The knowable world is incomplete if seen from any one point of view, incoherent if seen from all points of view at once, and empty if seen from nowhere in particular. The essays in this book are meant to illustrate and give character to that universal and fundamental truth.

I once had lunch with Margaret Mead at an American Anthropological Association round-table event. The year was 1971. Someone asked her, “Which society is the best place to raise children?” “Not so fast,” Mead replied. “It depends if it is a boy or a girl. If a boy I would raise him in England, and send him off to one of those public schools and get him away from his mother. If a girl I would raise her in America, right here, right now in the thick of the women’s liberation movement. This is the best time ever for a girl to be alive.”

I do not know how Margaret Mead would reply to that same question today, thirty years later. As we enter the twenty-first century, the pictures of reality and ideals for flourishing drawn by the women’s movement are neither homogeneous nor unitary, and the very idea of what it means to grow up as an American is hotly contested along religious, racial, and ethnic lines. But I think I know how I would reply: There is no single best place to be raised, whether you are a girl or a boy. But one of the really good places to be raised is any place where you learn that there is no single best place to be raised, whether you are a girl or a boy. I call that place
postmodern humanism, or the view from manywheres, and in this collection of essays I try to take you there.

Postmodern humanism is postmodern in at least two ways. First, it is willing to set aside the triumphal modernist's narrative about the ascendancy of the West (the dark ages to enlightenment story) and reconsider the value of premodern and non-Western practices and understandings about the connections among person, society, nature, and divinity. Second, postmodern humanism is suspicious of all totalizing or unitary worldviews and appreciative of variety, diversity, and difference. It is a philosophy of life and a way of thinking based on a single maxim: The knowable world is incomplete if seen from any one point of view, incoherent if seen from all points of view at once, and empty if seen from nowhere in particular. Per this maxim, one should stay on the move, seeking out and engaging alternative points of view. The essays in this book can be read as just so many attempts to give character to that maxim and to the mindset that it is meant to encourage.

For example, one of the greatest divides in cultural sensibilities is over the nature and significance of gender relationships and their implications for family life and the rearing of children. Across that divide—a divergence in tastes and preferences that, given the flow of immigrants from Asia, Africa, and Latin America into Western or Northern liberal democracies in recent decades, has been replicated within the United States and various European nations—we confront each other as alien beings, lacking integrity and value. In the essays in this volume, I try to restore some value and integrity to the alien voices on both sides of the fault line by staying on the move between different cultural realities. Given the nature of things in a postmodern humanistic world, any success I achieve can be only partial.

Nevertheless, in these essays I seek the view from manywheres. I seek to understand the value and integrity of my own cultural world. This is a world in which adolescent boys and girls are strongly encouraged to affiliate (and sometimes even pushed together), and along with puberty come such practices as dating and dancing and kissing games. Later it is humankind instead of mankind, parenting instead of mothering, grownups holding hands in public, and adults, who now come in couples, sleeping together exclusively in the same room and preferably in the same bed. Most especially I seek to understand the value and integrity of those cultural worlds (so alien at first blush to the sensibilities of many First World men and women) that elaborate or develop the symbolism latent in the contrast between male and female. Such cultural worlds take special pride in the difference and separateness of the male and female realms. Along with puberty may come gender initiation and genital modification, gendered secrets, gendered cults, gendered space, purdah, veiling, as well as gendered ways of being ethical, civilized, or dignified. In such cultural worlds the ground on which you walk may be a goddess or an earth mother. Men and women may avoid each other in public spaces. Husband and wife may each have a separate bed or room. Women do not barbecue in such worlds, and men stay out of the kitchen.

After Culture
I am both a cultural anthropologist and a cultural psychologist, so the idea of culture plays a central part in the book. The idea of culture is quite popular these days across the social and public policy sciences—with the possible exception of anthropology, where debates about the viability and usefulness of the concept have been lively and various anticulture or postcultural positions have been quite visible. In this introduction I locate the intellectual posture
and heritage of the essays in this book, all of which assume a decided pro-cultural stance. I hazard an overview of contemporary views of culture in anthropology. Then I trace the outlines of the revived field called cultural psychology, which focuses on the study of difference and hence is no stranger to controversy.

