EPISTEMIC JUSTICE AND EXPANDING HORIZONS IN CROSS-CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

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ABSTRACT

This thesis uses the framing of the liberal-communitarian debate in political philosophy to examine the significance of collective hermeneutical resources for the possibility of cross-cultural understanding and justice. A large part of this project simply involves sketching the connections between disparate conversations in political philosophy, ethics, and epistemology. After laying out the liberal-communitarian debate in Chapter I and justifying my choice to follow a communitarian perspective, I consider the relationship between identity, recognition, justice, and language drawing from the theories of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Charles Taylor (Chapter II). In Chapter III, I take on the particular injustices that might be associated, in a cross-cultural context, with the failure to recognize the epistemic authority of or provide hermeneutical resources to a marginalized group using Miranda Fricker's framework of epistemic injustice. I conclude by considering objections and solutions in the context of the example of climate challenges, suggesting that Gadamer's notion of the merging of horizons, expanded to embrace embodied practices, might allow for epistemic justice and cross-cultural understanding.

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INTRODUCTION

Daily life presents us with many situations in which we must interact with those who are different from us. These differences can occur at all levels: that of the family, the city, the state, or even across nations. At the extreme, we encounter people who speak languages different from our own, and who come from cultures with entirely different norms and social and political structures from ours. Differences of this latter sort, and their significance for questions of justice, will be the focal point of this thesis. I will designate this as the sphere of cross-cultural communication or understanding.[1]

From one perspective, it might seem like dialogue and understanding are *always* possible, always occurring. At each of these levels I have cited, some commonality can be found amidst any difference, whether it be the shared experience of physical space for co-habitants of a city or the following of shared rules and symbols (and often languages) within a country or religion. Furthermore, Cosmopolitan cities exist on an upward trajectory; people from all corners of the world can converge in many of the world's largest cities and live in increasingly peaceful conditions. Many nations also seem to be figuring out how to get along. Some might point to the 'successful' navigation of the Cold War as an indication of such ability. Others might point to globalization itself as evidence: if the flow of goods and services across the globe doesn't indicate acceptable communication and understanding, then what does? However, the challenges, as well as the conceptual frameworks, that hover in the background of much

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[1] In debates in political philosophy, political science, and other fields, this domain might often be called 'international relations', or otherwise employ the term 'international'. I prefer to refer to cultures because I think these boundaries, though more difficult to draw, more accurately reflect the salient features that present challenges to dialogue. As relatively recent conflicts in Rwanda and Kosovo, to name just two examples, deep disagreements can arise from largely cultural factors within the borders of a nation. Even when such differences do not lead to bloody conflicts, tensions often boil within nations, as well as between them, often because of differences which might be captured by the term 'cultural'.

cooperation between societies and nations illustrate the importance of considering such questions.

Furthermore, history does not demonstrate seamless cross-cultural contact. In his discussion of contact between cultures, Richard Shapcott raises the example of the conquest of America. He illustrates how various conquerors' approaches to the denizens of the new world could be characterized as either "annihilation" or "assimilation" (Shapcott 14)—however, none of the conquerors found a way to respect or understand the culture and way of life of the Aztecs, the indigenous people. Even attempts at assimilation first required viewing the indigenous people not as they actually were, but rather as misguided souls, "potential Christians" (19) who already led simple, almost godly lives and simply needed to be shown the way. History is replete with similar tales of indigenous people either losing their lives or their ways of life in the encounter with a conqueror from a radically different culture.

Today, though little traditional 'conquest' creates an abrupt, unexpected, and bloody cross-cultural encounter, myriad newer issues illustrate the ongoing importance of cross-cultural cooperation. Quite possibly, this cooperation must, in fact, encompass most of the world. Importantly, the challenges I briefly explore in this introduction both are in part *caused* by people from divergent backgrounds and geographic areas and, more importantly, involve complex and morally-laden issues which require close cooperation between different actors (most likely, in this case, nations, NGOs, and other groups). Thus, solving such issues is both precipitated by cross-cultural forces and requires cross-cultural communication in order to achieve any semblance of a resolution.

The first example is that of climate change. Anthropogenic climate change can mostly be attributed to more developed nations, which have been emitting greenhouse gasses since the industrial revolution. Of course, rapidly-industrializing nations also contribute to this problem.

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However, the detrimental aspects of climate change (increased extreme weather events, rising sea levels, droughts, famines, and so on) are not necessarily felt by those who have contributed most to the harm. The solution to climate change, insofar as it is possible to solve, must involve a variety of tactics from many different nations. Science itself plays a crucial matter in dictating what sort of action needs to be taken to curb carbon emission and stop warming. At the same time, Different cultures have different paradigms for relating to their lived environments; furthermore, different economies can bear different burdens with regard to the cost of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. However, unilateral action will, without a doubt, not be enough to solve the crisis: people from varied backgrounds must decide, together, how best to respond to the scientific evidence and policy possibilities.

Immigration and migration—in particular that of refugees fleeing violence, famine, or other horrors—poses another challenge for the global community. In current day Europe and America, refugees from Syria, Yemen and other majority-Muslim countries are often the scapegoat of xenophobic, nationalistic rhetoric. Political leaders downplay the massive humanitarian crisis, instead emphasizing the risks that such people pose to their populations. The vast power differential between those fleeing unlivable circumstances and those protecting their own comfortable lives is striking. This discourse connects up with age-old strands of narrative in the US, where immigrants of all sorts, from the Irish to Italians, as well as Jewish refugees during World War II, have been decried as unwelcome, posing a threat to American values and the American way of life. Occasional eruptions of violence against refugees and immigrants, alongside unfortunate outlier cases of terrorist attacks or related problems originating in the migrant community, fuel a narrative about the impossibility of coexistence.[2]

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[2] Some of my thoughts about the challenge presented by refugees for international relations theory and especially continental thought have been influenced by Michael Dillon's essay "The Scandal of the Refugee: Some Reflections on the 'Inter' of International Relations and Continental Thought," though ultimately the substance of his arguments is not used here. (Dillon)

Each of these examples have profound moral dimensions. Most basically, this is because what is at stake is the survival of some (in fact, many) human beings. Considering appropriate solutions demands attention to matters of justice: who should bear the costs of reducing emissions or sheltering those fleeing from war? Should we simply consider who is best-equipped to address the issue? Should we consider who has contributed to it the most? These basic questions are interlaced with more complicated ones. Even if we can agree, broadly, about who should take responsibility for climate change or the refugee crisis, the question of how to go about addressing the issue requires attention to detail.

This points to the second feature: namely that cultural practices and ways of life might appear to be deeply intertwined with both the existence of and the potential solutions to many problems that require cross-cultural cooperation. Fundamentally, addressing climate change might require changes in our way of life. But which changes should be made? And to whose way of life?

Different cultures necessarily interpret one another's practices from their respective perspectives, at least initially. The possibility of 'correctly' understanding another culture, and what that means, is unclear. Is it possible to fully and correctly understand the language and values of another culture in any or all cases? Is a convergence of views about a given topic possible, or are different cultures incommensurable?

The question of immigrants and refugees concretizes the meeting of different ways of life. Much modern discourse about refugees—specifically those from majority-Muslim countries—centers around the supposed threat of terrorism. Some politicians and theorists even theorize this meeting as a clash of fundamentally incompatible cultural outlooks and ways of life.[3] Even more radically, some right-wing nationalists suggest that certain peoples are fundamentally

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[3] See, for example, S.P Huntington's "The Clash of Civilizations" narrative.

unable, presumably by virtue of some ethno-genetic disposition, to adapt to a so-called 'western, democratic' way of life.

Furthermore, these challenges have significant epistemological dimensions. Certain experts hold knowledge about climate change and its possible solutions; however, narratives in the mass media and public consciousness about the issue varies greatly across demographic groups and geographic areas. Some individuals have direct experience of climate change through impacts like rising sea levels and unbearable heat waves and droughts; others experience colder than usual temperatures which, although actually caused by the same climatological impacts, do not fit so easily into the traditional 'global warming' paradigm.[4] Others experience no changes at all.

In the case of immigrants and refugees, the situation is a bit more complicated. Government officials (in theory) have data about the individuals they let in to the country. The public is left to trust their authority. Narratives swirl around the sufficiency of government procedures, the contribution or detriment that migrants provide to society, and so on. Some individuals have firsthand experiences that lead them to trust immigrants (specifically, contact with upright citizens who happen to originate from another country); others have no experience; a few probably have negative experiences.

A challenge in this discussion is the constant shift between the level of the collective and the individual. In a sense, this is the heart of my discussion. Different perspectives on how much (if at all) to weigh the relevance of culture or community depend upon how one conceives of this distinction. Because this is not a policy paper, I will not focus on diplomatic proceedings

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[4] In fact, because the impacts of anthropocentric climate change are so varied, encompassing warming in some areas and cooling in others, scientists and public officials pushed to shift from the language of 'global warming' to 'climate change' in the 90s and early 2000s.

between nations. Instead, I will zero in on the extent to which the individual brings the collective modes of reasoning and systems of value of her culture to a given interaction.

The issues at stake here touch on topics most obviously in political philosophy. However, there are also deep resonances with philosophy of language, ethics, metaethics, and epistemology. This thesis will begin with the political dimensions of this problem, but will quickly hone in on the linguistic and epistemic dimensions of the problem. This exploration will allow me to further explore links between the individual (a single person's knowledge) and that of the the collective (that is, through the language that is shared).

