story into a preexisting framework which structures the story so as to produce the lesbian ending. This framework was established, however, in relatively empowered discursive settings primarily by white, urban, middle-class lesbians. For "others" to become visible as lesbians through this story means that in their visibility as lesbians, "other" aspects of their "selves" are elided. Thus, this politics of articulation can effectively deny both diversity and complexity, as diverse lesbians appear to have the same story, while the complex inter-relations among possibly divergent stories become invisible.

Martin's example raises to Benhabib's texts a question similar to that raised by Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?": Does the requirement of articulation in Enlightenment-based communicative rationality, whether in the form of truth-as-articulation or narrative unity, allow for the full recognition of diversity in a complex world? Or, does it offer a form of recognition which is as likely to obscure differences and extend domination as it is to fulfill the promise of autonomy and emancipation? My suggestion is that Benhabib's transfiguration of communicative ethics to include discourses of needs and solidarity is crucial in that it addresses one important site of domination in the modern world: the suppression/repression of needs and affective relationships, a domination which is effected in order to sustain the purity of the moral realm and the division between public and private. Benhabib's transfiguration does not go far enough, however, to fulfill either the Enlightenment promise of emancipation or her own commitment to diversity, because it fails to address a corollary site of

modern domination—the discursive production of subjectedness through inducements/enforcements of "others'" articulations within the framework of modernity.

2.3   *Modernity and universalism*

Recognition of this second locus of domination brings into question the meaning of universalism within modernity. Specifically, it raises the question of how communicative rationality works in relation to non-modern and/or non-Western "others," because it questions whether everyone can communicate equally within the structure of this particular rationality. For Benhabib the modern norms of rational communication, egalitarianism, and universalism provide a coherent moral framework. In order for modern communicative rationality to be egalitarian, it must provide universal moral recognition, meaning respect for all persons in their diversity. Benhabib hopes to hold together the poles of universalism and egalitarianism by maintaining the perspective of both the concrete and the generalized other within the moral point of view; yet, because of the way that universalism works within her theory, she sometimes resolves the tension between the general and the concrete in favor of the general. Universalism has often been a stumbling block to egalitarianism, and Benhabib's claims on behalf of communicative rationality as a universal framework of validity ultimately undermine the recognition of diversity within her theory.

Like Habermas, Benhabib holds that communicative rationality is universally valid. Benhabib argues, however, that Habermas's justification of this claim is an unsubstantiated strong justification, when only a weak justification is possible. As part of her argument, Benhabib explicitly raises the question of judging other cultures:

> Suppose, however, that one were to raise the following objection: whatever one's evaluation of this process, it may be said, the argument concerning the binding nature of reflexivity begs the question. Certainly self-questioning, the justification of one's standpoint through reasoned argumentation, analysis of implicit and explicit presuppositions, and the like have been ideals in Western culture since its inception, but in what sense can they be universalized and applied in judging other cultures? [1986, 272].

To "the critic who accuses us of begging the question in positing the bindingness of reflexivity," there is, she concludes, only one possible answer:

> [Y]es indeed, there is a circularity in our argumentation, but this is not a
> vicious circularity. It would be a vicious circle only if presuppositionless
> understanding, an understanding that could divest itself of it own contex-
> tuality, were also possible. Since, however, this cannot be the case, it fol-
> lows that reflexivity is binding for us. To want to divest ourselves of it
> may be like wanting to jump over our own shadows [1986, 274].

Thus, reflexive rationality—along with the other "constituents of com-
municative rationality like decentration . . . and the differentiation of
value spheres"—can be said to have "universal significance and valid-
ity" in the weak sense that they are the products of Western civiliza-
tion of which Westerners cannot divest themselves (1986, 279). There
are three ways in which the constituents of communicative rationality
can be said to be binding on Westerners. First, we must "[confront]
other cultures" through "an act of translation" in which "it is inevi-
table that the characteristics of our own worldviews, decentered and
reflexive as they are, will come into play" (1986, 272). Second, "the
very fact that we can ask the question of whether reflexivity is a bind-
ing criterion implies that we are already in a reflexive circle" (1986,
272). And, "[f]inally, these structures are 'irreversible' in that the fu-
ture we would like to see can only be realized by fulfilling their poten-
tial" (1986, 279).