Within anthropology some critiques of the idea of culture are associated with a fear of "the ethnography of difference" (which is often equated with the ethnography of disparagement) and with the worry that any description of cultural difference sows the seeds of invidious comparison and ethnic conflict, and thus should be disavowed. Other critiques are associated with doubts about the grounds and authority of ethnographic representation. They are linked to a point of view, radically skeptical and self-nullifying at its core, that the idea of culture is a fiction, the goal of objective representation is misguided, and the products of ethnography are largely fabricated in the service of domination. Still other critiques of the idea of culture can be traced to concern about the hubris of "West is Best" thinking and about First World or Northern World claims to cultural superiority. They are best understood as anticolonial acts of resistance to neocolonial or imperial attitudes, as counters to an increasingly popular civilizing project in which the "developed" peoples of the world instruct the "undeveloped" peoples of the world about how to live their lives.

Finally, some critiques are associated with claims about the emergence of a cosmopolitan capitalist economy. Some anticultural or postcultural critics imagine that we already live in a world of individuals without groups in which meanings are detached or abstracted from communities and traded on a free market of ideas. These critics believe that globalization has rendered the very notion of discrete cultures, or of a commitment to one's own culture, obsolete.

Are these reasons for doubting the usefulness of the culture concept persuasive? I think not. The essays collected in this volume are all about cultural psychology and the ethnography of difference. They are about the distinctive mentalities and modes of psychological functioning of members of different communities in Asia, Africa, Europe, and the United States. They are about community-based differences in who sleeps by whom at night. They are about differences in ideals of femininity and masculinity. They are about differences in the life of the emotions. They are about differences in cultural conceptions of mature adulthood and the stages of life. They are about differences in the moral concepts that are brought to bear in decisions about what is right and wrong. They are about differences in the way illness and suffering are explained and alleviated. They are about differences in human conceptions of a "normal" or "abnormal" body.

Some of the essays are provocative. They ask us to re-examine and broaden our own conceptions of what is natural, good, true, beautiful, useful, or real. In some instances they invite us to have a second and closer look at specific cultural practices—for example, parent/child cosleeping, arranged marriage, male and female circumcision—that we may have found curious, puzzling, or even highly distressing. They ask us to be slow to judge others and to be more fully informed before we take a moral stance. They invite us to reject radical relativism and to engage in informed cultural critique, but only after we have achieved a nonethnocentric conception of the moral domain and some knowledge of local ethnographic realities.

Each essay in this book is dedicated to the proposition that the recognition and appreciation of cultural differences is one of the noble, even if hazardous, aims of ethnography in particular and cultural anthropology in general. The idea of culture indeed re-
mains viable in the face of recent postcultural critiques, does not necessarily lead to radical relativism, and is in fact essential for any genuine understanding of the human condition.

The essays are all “anti-postcultural”—they presuppose and illustrate the usefulness and viability of the idea of culture as a tool for social science research. They are dedicated to the proposition that anthropology has a special part to play in the community of disciplines, and that one of its primary roles is to test the limits of pluralism. Pluralism is the idea that things can be different but equal; anthropology contributes to the pluralism project through the close ethnographic examination (and cross-examination) of multiple cultural realities and alternative ways of life. As mentioned above, the foundational truth for such an intellectual enterprise is the maxim that “the knowable world is incomplete if seen from any one point of view, incoherent if seen from all points of view at once, and empty if seen from nowhere in particular.” Given the choice between incompleteness, incoherence, and emptiness, this kind of anthropological approach to the study of cultures attempts to overcome incompleteness by staying on the move between different points of view or frames of reference. Its aim is to achieve that view from manywheres.

The substantive and pluralistic vision implicit in the very idea of a view from manywheres can be contrasted with the single-mindedness of the view from only here (the ethnocentric perspective). It can be contrasted with the emptiness and abstractness of the “view from nowhere in particular” (Thomas Nagel’s visual metaphor for the ideal of perfect objectivity). It can be contrasted as well with the incoherence, intellectual chaos, and nihilism that arises when one holds firmly to no view at all (the perspective of the radical skeptic). In pursuit of the view from manywheres, anthropologists dedicated to the pluralism project want to know, are there other viable and self-perpetuating cultural realities that might be represented as truly alternative ways of life? Are the understandings and desires cultivated and made manifest in some other way of life the types of understandings and desires that might appeal to rational and morally decent human beings everywhere? Hence, the humanism in postmodern humanism. A common humanity made possible by giving permission to difference and by the recognition that people are not necessarily the same wherever you go.