The first chapter of this thesis will explore the liberal-communitarian debate, and then delve into communitarian views of the self, and how, through language, context-specific normative frameworks can arise. The aim of this first chapter is both to situate my project within a larger debate, and to introduce concerns related to recognition and its relevance intercultural understanding and justice. The remainder of my thesis will argue for and explore the insights that can be developed by linking a communitarian perspective with philosophical hermeneutics and the notion of epistemic injustice. The second chapter will focus on the role of language and interpretation, through Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics and Charles Taylor's communitarianism. The final chapter of my thesis will demonstrate how Miranda Fricker's notion of epistemic justice gives an account of the injustice that can occur when one culture does not accept another as an epistemic authority. This discussion will lead me to return to Gadamer's hermeneutics to fill in a few holes in my development of Fricker's theory.

CHAPTER I: THE CONTOURS OF THE LIBERAL-COMMUNITARIAN DEBATE

Though at times in this thesis I place liberalism in opposition to the views I explore, my intention here is not to refute liberalism. Nevertheless, it should be noted that a number of the theorists I engage with (for example, Hans-Georg Gadamer) resist the possibility, as well as the productivity, of a neutral stance. Without taking a definitive stance on the possibility of neutrality, I hope to focus on the *productivity* of a communitarian-informed view for addressing the possibilities of intercultural communication. Thus, I leave open whether liberals could integrate the ideas I discuss into their theoretical conceptions.[5] After outlining the two positions, I will justify focusing on the communitarian for the remainder of this thesis.

At the outset, it is important to note the unsatisfying and ambiguous nature of this debate. Firstly, there is no one, unified liberal political theory. As Charles Taylor points out in an interview with Ruth Abbey, liberalism refers both to contemporary English-speaking theorists (he gives the examples of John Rawls, Ronald Dworkin and Bruce Ackerman) who focus on "the importance of the neutrality of the liberal state" (3), and to older thinkers like Alexis de Tocqueville and John Stuart Mill, who do not to fit the narrower contemporary definition.

Some thinkers with strong communitarian pedigrees, perhaps most notably Charles Taylor and Michael Walzer, could be comfortably classified as liberal-leaning. There is also ambiguity in the orientation of the two sides to one another: some view the entire communitarian literature as posing an important and recurring, but not fundamentally disruptive, challenge to liberalism. Others conceptualize the boundary as a much starker divide. The ambiguity of this division comes from the fact that the two views are not inherently contradictory. As Amy Gutmann

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[5] Broadly speaking, however, I do consider this thesis to explore topics that are unlikely to be given full attention and weight on a liberal analysis. This alone might, in a sense, serve as a reprimand, if not a refutation, of the liberal position.

writes in her introduction to Taylor's essay "Multiculturalism," "[p]olitical recognition of cultural particularity" is not in itself at odds with a liberal view (Gutmann 3). However, recognition of particularity *does* give rise to potential conflicts between liberal and communitarian perspectives when the "*content* of various valued cultures" is at odds (3). This question of these entanglements—of how content relates to structure, and how individuals access and decide the validity of both—is what is contested in many iterations of this debate.

In this overview, I sketch a liberal position that draws most heavily on Rawls, and which I have admittedly sculpted to highlight the divergences from communitarianism. My intention here is not to offer a biased picture, but rather to quickly bring the two perspectives into relief, so as to justify my decision to focus on what light the communitarian can shed on matters of intercultural communication.

A. A SKETCH OF THE TWO SIDES

Contemporary liberal political theorists typically do not consider their theories to be "comprehensive." Specifically, John Rawls' liberalism does not, he claims, contain or presuppose a theory of value, ethics, epistemology, etc (Rawls 1996). Rather, Rawls contends, his liberalism offers a neutral way forward, which can allow for the coexistence of, or adjudication between, different comprehensive theories.

We can better understand the non-comprehensiveness of political liberalism by considering the distinction Ronald Dworkin makes between two different kinds of moral values. One the one hand, there is the matter of what makes up a good life. This is a substantive moral consideration—one which might be called 'thick'. By contrast, other moral commitments are thinner, concerning equality for and fairness toward all, regardless of what substantive moral outlooks we take up. This second kind of value can be called 'procedural'. For Dworkin, liberal

political theory—and a liberal society—focuses on a procedural commitment to equal treatment and respect, rather than on substantive measures.[6]

Most forms of political liberalism share an understanding of how reasoning about justice works—an understanding which flows from a certain kind of view of the individual. In *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls argues that the principles of justice are valid if they are freely chosen by rational individuals, abstracted from their situations behind "the veil of ignorance"—that is, unaware of their actual social position. Robert Nozick, another liberal theorist, in *Anarchy, State and Utopia* emphasizes that individuals have rights before the formation of any political community. Arriving about conclusions about what is right requires taking a step back from one's beliefs, abstracting from both "social" and "temporal" points of view (Rawls *Political Liberalism* 2-3). From this sort of conception of the individual, Rawls and other liberals claim that their neutral theory can mediate between different "conceptions of the good," allowing for the avoidance of "mortal conflict" (Rawls *Political Liberalism*). Rawls believes that the matter of priority between different moral theories is a real, and as-of-yet unresolved problem, and so seeks principles which do not have to be "weighed or balanced against any competing moral considerations" (Fishkin 350). Rawls claims that his theory is both neutral and unique—that it is the logical conclusion of the argument from the veil of ignorance. Only such a neutral theory can deal with tensions between competing moral views—the exact sort of tensions I have outlined. This possibility is predicated upon the atomistic individual as the base unit of all moral value: justice can be reached when individuals, abstracted from their contexts, take a rational and impersonal stance from which judgements about justice can be made.

Communitarian perspectives in political philosophy are usually seen as a reaction to liberalism. These views, most notably attributed to thinkers so distant from each other as

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[6] This is a brief summary of the views outlined in Dworkin's "Liberalism." This summary is also informed by Charles Taylor's discussion of Dworkin's views in his essay "The Politics of Recognition."

conservative Alasdair MacIntyre[7] and the liberal-leaning Charles Taylor and Michael Walzer, affirm the normative importance of community. Communitarians object that liberal views "downplay the human need for secure and separate cultural identities" (Walzer, "Multiculturalism" 9). A similar debate plays out on the international level, where cosmopolitans seek to establish universal, impartial laws, within an international, all-encompassing community of equals.[8] By contrast, for communitarians this sort of view is seen as based on an "idealized conception of agency" which does not acknowledge the particularity of morality—that is, how it varies from community to community (Shapcott 43). As Walzer writes in *Spheres of Justice*, "justice is rooted in" a particular community's "distinct understanding of places, honours, jobs, things of all sorts, that constitute a shared way of life" (44). This means that in principle justice itself cannot be universally legislated.

Some cosmopolitans recognize the challenges that come with intercultural communication, but deny that this is based on a deep fact about the fundamentality of community to meaning and morality.[9] For example, Kwame Anthony Appiah, in his book *Cosmopolitanism*, claims that cross-cultural conversations about values need not end in disagreement because "we can agree about *what* to do even when we don't agree *why*," "we exaggerate the role of reasoned argument in reaching or failing to reach agreements about values," and because "most conflicts don't arise from warring values in the first place" (Appiah 67). He contends that the most contentious debates, like those regarding the acceptance of gay people in society or the practice of footbinding, are so heated because they concern "the meaning of the *same* values, not that

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[7] MacIntyre is a looming figure in this debate, whose thought certainly informs that of Charles Taylor. I leave him out of this thesis simply because of constraints of space—exploring his thought in parallel to Charles Taylor's, in the context of this project, would require painstaking independent focus. Richard Rorty is another figure whose thought could easily fit into this discussion, but who I have left out for similar reasons of space and clarity.
[8] Though some see differences between the perspectives, I use the term "liberal" to cover both liberal and cosmopolitan views (though I introduce the term 'cosmopolitan' again in my discussion of Kwame Anthony Appiah's work, since his book is so entitled) for purposes of clarity.
[9] Onora O'Neill also takes the communitarian challenge seriously, but ultimately sides with the liberal perspective, as she considers these issues in *Bounds of Justice*. This can particularly be seen in the chapters "Identities, boundaries and states" and "Justice, gender, and international boundaries."

they oppose one value"— it is the existence of "shared horizons of meaning" that make these debates so difficult (81). Put in epistemic terms, which will be useful to me later, it could be said that Appiah sees these challenges as arising more often than not *between* members of a community of knowers. Thus, it cannot be a matter of disagreement about basic worldview. My later discussion of the epistemic dimensions of justice will, I hope, illuminate why we *should* understand certain disagreements as arising from basic mis-matches of interpretive frameworks. For the time being, however, I present this as an example of the cosmopolitan, deflationary response to the concerns about cross-cultural understanding.

With these perspectives on the table, the space between them can be brought into relief. In his review of the liberal-communitarian debate in the context of international relations, David Morrice identifies three main points of tension between the two sides of the debate. The first is the individual; the second is the idea of community; the third is the "justificiation of political principles" (233). These three tensions are tightly linked, but it is the first one that will be my focus. This is because the way in which the individual relates to her context—that is, her community and its social practices and values—can either create or eliminate the problem that I set up in the first section of my introduction.

In *Beyond the Global Culture War*, political theorist Adam Webb outlines the connection between atomism and liberalism. For Webb, liberalism's atomism and the individualistic view of human beings that it promotes is anything but neutral. He contends that the perspective on human beings promoted by liberalism amounts to a kind of "cultural project" (112). In an extreme critique, Webb contends that political liberalism's supposed neutrality deals with "only one dimension of human beings"—one which Webb takes to, in fact, be "unflattering" (113). He claims that with this understanding, the cultivation of specific virtues or values in the public sphere is simply not possible; justice and morality are thin notions,

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which cannot contain even a breath of the richness of everyday struggles—collective and individual—for meaning and value.

