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TOLERANCE AS/IN CIVILIZATIONAL DISCOURSE

Civilization is the humanisation of man in society.

Matthew Arnold, 1879

...along side an infinite diversity of cultures, there does exist one, global civilization in which humanity's ideas and beliefs meet and develop peacefully and productively. It is a civilization that must be defined by its tolerance of dissent, its celebration of cultural diversity, its insistence on fundamental, universal human rights and its belief in the right of people everywhere to have a say in how they are governed.¹

Kofi Annan
Secretary-General
The United Nations

We meet here during a crucial period in the history of our nation, and of the civilized world. Part of that history was written by others; the rest will be written by us... And by acting, we will signal to outlaw regimes that in this new century, the boundaries of civilized behavior will be respected.²

George W. Bush,
February 26, 2003

...America and the West have potential partners in these [Islamic] countries who are eager for us to help move the struggle to where it belongs: to a war within Islam over its spiritual message and identity, not a war with Islam...a war between the future and the past, between development and under-

development, between authors of crazy conspiracy theories versus those espousing rationality...Only Arabs and Muslims can win this war within, but we can openly encourage the progressives...

The only Western leader who vigorously took up this challenge was actually the Dutch politician Pim Fortuyn... Fortuyn questioned Muslim immigration to the Netherlands...not because he was against Muslims but because he felt that Islam had not gone through the Enlightenment or the Reformation, which separated church from state in the West and prepared it to embrace modernity, democracy and tolerance.

As a gay man, Fortuyn was very much in need of tolerance, and his challenge to Muslim immigrants was this: I want to be tolerant, but do you? Or do you have an authoritarian culture that will not be assimilated, and that threatens my country's liberal, multicultural ethos?

Thomas Friedman,
Foreign Affairs Editorialist
The New York Times

The War on Terrorism is a war for human rights.

Donald Rumsfeld
June 12, 2002

In the eyes of the West, the legitimacy of Israel is based upon its secularism as much as its singular status as a Jewish state. That is, Israel's external legitimacy and membership in "the West" depends upon its tolerance of a range of orientations toward Jewishness and especially its resistance to the aims of the Jewish orthodoxy to make Israel into a fundamentalist religious order. If the Haredi community (ultra-orthodox Hasids, mostly American immigrants) were to realize not simply its dream of Greater Israel but of a relentlessly religiously governed and ordered nation, Israel could neither be figured as a democracy nor as a part of contemporary Western Civilization. How much influence on government policy the Haredim along with nationalist religious Jews have is calibrated not simply by everyday politicking over concrete issues—what marriages the state recognizes, who may be buried as a Jew in public cemeteries—but by the larger concern of maintaining a secular rather than religious formulation of Judaism at the heart of Israeli state identity. Secularism and the tolerance it promises is perversely crucial to Israel's legitimacy and hence survival as a Jewish state.

But what is a secular Jewish state? If certain privileges of citizenship and the right of return are extended exclusively to Jews while Jewishness is fully separable from religious belief, this necessarily renders Judaism a matter of blood and thereby renders Israel a racial rather than religious regime. In this way, Israeli secularism becomes the foundation of Israeli racialism. Moreover, the legitimacy obtained through *the simultaneous tolerance and marginalization* of the Haredim itself consecrates Israel as a racist state—not a state that merely practices inadvertent racism toward Arab Israeli citizens or colonialism in occupied Palestine, but a state whose basis is racial rather than religious. Moreover, given that tolerance of the Haradim extends to exemption from compulsory military service and provision of state economic support, this tolerance simultaneously honors religious need and differentiates the state from it, thereby differentiating the state from religiosity as such. The Haredim, regarded by many Israelis as a thorn in Israel’s political side, especially regarding claims to the “illegal” West Bank settlements, are thus revealed as crucial to Israel’s legitimacy.

Now consider how “Israeli exceptionalism” works in international debates about Israel, including United Nations debates. Criticisms of Israel as a racist state, or calls for its transformation into a democratic secular one (in which religion or ethnicity could not be criteria for membership nor for economic and political privileges) are denounced by many Israeli leaders and supporters as anti-Semitic. That is, criticism of Israel and calls for its radical transformation are often equated with hostility toward Jews, an equation unique to this case. (Critiques of the current Chinese or Cuban regimes are not equated with hostility toward the Chinese or Cuban people.) This exceptionalism effectively claims that *because* Israel is a Jewish state, to attack it is to attack Jews or Jewishness; not merely the majority of the citizenry but the state is identified as Jewish even as its legitimacy depends upon its non-religiosity.³ As a state, Israel thus claims a difference, one that shields it from criticism by tarring criticism with anti-Semitism, a tarring that intentionally recalls the darkest years in twentieth century Western history to activate a metonymic slide from “ism” to action, and more precisely, from prejudice to slaughter. More than a shield, this slide clothes all Israeli action, including the most zealous aggression, as prophylactic against such slaughter.

But what kind of difference is the Israeli difference? What kind of difference counts as a legitimate and tolerable difference in Western Civilization, as opposed to a narrow and unacceptable one? The Israeli difference cannot be reduced to religion without making Israel equivalent to fundamentalist Islamic regimes—a Jewish Iran. And it cannot be a difference rooted entirely in historical experience (persecution, expulsion, displacement) without making Palestinians eligible for a parallel claim. So the difference again redounds to a notion of secular and racialized Judaism, that is, to Jews as a people rather than to Jews as a faith community. The Israeli difference—the Jewish difference—insulates Israel from charges of being undemocratic insofar as this difference must be protected. Yet it is secular Judaism, modestly tolerant within, that secures the democratic credential which qualifies the Israeli difference for tolerance from without, *despite the very illiberalism of this difference*. Again, the presence of the orthodoxy—leashed, marginalized, tolerated, even reviled—confirms, indeed constitutes, the secular status of the state and provides the basis of its legitimacy in the Western world.

In the modern West, a liberal discourse of tolerance (a term, incidentally, which my Israeli friends tell me is not part of the Israeli political vocabulary) distinguishes the fundamentalists from the non-fundamentalists and in so doing partly constitutes each. A non-fundamentalist collective identity is also at the heart of the West's self-conception as civilized, while barbarism is presumed to issue from fundamentalism even as some putative fundamentalists may escape the tag of barbarism. Within liberal tolerance discourse, the production and valorization of the sovereign individual is what keeps barbarism at bay. Conversely, the modern West's historical episodes of barbarism, e.g., fascism and slavery, are depicted as moments in which this fundamental value was abrogated.⁴ But as the case of Israel suggests, there is a consequential ruse in the association of liberal autonomy, tolerance, secularism, and civilization on the one hand and the association of group identity, fundamentalism, and barbarism on the other. Among other aims, this essay seeks to track the operations of that ruse.

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If tolerance as a political practice is always conferred by the dominant, if it is always a certain expression of domination even as it offers protection or incorporation to the less powerful, tolerance as an individual virtue has a similar asymmetrical structure. The ethical bearing of tolerance is a highminded one, while the object of such highmindedness is inevitably cast as something more lowly. Even as the outlandish, wrongheaded, or literal outlaw is licensed or suffered through tolerance, the voice in which tolerance is proffered contrasts starkly with the qualities attributed to its object. The pronouncement, “I am a tolerant man,” conjures seemliness, propriety, forbearance, magnanimity, cosmopolitanism, universality, the large view, while those for whom tolerance is required take their shape as improper, indecorous, urgent, narrow, particular, and often ungenerous or at least lacking in perspective.⁵ Liberals who philosophize about tolerance almost always write about coping with what they cannot imagine themselves to be: they identify with the aristocrat holding his nose in the agora, not with the stench.