Kroeber and Kluckhohn’s Risky Allegation
For an anthropological pluralist, the very best place to look for a viable concept of culture is in the seminal work of the American anthropologists A. L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn. In the introduction to their monumental book Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions, they declared in 1952: “. . . few intellectuals will challenge the statement that the idea of culture, in the technical anthropological sense, is one of the key notions in contemporary American thought.” In that time period, scholars and intellectuals in the United States were confident that the concept of culture was deeply entrenched in the human sciences. Kroeber and Kluckhohn even began their famous treatise proclaiming that the idea of culture was comparable in explanatory importance to the idea of gravity in physics, disease in medicine, and evolution in biology. They ended by adding a unified (albeit ponderous) definition that became the mantra for cultural anthropologists who came of scholarly age in midcentury. “Culture,” they wrote:

consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e., historically derived
and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other hand as conditioning elements of further action. (1952: 357)

Kroeber and Kluckhohn were students of intellectual history and brilliant culture theorists, but they were not prophets. Little did they know that during the fifty years following the publication of their book, the idea of culture in its midcentury anthropological sense would be frequently debated, doubted, distrusted, and scorned and that the discipline of cultural anthropology itself would be rethought, remade, recaptured, and reinvented time and time again. They did not foretell the many types of humanists and social scientists (cognitive revolutionaries, structuralists, poststructuralists, sociobiologists, feminists, skeptical postmodernists, postcolonialists, subaltern theorists, globalization theorists) who would associate the concept of culture with a variety of supposed sins, including “essentialism,” “primordialism,” “representationalism,” “monumentalism,” “reification,” “idealism,” “positivism,” “functionalism,” “determinism,” “relativism,” “sexism,” “racism,” “nationalism,” “colonialism,” “Orientalism,” and just plain old-fashioned “stereotyping.” (See, for example, Abu-Lughod, 1991; Asad, 1973; Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Denzin, 1996; Fox, 1991; Freeman, 1983; Hymes, 1972; Kuper, 1999; Marcus and Fisher, 1986; Rabinow, 1983; Reilly, 1994; Rosaldo, 1989; Said, 1978; Sangren, 1988; Scheper-Hughes, 1995; Spiro, 1986; Wikan, n.d.).

Nor did Kroeber and Kluckhohn anticipate the ironic fate of the concept of culture at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Today culture is once again a key concept in many of the social science and policy disciplines (including law), yet it is viewed with great suspicion in some quarters of cultural anthropology. After being reviled, pummeled, and rejected by one new wave intellectual move-
codes of the members of a community but their tacit, implicit, or intuitive understandings as well. It sought a middle course between the Scylla of a purely behavioral definition of culture and the Charybdis of a purely ideational one.

According to the standard view, culture should be defined in such a way as to avoid the hazards of both behaviorism and idealism. On the one hand, Kroeber and Kluckhohn suggest, culture is more than just social habits or patterns of behavior that are learned and passed on from generation to generation. On the other hand, it is not just a system of categories, doctrines, propositions, or symbols per se. Thus in the 1952 definition, culture is defined as the ideational side of social action or social practice, and anthropologists are called upon to view cultural analysis as the interpretative study of behavior, although little is said about what particular theory of interpretation should guide the analysis.

Useful definitions deserve to be expressed in elegant terms, and Kroeber and Kluckhohn's definition of culture is cumbersome, to say the least. But it is not the only expression of the standard view. The most exquisite and straightforward formulation is Robert Redfield's 1941 definition: "shared understandings made manifest in act and artifact." Another variation, perhaps the most famous definition of culture since the 1950s, is the one proposed by Clifford Geertz (1973: 89). He puts it this way: "the culture concept . . . denotes an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic form by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life." In 1984 Roy D'Andrade, writing very much within the North American anthropological tradition, defined culture this way, as "learned systems of meanings, communicated by means of natural language and other symbol systems, having representational, directive, and affective functions, and capable of creating cultural entities and particular senses of reality" (1984: 116).