Charles Taylor's "Atomism" develops this critique more carefully. He argues that "human beings can only develop their characteristically human capacities in society" Specifically, a human being must live in a society to develop rationality, or "become a moral agent in the full sense of the term." Crucially, this communal foundation is necessary for "becoming a fully responsible autonomous being" (Taylor *"Atomism"* 191). Here, the opposition between the liberal and communitarian subject can be seen. For the communitarian, there is no morality, justice, meaning or reasoning independently of society. Thus, in the extreme versions of the communitarian critique, the claims liberalism makes are mired in its own origins; political liberalism cannot serve as a grand adjudicator, an empty stance outside of the messy melee of cultural values. This is because individuals as moral reasoners are inevitably constituted by such a context. Some might object that the tools of liberalism might arise in particularity, but allow us to transcend this particular context. A hardline communitarian might respond that the ability of one theory or framework to overlay—or dominate—another does not necessarily entail that it is neutral or well-suited to any context to which it might migrate. I, however, leave open here the possibility that liberalism might arise from such particularity, but achieve some form of universality—as I have stated, my intention is to outline this debate in order to consider the dimensions of the problem of cross-cultural understanding that a communitarian perspective can highlight.

This challenge—and my sketched 'hardline communitarian' answer does, however, bring our focus back to the matter of epistemic commensurability. What occurs when thick conceptions of value and the good—and the accompanying language and frameworks for making sense of the world—encounter one another? In order to move on to address this question and discuss the epistemic dimensions of intercultural understanding and justice, I need

to take my final steps to justify assuming a broadly communitarian framework. In order to do so, I consider the matter of recognition. This topic will also allow me to bring into focus details of Charles Taylor's communitarianism, which will be crucial to my discussions in Chapters II and III.

B. RECOGNITION

A turn toward recognition of particularity might also be seen as a paradigm shift that differentiates communitarians from liberals in political philosophy. In order to contextualize my discussion, I briefly review a few major contributors to this debate. In some sense, a political focus on recognition might be traced back to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, and, perhaps most notably, G.W.F Hegel. However, I will focus on more contemporary discussions of the topic, and the salient contributions of a few thinkers.

Iris Marion Young, in *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, was one of the first theorists to advance recognition as an important aspect of justice, clearly distinct from distributional concerns.[10] In her book, Young argues that debates about justice have been traditionally focused on "the morally proper distribution of benefits and burdens among society's members" (15), citing theorists from John Rawls to Bruce Ackerman to David Miller as embodying this paradigm. Young seeks not to discount the importance of the material distribution of goods entirely, but rather wants to "displace talk of justice that regards persons as primarily possessors and consumers of goods" (16)**.** She wants to widen the scope of her inquiry to consider "action, decisions about action, and provision of the means to develop and exercise capacities" (16). Broadly speaking, Young's work connects the ideas of identity, recognition, and justice. It is our identities which have personal and ethical value, and which must be recognized in order

for us to develop and exercise capacities as is our right. In a sense, this space for development is exactly what is demanded when we consider (following Amy Gutmann's gesture) what is at stake when the 'content' of various cultures are at odds. The contents of different cultures provide different ways of living and problem-solving, and Young and others argue that the lack of recognition of the validity of these different paradigms can have impacts that run as deep as distributional injustices.

Perhaps most notably, Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth have engaged in a lengthy dialogue about recognition. Though their discussion is centered around the opposition between distributive justice and justice as recognition, I skim a few elements from their debate to further explore the relevance of recognition to my intercultural considerations. Importantly, both theorists recognize the salience of recognition in an increasingly multicultural world. Fraser explains that "struggles for recognition are proliferating today despite (or because of) increased transcultural interaction and communication" (Fraser and Honneth 114). To her mind, migration and media together are "fracturing and hybridizing" of all forms of culture (114).

Differences emerge in how these two theorists address these challenges. Fraser—with a loosely Marxist framework—argues that a focus on redistribution should not be set aside, but that concerns about recognition should be added to these considerations. She advocates for adaptation to the complexity of intercultural interactions, rather than "a communitarianism that drastically simplifies and reifies group identities" (Fraser and Honneth 114). By contrast, Honneth contends that "even distributional injustices must be understood as the institutional expression of social disrespect—or, better said, of unjustified relations of recognition" (114).

Beyond the relative emphasis placed on distribution and recognition, this debate exposes important congruities with my concerns. Firstly, questions of recognition take on urgency and complexity in a multicultural society or world. As we encounter individuals and communities

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whose identities we cannot immediately make sense of, because they do not operate with the same observable signs and meanings as our own, recognition becomes more difficult, illuminating its importance in matters of justice. Is recognition merely liberal tolerance—that is, putting up with the different practices of others? Or does it involve some deeper effort at understanding, and even appreciation? Secondly, recognition of particular identities always runs the risk of devolving into a simplistic—and, quite possibly, ethnocentric—paradigm. Finally, the push-and-pull between recognition and redistribution does, in some sense, foreshadow some of the points I will make in Chapter III. Specifically, I think that the difficulty in dividing (or merging) these two elements is indicative of the crucial connection between the material world—as it is lived, a world of action—and the 'epistemic' and conceptual schemes we use to interpret that world.

Charles Taylor's work builds on these conceptions of recognition. [11] In his essay "Multiculturalism," Taylor notes that the urgent need for recognition comes from the "links between recognition and identity, where this latter term designates something like a person's understanding of who they are" (25). As Taylor summarizes, on these views either lack of recognition or misrecognition can "inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being" (25). In the modern day, he contends, this discourse is familiar to us both in our private lives, as we see our identities form through "a continuing dialogue and struggle with significant others," and in our public lives, where "a politics of equal recognition" has become increasingly visible (37). As is the case with Fraser and Honneth's discussion, Taylor notes the pressing challenges created by multicultural contexts. Much like Fraser, he seeks "something midway between the inauthentic and

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[11] I do not mean to specifically insinuate a theoretical link between the development of Taylor's ideas and the thought of Young, Honneth, or Fraser. "Multiculturalism," which is my focus for this discussion of recognition, was published a few years after Young's book. However, all four thinkers have been working more or less contemporaneously for some time, with their thought occasionally explicitly intersecting. It is important, however, to reiterate the influence of Hegel here—one of Taylor's most notable earlier works was, after all, *Hegel*.

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homogenizing demand for recognition of equal worth, on the one hand, and the self-immurement within ethnocentric standards, on the other" (72).

Taylor says that in order to understand the relationship between identity and recognition, we must understand a "crucial feature of the human condition," which mainstream modern philosophy has ignored. This feature is the "fundamentally *dialogical* character" of human life—that is, the fact that we "become full human agents, capable of understanding ourselves, and hence defining our identity, through our acquisition of rich human languages of expression" (Taylor *Multiculturalism* 32). These ways of expressing ourselves are acquired through interaction with others; and this process does not stop—our identities are always changing "in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the things significant others want to see in us" (32). This sort of understanding of the self is opposed to what Taylor calls the 'monological ideal', which seeks to minimize the genesis of this identity and, more generally, meaning, by downplaying the role of dialogue. Here, the contrast with the liberal subject is again striking.

The modern discourse of recognition operates on both the intimate sphere, where "the formation of identity and the self" takes place "in a continuing dialogue and struggle with significant others" (Taylor *Multiculturalism* 36), and in the public sphere, "where a politics of equal recognition come to play a bigger and bigger role" (36). In this latter sphere recognition goes in two directions. On the one hand, it gives rise to a politics of equal dignity, which is supposed to accord equal recognition to all citizens. On the other hand, it gives rise to a politics of difference, which asks us "to recognize…the unique identity of this individual or group, and their distinctness from everyone else" (Taylor 38). Here, the suggestion is that ignoring these differences is what has given rise to inequalities and wrongs. These two politics can, in a sense, emerge from one another in either direction. On the one hand, the politics of difference decries discrimination based on difference, and this focus on "equal dignity" can give rise to a politics

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of universal equality. Conversely, the politics of difference can arise from the politics of equal dignity since the universal can demand that the specificity each of us possesses is acknowledged. Despite this interrelation, there is an innate tension between these two politics, because, while the politics of difference asks us to recognize "what is particular to each," the politics of equal recognition asks us to "give due acknowledgement only to what is universally present"—that is, the mere fact of identity which everyone possesses (38). This tension in fact tracks on to—admittedly fuzzy—line between liberal and communitarian views. Put roughly, it might be said that liberals focus on equal dignity, notably for many theorists through procedural justice, while communitarians are concerned with the politics of difference. Though the demand for recognition of difference has some basis in a universal acknowledgement of the human capacity to develop specific sources of meaning, in an intercultural context in particular "the demand for equal recognition extends beyond an acknowledgement of the equal value of all humans potentially, and comes to include the equal value of what they have made of this potential in fact" (Taylor *Multiculturalism* 42-43).

At this point, I hope that I have illustrated the importance of recognition both in discussions of justice generally, and the significance of that discussion for the liberal-communitarian debate. Importantly, the interesting questions that revolve around intercultural understanding seem, to me, to clearly emerge from the perspective of the politics of difference. Though it might be hard in practice, following procedures that allow for a political process that is blind to difference is not the challenge posed by the varied values and ways of being in the world that we might encounter in another culture. The critique that the aspiration to a neutral, liberal perspective is, itself part of a hegemonic culture's perspective (and therefore not in fact neutral) goes above and beyond what I need to argue here. My point is simply that by choosing to focus primarily on the politics of equal dignity, we have little purchase on the questions that motivate

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me, namely: how do diverse conceptual schemes and frameworks of meaning interact when it comes to matters of cross-cultural understanding and justice?