   Certainly, the characteristics of Western rationality form the cul-
tural context for those of "us" who inherit this tradition in "our" inter-
actions with "others." Moreover, "we" cannot simply divest "ourselves"
of this tradition, nor can we jump to a purified and contextless interac-
tion. I also agree that the emancipatory promise of the Enlighten-
ment—a future of universal egalitarianism—is a future which I would
want. This argument does not, however, support the claim that "in
confronting other cultures" we must depend on Western rationality to
"judge" these cultures. Cross-cultural interactions bring together two
contexts which are both alike and different. The space of interaction
between these cultures is underdetermined by any one culture alone.
Only if we accept some "naturalization" of the story of modernity, such
as the naturalization for which Benhabib criticizes Habermas, can we
assume that Western rationality will form the framework for judg-
ment of other cultures. In the passages quoted above, this naturaliza-
tion is apparent as Benhabib's claims slip from the "we" of those
persons who recognize themselves in the promise of enlightenment to
judging "others" as if they, too, should recognize themselves in this
legacy and its "reflexive circle." As in Habermas's story of modernity,
the "we" loses its specific historical referent as all persons are norma-
tively brought into the framework of the Western Enlightenment tra-

dition, whether or not they empirically recognize themselves in that tradition.

Naturalization is further apparent in Benhabib's characterization of the processes of modernization and rationalization in *Situating the Self*:

> I see even this postmodern moment as being situated within the larger processes of modernization and rationalization *which have been proceeding on a world scale since the seventeenth century, and which have truly become global realities in our own.* In this sense interactive universalism is the practice of situated criticism for a global community that does not shy away from knocking down the "parish walls" [Benhabib 1992, 227–28, emphasis added].

By using the passive voice here, Benhabib erases both the historical contingency of these processes and differences among subject positions in relation to modernity or the Western tradition. The relationship between Western ethics and "others," as established by Benhabib in these passages, seems perilously analogous to the history of Western colonialism and imperialism dedicated to bringing others within its framework by forcibly crossing and frequently redrawing political and cultural boundaries. While various persons and cultures affect and are affected by Western modernization and rationalization (so that "traditional" boundaries cannot be simply reasserted), by failing adequately to address different subject positions *vis-à-vis* processes of Western rationalization and modernization, Benhabib has failed to show that these processes have simply "become" global realities or form the basis of a (singular?) global community.

Benhabib contends that Western rationality can form the basis of moral interaction in a global community because "non-Westerners" could question any aspect of this rationality, but the loss of diversity in Benhabib's naturalization of the Western tradition becomes apparent at those points in her texts where Western universalism is read as resolving the tension between the general and the concrete in favor of the general. This resolution tends to create a singular framework within which all other ethics must interact and be judged. At the end of *Critique, Norm and Utopia,* Benhabib presents her vision of the possibilities for a communicative ethic which recognizes both a polity of rights and entitlements and an association of needs and solidarity. In reference to communities of needs and solidarity, Benhabib writes:

> Such communities, in my view, are not pregiven; they are formed out of the action of the oppressed, the exploited, and the humiliated, and must be committed to universalist, egalitarian, and consensual ideals. Tradi-

tional ethnic, racial, and religious communities are neither necessarily nor primarily such communities of needs and solidarity. They become so only insofar as they uphold the ideal of action in a universalist, egalitarian, consensual framework [1986, 351].

Here we see an example of communicative rationality granting recognition to others while simultaneously effacing them. The problem is not that Benhabib argues against the pregiven nature of such communities; her argument that the "we" of social action is not pregiven forces us to recognize diversity within any social group. Nonetheless, she fails to acknowledge the complex relationship between the socially structured categories of identity which frequently inform oppression—such as race, ethnicity, and religion—and the communities and movements which resist this oppression (Mohanty 1987; Lugones 1990a). The central problem, however, is highlighted in the final sentence of this passage. For a community to gain full recognition as an association of needs and solidarity, it must enter a universalist, egalitarian, consensual framework. Here, ethics developed at sites "other" than the Enlightenment tradition are to be judged by modern Western standards. Such judgment, however, belies the coherence of the very list which Benhabib invokes as a standard. If all ethics, including potentially non-modern ethics, must enter its framework, is the universalism offered by Benhabib truly egalitarian and consensual?