Historically and philosophically, tolerance is rarely argued for as an entitlement, a right, or a naturally egalitarian good in the ways that liberty generally is, but rather is pleaded for as an incorporative practice that promises to keep the peace through such incorporation. Thus the subterranean yearning of tolerance—for a universally practiced moderation that does not exist, a humanity so civilized that it would not require the virtue of tolerance—sits uneasily with the normative aspect of tolerance that reaffirms the characterological superiority of the tolerant over the tolerated.

Attention to these aspects of the rhetorical frame of tolerance suggests that tolerance is not simply asymmetrical across lines of power but carries caste, class and civilizational airs with it in its work. This essay scrutinizes that conveyance through consideration of the logic of tolerance as a civilizational discourse, a discourse that simultaneously marks off the civilized from the uncivilized *and* establishes the supremacy of the West as a civilization.

The dual function of civilizational discourse—to mark in general what counts as “civilized” and also to confer superiority on the West—casts tolerance itself in two distinct if intersecting power functions: 1) as part of what defines the superiority of Western Civilization, 2) as that which confers the status of ‘intolerable’ on certain non-Western

practices or regimes, and thereby legitimizes liberal polities' non-liberal treatment of these practices and the societies that harbor them, that is, permits intolerance of or outright aggression toward these practices without tarring the "civilized" status of the aggressor. George W. Bush helps to provide a concise foretaste of the argument. Shortly after September 11th, Bush asserted: "Those who hate all civilization and culture and progress...cannot be ignored, cannot be tolerated...cannot be appeased. They must be fought."⁶ Paired with remarks in February 2002 in which Bush declared that the U.S. has a "historic opportunity to fight a war that will not only liberate people from the clutches of barbaric behavior but a war that can leave the world more peaceful in the years to come," it is not difficult to see how an opposition between civilization and barbarism, in which the cherished tolerance of the former meets its limits in the latter, provides the mantle of culture, progress and peace for imperial militaristic adventures.⁷

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"Civilization" is a complex term with an even more complex genealogy. The Oxford English Dictionary, itself no minor civilizational project in its creation of literary legacies that both set linguistic standards and define a cultural practice⁸, describes civilization since the eighteenth century as referring to the "action or process of civilizing or being civilized" and also as denoting a "developed or advanced state of human society."⁹ In *Keywords*, Raymond Williams notes that while "civilization is now generally used to describe an achieved state or condition of organized social life," it referred originally to a process, a meaning which persists into the present.¹⁰ The static and dynamic meanings of civilization are easily reconciled in the context of a progressivist Western historiography of modernity in which individuals and societies are configured as developing a steadily increasing democratic, reasoned and cosmopolitan bearing. In this way civilization simultaneously frames the achievement of European modernity, the promised issue of modernization as an experience, and crucially, the effects of exporting European modernity to "uncivilized" parts of the globe. European colonial expansion from the mid-nineteenth through the mid-twentieth century was explicitly

justified as a project of civilization, conjuring the gifts of social order, legality, reason, religion, regulating manners and mores, but also, as Freud reminded us, repression and the attendant introduction of anxiety, guilt, unhappiness, neurosis, sublimation, and productivity associated with modern Western existence.

However, civilization by no means remained a simple term of colonial domination in which all the subjects it touched aspired to European standards. Not only did non-European elites and various anti-colonial struggles reshape the concept to contest and sometimes forthrightly oppose European hegemony, the idea of civilization was also pluralized in both scholarly and popular discourses during the last century. From Arnold Toynbee to Fernand Braudel to Samuel Huntington, there has been a concerted if inconsistent effort to pry apart the idea of civilization from Europe and even from modernity to define structured “ways of life” comprised of values, literatures, legal systems, and social organization.

Plural accounts of civilization, however, do not equate to a pluralist sensibility *about* civilization; Samuel Huntington’s thesis (best known as an argument about the mutual sparking points among what he imagines to be the world’s distinct and incommensurate civilizations) makes abundantly clear that such pluralization can cloak rather than negate the Western superiority charging the term. While Huntington insists that Western Civilization “is valuable not because it is universal but because it is unique” [in its cultivation of the values of individual liberty, political democracy, human rights, and cultural freedom], this apparent gesture toward cultural relativism does not materialize as a principle of mutual valuation.¹¹ This is not only because Huntington’s argument about Western Civilization’s uniqueness forms the basis for intolerance of multiculturalism *within* the West (famously, Huntington argues: “a multicultural America is impossible because a non-Western America is not American....multiculturalism at home threatens the United States and the West”).¹² Equally important is that Huntington’s book on the potential clash of civilizations concludes with a warning about the current vulnerability of what he calls ‘civilization in the singular’: “on a worldwide basis Civilization seems to be in many respects yielding to barbarism, generating the image of an unprecedented phenomenon, a global Dark Ages, possibly descending on humanity.”¹³ This danger can be seen, Huntington

argues, in a worldwide breakdown of law and order, a global crime wave, increasing drug addiction, a general weakening of the family, a decline in trust and social solidarity, and a rise in ethnic, religious and civilizational violence. And what is occasioning this dark specter of what Huntington terms a global “moral reversion”?¹⁴ Nothing less than the decline of Western power, that which established the rule of law as a civilizational norm and decreased the acceptability of “slavery, torture and vicious abuse of individuals.”¹⁵ So even as Huntington argues for all civilizations to bond together in fighting barbarism—the intolerable—only the values of the West can lead this fight: what will hold barbarism at bay is precisely what recenters the West as the defining essence of civilization and what legitimates its efforts at controlling the globe.

Now when we combine these two arguments, the argument for mutual accord among civilizations governed by what Huntington admits is a distinctly Western value (tolerance, mutual respect), and the argument that the barbarism into which the world now threatens to slide is attributable to the decline of the West, the identification of the West with Civilization, of civilization with tolerance, and of the intolerable with the uncivilized is unmistakable. And if this identification occurs despite Huntington’s sincere effort to break it, this is only a sign of how powerful civilizational discourse is in liberal theories of tolerance, even (and perhaps especially) when that discourse is most thoroughly inflected by realism.

Huntington’s work also makes clear that even when civilization is rendered in the plural, its signifying opposite remains barbarism. “Barbaric,” of course, derives from the ancient Greek term denoting all non-Greeks. With the rise of Rome, its meaning shifted to refer to those outside the Empire; with the Italian Renaissance, barbarian covered all those imagined unreached by the Renaissance, that is, non-Italians. A barbarian is thus technically “a foreigner, one whose language and customs differ from the speaker’s” but crucially, this foreignness was continually established *vis a vis* empire and imperial definitions of civilization. And so the OED gives the second meaning of barbarian as a condition of being “outside the pale of civilization.” Outside the pale (an English phrase for measuring its colonial jurisdiction in Ireland in the sixteenth century)—not merely beyond the geographical bounds but unreached by civilization, without its

canopy. It is not difficult, then, to see the path from the ancient meaning of barbarian as foreigner to its contemporary signification, the third listing in the OED: “a rude, wild, uncivilized person....an uncultured person, or one who has no sympathy with literary culture.”¹⁶ As we shall see shortly, Susan Okin’s designation of selected non-liberal cultural practices as barbaric and her inability to see “barbaric” practices within liberalism perfectly mimics the etymological slide of barbarian from *foreigner* to *uncivilized* to *wild brute*, and inhabits as well the blindness to colonial or imperial domination that this slide entails.

If being beyond the pale of civilization is also to be what civilization cannot tolerate, then tolerance and civilization not only entail one another, but mutually define what is outside of both: to be uncivilized is to be intolerable is to be a barbarian, just as to declare a particular practice intolerable is to stigmatize it as uncivilized. That which is inside civilization is tolerable *and* tolerant; that which is outside is neither. This is how, even amidst plural definitions of civilization, the discourse of tolerance re-centers the West as the standard for civilization, and how as well tolerance operates simultaneously as a token of Western supremacy and a discursive vehicle of Western domination. This is also why Kofi Annan, in one of the epigrams for this chapter, had to bring all civilizations into the orbit of a liberal political idiom; in no other way could they attain or keep their status as civilized.