C. DEFINING COMMUNITY

Now that I have set my feet on the communitarian path, I make a brief digression to consider how we should understand a term that, by this point, is clearly ubiquitous to my project: namely, the notion of 'community'. The notion of community is notoriously overused and difficult to define, as Andrew Mason acknowledges at the outset of his book when he describes the very idea of community as "fundamentally ambiguous" (Mason 4). Communitarians like Michael Sandel, focus on the common good of a community. This sort of good is that which is beneficial to the community, and which can only be achieved together, rather than individually.[12] This sort of good could encompass an economic means of survival (for example, a mining town which requires the cooperative work of the whole community in order to run the mine and achieve subsistence standards of living). It could also involve a good like a functional language. Though in theory an individual might have a personal language, the benefits to groups of sharing a language are necessarily the sorts of benefits that cannot be achieved alone: the communicative functions of language, from facilitating interpersonal connections to avoiding danger and advancing as a society necessarily require that more than one individual (and, in fact, a large group) speak that language. This understanding of community already carries moral tinges, as it involves some sense of what is good.

Other sorts of definitions further explore the normative aspects of the very notion of community. Mason describes both 'ordinary' and moralized communities in his book: ordinary communities are those in which people share "a range of values" and a "way of life" as well as

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[12] This sort of common good account of community can be found in many of Sandel's works. In his 1984 essay "The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self," Sandel explicitly contrasts this sort of community—one based on the common good—with the erosion that comes with a procedurally-focused political community.

identifying "with the group and its practices" and recognizing "each other as members of that group" (Mason 21). Even on this understanding, identity and values are tightly bound up with the notion of community. However, Mason goes further in his definition of a moralized community, which he says must also display solidarity and justice (that is, a lack of systemic exploitation) (27).

A further taxonomy of communities will also be helpful in reiterating the scope and focus of my project. As Robert Fowler Booth explains, in the American context three main kinds of communities can be identified. These definitions are both descriptive and normative: various theorists seek both to point out how the lines of community might be drawn, and advocate for the conceptualization, and even realization, of certain forms of community. Furthermore, it is crucial that all these communities have a strong self-reflexive component, at least in Booth's definition. They are defined as communities in part because of the manner in which members of the community—or at least their leaders—consciously delimit the community along certain lines. Despite these commonalities, there are also important epistemic differences between these different kinds of communities.

The first kind of community that Booth proposes is a Community of Ideas. This kind of community is participatory, and its advocates emphasize "the importance of people deciding together, face to face, conversing with, and respecting each other in a setting which is as equal as possible" (89). A Republican community, one based around "public-regarding virtues" (89), exemplifies such a case. Within this community, the epistemic common ground is very abstract. An example might be the entire United States, where most citizens in some way subscribe to or consent to participating in a community where certain liberal ideals of freedom and equality are paramount. Though certainly some communities of ideas might be based on morally thick

ideas,[13] it is more often than not the case, I contend, that such communities would also be classifiable—if not better classified—as Communities of Memory. This is because those morally thick ideas and practices are often based on some sort of rich tradition, passed from generation to generation. As such, communities of ideas require consensus not so much about specific epistemic matters, but only about the general and abstract frameworks for negotiating between these ideas.

The second sort of community that Booth identifies is the Community of Public Crisis. Booth places 'tribal' communities into this group, and it appears that he also thinks some communities based on racial or ethnic identity could fit here. Presumably, the idea behind this inclination is that identities and practices of a 'tribal' group (loosely interpreted here) face crises when they are confronted by another group or way of life. However, other sorts of communities can also fit into this category. Booth also raises the environmentalist community as another example of a community of public crisis. There is a very minimal epistemic state that is shared by members of such a community—namely, some awareness of the relevant crisis. The specific knowledge of the crisis, beliefs about its origins, and normative stances toward it can vary greatly. In its formation this community can encompass great epistemic diversity. A toy example might be that of a community ravaged by a fire: everyone is brought together by this common crisis, and everyone is aware that it has occurred; however, there are most likely wide dispute about the causes of the fire, how best to reconstruct the town, and so on. The crisis itself is a starting point of epistemic common ground.

Booth's third community type is the Community of Memory. He explains that these communities are those in which "current ideas of community that derive from long-established belief systems that link the present and the past, communities fashioned, above all, from

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[13] For example, Jurgen Habermas' "Three Normative Models of Democracy" (1994), where he defines a Republican ideal community as sharing a thick conception of virtue.

tradition and religion" (91). Racial, ethnic, or cultural communities also seem to fit well into this category: often practices, from political ones to social or religious ones, which are imbued with historical narrative and collective memory, bind these sorts of communities. This seems to be the most epistemically rich sort of community. Take, for example, a religious community: detailed narratives about God, what he asks of human beings, and how to properly worship him furnish thick moral knowledge and understanding.

Booth does not explore the interaction of these communities at length, but this interaction might be seen as lying at the heart of the tension that motivates this thesis. This is because the tension that motivates my inquiry might be placed at the intersection of these kinds of communities. Using broad strokes, the liberal approach championed by some might be said to prioritize and draw lines according to communities of ideas; by contrast, communitarians think that communities of memory are morally salient. [14] These two approaches are not inherently contradictory, but the privileging of one over the other can be problematic, in a very practical sense as well as theoretical one, when morally thick communities of memory are jeopardized by the advancement of a morally thin community of ideas. It is the community of crisis that creates a particularly sharp need to think through these sorts of tensions. Here, I think of the community of crisis as a broader, international, cross-cultural community, perhaps at times encompassing all of humanity as we deal with issues like climate change. Though many communities of crisis might be based on a local crisis, this category can be expanded to focus on the ways that new communities, drawing together individuals from disparate communities of ideas and communities of memory, can be created around a crisis.

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[14] This notion of community resembles some of the ideas of community that non-communitarian liberal Will Kymlicka considers in his work on ethno-cultural communities (see, for example, his *Liberalism, Community and Culture*). O'Nora O'Neill also takes seriously cultural communities that might be seen as communities of memory. These indicates the difficulty of the liberal-community typology, and generalizing about these views—though in general the procedural theory itself might draw communities around people who identify with the notions of equality and dignity, other forms of community can still be considered by the liberal theorist.

CHAPTER II: GADAMER AND TAYLOR, LANGUAGE AND HUMAN CAPACITIES

The goal of this (relatively short) chapter is to further delve into how specific understandings and values emerge from communities by examining how language relates to the topics of recognition and identity. In order to do so, I first review the hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer. There are a few main reasons that I include the thought of Hans-Georg Gadamer in my thesis. In no particular order, they are as follows. Gadamer's theories hover in the background of much of Charles Taylor's thought (most notably in his historical focus, attention to context and particularity, and the way he views language). However, there are deeper reasons that Gadamer is useful to my argument—reasons which are, of course, not unrelated to the reasons that his thought so exercised Taylor. These are his treatment of the individual and of the divide between theory and practice (which I will not substantially engage with until Chapter III). Importantly, Gadamer's thought also provides the foundation for the communitarian resistance to universalization and the pretension of a 'neutral' stance.

A. GADAMER'S PHILOSOPHICAL HERMENEUTICS

Traditional hermeneutics concerned itself with more straightforward texts, like the bible or legal tracts. Theorists like Friedrich Schleiermacher and Wilhelm Dilthey advanced the approach, but Hans-Georg Gadamer is credited with expanding philosophical hermeneutics into a broad philosophical theory. The cornerstone of this theory is the idea that because we are essentially interpretive creatures, interpretation is something that is always already occurring—hermeneutics is an all-encompassing theory of human understanding. As Gadamer explains in "Hermeneutics as Practical Philosophy," hermeneutics concerns "a theoretical attitude toward the practice of interpretation, the interpretation of texts, but also in relation to the experiences interpreted in them and in our communicatively unfolded orientations in the

world" (Gadamer *Reason in the Age of Science* 245). This innovation—looking beyond the text at how we interpret our world—provides fertile ground for the extension of hermeneutics and hermeneutically-informed analyses to a vast array of problems, including ethical and political ones.

Because human beings understand meaning through interpretation, we encounter our world as something that is always already interpreted. This means that there is no space outside of interpretation from which to make decisions, view a situation or dilemma, or, indeed, philosophize. This stance leads philosophical hermeneutics to embrace preconceptions—which Gadamer calls prejudices (a term which does not carry the negative connotations it has in modern everyday discourse). These prejudices are, in fact, necessary for understanding: the world holds meaning to us because we exist within a historical context that provides an interpretive framework for our encounter with the world. From the perspective of hermeneutics, a stance outside of this framework (which, on most hermeneutical views, is not possible anyway) would leave us unable to achieve understanding or find meaning.[15]

Gadamer's discussion of the impossibility of 'getting outside' history constitutes the basic disconnect between philosophical hermeneutics and any claims to a 'neutral' stance (like those the liberal makes). In his discussion of 'The History of the Principle of Effect', Gadamer explains that "we should learn to understand ourselves better and recognize that in all understanding, whether we are expressly aware of it or not, the efficacy of history is at work" (Gadamer *Truth and Method* 300). However, the power of history "does not depend upon its being recognized"—it "prevails" even when we "deny [our] own historicity" (300). Our historicity is inevitable, and therefore in some sense our relation to and awareness of it cannot change the fundamental reality that we are historical beings. Though we are always interpreting

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[15] This is a broad-strokes sketch of some of the central ideas found in Gadamer's seminal work *Truth and Method* (the basic ideas found here also inform virtually all his other work).

our world, we only rarely recognize ourselves as doing so. Because we are "not standing outside" of history, we are "unable to have any objective knowledge of it" (301). This means that any conception of the individual as independent or imbued with radical choice or even powers of self-determination misses the ways in which we are always embedded in, and shaped by, our history.