This problem is evident in *Situating the Self,* where Benhabib clearly articulates the point at which the general overtakes the concrete and Western rationality is established as the singular framework, *within which* "other" ethics can—and morally must—freely and equally articulate themselves and rationally reach agreement. In describing the care perspective, for example, Benhabib points to its "genuinely moral concerns," provided it operates within the framework of Western universalism: "Considerations of a universalist morality do set the constraints *within which* concerns of care should be allowed to operate and they 'trump' over them if necessary . . . and considerations of care should be 'validated or affirmed from an impartialist perspective'. . ." (Benhabib 1992, 187, quoting Blum 1988, emphasis added). Benhabib uses the example of a Mafia family to demonstrate an internal world of care and responsibility which needs "Kantian universalism" to show why it is immoral in its actions toward outsiders. The ethics of the Mafia family or any particular family may be "trumped" by modern Western universalism and must also

justify themselves in terms of this universalism (Benhabib 1992, 188).[7]

Benhabib criticizes Habermas for lacking sufficient grounds to claim a determinative role for the universalism of communicative rationality over against other modern Western universalisms. Nowhere, however, does she give any consideration to universalisms developed outside the bounds of the modern Western tradition. As Judith Butler (1991) points out, Ashis Nandy (1983), looking specifically at India, has argued convincingly that multiple universalisms have been produced outside of the West. I have argued elsewhere (Jakobsen n.d.) that the ethic presented by Katie Cannon in *Black Womanist Ethics* (1988) is a specific universalism. In this text, Cannon connects claims for the ethical specificity of Black womanist ethics with a universalism developed in the Black church tradition. Cannon argues that Black women's struggles to enact their vision of agency can contribute to a universal struggle for human dignity and wholeness. This universalism is distinct because it is grounded neither in a universal notion of rationality which supersedes other forms of truth, nor in a Euro-American Christianity which understands its revelation as a unique and dominant form of truth. This ethic represents a difference which is internal to the West and which challenges the framework of Western modernity; as James Evans (1990) argues, the Black Church tradition has been different from and "ill at ease in the modern world" (207) and has been "within yet outside of the discursive arena of European-American Christianity" (217). Similarly, Kwame Anthony Appiah describes some contemporary African texts as "misleadingly postmodern" in order to signal their difference from European modernism and post-modernism (1991, 356–57). Appiah argues that postcolonial African morality rejects Euro-American postmodern relativism through an appeal to non-modern universals, such as a universal imperative against suffering, developed from historical experiences of suffering. Appiah argues that this moral imperative is non-modern because of its refusal of modern rationalism as the grounds for such a claim.

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[7] My assumption that Benhabib would maintain Western universalism as the "trump" card in interactions with other ethics (not just the care perspective) is based on her claim for "interactive universalism" as relevant for a "global community" (1992, 227–28) and her definition of universalism as "impl[ying] a commitment to accept as valid intersubjective norms and rules of action as generated by practical discourses, taking place under the constraints specified above [the constraints of discourse ethics as modified by Benhabib] . . ." (1992, 185). These constraints, then, establish the framework for discourse among ethics.

What if we were to substitute these non-modern and/or non-Western universalisms for the Mafia in Benhabib's example of how we judge particular ethics? Would modern, rationalized universalism "trump" African-American Christianity or African non-modern universals? Is Western rationalized universalism the only universalism which is not also particular? By failing to consider the claims of these non-modern and/or non-Western universalisms, Benhabib has not shown why Western values should be considered the practice of a "global community" rather than one particular set of values within a diverse and complex world.