The definitions proposed by Kroeber and Kluckhohn, Redfield, Geertz, and D'Andrade call out for specification and clarification. Nevertheless, those definitions are a good reference point for understanding current debates about the values and dangers associated with the very idea of culture. One can summarize the standard view by saying that culture refers to community-specific ideas about what is true, good, beautiful, and efficient. To be cultural, those ideas about truth, goodness, beauty, and efficiency must be socially inherited and customary. To be cultural, those socially inherited and customary ideas must be embodied or enacted meanings; they must be constitutive of (and thereby revealed in) a way of life. Alternatively stated, the standard North American anthropological view of culture refers to what the British philosopher Isaiah Berlin (1976) called "goals, values and pictures of the world" that are made manifest in the speech, laws, and routine practices of some self-monitoring and self-perpetuating group. A cultural account spells out those goals, values, and pictures of the world. A cultural account thus assists us in explaining why the members of a particular cultural community say the things they say and do the things they do to each other with their words and other actions. These goals, values, and pictures of the world or ideas about what is true, good, beautiful, and efficient are sometimes referred to as cultural models (D'Andrade, 1995; Holland and Quinn, 1987; Shore, 1996).

Fault Lines in Contemporary Anthropology

The standard North American anthropological view of culture was synthesized and defined by Kroeber and Kluckhohn before the disci-
pline went through a series of revolutions and movements that fractured the field on the basis of different visions of its mission. Although proposing a map of the current intellectual camps within cultural anthropology may be hazardous, such a map is helpful in understanding the various types of anticultural, postcultural, and procultural positions that have emerged within anthropology over the past fifty years. I see four such camps in the field: identity politics, skeptical postmodernism, neopositivism, and romantic pluralism.

IDENTITY POLITICS

In this camp, anthropology is a platform for moral activism in the battles against racism, sexism, homophobia, and neocolonialism and a forum for identity politics in the fight against exploitation, discrimination, and oppression. Advocates of this conception of anthropology have several concerns about the idea of culture. They argue that culture is an excuse for the maintenance of authoritarian power structures and permits despots and patriarchs around the world to deflect criticism of their practices by saying “that is our custom” or “that is the way we do things” (see Abu-Lughod, 1991; Said, 1978; Schepers-Hughes, 1995; Wikan, n.d.). The claim by liberal First World feminists that “multiculturalism is bad for women” (Okin, 1999) is an expression of this view, which tends to associate culture with the idea of patriarchal domination (Haynes and Prakash, 1991; Raheja and Gold, 1991). This conception of the mission of anthropology is closely allied with a global human rights movement that has a firm sense of what is objectively and universally right and wrong.

However, not all moral activists in anthropology want to dump the idea of culture and some have found ways to put this idea to work in the service of their own political aims. Some who are active in the identity politics movement find the idea of culture politically and strategically convenient in their egalitarian battles on behalf of minority populations who do not live up to the achievement standards of majority populations. They use the idea to mitigate invidious comparisons between groups (for example, in terms of wealth, occupational success, or school performance) by denying that any real differences exist, attributing all differences to a history of oppression or discrimination, or celebrating the differences as “cultural.” In the identity politics movement, the term “culture” is displacing the term “race,” and it may not be too long before the expression “people of color” is superceded by a new shibboleth, “people of culture.”