Teaching Tolerance

According to Huntington, the West will save itself by valuing itself and will save the world through developing global practices of civilizational tolerance; but the latter requires enlightening others about the value of tolerating difference and eschewing fundamentalism. This depicts tolerance as something that must be pedagogically achieved, a formulation underscored by the very name of the Southern Poverty Law Center “Teach Tolerance” project. This formulation also establishes intolerance as a natural or “native” response to difference where natives are assumed to run on instinct

as opposed to education. The rhetoric of “teaching tolerance” construes enmity or intolerance as the natural, uneducated response to difference. Hence the popular journalistic tropes of ‘primitive blood feuds’ or ‘archaic enmity’ to frame contemporary ethnic conflict in eastern Europe, Rwanda or Ethiopia (all of which are treated together, in montage fashion, in a video on “intolerance” titled “In Our Time” at the Los Angeles Museum of Tolerance). At work here is a familiar Orientalist narrative trope of the enlightened Westerner as more rational, cosmopolitan, and peaceful than her or his native Other, a rationality, cosmopolitanism, and peaceability that is understood to derive from tolerance and also to generate it. In the words of K. Peter Fritzsche of the International Tolerance Network, “...Tolerance has to be learned. One has to be made capable of tolerance, and it is one of the utmost tasks of tolerance education to promote the elements of this capability.”¹⁷ Jay Newman, a contemporary philosopher of tolerance, introduces his volume on religious tolerance with a similar invocation: “intolerance is the most persistent and the most insidious of all sources of hatred. It is perhaps foremost among the obstacles to civilization, the instruments of barbarism.”¹⁸ Newman’s cure for intolerance? Education, which he equates with “a process of civilizing.” The native, the fanatic, the fundamentalist, and the bigot are what must be overcome by the society committed to tolerance; from the perspective of the tolerant, these figures are pre-modern or at least have not been thoroughly washed by modernity, a formulation endlessly rehearsed by Thomas Friedman in his pontifications about Islam on the *New York Times* op ed page. This reminds us too that it is not really Western Civilization *tout court* but the identification of modernity and in particular, liberalism, with the West, indeed the identification of liberalism as the telos of the West, that provides the basis for Western civilizational supremacy.

What wraps in a common leaf the native, the fanatic, the fundamentalist, and the bigot is a presumed existence in a narrow, homogeneous, unquestioning and unenlightened universe, an existence that inherently generates hostility toward outsiders, toward questioning, toward difference. “Learning tolerance” thus involves divesting oneself of relentless partiality, absolutist identity, and parochial attachments, a divestment understood as the inevitable effect of a larger, more cosmopolitan worldview and not as the

privilege of hegemony. It is noteworthy too that within this discourse, the aim of learning tolerance is not to arrive at equality or solidarity with others, but rather, to learn how to put up with others by weakening one's own connections to community and claims of identity, that is, by becoming a liberal pluralist, one whom, according to Michael Ignatieff, can "live and let live."¹⁹ In neo-Hobbesian fashion, tolerance appears as a management of primordial and natural aversions achieved through converting overt hatred to forbearance and pacifying the passions (a forbearance and pacification that anticipates the passive form of citizenship tolerance breeds).²⁰ As a posture superior to absolutism or fanaticism, tolerance is treated as the issue of education and repression, that is, with the social contract and civilization, to overcome the putative naturalness of enmity among essentialized differences. This formulation, of course, simultaneously confirms the superiority of the West, de-politicizes the effects of domination, colonialism, and Cold War deformations of the Second and Third Worlds as nativist or tribalist enmity, and portrays those living these effects as in need of the civilizing project of the West.

Undergirding this conceptualization of enmity toward difference as natural and primitive is the Enlightenment conceit that the rational individual is inherently more peaceable, civil, far-seeing, and hence tolerant than members of "organicist societies." Ignatieff is the most ardent yet subtle exponent of this dimension of tolerance discourse. In his view, racism and ethnically based nationalism are the effects of being "trapped in collective identities," the cure for which is "the means to pursue individual lives" and especially individual routes to success and achievement.²¹ Thus, argues, Ignatieff, "the culture of individualism is the only reliable solvent of the hold of group identities and the racisms that go with them." The "essential task in teaching 'toleration,'" he argues, "is to help people see themselves as individuals, and then to see others as such," a project that Ignatieff also understands as bringing us closer to the truth of "actual, real individuals in all their specificity" as opposed to the "procedures of abstraction" constitutive of group interpellation.²² The individual, in other words, is a distinctly Hegelian *a priori* in Ignatieff's analysis—ontologically true yet historically achieved. And the more developed and rewarded this individual is *as an individual*, that is, the more

that collective identity is eroded or undercut by individualism and especially individual ego strength, the greater the prospects for a tolerant world. As we shall see a bit later, this formulation not only figures liberalism as superior because true, that is, it not only figures tolerance as the sign of a fully and rightly individualized society, a society that has arrived at the core truth of human beings, it also figures liberalism as both a-cultural and anti-cultural...beyond culture and opposed to culture. In this regard, it repairs to early anthropological and colonial discourse about culture, casting it as something "they" have but we don't, and also casting it as autonomous of politics, economics and law. In short, culture is both exoticized and reified as it is opposed to the figure of the individual as well as rule by law and the free market.

Conferring and Withholding Tolerance

Tolerance is generally conferred by those who do not require it upon those who do, which is to say, it arises within a normative order in which those who deviate from rather than conform to the norms are eligible for tolerance. The heterosexual proffers tolerance to the homosexual, the Christian tolerates the Muslim or Jew, the dominant race tolerates minority races... each of these only up to a point. However, the matter is rarely phrased this way. Rather, power discursively disappears in an action in which a hegemonic population tolerates a marked or minoritized one. The scene appears instead as one in which the universal tolerates the particular in its particularity, which also means that the putative universal always appears superior to that unassimilated particular, a superiority itself premised upon the non-reciprocity of tolerance (the particular does not tolerate the universal). It is the disappearance of power in the action of tolerance that convenes the hegemonic as the universal and the subordinate or minoritized as the particular. The mechanics of this are familiar: homosexuals discursively appear as more thoroughly defined by their sexuality and hence less capable of participation in the universal than heterosexuals, just as Jews, Catholics, Mormons, and Muslims appear more relentlessly saturated by their religious/ethnic identity

than other Americans. (Thus, vice presidential candidate Joseph Lieberman's orthodox Judaism became a significant campaign issue as did John F. Kennedy's Catholicism, while the born-again Christianity of Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, and both Bushes did not.) This appearance of saturation is consequent to a normative regime and not to some quality inherent in the identities or practices. However, in associating itself with universality and relative neutrality, the unmarked-because-hegemonic identity also associates tolerance with this standing and conversely, associates objects of tolerance with particularity and partiality. In this way, tolerance comes to be identified not simply with liberal political institutions, but establishes the superiority of liberalism, a superiority based upon the twin (false) premises of neutrality and universality on the one hand, and being the tolerant political order in a world divided into the tolerant and the tolerated on the other.

When the heterosexual tolerates the homosexual, when Christians tolerate Muslims in the West, not only do the first terms not require tolerance, their standing as that which confers tolerance establishes their superiority over that which is said to require tolerance; in this way, the tolerating and tolerated are simultaneously radically distinguished from each other and hierarchically ordered in a table of virtue. That which tolerates is not eligible for toleration; that which is tolerated is presumed roughly incapable of tolerance. It is this aspect of the binary structure of tolerance discourse that circulates not just power but the superordination of a group with the term. Through the establishment of the object of tolerance as *different*, its inferiority to that which is the same is secured. Through this inflection with difference the object of tolerance is placed outside the universal, hence positioned as needing tolerance but unable to tolerate, hence also cast as a lower form of life than the host. But this positioning is a discursive trick, one that disguises the extent to which it is power and not inherent qualities of openness or rigidity, moral relativism or orthodoxy, that produces the universal and the particular, the tolerant and the tolerated, the West and the East, the pluralist and the fundamentalist, the civilized and the barbaric, the same and the other. This discursive trick also purifies the first term, the tolerant culture, of all intolerance; and it saturates the second term, the tolerated, with orthodoxy, ethnic nationalism, fundamentalism,

identity, and rigidity....nearly to (and sometimes arriving at) the point of intolerability.