Looking more carefully at the role of the individual and her relationship to history in Gadamer's thought can illuminate the possibility of productive understanding and dialogue, the second reason I gave for discussing Gadamer's basic theory. For Gadamer, the individual is the vessel which links the particular practices of a time and person to the vast historical context which shapes those practices. Gadamer explains that through "communication with [her] environment" the individual takes her the accumulated "habits of thought and language" and "places them before the forum of the historical tradition to which we all belong" (Gadamer *Truth and Method* xxiv). The individual, as interpreter, has a role to play: using her language, she is a conduit for history.

Gadamer's praise (which comes only after a critique) of Hegel illuminates this relationship. Gadamer notes that Hegel correctly saw recognizing "one's own in the alien" and becoming "at home in it" as "the basic movement of the spirit" (Gadamer *Truth and Method* 13). Each individual who moves from "natural being" to the spiritual finds herself in a the "pre-given body of material" of her people which she must make her own through speech (13). Each and every one of us "is always engaged in the process of Bildung and in getting beyond [her] naturalness" (13). The idea of Bildung, understood as human self-cultivation, shows link between history, tradition and the individual more clearly. It is not that we are immediately at home in our historical contexts; rather, we, as natural, uncultivated beings enter a world where tradition and history are always already formed. Our movement to feel at ease in this alien (and ever-changing) world is constant. The fact that we are "always engaged" in cultivating

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ourselves through speech and language implies that we are always "becoming" but never fully at home in our context. Perhaps it is this very discomfort which necessitates constant interpretation of that which we know, are immersed in, but did not create—even as we come to shape it through our interpretations and actions.

Thus, the interpreting individual is far from being a passive object of history. For Gadamer, the individual exists as an interpreter and purveyor of history. This individual lives within a tradition, which has fundamentally linguistic dimensions, and in turn shapes the tradition through interpretation and action guided by that interpretation. The individual is the locus of dialogue; through her openness, she can allow for a merging of horizons—that is, engagement with worldviews different than her own.

B. CHARLES TAYLOR: LANGUAGE AND HUMAN CAPACITIES

In Charles Taylor's thought, the links between human capacities, recognition and language are elaborated from a political perspective.[16] These links are crucial to the arguments about the context-dependence of values, and set up the notion of interpretation in both the personal and social context. Charles Taylor's thought is a rich source for exploring this connection.

This discussion brings us back to the individual. Despite his rejection of a certain kind of individualistic conception of human beings, the individual does play an important role in Taylor's philosophy. The details of this account are crucial, because they explain how he mediates between the obvious reality that we often act as individuals, and the communitarian supposition that we are also fundamentally social.

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[16] Due to space constraints, and for the purpose of clarity, I choose to focus on a few of Taylor's essays in this thesis. However, I would be remiss not to note that his writings on these topics are vast and varied, though generally fairly consistent in their basic aims and presuppositions.

Much like Gadamer, Taylor considers human beings to be 'self-interpreting animals'. This, he explains, means that "our interpretation of ourselves and our experiences is constitutive of what we are" (Taylor *Human Agency and Language* 47). He argues for this view against what he terms 'objectivist' theories, popular in science and modern philosophy, which might consider any acts of interpretation to be "merely a view on reality, separable from reality," or "as an epiphenomenon, which can be by-passed in understanding reality" (47).[17] It is this fundamental fact about us from which arises the possibility of value, morality, justice, and, really, any sort of understanding at all. We make sense of ourselves, and, in the process, our world, through interpretations which arise from our situatedness in a historical community. Exploring how Taylor reaches this conclusion demonstrates the links between interpretation, language, community, and justice.

In particular, the importance of language can be seen when it comes to values, emotion, and our moral frameworks. In this portion of the paper, Taylor considers shame. He raises the case of Alpha Centaurans (aliens who do not share our customs or language), and explains that a "radical communication gap" would open up between us and such creatures if were we to try understand or identify shame in one another—but that this should not be surprising. Taylor notes that these sort of gaps, precisely the sorts of gaps that motivate my inquiry, exist in real life both between and within cultures. Because our human experiences differ, "the language that will be meaningful to us" when it comes to matters like that of shame, will vary, as will the expression of that emotion and its application and significance.

Thus, "[o]ur emotional language is indispensable precisely because it is irreducible" (*Human Agency and Language* 57). He sees a deep connection between "import and goal" and

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[17] These sorts of objectivist theories might often, but need not always, go along with atomistic views of the self. It is, however, hard to see how a hardline objectivist theory could go along with a communitarian view, since the basic substrate for rejecting individualism is usually some sort of subjective set of values which bind communities and their particular ways of reasoning together.

"the language of feelings and consummations desired," which together form a "skein of mutual referrals, from which there is no escape into objectified nature" (57). Here, Taylor continues his assault on 'objectivist' stances which seek to reduce interpretations to epiphenomenal and subjective descriptions. He also draws a line from emotions and associated language to the possibility of import, goal, and, ultimately, other normative concepts. It is our experiences in the (shared, historical) world, he argues, which give rise to our existence as moral beings.

We experience shame, or guilt, or a sense of moral obligation because of our self-interpretation, which allows us to understand ourselves and our world in a relationship with imports of a moral sort. In order to fully understand a "moral obligation," we must make "reference to the kind of being on whom this obligation is laid"—that is, to our self-understanding. A moral decision functions as such only "in virtue of the kind of being I am" (Taylor *Human Agency and Language* 58).

Taylor's first three claims are that "some of our emotions or experienced motivations involve import-ascriptions," that "some of these imports are subject-referring" (*Human Agency and Language* 58), and that "a sense of what it is to be human, which is incorporated in our subject-referring feelings, is crucial to our understanding of what it is to be human" (60). Taylor specifically identifies shame, guilt, dignity, pride, admiration, contempt, moral obligation, and remorse as subject-referring emotions. The term 'emotions' might seem controversial or out of place here—though I do not intend to rely on it, I do not find it to be overly troubling. What Taylor is pointing to is the fact that we *experience* these various things as subjects, by virtue of our understanding of ourselves, our world, and what is important (implicitly, to us). However, my goal is to get past the talk of emotions to consider the relationship between morality and justice, the individual, community, language, and interpretation.

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As Taylor explains, we do not start off with raw, random impulses which are then taken by the individual as either better or worse. Instead, "human life is never without interpreted feeling; the interpretation is constitutive of the feeling" (Taylor *Human Agency and Language* 63). Thus, "feelings incorporate an articulation" and also "call for an interpretation"—these feelings are "essentially articulated," but also, in a sense, are never completely so (64). This leads to Taylor's fourth claim, namely that "our feelings are thus bound up with a process of articulation" (64). The connection between the possibility of our being moral beings and language begins to emerge here. We are always articulating, interpreting, and again articulating the values which ground this possibility. This is, Taylor acknowledges (reminiscent of Gadamer's discussion of *Biludng*), "potentially a lifetime process" (65).

Taylor clarifies that the connection between language and emotion that he is suggesting is not necessarily a causal one. His claim is not that people change because the words they use to describe themselves do. Rather, "[t]o say that language is constitutive of emotion is to say that experiencing an emotion essentially involves seeing that certain descriptions apply" (Taylor *Human Agency and Language* 71). What Taylor does *not* do is make a claim about the genesis of this connection between emotion and language or insight.

It is at this point that the cultural and social milieu enter fully. Taylor explains that because of this fundamental importance of language to our emotions and, ultimately, our experience as moral beings, "the emotional lives of human beings from different cultures, who have been brought up with very different import vocabularies, differ very greatly" (*Human Agency and Language* 71). Language allows for imports to "impinge" on us, and these values are crucial to who we are. Thus, to say that man is a self-interpreting animal is not just to say that he has some compulsive tendency to form reflexive views of himself, but rather that as he is, he is always partly constituted by self-interpretation, that is, by "his understanding of the imports which impinge on him" (72).

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Important for my later discussions is the fact that Taylor is not opposing knowing to feeling: he claims that "what I know is also grounded in certain feelings," but that these feelings "incorporate a deeper, more adequate sense of our moral predicament," where this feeling is "an affective awareness of situation," which reflects "my moral situation as it truly is" (Taylor *Human Agency and Language* 61). Thus, there is a tight connection between our moral feelings and our moral knowledge. This opens the door, however, for how we can have knowledge of the moral situations of others and the demands of justice in an intercultural context.

Taylor's views on language, community and the human capacities like moral reasoning link with his discussion of recognition. Our identity as individuals is bound up with our ability to, through language, interpret ourselves as better or worse—and this process happens in concert with either recognition of that self, or lack thereof. What remains underexplored is the consequences of this sort of lack of recognition (from others or from ourselves) for our ability to understand ourselves. Additionally, and saliently when it comes to understanding about thick moral disputes across cultures, there remain questions about the possibility of understanding when such a disconnect exists between webs of identity, language, and shared concepts of value. To take up these questions, I turn to consider Miranda Fricker's discussion of epistemic injustice.