Benhabib's commitment to a reason-centered reading of the Enlightenment makes it unsurprising that she sometimes resolves the tension between the general and the concrete and at these points establishes Western rationality as an overarching moral framework. The loss of such a framework raises the possibility that cross-cultural conflicts cannot be morally adjudicated. We are returned to the possibility that cross-cultural conflict can be addressed only through "wars of religion." For both Habermas and Benhabib, however, the necessity of maintaining this overarching framework has led to paradox or contradiction, as the demands of Western universalism have pushed both theorists away from their commitment to egalitarian recognition of all persons and cultures in their diversity. The fact that two theorists as committed to diversity as are Habermas and Benhabib are led to these moments of non-recognition raises the serious possibility that this paradox or contradiction is internal to the Enlightenment tradition. This conclusion is further supported by the parallels between theoretical non-recognition of diversity and its historic enactment in colonialism, imperialism, and gender domination.

3.   De-Centering Rationality and Dis-Locating Modernity

Given these paradoxes and contradictions, how are Western feminists to respond to the Enlightenment legacy? Is it possible to develop an emancipatory politics and, simultaneously, to challenge the constraints and problems of rationalization and modernization? In conclusion, I would like to suggest that Western feminists who wish to draw on the emancipatory heritage of the Enlightenment might resist contradiction and paradox by furthering the transfiguration begun by Benhabib. A subversive appropriation of the Enlightenment tradition which maintains its promises, while altering the traditional path toward their fulfillment, may open new opportunities for emancipation. In order to demonstrate the potential of a feminist appropriation of the Enlightenment tradition, I will briefly pursue the possibilities

offered by the path of de-centering rationality and dis-locating modernity.

One possible appropriation of the Enlightenment would interpret Western universalism as a specific universalism which presents Westerners with the ideal of universal and egalitarian respect, but which does not overdetermine interactions with "others." This alternative configures Western universalism as one among forms of universalism, thus opening the possibility for new forms of moral interaction among universalisms and across cultures. This alternative reading of the meaning of Western universalism points to a further reconfiguration of the Western tradition in terms of the relationship among universalism, egalitarianism, and consensuality. At the end of *Critique, Norm and Utopia,* Benhabib presents these values in a horizontal list, because, for her, they are a coherent set. As I have argued, however, the relationship between universalism and egalitarianism has presented a repeated problem for the Western tradition, with the strictures of Western universalism frequently undercutting its egalitarian promise as "other" ethics must operate within its framework. In fact, the very meaning of Western egalitarianism is equal treatment within this framework, thus contributing to the corrosive nature of modernism and Habermasian paradox, because there is no site from which to address equal treatment beyond the boundaries of Western tradition. Reconfiguring Western universalism as a specific universalism offers the possibility of maintaining universal egalitarian treatment as a norm without establishing the meaning of equal treatment in Western terms alone. Here the meaning of equal treatment becomes something like an open sign (Butler 1993; Chopp 1989) which will be determined not by Western rationalism alone, but by the interaction of this rationalism with other moral agents and ethics. Through this reconfiguration, Western rationalism is de-centered in that the promises of equal treatment and emancipation are no longer dependent only on the extension of Western rationality. Modernity is also dis-located in that the story of modernity no longer provides the narrative framework of moral development for all persons and cultures. The developmental model is itself called into question because of its tendency to "naturalize" a particular ethic as the *telos* of moral development.

Such a reconfiguration of the role of rationality and modernity requires a non-traditional understanding of cross-cultural interaction. María Lugones's (1990b) concept of " 'world'-travelling" provides a possible starting point. "World"-travelling describes a method for women from different cultural locations to come to know each other and to learn to work together without necessarily "knocking down parish walls." Lugones suggests that societies comprise multiple incommen-

surate "worlds," and we need a set of relational skills to travel effec-
tively between and among these "worlds." The "worlds" are not rigidly
or completely separate, so interactions in one "world" may affect other
"worlds." Lugones argues that, in the United States, the skills of
"world"-travelling are learned forcibly by women of color and other
persons marginalized from the mainstream, because for a woman of
color such skills represent the necessary "flexibility in shifting from
the mainstream construction of life to other constructions of life where
she is more or less at home" (1990b, 395). Lugones argues that Anglo
women and others who live primarily in the mainstream can work to
acquire these skills.