In liberal theories of tolerance concerned with liberalism's orientation toward putatively non-liberal cultures, the superiority of liberalism is established through its ability to tolerate those who, consequent to their fundamentalism, are thought not to be able to tolerate liberalism. So the superiority of liberalism is established through the conceit that it can harbor religions without being conquered by them, or more generically, harbor various fundamentalisms without becoming fundamentalist. Liberalism tolerates fundamentalism, it can incorporate it, so the logic goes, while fundamentalism cannot tolerate or incorporate liberalism; the superior entity is the more capacious one, the one that can put up with difference and not be felled by it. In this regard, tolerance valorizes both size and strength; its virtue rests in a presumption about the value of being large, and that which cannot be large is its inferior. Indeed, capacity as such is the measure of tolerance in most domains of its usage: at its most rudimentary, tolerance is defined by how much error, contamination, or toxicity can be absorbed by the host without damaging it, whether the element at issue is alcohol consumption for a college freshman, margin of error for a statistical inference, or ethnic nationalism for a liberal society. But within a liberal regime, this capacity is not only a measure of ability but virtue. Tolerance discourse thus rewards power's potential for capaciousness with the status of virtue.

From a slightly different angle, the capacity for tolerance is itself an expression of power and of a certain security in that power. At the collective and individual levels, the strong and secure can afford to be tolerant; the marginal and insecure cannot. A polity or culture certain of itself and its hegemony, one which does not feel vulnerable, can relax its borders and absorb otherness without fear. Thus the Ottoman Empire could be modestly tolerant and so could Euroatlantic liberalism, though the latter has reified tolerance as a continuous principle while the actual practice of tolerance in liberal societies varies dramatically according to perceived threats and dangers. In America, this appears not only in the post-September 11th circumscription of civil liberties and detention of Arabs and Arab-Americans, but in such sordid twentieth century practices as

McCarthyism, Japanese-American internment, and FBI disruptions of labor unions and political groups. Indeed, liberal commitments to tolerance are always modified by anxieties and perceived dangers, from property values (when African Americans move into the white neighborhoods) to influences on the children (when homosexuals are school teachers). If tolerance is an index of power, it is also a practice of vulnerability within this power, an instrument of governance that titrates vulnerability according to a variety of governmental aims.

This suggests that tolerance is also crucial to the shell game that liberal political thought plays with Christianity and with liberal capitalist culture more generally, the ways it denies imbrication with either while promulgating and protecting both.²³ A homely example: the University of California academic instructional calendar, like that of most state schools, is prepared without deference to major religious holidays for Jews, Muslims, or eastern Orthodoxy. A faculty member complains that one year, the first day of fall instruction, when students risk losing their place in over-subscribed courses if they are not present, falls on Yom Kippur. The Registrar responds that the academic calendar honors no religious holidays but that faculty are urged to tolerate all recognized religions by offering make-up exams and other non-punitive accommodations for students whose religious commitments require them to miss selected classes. The faculty member notes that classes are never held on Christmas, Easter, or for that matter, the Christian sabbath. The Registrar responds that this is a coincidence of the timing of “winter break” and of Easter and Sundays always falling on a weekend.

Liberal tolerance discourse not only hides its own imbrication with Christianity and bourgeois culture, it sheaths the cultural chauvinism that liberalism carries to its encounters with non-liberal cultures. For example, when Western liberals express dismay at (what is perceived as mandatory) veiling in fundamentalist Islamic contexts, this dismay is legitimized through the idiom of women’s choice. But in the contrast between the nearly compulsory bearing of skin by American teenage girls and compulsory veiling in some Islamic societies, this contrast is drawn as absolute lack of choice, indeed tyranny, “over there” and absolute freedom of choice (representatively redoubled by near nakedness) “over here.” This is not to deny any

differences between the two dress codes and the costs of defying them, but rather to note the means and effects of converting these differences into hierarchical opposites. If successful American women are not free to veil, are not free to dress like men or boys, are not free to wear whatever they choose on any occasion without severe economic or social consequences, what sleight of hand recasts this as freedom and individuality contrasted with hypostasized tyranny and lack of agency? What makes choices “freer” when they are constrained by secular and market organizations of femininity and fashion than by state or religious law? Do we imagine the former to be less coercive than the latter because, as Foucault put it, we have yet to “cut off the king’s head in political theory,” that is, because we cling to the belief that power is only and always a matter of sovereignty? A less politically innocent account of this analytic failure would draw on the postcolonial feminist insight that the West encodes its own superiority through what Chandra Mohanty identifies as the fantasy of Western women as “secular, liberated, and having control over their own lives,” an identity derived in part from the figure of an oppressed Third World opposite.²⁴ To acknowledge that we have our own form of compulsory feminine dress would undercut this identity of superiority: we *need* fundamentalism, indeed, we project and produce it elsewhere, to establish that we are free of it and free generally. Tolerance discourse frequently constructs the fundamentalism it projects as its opposite and that it also takes as the object of its practical work. George W. Bush epitomized this construction during the initiation of his war on Afghanistan in the winter of 2002:

We have a great opportunity during this time of war to lead the world toward the values that will bring lasting peace....We have no intention of imposing our culture. But America will always stand firm for the non-negotiable demands of human dignity: the rule of law; limits on the power of the state; respect for women; private property; free speech, equal justice; and religious tolerance.²⁵

I shall return shortly to the matter of distinguishing the non-negotiable demands Bush cites from the business of “imposing culture.” For the

moment, note only the dark other that each “demand” figures—rule by the sword, unlimited state power, degradation of women, collective ownership, censorship, inequality, and fundamentalism—and how this figuration constitutes not only the identity and supremacy of the West, but justifies its aggressions on behalf of “human dignity” and “peace.”

When used to describe collectivities, intolerance is almost always reified as an absolute, as if it saturated the whole, indeed, as if intolerance itself defined the collectivity or was a deep principle of the collectivity. Conversely, tolerance as a political principle is almost always imagined to rather exhaustively define the polity that harbors it. This division of the world into the tolerant and the intolerant, the fundamentalist and the pluralist, the parochial and the cosmopolitan, allows the political theoretical and philosophical literature on tolerance to repeatedly pose the problem, ‘what should be the attitude of the tolerant toward the intolerant,’ as if these were true and dire opposites, as if these were the two different types of entity. The point, again, is not that there are no differences between regimes that formally advocate tolerance and those that formally eschew it, but that civilizational discourse converts these differences into opposites and attributes a distorting essence to each—“fundamentalist/intolerant/unfree” on one side and “pluralist/tolerant/free” on the other—to align liberalism with civilization.