CHAPTER III: EPISTEMIC JUSTICE AND EXPANDING HORIZONS

In his *Cosmopolitanism*, Appiah claims that there are three main kinds of differences about values. We can "fail to share a vocabulary of evaluation; we can give the same vocabulary different interpretations; and we can give the same values different weights" (Appiah 66). I do not think that these distinctions would interest Taylor—though such lines can be drawn, it is the deep *connections* between weight, interpretation and the role that words play in our vocabulary that concern him. The differences we have in vocabulary, and in our underlying understanding and knowledge of ourselves and of others, are the topic that Miranda Fricker's notion of epistemic justice aims to examine.[18]

So far, I have used Taylor to lay out the case for the linguistic dimensions of cultural differences about matters of justice. This discussion has pulled together varied themes: justice, identity, interpretation, community, and language, to name a few. Though I have sought to examine the context-dependent aspects of justice, I have not considered the consequences of this *for* justice. What is the nature of the wrong that can occur when one morally thick language is privileged over another? How does this relate to important themes in this discussion, such as the individual, the collective, and the possibility of dialogue and, ultimately, a just way of living

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[18] Here, I would like to note that 'epistemology' is something of a bad word—and enterprise—for both Gadamer and Taylor. Both thinkers mount robust critiques of epistemology, largely based on similar critiques of the foundationalist and often positivism that goes along with a quest for certainty about beliefs. With this in mind, it might seem troubling to blend their insights with a theory termed 'epistemic injustice'. Firstly, I do not believe that the aspects of Gadamer's and Taylor's theories from which I draw necessarily entail their robust critiques of epistemology (though I am sympathetic to those critiques). Fortunately, Fricker's 'epistemic injustice' does not fall prey prey to the errors of traditional epistemology that Gadamer and Taylor cite—at least not insofar as I read and utilize her theory. What interests me is the fundamentally social and historical aspects of her so-called epistemology. She is concerned not with defining what it is to have a true belief, or how it is that we can be certain of something. Rather, her project looks past these questions, to consider how our calcified cultural outlooks, with all their epistemic and hermeneutic resources, might influence our ability to communicate our experiences and, ultimately, understand one another. This project is not at all at odds with that of Gadamer or Taylor, though it is couched in more 'analytic' language.

together? I will begin by exploring the basic elements of Fricker's framework, simultaneously noting its consequences for my discussion. I will then delve more fully into what the notion of epistemic justice tells us about cross-cultural justice, filling in some holes in Fricker's account with a return to Gadamer's hermeneutics.

A. EPISTEMIC INJUSTICE

Miranda Fricker's epistemic injustice has two subspecies: testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice. These notions—and, indeed, Fricker's entire book—are intended to fill a gap between ethics and epistemology, exploring the consequences for justice of various epistemic disparities. Fricker acknowledges that, due to the dominant distributive accounts of justice, "the idea of epistemic injustice might first and foremost prompt thoughts about distributive unfairness in respect of epistemic goods such as information or education" (1). However, her focus is more on recognition than distribution. Furthermore, dominant epistemic frameworks tend to shy away from the suggestion like the ones she makes that "epistemic trust might have an irrepressible connection with social power, or that social disadvantage can produce unjust epistemic disadvantage" (2). Thus cutting against the grain, she seeks to establish what wrong can be done to speakers or listeners "specifically in their capacity as a knower" (1). She is concerned both with the practice of conveying knowledge, and of making sense of our own social experiences. My interest is in both these areas, expanded to the cross-cultural context. The link I have been exploring is the degree to which the very possibility of justice could be social and contextual. In a sense, Fricker's work walks this link in the opposite direction: she explores how the individual's ability to achieve justice for herself might have a basis in her standing within the society.

Fricker explains the general mechanism by which epistemic injustice is perpetrated as that of "identity power," which is "a form of social power…directly dependent upon shared social-

imaginative conceptions of the social identities of those implicated in the particular operation of power" (4). These sorts of operations of power undermine a person "in their capacity as a subject of knowledge, and thus in a capacity essential to human value" (5). This is the fundamental wrong of epistemic injustice. Here, already, it is clear that Fricker's starting point has more in common with communitarian than with liberal views. These injustices arise from shared, social epistemic powers. Though she is careful to use examples throughout her discussion of how *individuals* experience these wrongs, the individual always exists as a social being, for whom the possibility of meaning and identity is intertwined with the social imaginary.

For Fricker, the first concerns about this wrong are psychological. She contends that if this sort of harm "goes deep," it can "cramp self-development, so that a person may be, quite literally, prevented from becoming who they are" (5). This discussion clearly draws on the idea of justice as recognition, and specifies what sort of injustices can occur when a particular kind of misrecognition occurs. Here, the examples Fricker gives are generally of racist or sexist attitudes within a society. But to what extent can these points can be generalized to a cross-cultural context? There seems to be no prima facie reason that Fricker's framework would not hold. Though the specific power dynamics will be more complex, it is nevertheless the case that in situations of cross-cultural dialogue and interaction, where individuals or groups from one society or another meet, one societal perspective, particularly the more 'powerful' one, might stifle the other.[19]

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[19] Others have recognized this basic human need explicitly in terms of recognition, often in an intercultural context—consider Fanon, 1952, discussing racism and colonialism. In "Multiculturalism," Charles Taylor also describes recognition as a "vital human need." Furthermore, other thinkers like Axel Honneth and Nancy Fraser have had a high-profile debate about recognitional vs. distributional justice, which at times touched on cross-cultural issues.

In certain cases of epistemic injustice, there is a gap in "collective hermeneutical resources" available to a person or group of people (Fricker 6). This lack of "shared tools of social interpretation" creates—not accidentally—a "cognitive disadvantage" in certain social groups. Unsurprisingly, it is often already-marginalized minority groups whose experiences fall outside the interpretive frameworks of society. Thus, one speaker's "relative unintelligibility" to another person might be "a function of a collective hermeneutical impoverishment" (7).

This sort of intelligibility might find its apotheosis in instances of colonialism and conquest. Recall, Richard Shapcott's example of the conquest of the Americas. He illustrates how various conquerors' approaches to the denizens of the new world involved either "annihilation" or "assimilation" (Shapcott 14). In the case of each of these paradigms, the conquerors failed to find a way to coexist with the indigenous people. That is, they were unable to recognize, respect or in any real way preserve the indigenous peoples' culture and way of life. Attempts at assimilation first required viewing the indigenous people not as they actually were, but rather as misguided "potential Christians" (19)—a category already imbued with the normative and interpretive resources of the conqueror. This perspective saw the indigenous people's way of life as ultimately inferior, but exalted the godliness of their simplicity, creating a narrative that they merely needed to be shown the way to God. If we read these cases with Fricker's view in mind, we can see how the lack of recognition of the identity of the native people is a starting point for not only their epistemic devaluation but, ultimately, their near-annihilation as a culture—that is, of their identity.

1. TESTIMONIAL AND HERMENEUTICAL INJUSTICE

In order to better apply Fricker's theory, I examine the two subspecies of epistemic injustice. The first, testimonial injustice, is the injustice done when some people's testimony is not taken seriously. There are extensive political, social, and material consequences for such

an injustice. For example, studies show that in medical situations in many western patriarchal societies the professed pains of women are not taken seriously. In a more formal sense of the word, testimonies of certain witnesses (for example, black men against police men in the US) can be heard as less legitimate in the courtroom. Importantly, it seems that such testimonial injustice can also is also erode the very identity constructed around the experiences which ground that testimony.

Pausing to consider the implications of testimonial justice in an intercultural context, it seems that more analysis might be needed about whose frameworks are, or become, impoverished. In many cases, it might be that individuals have perfectly adequate resources to make sense of their experiences within their own culture; for example, one would guess that, generally speaking, the Aztecs, engaged together in collective pursuits following shared norms, were able to respect one another *as Aztecs* rather than as 'potential Christians'. What is difficult is conveying those experiences and norms to someone from another culture. No doubt this problem can begin to feed back into a more prototypical form of Frickerian epistemic injustice: lack of recognition by another culture has led, in many cases, to the erosion of collective meaning within the 'subordinate' culture (recognition *as Aztecs* becomes less valuable, as it does not earn one the respect necessary to survive). Though we don't know if the Azteces were able to recognize and respect the conquerors, we can be certain that the reverse was not true. In this way, one might say that the frameworks of the more powerful culture are impoverished. In a sense, it is the more powerful culture whose impoverished framework pushes out that of the less powerful one.[20] This idea—of interpretive frameworks—segues into Fricker's second type of epistemic injustice.

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[20] Here 'power' is not meant to directly modify 'culture'—that is, it is not intended to imply any sort of hierarchy of different cultures. It is just intended to refer to basic, often military, economic, or social power, that might allow one culture at a given time to subsume or otherwise harm the integrity of another culture.

In her final chapter, Fricker turns to consider hermeneutical injustice, the second species of epistemic injustice. As she explains, the background concerns that motivate her discussion have long existed in feminist discussions about how "relations of power can constrain women's ability to understand their own experience" (Fricker 147). Historical materialist perspectives, such as that of Nancy Hartsock, emphasize how those who are subject to domination live in a world which is "structured" for the purposes of others (147). This, Fricker reminds us, can be interpreted materially, ontologically, or epistemically. Fricker is interested in the epistemic reading—she wants to explore the ways in which "the powerful have an unfair advantage in structuring collective social understandings" (147).[21] By contrast, material or ontological readings emphasize, respectively, how social institutions and practices "favor the powerful" and how "the powerful somehow constitute the social world" (147). Fricker acknowledges that these distinctions begin to run together, but insists upon the priority of the epistemic for her discussion. She wants to consider the structure of understanding, leaving aside what she sees to be derivative social facts that are structured by that understanding.