The distinction between Benhabib's vision of cross-cultural interac-
tion and Lugones's is that for Lugones there is no single discourse
which can provide the framework for interaction across cultural
boundaries. Rather, persons and interactions shift depending on the
"world" in which they take place. Lugones distinguishes "world"-
travelling from projects of translating moral claims made in one moral
world into the terms of another, a project which Benhabib argues is in
some sense necessary. The translation model proves inadequate be-
cause complex cultures are not entirely translatable and because
"worlds" stand in unequal power relations to each other. The act of
translating can extend domination by shifting the meaning structures
of less powerful "worlds" into the terms of the more powerful. To
travel to another "world" is to learn aspects of that culture which have
meaning only in that particular context and to begin to understand
both that culture and one's own culture in the terms of that particular
"world."

"World"-travelling implies an alternative vision of both individual
subjectivity and intersubjectivity. The plurality of "worlds" in multi-
cultural societies leads to a plurality of identities which persons ani-
mate in various "worlds." To enter another "world" is in a sense to
become another person, as one comes to know oneself and others dif-
ferently by moving into a different "world." Those aspects of "worlds"
which are incommensurable and not fully translatable make for multi-
plicity of identity in the "world"-traveller. Because the self is not com-
pletely separable from the context of social interaction, parts of the
self shift along with the context. While persons may not be able to
enact fully the identity or claims of one "world" in another, they do
carry aspects of multiple identities into various "worlds." The process
of "world"-travelling requires the constant enacting of ambiguities be-
cause these structural constraints on identities can never simply be
overcome. Thus, Lugones's vision of multiple identities contrasts with

Benhabib's notion that the individual must integrate multiple narratives of self.

"World"-travelling as a method of cross-cultural interaction implies that intersubjectivity demands a recognition of the multiplicity in "worlds" and in persons, because we cannot fully know or recognize one another if we see each other only as we are in one "world." Thus, Lugones writes, "The reason which I think that travelling to someone's 'world' is a way of identifying with them is because by travelling to their 'world' we can understand *what it is to be them and what it is to be ourselves in their eyes*. Only when we have travelled to each other's 'worlds' are we fully subjects to each other" (Lugones 1990b, 401, emphasis in original). In intersubjective interactions, the moral subject carries her norms with her into interaction, but these norms enter into and are changed by other "worlds," rather than framing or "trumping" norms from those "worlds." To use Benhabib's example, while Western feminists may move and act in a circle of reflexivity, this reflexivity is not a sufficient basis on which to judge other cultures. Moreover, there is no single framework for interaction among "worlds," no set of norms which necessarily "trump" others. Thus, Enlightenment norms are not lost as possible elements of critique as they enter into, rather than frame, critical interactivity.

Lugones argues that this multiplicity and ambiguity opens new moral possibilities by allowing for resistance to otherwise reified categories and structures of domination within and among "worlds." For example, Anglo women who learn to see others and themselves in "worlds" which are not structured by Anglo dominance may learn new sources for resistance in "worlds" which are structured by this domination. Thus, those aspects of multiplicity which Benhabib interprets as leading to the loss of moral possibility, Lugones interprets as implying new moral possibilities. For example, the dissolution of a completely coherent self-narrative (or identity) into an ambiguous and internally multiplicitous set of narratives (or identities) implies, for Lugones, new opportunities for resistance to domination. Analogously, the loss of a singular framework for resolving moral differences does not necessarily dissolve, and may create, moral possibilities, including possibilities for non-violent conflict resolution, because it allows for recognition and interaction among "worlds" which would be elided by a singular framework.

With such an alternative method of cross-cultural interaction, Western rationality is de-centered and modernity dis-located. Western modernity no longer frames the world historical stage, and Western rationality is no longer the singular site for respectful interaction across differences at the center of this stage. Rather, both rationality

and modernity become aspects of the play of cross-cultural interactions. In this way, Western feminists can make use of the Western heritage, particularly its promises of emancipation, egalitarianism, and universal respect for all persons, but the meaning of these terms will be reconfigured. Thus, for Western feminists, emancipation which is both universal and egalitarian may be appropriated as an ideal toward which we strive, but it is just one particular ideal among many which contribute to the movements and struggles necessary to its fulfillment.

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