It is not only liberal advocates of tolerance who participate in this Manichean rhetorical scheme. Liberal anti-relativists, on the right and the left, who seek to limit tolerance, indeed who regard current deployments of cultural tolerance as abetting a loathsome relativism, also depict the world as divided between the tolerant and free (West) and the fundamentalist and oppressive (non-West). In a special issue of *Daedalus* entitled “The End of Tolerance: Engaging Cultural Difference” and in Susan Okin’s *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* a concerted argument emerges for articulating standards of the humane and acceptable and limiting tolerance to those cultural practices or even to those cultures that meet such standards.²⁶ Western refusals to condemn and legally ban practices such as genital mutilation, widow suttee or polygamy are taken as signs of relativism run amok (a running amok tacitly if not expressly attributed to something called ‘postmodernism’) and as thoroughly compromising liberal values of

autonomy and freedom. Tolerance is not here repudiated as a value but rather is expressly practiced as a line drawing activity where the line is drawn at the “barbaric”—the violent, the degrading, the unfree. Intrinsically unobjectionable as this argument sounds, the problem is that all instances of the barbaric are found on the non-Western side of the line, thus reminding us that it is *through cultural-political lenses* that perceptions of violation, degradation and unfreedom occur. Everything legal in liberal capitalist cultures of the West is tolerable from *within* its perspective (which is only to say that it is a culture that like all cultures, affirms itself) including feasting upon a variety of animals except those fetishized as pets, polluting the planet and plundering its resources, living and dying alone, devoting life to the pursuit of money, making available human eggs, sperm, and infants for purchase by anonymous strangers, the death penalty, abortion, nuclear weapons, sex clubs, indigency and homelessness, flagrant luxury enjoyed in the presence of the poor, junk food, imperialist wars—any one of which might be considered violent, dehumanizing or degrading from another cultural perspective. But what Okin and others find absolutely intolerable are selected non-Western practices, each of which is understood to be sanctioned or at least protected by culture, religion, or tradition, three terms from which Okin imagines liberal legal categories to be immune. The effect is to tar the non-West with the brush of the intolerable for harboring certain practices which are not only named barbaric, that is, uncivilized in contrast to our practices, but coerced, that is, unfree compared to our practices. Thus, the discourse of tolerance at its limits is just as effective as the discourse of tolerance in a more capacious mode in distinguishing the civilized from the uncivilized. The former marks the barbaric, the latter the fundamentalist; together, they figure the West’s Other through which the West acquires its superiority.

Susan Okin’s Orientalist Feminism

A closer examination of Okin’s argument reveals several of the more subtle operations of tolerance as a civilizational discourse.²⁷ Her basic claim is a simple one: multiculturalism—which she takes to be a

relatively unqualified respect for various cultures and which may assume the juridical form of according group rights or cultural defenses for particular practices that may not be legal or conventional within liberalism—is in high tension with feminism, the opportunity for women to “live as fulfilling and as freely chosen lives as men can.”²⁸ Reduced further, Okin believes that respect for culture collides with respect for gender equality, even that culture *tout court* is in tension with feminism. If culture and sex difference are something that all peoples everywhere have, there is, of course, no logical reason for culture and gender equality to be antagonists, especially when one considers that the gender equality Okin values itself emerges from within some culture.²⁹ Or does it? What Okin mostly means by culture is not simply the myths, conventions, ideas, gestures, icons, fetishes, and self-understandings that bind and organize the lives of a particular people. Rather, for her, culture comprises ways of life that are not markedly liberal, Enlightenment bound, rational-legal, and above all, secular. Implicitly, culture is pre-modern or at least incompletely modern in her account. Thus, “they” have culture; “we” do not. Or more precisely, non-liberal societies *are* cultures; liberal societies are...states, civil societies, and individuals. Culture appears when a collectivity is not organized by individual autonomy, rights, or liberty. Culture is non-liberal; liberalism is *kulturlos*.

Okin does not argue this explicitly; to the contrary, she manages to utter the phrase “liberal culture” when acknowledging and lamenting that Western democracies harbor some sexist practices, that is, culture makes its appearance in the West whenever Okin has to explain how sexism has persisted into an age and an order formally governed by individual rights. But this only confirms the pejorative standing of “culture” in her analysis—culture is what a complete realization of liberal principles will eradicate or at least radically subdue. Moreover, the gesture of recognizing liberalism as bearing culture appears disingenuous when one notices the slide Okin constantly performs from culture to religion. Not only are “culture and religion” often uttered in the same breath, a paragraph that begins with a claim about the drive of most cultures to control women ends with a series of examples from Judaism, Islam, and Christianity.³⁰ And that paragraph is followed by one that links orthodox monotheism and “Third World” cultures in their shared patriarchal

tendencies. The basis on which Okin pairs culture and religion is their common occupation with the organization of domestic life, a key domain for the organization of gender and the transmission of gender ideology: “obviously culture is not only about domestic arrangements, but they do provide a major focus of most contemporary cultures. Home is, after all, where much of culture is practiced, preserved, and transmitted to the young.”³¹ What is the standing of liberalism in this regard? The sharp ideological and practical divide between public and private which feminists have spent the past thirty years subjecting to critique for its depoliticization of women’s subordination is here affirmed by Okin for the dam it erects between gendered family values and civic and public law. If the private realm in liberal societies harbors gender inequality, Okin tacitly argues, if this is the place where sexist culture lingers and is reproduced, at least this is contested by gender neutral public values of abstract personhood and autonomy. She counts on a formal commitment to secularism and individual autonomy, and a formal privatization of religions and other moral values, both of which are secured by the liberal democratic state, to erode the force of sexist culture.

According to Okin, “most cultures have as one of their principal aims the control of women by men.”³² Liberalism, by contrast, may have originated in a context of male supremacy and female subordination but the political principles of individual autonomy, liberty and equality make this past irrelevant to its present superiority to “culture” and its antidotal relationship to culture. “While virtually all of the world’s cultures have distinctly patriarchal pasts, some—mostly, though by no means exclusively, Western liberal cultures—have departed far further from them than others.”³³ What distinguishes Western cultures, which “still practice many forms of sex discrimination,” from others is that women are “legally guaranteed many of the same freedoms and opportunities as men.”³⁴ In other words, it is not the law or the doctrine of liberalism that is sex discriminatory but some kind of cultural remainder that the law has not yet managed to reform or extinguish. Whatever the remains of culture in Western liberal orders, and whatever the remains of sexism within those cultures, liberalism as a political-judicial order is or has the capacity to be gender-clean. This, of course, is warmed over

John Stuart Mill: in a progress narrative led by liberalism, indeed, by the bourgeoisie, male dominance is the barbaric stuff of the old regime, of a time when might, custom and religion rather than law and reason ruled the world, of a time when groups rather than individuals reigned. Thus, if liberal regimes continue to house deposits of misogyny and female subordination, this is the result of something other than liberalism which, with its legal principles of autonomy, liberty and equality, constitutes the remedy to such ills within the societies it orders.

But what if liberalism itself harbors male dominance, what if male superordination is inscribed in liberalism's core values of liberty rooted in autonomy and centered upon self-interest, and in equality defined as sameness and confined to the public sphere?³⁵ Many feminists have argued that liberal categories, relations, and processes are inseparable from a relentlessly gendered division of labor and a far-reaching public/private distinction, in which everything associated with the family—need, dependence, inequality, the body, relationality—is identified with the feminine and constitutes both the predicate and the opposite to a masculinist public sphere of rights, autonomy, formal equality, rationality, and individuality. In this critique, liberalism contains masculinist social norms in its very architecture, in its division and population of the social space, and hence in its production of subjects. These are norms that produce and privilege men as public beings—free, autonomous, and equal—while producing a feminine other as a familial being—dependent, encumbered, and different.³⁶

Okin does not simply elide such feminist critiques of liberalism. Rather, a presumption of ungendered liberal principles counterposed to gendered cultural ones is required for her argument that liberalism is the best cure for the patriarchal ills of culture. For Okin, autonomy prevails only when culture recedes; culture is autonomy's antimony.³⁷ And where there is autonomy, there is choice and where there is choice, there is freedom, especially women's freedom. This is how Okin figures both culture and patriarchy (as opposed to mere "sexist attitudes or practices") as always elsewhere from liberalism. Culture and religion perpetuate inequality by formally limiting women's autonomy while the constraints on choice in a liberal capitalist order—say, those of a single mother with few job skills—are either

not cultural or not significant. The formal existence of choice is the incontestable (hence non-cultural?) good, regardless of its actualizability. Thus she concludes:

In the case of a more patriarchal minority culture in the context of a less patriarchal majority culture, no argument can be made on the basis of self-respect or freedom that the female members of the culture have a clear interest in its preservation. Indeed, they *might* be much better off if the culture into which they were born were either to become extinct (so that its members would become integrated into the less sexist surrounding culture) or, preferably, to be encouraged to alter itself so as to reinforce the equality of women—at least to the degree to which this value is upheld in the majority culture.³⁸

This passage involves several remarkable claims. First, in arguing that women who have self-respect and want freedom will necessarily be opposed to (not simply ambivalent about) their culture, Okin rehearses a “false consciousness” argument always specially reserved for the practices of women: a woman without self-respect cannot be thinking for herself, and hence cannot be trusted to think well about her attachments and investments. Consequently, self-respecting liberals like Susan Okin or Martha Nussbaum must think for her.³⁹ Second, it implies that female subordination is sufficient grounds for wanting one’s culture dead, an extraordinary claim by itself and also for one as wedded to Western culture as Okin is. Third, it argues that the standard against which minority cultures are to be measured is not an abstract standard of freedom, equality, and self-respect for women but rather that superior degree of these things found in the majority culture and measured by the values of the majority culture. In this strict quantification of sexism—more there, less here—and inattention to the *varieties* of male superordination, it is hard to imagine a more naked version of Enlightenment progressivism and the brief for liberal imperialism it entails. Even Bush and Fukuyama are slightly more subtle.

Where does tolerance fit into this picture? In Okin’s view, liberal orders and liberal legalism should *not* stretch to accommodate the overtly misogynistic or sexist practices of minority cultures—e.g., child brideship, polygamy, clitoridectomy—and should not permit cultural defenses any standing in criminal trial cases concerned with

rape, wife-murder, or infanticide.⁴⁰ Okin draws the line for tolerance at the point of what she calls not simply “sex inequality” but the “barbaric” treatment of women. Tolerance is for civilized practices: barbarism is on the other side of the line.

But what if barbarism, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder and what if that eye is always culturally situated? American women spend upwards of nine billion dollars annually on plastic surgery, cosmetic implants, injections, and facial laser treatments, and untold more on over-the-counter products advertised to restore youthful looks. In the last half-decade, tens of thousands of women have opted to smooth their forehead lines with regular injections of Botox, a diluted version of what the American Medical Association has identified as “the most poisonous substance known;” far more deadly than anthrax, “a single gram, evenly dispersed, could kill more than one million people, causing ‘symmetric, descending, flaccid paralysis’ and eventually cutting off its victims’ power to breathe, swallow, communicate, or see...”⁴¹ How many noses have been cut, flattened, or otherwise rearranged to fit an Aryan ideal of feminine beauty? How many breasts reduced? How many enlarged? How many submissions to painful electrolysis and other means of removing body hair? Are these procedures less culturally organized than the procedures Okin cites to condemn? Is their “voluntariness” what spares them from being candidates for her attention? Does a liberal frame mistake elective surgery for freedom from coercive power, as it tends to mistake elections for political freedom? What is voluntary about treatments designed to produce conventional ideals of youthful beauty for an aspiring Hollywood actress, a trophy wife on the verge of being traded in for a younger model, or an ordinary middle-aged, middle-class woman in southern California where, as one such woman recently said to me while visiting the northern part of the state, “we don’t have gray hair”?

Similarly, why is Okin more horrified by clitordectomy than by the routine surgical “correction” of intersexed babies in the United States—babies whose genitals are sexually ambiguous and who have no say whatsoever in these surgeries but are condemned to live the rest of their lives with the (often botched) outcome?⁴² Is Western anxiety about sexual dimorphism, and in particular about female availability for penile penetration, any less cultural than the anxieties

about female sexual pleasure she condemns in parts of Africa and the Middle East?⁴³ Why isn't Okin alarmed by the epidemic of eating disorders among American teenaged girls or the epidemic of American women being pharmaceutically treated for depression? With regard to the latter, why doesn't Okin find drugging rather than transforming the life conditions of such women barbaric and intolerable? In sum, why is Okin more horrified by the *legal* control of women by men than by the controlling cultural norms of gender and sexuality, including norms that regulate beauty, sexual desire and behavior, weight and physique, soul and psyche, that course through modern Western societies? The answer lies in that which Okin treats as the salvation from culture: liberalism. Within a liberal framework, women are free when they have the rights and liberties promised to all others in the society. By posing individual rights and liberties as the solution to coercion (and liberalism as the antidote to culture), women's oppression (as opposed to their contingent violation or maltreatment) appears only where there is an explicit law on men's side, which is to say, when law and culture appear coterminous. Liberalism's self-representation, which Okin accepts, as promoting and protecting individual autonomy, power, freedom and choice elides the way in which the reduction of the political to policy and law itself sets loose, as a kind of depoliticized underworld, a sea of social powers as coercive as any law. Moreover, Okin's inability to grasp liberalism as cultural norms in which, for example, autonomy is valued over connection or being responsible for dependent others (with which women are associated), liberty is conceived as freedom to do what one wants (for which women are generally faulted), equality is premised upon sameness (while women are always conceived as different), prohibits the possibility of discerning the deep and abiding male superordination in liberal orders.

There is a final irony in Okin's formulation of "culture" as the enemy of women. This focus sustains an elision of the subordinating and constraining conditions imposed on Third World women by global capitalism, conditions to which Western critics could actually be responsive—indeed for which they might even take responsibility given that the engine of globalization lies in the West—without engaging in cultural imperialism. These conditions include the production of sweatshop labor and other deformations of local orders of production,

along with often violent disruption of rich and sustaining orders of kinship, family and community. In her obsession with culture over capitalism, indeed, in her refusal to acknowledge the culture of capitalism (as well as liberalism), Okin repeats a disturbing colonial gesture, one that, as the final turn of this paper suggests, is characteristic of tolerance discourse in its civilizational mode.

There is a second critical colonial gesture here. The liberal formulation of tolerance as respect for individual autonomy overseen by a secular state, a formulation shared by liberal theorists on both sides of the “group rights” debates, means that tolerance cannot prevail where such autonomy is not enshrined in law and at the same time treats the legal codification of autonomy as the exhaustive measure of its presence. Thus, the liberal definition of tolerance not only confirms the superiority of liberalism but reiterates liberalism’s obliviousness to social powers other than law. At the same time, in its dependence upon legally encoded autonomy—rights—this definition rules out the possibility of non-liberal political forms of tolerance and indeed goes further, equating non-liberalism with the absence of state-secured autonomy, hence with unfreedom, fundamentalism, or barbarism. Anthropologists David Scott and Saba Mahmood are among those who have traced the arc of colonial discourse in measuring postcolonial states against liberal formulations of tolerance and have made a compelling case for thinking about tolerance in postcolonial settings outside of the frame of liberalism, that is, a case for refusing liberal imperialism in its academic as well as political mode.⁴⁴

Tolerance, Capital, and Liberal Imperialism

In considering the entwining of liberalism, secularism, and civilization through the discourse of tolerance, I have dwelt upon Okin at length—not because she is the most important or sophisticated exponent of the place of tolerance in civilizational discourse but because she is among the most open-handed. But there are theoretically more subtle cousins to Okin’s analysis. Recall Michael Ignatieff’s argument that tolerance is the fruit of individuation and

hence the achievement of societies governed by individualism. Recall too, that Ignatieff portrays such individualism as the primordial truth of human beings—who we really are—as opposed to the “abstraction” from the individual entailed in collective identity and prejudice. This construction of the individual as primordial and Real not only renders culture ideological, it tacitly assigns culture and all other forms of collective identification to a prehuman past and subhuman elsewhere. Liberal democracy thus consecrates the truth about human beings and represents as threatening, because intolerant, all those mired in collective identity, or as Fukuyama would have it, “mired in history.”