SKEPTICAL POSTMODERNISM

The second camp conceives of anthropology as a deconstructive discipline and as an arena for skeptical postmodern critiques of all ethnographic representations and so-called objective knowledge (see, for example, Clifford and Markus, 1986; Latour and Woolgar, 1979; Rabinow, 1983; also Culler, 1982; Foucault, 1973; Rosenau, 1992). Advocates of this conception of anthropology call for a deeply skeptical reading of all anthropological representations of others, especially of those accounts that make claims about some primordial, essential, or core cultural identity that members of some group are supposed to share. The skeptical postmodernists raise doubts about the reality and existence of groups. They are critical of all attempts to draw a portrait of others that represents them with any characteristic face. They are suspicious of the very idea of boundaries and borders and loyalties to a tribe or nation. They view the idea of a culture as a fiction, the goal of objective representation as misguided, and the products of ethnography as largely made up, or constructed in the service of domination.
One of the many ironies of contemporary anthropology is that for a while members of these first two camps of anthropology thought they were allies with a common enemy—hegemonic heterosexual First World white males, such as Kroeber, Kluckholm, Redfield, Geertz, and D’Andrade who historically had defined the mission of cultural anthropology. The camps’ alliance, however, was short-lived. Identity politics requires a robust notion of identity and group membership. Moral activism requires a strong conviction that some things are objectively wrong. Skeptical postmodernism is intellectually incapable of lending support to either of those metaphysical notions and is readily put to use deconstructing the woman of Women’s Studies, the imagined common identity of the ethnic group, and all supposed objective moral foundations for any political cause. If groups and collective identities are so easily dissolved, so too are claims about group rights and affirmative action.

**Neopositivism**

The third camp thinks of anthropology as a pure positive science (see, for example, D’Andrade, 1995; Romney, Weller, and Batchelder, 1986; Sperber, 1985). In this view, anthropology is a value-neutral and nonmoralizing discipline. Positive scientists aim to represent, reliably and validly, the law-like patterns in the world and to develop universal explanatory theories and test specific hypotheses about objectively observable regularities in social and mental life. They want to protect anthropology from the other camps by describing or recording rather than judging, justifying, or condemning other peoples’ practices, and by developing scientific standards for evaluating ethnographic evidence. This is a laudable aim, although one that has been contested by skeptical postmodernists. There has been much useful work in neopositivist fields such as cognitive anthropology representing the content, structure, and degree of sharing of cultural models (see, for example, D’Andrade, 1995; Holland and Quinn, 1987; Romney, Weller, and Batchelder, 1986). Nevertheless, the positive scientists in anthropology tend to duck a critical question close to the heart of all great social theorists. Is this particular social order really a moral order? Is this particular social order a way of living that might appeal to a rational and morally decent person; and if not, how can we make it become so?

When it comes to justifying social practices and beliefs or evaluating what is truly desirable or really “good” in social life, the neopositivists are very much like the skeptical postmodernists—both turn radically subjective or relativistic and believe there is no scientific or objective foundation for value judgments. The neopositivists, unlike the skeptical postmodernists, are willing to objectively document what people want and to make claims about the most efficient or adaptive way to get from here to there. Nevertheless, much like the skeptical postmodernists, they do not think it is possible to say whether getting “there” is desirable. Beyond questions of efficiency (no small matter, however), their positive science offers them no intellectual basis for evaluating cultural practices.

**Romantic Pluralism**

A fourth camp sees anthropology as a romantic discipline designed to test the limits of pluralism. Here we engage the intellectual agenda lending shape to the essays in this book. Pluralism is the idea that things can be different but equal, and that diversity can be good. It is a measure of some of the tensions within contemporary anthropology that, while the ethnography of difference is viewed with suspicion by some of the anticulturists, “difference” is the main topic of investigation and interest for romantic
pluralists. In contrast to anticulturalists, who worry that describing cultural differences prepares the way for invidious stereotyping, romantic pluralists see the recognition and appreciation of cultural differences as one of the principal goals of ethnography in particular and cultural anthropology in general. Romantic pluralists are quick to distinguish the ethnography of difference from the ethnography of disparagement.

The intellectual inheritance of the romantic tradition most relevant to this camp of anthropology is a conception of culture as an extension of the creative imagination, which is itself imagined to be a distinctive intellectual capacity of human beings (see Geertz, 1973; Sapir, 1963; Sahlins, 1975; Shweder, 1984, 1991). According to romantic pluralists, a genuine culture is a reality-binding product of the human mind that is not dictated by either logic or direct (meaning-free) experience. There is thus plenty of room within the limits of logic and experience for cultural variety, and for the historical creation of different lived conceptions of what it means to be a rational and morally decent human being. According to this view, social and cultural realities are not fully deducible by relying on logic alone. Nor are they simply found by combining direct experience with good logical reasoning. Instead, social and cultural realities are constructed by and for more or less rational agents, with a large assist from the human imagination when logic and direct experience do not suffice to answer fundamental questions about the meaning of things. In other words, most of the time.