The paradigmatic case of hermeneutical injustice that Fricker considers is that of relations of power that "constrain women's ability to understand their own experience" (147). In this example, the power of language and its relation to interpretation is evident for women who suffered from challenges that predominately or entirely affect women, like post-natal depression and sexual harassment in the workplace. During the early years of the feminist movement, there simply were not words—or, more importantly, concepts—for these things. This, in turn, meant that there were scant resources available to make sense of what these women were experiencing. Thus, the project of early members of the women's movement can

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[21] Note that this aspect of Fricker's discussion closely resembles Marx's Ideologiekritik. Fricker seems aware of these affinities, but does not substantially engage with them. Due to constraints of space and topic, I follow her here.

be seen as overcoming certain social interpretive habits, to arrive at (what were at the time) exceptional interpretations of "formerly occluded experiences" (148).

We can think of shared understandings as "reflecting the perspectives of different social groups" (Fricker 148). What unequal power relations do is to "skew shared hermeneutical resources," which leave the powerful with resources to understand their own experiences even as "the powerless are more likely to find themselves having some social experiences through a glass darkly, with at best ill-fitting meanings to draw on in the effort to render them intelligible" (148). This mechanism occurs through what she calls 'hermeneutic marginalization', which is what occurs to a disadvantaged group when there is "unequal hermeneutical participation" for that group "with respect to some significant area(s) of social experience" (152). Importantly, this sort of marginalization often occurs only along some dimensions: for example, a woman might be marginalized when it comes to making sense of her experience of assault, because there is not vocabulary and conceptual schema to describe that experience, but might be very well-equipped to describe and interpret her experiences as a student or mother. Furthermore, this marginalization can be perpetrated by a variety of sources. In some cases, material power might be properly pointed to as the cause of the problem. For example, a socio-economic situation could put jobs that make full hermeneutical participation possible outside of the grasp of certain subsets of the population. Identity power can also be responsible for hermeneutical marginalization: certain prejudicial stereotypes and structural racism or other structural prejudices can create such a situation. Finally, in some cases a specific party (be it an individual or an organization) can be responsible for hermeneutical marginalization.

Though she works through a series of definitions in the process of explaining and exploring the phenomenon, Fricker arrives at a definition of hermeneutical injustice as "the injustice of having some significant area of one's social experience obscured from collective understanding owing to hermeneutic marginalization" (159). This definition has obvious resonances with

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concerns related to cross-cultural exchange. It highlights the importance of collective understanding to the very possibility of justice.

There is a naïve version of this concern, which might interpret collective understanding in a flat-footedly linguistic way. One might suggest that obviously collective understanding has a strong linguistic element (or, one might even argue that it relies entirely upon language). In these sorts of cases, efforts to speak to someone from another culture, with a different language, and therefore different collective hermeneutic resources, will obviously be challenging. Talking about matters of justice is hard if you don't speak the same language as your interlocutor. But, with the rich background of Taylor's discussion of the relationship between self-interpretation, social context, and language, we can see that this sort of separation simply isn't tenable. The problem isn't just the technical difficulty of understanding someone who speaks a different language; even once the basic translation problem has been overcome, there might be further broadly linguistic challenges. Certain notions (for example, conceptions of shame, politeness, honor, and moral responsibility) simply might not be available within another culture's interpretive framework.

2. GENERALIZATION TO THE CROSS-CULTURAL CONTEXT

Here, the intersection of Fricker's ideas and my discussion gets a bit messy. In her book, Fricker is mostly focused on the impact on the individual interpreting herself. There are real impacts for a person who is not able to make sense of her assault, or a community which is not able to make sense of its position as dominated by another community, because she/they lack the language of "sexual assault" or "colonialism," respectively. It is not the mere absence of the word that is relevant here—a language can express a concept without having a single word that corresponds to that idea. However, the absence of any word or web of concepts in the publically available hermeneutical resources leaves the individual unable to either privately

make sense of or publically draw attention to these experiences. Already, in the second example, I have made the jump from the individual to the collective level. Thus, it seems that epistemic injustices, in particular hermeneutical ones, can occur in intercultural encounters at both the collective and the individual level.

Another complexity, however, is that interpretive troubles can occur both in the specific content of an experience and in a meta-level analysis of different moral, epistemic, aesthetic or other normative frameworks. Most certainly, an individual from one culture, when placed in another, might find herself in "concrete situation[s]" where there is "something which is particularly in [her] interests" which is unintelligible to those around her; furthermore, it also seems plausible that "prejudicial exclusion from participation in the spread of knowledge" (Fricker 162) can occur when a more 'powerful' culture encounters another. However, a specific sort of wrong might occur on the plane of moral assertions, systems, and frameworks. The claims to knowledge of justice, and even a basic understanding of morality or other norms, that one culture might make can be rejected or ignored by another. Here, the connection between Fricker's hermeneutical and testimonial injustice is clear; as she acknowledges throughout her book, the two often interact.

Still, the potential of the framework seems powerful: it suggests exactly the means by which one culture's interpretation of both thick and thin moral concepts might drown out, erode, and ultimately stifle the fundamental expression of norms and values of a culture that stands in a lesser relation of power. This framework also mediates between individuals and the collective in a satisfying way, incorporating the ideas of both language and interpretation.

B. CHALLENGES AND HERMENEUTIC SOLUTIONS

So far, I hope I have sketched the relationship between communitarian positions and the idea of epistemic justice by focusing on recognition language in both cases. However, this

whole discussion has hovered above what an actual encounter between cultures might look like. In particular, I am interested in an encounter that demands cooperation, understanding, and dialogue—not mere peaceful coexistence. In diving into this specificity, two challenges will crop up. Firstly, the lack of positive suggestion in Fricker's account becomes clear; secondly, concerns linger that ethnocentrism, nationalism, and related ills might latch on to a culturally-focused discussion of justice. The first matter I will call 'the solutions challenge', and the second 'the ethnocentrism challenge'. In order to look at a particular (hypothetical, though not wholly unrealistic) encounter and answer these challenges, I will return to the philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer.

In a sense, these two challenges are related. In broad strokes, solutions come from progress, from change and forward motion. Interculturally, this means learning to worship, socialize, eat, drink, and otherwise cohabitate our increasingly interconnected planet with people who are from different cultural backgrounds than us. It also means figuring out how to address fundamental moral challenges without privileging one framework of justice unduly—that is, not privileging one framework simply because it comes from the dominant culture, rather than because there are good reasons to believe that it is correct. The ethnocentrism challenge points in the opposite direction. There is always a danger that prioritizing communities and cultures can lead to the reification of these divisions, and to troubling nationalist political and theoretical stances that seek to preserve a homogenous ethno-state. This potential casts a particularly worrying shadow today, as nationalistic-tainted rhetoric and policies ooze into everyday political life in the U.S, Europe, and other states across the globe. Ultimately, this challenge is about an aggressive kind of conservatism, which seeks a return to a (most probably fictional) state of ethnic and religious purity and national greatness. This returns us to the question of different forms of recognition, and the balance between the politics of equal dignity and the politics of difference. Without an external arbiter, can we come to recognize, understand, and

respect each other while also not annihilating the particularity which is (at least on the communitarian account) the source of our identities and values?

1. A RETURN TO GADAMER AND THE PRODUCTIVITY OF PREJUDICE

In order to answer this question, I return to another notion of hermeneutics—that of Hans-Georg Gadamer, specifically considering his notion of horizons. Recalling Gadamer's emphasis on history, explicated in Chapter II, it might not be surprising that concerns about conservatism are among the most common criticisms of philosophical hermeneutics. Georgia Warnke, writing about Gadamer's seminal work *Truth and Method,* suggest that Gadamer's refusal to allow for any perspective outside of history and tradition, and his corresponding emphasis on "mediation" rather than "distantiation" makes his philosophical hermeneutics fundamentally conservative (Warnke 146). According to this critique, Gadamer's theories can be seen as, at best, failing to provide options for progress, and, at worst, as providing an excuse for regressive theories and policies. This sort of critique relies on a misunderstanding of the fundamentally productive role of history, and what Gadamer calls "prejudice," plays in understanding for the hermeneutic theorist.

Hermeneutics is, in a sense, grounded in a pragmatic acceptance of our constraints: it recognizes that our preconceptions cannot be escaped, and will inevitably shape whatever perspective might come next. Thus, the slow pace of progress that the theory suggests does not come from the theory itself, but rather from the nature of the reality it describes. Denying our fundamental historicity will not free us from the constraints of our slowly-changing horizons. As such, accusations of the "slowness" of hermeneutics are not truly damaging to the theory— they are merely a result of its realism, and are, for the hermeneuticist, something with which we must cope, whether or not we explicitly acknowledge our historical situatedness.