On a closer reading of Ignatieff, however, tolerance is not simply the fruit of individualism but of prosperity—success as an individual and not the individual as such breeds a tolerant moral psychology. On the one hand, “the German man who can show you his house, his car, and a family as measures of his own pride rather than just his white skin may be less likely to wish to torch an immigrant hostel.” On the other hand, “if the market fails, as it is failing upwards of twenty million unemployed young people in Europe alone, then it does create the conditions in which individuals must turn to group hatreds in order to assert and defend their identities.”⁴⁵ Here tolerance appears less a moral or political achievement of liberal autonomy than a *bourgeois* capitalist virtue, the issue of power and success...even domination. In forcing this concession from Ignatieff, he is moved closer to the likes of Bernard Williams and Joseph Raz for whom the solution to intolerant nationalisms is robust international capitalism, and this despite Ignatieff’s worry that globalization, through its economic leveling of populations, sometimes incites racial or ethnic nationalisms as a kind of last-gasp source of supremacy or privilege among rival groups.⁴⁶ No such anxieties for Williams and Raz, for whom the market inherently attenuates fundamentalism, puts the brakes on fanaticism, and “encourages scepticism about religious and other claims to exclusivity”—in short, erodes cultural, nationalistic, and religious forms of local solidarity or belonging.⁴⁷

The difference between Williams and Raz here is slight but worth noting. For Raz, market homogenization counters the fragmenting effects of multiculturalism in the era of global capitalism—that is, the market helps to dampen the “culture” in the multicultural civic and national populations produced by globalization. Raz believes

that establishment of the free market brings liberal democratic politics along with it, thereby producing a common (cultureless) political and economic life to attenuate the substance and contentiousness of (culturally based) claims of difference. Williams, however, does not need the globalized market to disseminate liberal democracy as a political form in order to produce greater religious and ethnic tolerance. Rather, for Williams, the market itself loosens the grip (by greasing the palm?) of the fundamentalist, thereby reducing intolerance by utility rather than by principle. In William's words, "when such scepticism [induced by international commercial society] is set against the manifest and immediate human harms generated by intolerance, there is a basis for the practice of toleration—a basis that is indeed allied to liberalism, but is less ambitious than the pure principle of pluralism, which rests on autonomy. It is closer to the tradition that may be traced to Montesquieu and to Constant, which the late Judith Shklar called "the Liberalism of Fear."⁴⁹ Indeed, not only the politics of fear configured by the rightest liberal tradition of Hobbes, Montesquieu, and Constant, but also the ghost of Adam Smith appears on Williams' pages, as unfettered capitalism is imagined to produce a kind of natural as well as normative social order that need not be codified in law or letters.

For attentive students of the history of capitalism, of course, the erosion of non-market practices and customs by capital is old news. But what is striking about the enthusiasm with which Ignatieff, Williams, and Raz embrace this phenomenon is that the embrace involves a revival of raw Western liberal imperialism, interlaced with an affirmation of economic globalization. It brings their arguments into modest convergence with Fukuyama's insistence that the end of the Cold War reveals liberalism and capitalism to be the triumphalist conclusion of history itself.

Others are less sanguine about the ease which tolerance can be exported to geo-political sites steeped in the history of non-liberal traditions. Will Kymlicka concludes that there is no way to impose the value of tolerance upon minority cultures that do not place a primary value upon individual autonomy other than to make it part of the deal of being tolerated by the majority or hegemonic culture. For a culture to be tolerated by liberalism, in Kymlicka's view, it must become tolerant within, even if this compromises crucial

principles of the culture.⁴⁹ Thus Kymlicka effectively advocates exploiting the power position of the tolerating culture, which means both revealing this power in a way that risks de-legitimizing it and using deploying Kantian liberalism in a distinctly non-Kantian way, i.e., treating tolerance as a means for transforming another rather than an end in itself, and treating individual autonomy itself as a bargaining chip rather than as an intrinsic value. The demand for cultural transformation, of course, also undermines the gesture of tolerance at the moment it is extended. Kymlicka's proposition for the extension of tolerance to non-liberal cultures tacitly exposes the anti-liberal aspects of this imperialist aim, along with the absence of cultural and political neutrality in tolerance itself.

There are important analytic and prescriptive differences among Okin and Ignatieff, Huntington and Raz, Williams and Kymlicka. Together, however, they offer evidence of common strains in tolerance as a civilizational discourse, a discourse that encodes the superiority of liberalism not only through the valorization of autonomy but through the location of culture and religion elsewhere, as individual autonomy's opposite. That is, while the value of tolerance over civil conflict is inarguable, what this truism elides is the work of tolerance as a discourse that legitimates the often violent imperialism of international liberal governmentality conjoined with neoliberal global political economy.⁵⁰ Not only does tolerance anoint the superior or advanced status of what extends it, not only does the refusal to extend tolerance to certain practices mark those practices (and the cultures that harbor them) as beyond the pale of civilization, but the economy of this offering and this refusal itself reveals an important function of tolerance in masking the cultural norms that liberalism secures precisely by denying them cultural status. In other words, what becomes clear from considering these thinkers together is that the discourse of tolerance substantively brokers cultural value—valorizing the West, Othering the rest—while feigning only to distinguish civilization from barbarism, protect the former from the latter, and wherever possible convert the latter into the former. Insofar as tolerance in its civilizational mode operates from a political-juridico discourse of cultural neutrality in which what is at stake is the rule of law, tolerance is crucial to liberalism's denial of its imbrication with culture, its conceit that it is independent of culture, neutral

with regard to culture...a conceit that in turn shields liberal polities from charges of cultural supremacy and cultural imperialism. This is precisely the conceit that allows G. W. Bush to say, without recourse to the infelicitous language of “crusade,” that “we have no intention of imposing our culture” while insisting on a set of liberal principles that cannot be brooked without risking being bombed.

Tolerance *conferred* as well as tolerance *withheld* serves this function; indeed, both are crucial in the circuitry that establishes tolerance as a civilizational discourse. *Tolerance conferred* upon “foreign” practices shores up the normative standing of the tolerant and the liminal standing of the tolerated—a standing somewhere between civilization and barbarism. It reconfirms, without reference to the orders of power which enable it, the higher civilizational standing of those who tolerate what they do not condone or share—their cosmopolitanism, forbearance, expansiveness, catholicity, remoteness from fundamentalism. Against this backdrop, *tolerance withheld* succeeds in marking the other as barbaric without implicating the cultural norms of the tolerating civilization in this marking. When a tolerant civilization meets its limits, it does not say that it is encountering political or cultural difference, but rather encountering the limits of civilization itself. At this point, the tolerant civilization is justified not only in refusing to extend tolerance to its other, but in treating it as hostile—oppressive internally, dangerous externally. This hostile status in turn legitimates abrogation of the tolerant civilization’s own civilizational principles in dealing with the Other—principles which range from political self-determination and nation-state sovereignty to rational deliberation, legal and international accountability, and reasoned justifications. This legitimate abrogation can be carried quite far, up to the point of openly making war on the Other.