According to romantic pluralists, the human creative imagination has the capacity to fill in, and give definition to, a vast discretionary space that stretches in between the necessary truths of formal logic and the uninterpreted evidence of the senses. Advocates of this conception of anthropology are dedicated not only to the project of accurate ethnographic representation, but also to the cognitive and moral defense of different ways of life, frames of reference, and points of view. They write about witchcraft, oracles, and magic (Evans-Pritchard, 1937; Luhrmann, 1989) and about conceptions of the person (Geertz, 1973), of family life, and of gender relations around the world (Menon and Shweder, 1998). They write about the local cultural meaning of rituals of initiation (Kratz 1994) or about non-Western religious traditions, while portraying the ideas and practices of others with respect, as different but equal to our own. This camp thinks of “different but equal” in the sense that the ideas and practices of others are represented as meaningful and imaginative, yet supportable within the broad limits of scientific, practical, and moral reason.

A Fifth Camp within Anthropology? The Return of Cultural Developmentalism and the First World’s Burden

Increasingly these days, as the world globalizes, the concept of culture (or “cultural capital”) is used to explain differences in the economic, social, political, educational, scientific, and moral accomplishments of nations, groups, or peoples. An evolutionary or developmental view of culture has returned to the intellectual scene. Along with it comes the claim that some groups have the wrong goals, the wrong values, the wrong pictures of the world, and the wrong patterns of behavior. As a result, their economies are poor, their governments corrupt, and their people unhealthy, unhappy, and oppressed.

The cultural developmental view was popular at the very beginning of the twentieth century and is associated with the “civilizing project” or the “white man’s burden” to uplift those who are ignorant, primitive, pagan, and poor. Quite remarkably, this view is becoming increasingly popular at the beginning of the twenty-first
century as well, especially outside anthropology—for example, in economics and political science (Harrison, 1992; Harrison and Huntington, 2000; Landes, 1998). In development economics (for example, at the World Bank), the view that “culture counts” or that “culture matters” is now popular in part because it is a discrete way of telling “underdeveloped” nations (either rightly or wrongly) that the westernization of their cultures is a necessary condition for economic growth. Cultural developmentalists want to convert others to some preferred superior way of living. Their aim is to eliminate or at least minimize the differences between peoples rather than to tolerate or appreciate them as products of the creative imagination.

Relatively few anthropologists would describe themselves as cultural developmentalists. Nevertheless, that stance is more common in anthropology than many admit, especially when the topic concerns gender relations and family life practices, for example, polygamy, purdah, arranged marriage, bride price, female circumcision, and the association of femininity with domesticity and the production of children. Along with the international human rights movement and other groups promoting Western-style globalization, there are anthropologists who now take an interest in other cultures mainly as objects of moral scorn. The up-from-barbarism theme of certain versions of Western liberalism has once again become fashionable on the anthropological scene.

Culture Theory: Some Classic Problems
A detailed description of the core assumptions of each of the camps within cultural anthropology is well worth undertaking but is not possible here. Nevertheless, any introduction to or review of this topic should include at least brief reference to some classic questions that are always addressed (although answered somewhat differently) by the scholars in each of the camps.

THE PROBLEM OF DIFFERENCE OR THE PROBLEM OF THE “OTHER”
The problem of difference—what to make of it and what to do about it—is also called the “problem of the other,” although the term “other” is used variously in the anthropological literature. It is sometimes used to connote difference per se, without any initial judgment of relative worth. It is also sometimes used to connote unbridgeable differences or a solipsistic gap between self-knowledge and a mysterious or spectral other whose identity can never be truly inscribed. Finally, it can connote the representation of others as less than or other than human, or as different in ways that condemn them to inferior status or justify their domination. Here I use the term to connote difference per se.