A. AN EXAMPLE: ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

Dimensions of the liberal-communitarian debate can be seen playing out in environmental ethics, which has long been dominated by utilitarian and Kantian approaches, and by a general framework that focuses on liberal rights-talk. Environmental ethics often presupposes a uniform relationship between man and nature, glossing over the culturally specific dimensions of the various morally salient matters related to climate change. Because of the nature of the environmental—which is shared, and limited—this case also presents an instance where dialogue and understanding must be achieved, since collective action on a moral challenge is necessary.[22]

Man-induced climate change and other forms of environmental degradation have largely been perpetrated by individuals from 'western', highly consumptive cultures. However, the impacts of these changes are felt first and foremost by poorer Island nations (who are the first to lose land to rising sea levels); similarly, climate change-precipitated droughts occur predominantly in the global South, not in the countries responsible for most carbon emissions. Thus, the imposition of deprivation by one group on another often will stem from choices by all or part of the community of that culture; in turn, the impact and response, or lack thereof, has to do with the culture and community of the area which suffers. In each case, the nature of the internal and external impact relates not just to the abstract rights that face an existential threat; the values each community holds shape the challenge itself and the possibilities for resolution. The epistemic dimensions of this problem include straightforward matters of belief (that is, in climate science), but also have to do with the vocabulary and values that a community in a different ecological context might hold in relation to their environment. Recognizing the ways of life related to these values and acknowledging the epistemic authority

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[22] It might be feasible to construe this case in purely pragmatic and technical terms. However, as I construct the case, I intend to emphasize the morally relevant aspects of man-induced climate change, and of the frameworks that various individuals use to try and address the problem.

of, for example, indigenous communities working to fight climate change with more 'traditional' environmental paradigms, links back to Fricker's discussion of testimonial and hermeneutical justice. When considering questions about the appropriate solutions to climate change, the feasibility of that solution's success, and the appropriate moral perspectives to take on the issue, these dimensions—those related to the communities in question and their values, and how those values are realized in individual's treatment of resources—are unavoidable.

John Van Buren's discussion of environmental hermeneutics illustrates the close link between this development of hermeneutic theory and Fricker's epistemic injustice. Van Buren considers how these narratives are either represented or marginalized, and discusses how the interplay of these narratives informs how 'the forest' (his point of focus) has been treated. This approach does, however, present a challenge: can environmental hermeneutics adjudicate between or blend such varied views, or does it merely offer a description of varied perspectives? Considering this relativistic concern will bring me finally to illustrate how hermeneutics shifts the theory/practice paradigm, thereby providing solutions and avoiding falling into ethnocentric abstractions.

Accusations of relativism, like those of conservatism, are an old problem for Hermeneutics. As Pol Vandevelde observes, debates over "whether an interpretation may be accorded the status of better as opposed to merely 'different'" have been central to hermeneutical theorizing at least "since the rise of Romantic hermeneutics" (Vandevelde 288). Vandevelde's answer to this problem is not directly relevant to my purposes here—however, Jeff Malpas' discussion of the importance of concrete situatedness in the world to understanding does point in the direction of my solution. As Malpas explains "understanding begins with our being already in a situation" (271). This situation is a concrete, spatial and geographical one, which constrains possible interpretations. Possible understandings, and better understandings, can be determined by what actually fits the concrete situation. This can

include the material constraints of the context, as well as cultural and political realities. Such a response does not narrow possible interpretations down to a single option, but it prevents an unconstrainedly relativistic attitude toward different interpretations. Furthermore, this first insight begins to link concrete reality and the physical environment to possible interpretations.

B. Reorienting THeory and Practice

In order to better understand this link, I return to explicate one further aspect of Gadamer's thought. According to Gadamer, the continuous act of orienting ourselves in this situation—interpreting—brings us continuously outside ourselves and then back in again. As Malpas explains, in this motion of understanding we *respond* to the demands of this concrete place. It is this conception of understanding that allows Gadamer to reject the common modern distinction between theory and practice—or, as he sees it, to return to the original understanding of *theoria* and *praxis* found in Aristotle.[23] For Gadamer, theory is "itself a mode of practical engagement, while practical engagement is also theoretical in that it is only in practice that theory can arise" (Malpas 271).

Environmental challenges provide a concrete problem which can serve as a locus for dialogue. This reflects another basic tenet of Gadamer's hermeneutics: we do not come to understand the other by asking her questions about herself. Rather, we can approach a common object and come to understand both that object and one another through dialogue. This is a powerful idea when it comes to such a material challenge as climate change. The interplay of practical engagement and interpretive frameworks—that is, the particular theory we have about ourselves and our responsibility to the environment—can shed light on what our interlocutor believes is right, and (this time following Taylor's link from self-understanding to values backward), ultimately, tell us a little more about who she is. We come to understand something

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[23] This "return" to the original meaning of praxis can be found throughout Gadamer's thought. For a particularly clear discussion, see Gadamer's conversation with Carsten Dutt, pages 78-79, in the chapter entitled "Practical Philosophy," in the volume *Gadamer in Conversation*.

of her horizon, and, perhaps, can begin to absorb a little bit of that perspective without fully abandoning our own deeply contextual interpretive frameworks.

For Gadamer, coming together around an object of interpretation with people of different horizons is not viewed negatively: every time we engage with a text (itself a mode of dialogue for Gadamer) or speak with another human being, some sort of shift in our horizons is likely to occur. This possibility for motion indicates both the escape from ethnocentrism and the sketch of a solution. The first occurs, I think, rather silently. Ethnocentrism melts away once discussions seriously begin demonstrating the flexibility of our horizons. Additionally, this discussion demonstrates that the answer to the challenge has, in a sense, been present all along in one of the motivations for this inquiry: the common crises that demand cross-cultural collaboration might be the very thing that provides the possibility of understanding. Because we must come together around these crises, an object of dialogue will be readily available to facilitate the encounter of different perspectives. In a sense, recalling Booth, the "community of crisis" creates a space in which communities of ideas and communities of memory can adjudicate their differences.

But what will those conversations actually be like? Throughout this discussion, language has been central. Taylor's notion of self-interpretation introduced the way in which our very sense of value is based upon a process of which language is constitutive; language links the community and the individual, creating boundaries for our understandings of culture and associated values.

2. CLARIFYING (AND EXPANDING?) THE NOTION OF HORIZONS

Ultimately, I want to expand Gadamer's notion of horizons, coming close to what Appiah contends in his *Cosmopolitanism*. Appiah claims that "practices and not principles are what enables us to live together in peace," and that we can speak across boundaries of identity "with

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the sort of imaginative engagement you get when you read a novel or watch a movie or attend to a work of art that speaks from some place other than your own" (Appiah 85). My disagreement is with his implicit division between theory and practice—a division whose rejection, as I have noted, is at the core of Gadamer's thought.

I follow Linda Martín Alcoff in suggesting that we need to attend to the hermeneutical horizon "as a material and embodied situatedness, and not simply mentally perspectival or ideological" (102). This sort of emphasis cannot be found explicitly in Gadamer, though his extension of hermeneutics to virtually everything (we are always interpreting) leaves open such a possibility. In "Language and Understanding," Gadamer suggests that by grasping "the phenomenon of language not by starting from the isolated sentence but by beginning with the totality of our behavior in the world, which at the same time is a living in conversation" we can come to understand the mysterious and powerful phenomenon of language, which both draws us in and repels us (Gadamer, *The Gadamer Reader: A Bouquet of Later Writings* 107). There is a constant interplay between behavior and language, as the words we use inform the language which we have to interpret those actions, and so on. The restored relationship between theory and practice is one that does not empty the theory from practice or the practice from theory.

Gadamer also embraces the power of poetry, philosophy, literature, and other forms of expression besides straightforward expository or scientific language. Though "the language of science" is perhaps popular in modern discourse about the technical challenges we face or about social scientific challenges, it is just one "moment that is integrated into a whole" of language. Language also includes "philosophical, religious, and poetical speaking" (Gadamer *The Gadamer Reader* 107). For Gadamer, these kinds of speaking hold a certain sort of priority: these words allow us to be "at home"; they are not words that "self-forgetfully" pass through "the world"—and our lips—but rather provide a certain "guarantee" (107).

I make these points about embodied practices and other ways of thinking together almost as a counter-point to my earlier focus on the shared object (that is, the common crisis). On the one hand, it is by coming together over a common object, a topic of debate, that we can begin to reach understanding by discussing that object. However, I also want to suggest that, when it comes to deep misunderstandings about value, we need not always focus on a tense and existential object of debate (like climate change). In order to understand how another's way of life interacts with their moral views on a given topic, one can begin to engage with that way of life through traditions (religion or poetical speaking, as Gadamer says), or, even more radically, through engagement with or even just observation of embodied practices. These practices are a crucial part of the interpretive world, and as such can provide an avenue for modifying the interpretive resources of communities and individuals in order to facilitate understanding, not just about superficial matters, but also about the deeper web of meaning that gives rise to values, morals, and the possibility of justice.

CONCLUSION

It is evident that the focus of my discussion has shifted seismically since Chapter I. This is not accidental: my intention has been to bring together disparate topics, which together shed light on the challenges and possibilities of cross-cultural understanding and justice. Thus, the topics and vocabulary prominent at my starting point—an entrenched debate in political philosophy—bear little obvious resemblance to my final two chapters' discussion about hermeneutics and hermeneutical injustice. However, reaching across this vast domain has, in large part, been the goal of my thesis: I see ways in which these ideas complement one another, and have sought to demonstrate one way in which the idea of epistemic injustice can both bolster a communitarian discussion of intercultural understanding and justice and, in turn, be informed by the communitarian perspective.

In my introduction, I focused on motivating this pursuit by describing specific instances where cross-cultural understanding, particularly about fundamental matters of justice, seems both crucial and challenging. In a sense, the problem has been the solution: I have suggested that by coming together around an object of concern, following the suggestions of Gadamer's hermeneutics, and with care for epistemic injustices, we can begin to enter into a dialogue that can yield understanding. Importantly, this dialogue is not merely a spoken or written one—it encompasses the language of embodied practices, which can be incorporated into this development of shared understanding.

My goal was not to refute liberalism, and I do not pretend to have done so. However, I hope that this discussion has illuminated the unique insights that a communitarian perspective can offer, with its focus on the particular frameworks of meaning of communities. It remains to be seen whether these considerations can be integrated into any, or all, liberal frameworks.

At the very least, though, the fruitfulness of this discussion demonstrates the insights that can be drawn from the basis of a communitarian perspective.

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