Notes

- 1 Address to a United Nations Meeting on Dialogue Among Civilizations, September 5, 2000, Press Release SG/SM/7526/Rev.1
- 2 Address to the American Enterprise Institute, February 26, 2003.
- 3 The charge of exceptionalism, of course, is usually sent in the other direction, namely from supporters of Israel toward those said to single

- out Israel for criticism among all other undemocratic or violent Middle Eastern states. Indeed, proof of the anti-Semitism of the challengers is often hinged to the claim that Israel alone is reproved for actions that are ubiquitous in other parts of the world.
- 4 The Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles treats Naziism and American slavery as the signal episodes of intolerance in modern history. Clearly, by a definition of intolerance as the sacrifice of the individual to group prejudice, there are many others, including some which the Museum's investment in Holocaust remembrance will not permit it to feature.
 - 5 The same associations are not conjured by the utterance, "she is a tolerant woman" or even "he is a tolerant person," a differential which speaks volumes about tolerance as both an effect of power and a vehicle of power, a means of both expressing and expanding domination.
 - 6 Address to Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit in Shanghai, October 20, 2001.
 - 7 Address to the Republican Caucus in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, February 1, 2001.
 - 8 Gail Hershatter and Anna Tsing, "Civilization," *New Keywords*, ed. M. Morris, et al, (Blackwell, forthcoming), p. 1 in the manuscript.
 - 9 "Civilization," in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, Second Edition, on line (no page number).
 - 10 Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, revised edition (Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 57.
 - 11 Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), p. 311.
 - 12 *Ibid.*, p. 318.
 - 13 *Ibid.*, p. 321.
 - 14 *Ibid.*, p. 321.
 - 15 *Ibid.*, p. 321.n
 - 16 The conflation of civilization with culture in this definition is paralleled by Huntington's definition of civilization as "culture writ large" (41) or "the highest cultural group of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have short of that which distinguishes humans from other species." (43) However, in its reference to one who has "sympathy with literary culture," the OED definition also clearly equates civilization with high European culture, thus referencing its class connotations and helping us to understand why we refer to children learning table manners as a process of "civilizing" them.
 - 17 K. Peter Fritzsche, "Human Rights and Human Rights Education," International Network: Education for Democracy, Human Rights and Tolerance, *Podium* 2/2000 at <http://www.tolerance-net.org/podium/podium031.html>

- 18 Jay Newman, *Foundations of Religious Tolerance*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), p. 3.
- 19 "Nationalism and Toleration," *The Politics of Toleration*, ed. Susan Mendus, 1999, p. 85.
- 20 The construction of citizenship achieved by tolerance as a justice discourse is discussed at length in chapter four of the book in progress from which this essay is drawn. "The Governmentality of Tolerance: Citizen Passivity, Institutionalized Inequality, and State Violence".
- 21 Ibid. p. 101.
- 22 Ibid. p. 102.
- 23 There are many aspects to the Christian and more specifically Protestant nature of liberal tolerance discourse, most of which are discussed elsewhere in this book. Liberal tolerance not only presumes individual autonomy but a mechanics of privatization for fundamental beliefs. Most of the belief structures of most of the world's peoples for most of human history do not fit with these presumptions. Reformation tolerance doctrine does not work well for the faith structures of the ancient Greeks, Mediaeval Christians, or of modern Muslims, Jews, Hindus or Catholics. It does not work well for a socialist, tribalist or communitarian ethos or order. It was coined to solve a specific problem issuing from a specific social formation and political crisis: how to allow Protestant sectarians the right to worship God according to their own individual understanding of Him and His words without undercutting both Church and state authority, how to substitute accommodation of these sects for burning heretics alive, in short, how to stem the tide of blood spilled over religious rebellion in early modern Europe.
- 24 Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," *Feminist Review*, no. 30 (Autumn 1988), p. 74.
- 25 January 29, 2002, cited on the U.S. Department of State home page, <http://www.state.gov/g/wi/>.
- 26 *Daedalus* 129.4, Fall 2000 and Susan Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).
- 27 Anne Norton's review in *Political Theory* offers a scathing critique of Okin's poor scholarship, the Orientalism of her argument, and her ignorance of critiques of liberal feminism and of the debates surrounding her instances of the "intolerable," from polygamy to clitoridectomy. *Political Theory*, Volume 29, No. 5 (October 2001), pp. 736-749.
- 28 Okin, p. 10.
- 29 A discussion of Okin's argument about multiculturalism and feminism poses a conundrum about whether to deconstruct her impoverished

concept of culture and thereby refuse to enter the rest of the argument, or to provisionally accept her concept and struggle with its impoverishment as one takes up other aspects of the argument. I've mostly taken the latter route but note here that Okin is impervious to the last several decades of rethinking what culture is and could mean (a rethinking undertaken primarily in anthropology and cultural studies) and is wholly unconcerned with specifying what culture is—there is a stray reference to “ways of life” on page 10. This unwillingness to consider carefully her own terms of analysis facilitates her denial of the cultural dimensions of liberalism and her deployment of a liberal formulation of culture. Her analysis could not get off the ground if she attended closely to theorizations of culture that recognize its inseparability from what has been designated as politics and economics, if she grasped the colonial inflection in the notion of culture she deploys (in which culture is always pre-liberal and liberalism is always without culture), if she recognized that the sense of culture she uses is the coinage of liberal strategies of both depoliticization and colonialism.

30 Okin, pp. 13-14.

31 Ibid. p. 13.

32 Ibid. p. 13.

33 Ibid. p. 16.

34 Ibid. pp. 16-17.

35 See Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988); M.G. Clarke and L. Lange, eds, *The Sexism of Social and Political Theory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979); Kathy Ferguson, *The Feminist Case Against Bureaucracy* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984); Wendy Brown, “Liberalism’s Family Values” in *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (Princeton University Press, 1995); Joan W. Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996); Catharine MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State* (Harvard University Press 1989).

36 See my “Liberalism’s Family Values,” op cit., and Catharine MacKinnon, “Sex Equality: On Difference and Dominance,” in *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*, op cit.

37 This makes clear why multiculturalism is so bad for women—it multiplies enemies to autonomy!

38 Ibid. p. 23.

39 Martha Nussbaum’s missionary tone in *Sex and Social Justice* (Oxford University Press, 2001) is unmistakable, though it should be noted that in her commentary on Okin in *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women* entitled “A Plea for Difficulty,” Nussbaum is quite critical of Okin’s dismissal of religion as inherently patriarchal.

- 40 Ibid. p. 18.
- 41 Susan Dominus, "The Seductress of Vanity," *New York Times*, May 5, 2002, p. 50.
- 42 Information about the nature and frequency of intersex, along with the history of its treatment, can be found at the website of the Intersex Society of North America: <http://www.isna.org>.
- 43 Intersexed children, regardless of where they are on a complex spectrum of physiological sex, are more often "surgically corrected" to be anatomically female than male, since, according to the surgeons, it is "easier to poke a hole than to build a poke." This surgery, which is performed neither for the physical health or nor the future sexual pleasure of the subject, may include clitoral reduction (so the clitoris is less penile-like), invagination (production or enlargement of the vagina), and removal of undescended or "internal" testes. The post-surgical course of treatment, often lasting for years, includes stretching the vaginal cavity with successively sized vaginal inserts; the aim is to enlarge it sufficiently for penetration by an erect penis when the child reaches maturity. Since administration of these painful treatments often requires forcible restraint of the child undergoing them, it is hard to name them anything other than medically authorized rape.
- 44 Saba Mahmood, "Response to Khaled Abou El Fadl's 'Islam and the Challenge of Democracy'", unpublished ms., and David Scott, "Toleration and Historical Traditions of Difference", *Subaltern Studies XI, Community, Gender and Violence*, eds. Partha Chatterjee and Pradeep Jeganathan (Ravi Dayal).
- 45 Ignatieff, "Nationalism and Toleration," p. 102.
- 46 Ibid. pp. 94-95.
- 47 Bernard Williams, "Toleration: An Impossible Virtue?" in *Toleration: An Elusive Virtue*, ed. David Heyd (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) and Joseph Raz, *Ethics in the Public Domain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p. 172.
- 48 Williams, "Toleration: An Impossible Virtue?", p. 26.
- 49 Kymlicka, "Two Models of Pluralism and Tolerance," in Heyd, ed. *Toleration: An Elusive Virtue*, op. cit.
- 50 See my "Neoliberalism and the End of Democracy," *Theory and Event* 7.1, Fall 2003.