The problem of difference is not just a problem for anthropology. It arises whenever members of different groups (for example, Jesuit missionaries and Native North American Indians; British traders and Hindu Brahmans; Western feminist human rights activists and Islamic fundamentalist women) or members of different social categories (for example, gay men and heterosexual men) encounter each other. These individuals may find the encounter disturbing, strange, or astonishing because of a difference between self and other, and want to know what to make of it and (if they have the power) what to do about it.

In the history of anthropology, the problem of difference mostly concerned differences in the ideas and practices of members of different groups. What should one make of, and what should one do about, such ideas as witchcraft, ancestral spirit attack, reincarnation, or menstrual pollution? How about practices such as animal
sacrifice, infanticide, purdah, child betrothal, suttee, or adolescent circumcision? Such encounters between anthropologists and the groups they study are obviously hazardous and fraught with dangers of many kinds, intellectual, ethical, and political. Who represents the other and to which audience and to what end? Who has voice and authority in such encounters? Who ought to have voice?

Confronted with apparent differences between other people’s ideas and practices and their own, anthropologists have historically reacted in one of three ways, which are instructive to keep in mind when surveying the fault lines in cultural anthropology today. Some, known as universalists, have sought ways to minimize or erase the appearance of difference or to deny that any significant differences exist, and to treat otherness as an illusion. Some, known as developmentalists, have perceived in the encounter between cultures a story about a civilizing process. They have argued that the more evolved and progressive cultures (those that are enlightened, scientific, ethical, and rational) bear the white man’s burden of lifting others up out of ignorance and superstition. Developed cultures, they suggest, have an obligation to intervene if necessary to bring a halt to the monstrous or barbaric practices of other lands. Still other anthropologists, known as pluralists, have argued that cultures can be different but equal, and they have cautioned against cultural imperialism, suggesting that one’s own local cultural evaluations should not be confused with Universal Scientific, Practical, or Moral Reason.

**Globalization**

The narrowest definition of globalization refers to the linking of the world’s economies (for example, free trade across borders) with the aim of promoting aggregate wealth and economic growth. Yet the definition readily expands to include the free flow of capital and labor. A new cosmopolitan economic order is imagined, which consists entirely of global economic organizations such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, multinational corporations, and multicultural states with open borders. According to this rather utopian vision of a borderless capitalism, goods, capital, and labor ought to be freely marketed on a worldwide scale for the sake of global prosperity. For those who adopt such a perspective, any desire for a homeland or an identity based on religion, ethnicity, race, or tribe with associated restrictions on residence and trade is viewed as illiberal and disparaged as a form of retrograde or irrational apartheid or ethnologicalism.

There is an even more expansive idea of globalization. Here the concept is extended to reach beyond just the removal of all barriers to trade, foreign investment, and the opening of borders to migrant labor. The idea is linked to demands for “structural adjustments” of lagging economies and for moral adjustments of lagging cultural traditions as well. The structural adjustments usually begin with the firing of an overemployed civil service and the reorganization of economic life to reduce imports and increase exports (in many countries this means cultural tourism, because there is little else to export)—all with the aim of accumulating foreign exchange. There may also be structural adjustments in the direction of Western ways of running banks, enforcing contracts, paying off debts, and settling disputes. “Transparency” and the elimination of “corruption” are key objectives in this structural adjustment process. Ultimately the idea is to model a political economy (including legal institutions) on the example of the United States. Such adjustments may be entered into voluntarily to encourage foreign investment or they may be mandated (such as by the World Bank) as necessary conditions for securing low-interest loans.

The most expansive idea of globalization equates the term with
Westernization (which is, in turn, equated with being modern). In this fully expanded form, the idea of globalization becomes an hypothesis about human nature and an imperial call for enlightened moral interventions into other ways of life in order to free them of their supposed barbarisms, superstitions, and irrationalities. This globalization hypothesis makes three related claims: (1) that Western-like aspirations, tastes, and ideas are objectively the best in the world; (2) that Western-like aspirations, tastes, and ideas will be fired up or freed up by economic globalization; and (3) that the world ought to become Westernized. Western-like aspirations include the desire for liberal democracy, free enterprise, private property, autonomy, individualism, equality, and the protection of natural or universal rights (the contemporary human rights movement is in many ways an extension of an expansive globalization movement). Another such aspiration is the notion that all social distinctions based on collective identities (such as ethnicity, religion, and gender) should be viewed as invidious. Yet another is the notion that individuals should transcend their tradition-bound commitments and experience the quality of their lives solely in secular and ecumenical terms, for example, as measured by wealth, health, or years of life.

The true connection between globalization narrowly conceived (free trade) and globalization expansively conceived (Western values, culture, and institutions taking over the world) has yet to be firmly established. Nevertheless, the picture of a cosmopolitan world of individuals without groups, in which meanings are detached or abstracted from communities and traded on a free market of ideas, has influenced thinking of some anticulture and postcultural theorists. Whether that picture is realistic remains to be seen.

It is quite possible that other cultures do not need to become just like the United States to benefit from participation in an emergent global economy. Modern technologies (for example, television, cell phones, computers, weapons) and economic institutions such as private property seem to have effectively served many interests, including the interests of communitarians and religious fundamentalists all over the world. It is quite possible that a genuinely successful global political economy will not emerge, or will fail to sustain itself, or that efforts to globalize values and culture will be effectively resisted (in some cases, for very good reasons), or that the world will go to war. That is how the last big push to globalize the world came to an end, with World War II. Nevertheless, the idea that the rich nations of North America and Northern Europe have an obligation to use their economic and military power to civilize and develop the world is no less popular today than it was 100 years ago when the empire was British rather than American.

**Culture: Popular Objections and Common Misattributions**

There have been many critiques of the idea of culture since the publication of Kroeber and Kluckhohn’s *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* in 1952. Some of these critiques are associated with a fear of the ethnography of difference, some with doubts about the grounds and authority of ethnographic representation, some with nervousness about the return of a universal civilizing project controlled by the First World, and some with exuberant or even utopian claims about the emergence of a cosmopolitan capitalist economy. Many reasons have been advanced for doubting the usefulness of the culture concept. But are they persuasive or decisive reasons? Those who continue to embrace some version of the Kroeber and Kluckhohn definition of culture tend to believe that their idea of culture does not carry the implications that are
the supposed grounds for various anticultural or postcultural critiques.

For example, the Kroeber and Kluckhohn definition of culture does not really imply that whatever is, is okay. Valid social criticism and questions of moral justification are not ruled out by the standard view of culture. Nothing in the Kroeber and Kluckhohn formulation suggests that the things that other peoples desire are in fact truly desirable or that the things that other peoples think are of value are actually of value. Consensus does not add up to moral truth. In other words, a definition of culture per se is not a theory of the good. From a moral point of view, one need not throw out the idea of culture just because a tyrant puts the word “culture” to some misuse or because some ethnic groups enter into geopolitical conflict.

The idea of culture also does not imply passive acceptance of received practice or a lack of agency, a common claim among anticulture theorists. Indeed, many proculture theorists find it astonishing to see the idea of agency or intentionality used as a synonym for resistance to culture in the discourse of anticulture theorists. Even fully rational, fully empowered, fully agentic human beings discover that membership in some particular tradition of meanings and values is an essential condition for personal identity and individual happiness. Human beings who are liberationists are no more agentic than fundamentalists, and neither stands outside some tradition of meaning and value.

The idea of culture also does not imply the absence of debate, contestation, or dispute among members of a group. Nor does it imply the existence of within-group homogeneity in knowledge, belief, or practice. “Natives are not all of the same opinion any more than we are; and some are better informed than others,” wrote E. E. Evans-Pritchard in his classic ethnography on Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande, first published in the 1930s (Evans-Pritchard 1976: 247). Every cultural system has experts and novices; one does not stop being a member of a common culture just because cultural knowledge is distributed and someone knows much more than you do about how to conduct a funeral, apply for a mortgage, or consult an oracle. One does not stop being a member of a common culture just because there are factions in the community. The claim that there are between-group cultural differences never has implied the absence of within-group differentiation or that there is no variation around the mean. The idea of culture does not imply that every item of culture is in the possession or consciousness of every member of that culture.

The idea of culture merely directs our attention to those ideas about what is true, good, beautiful, and efficient that are acquired by virtue of membership in some group. Members of a cultural community take an interest in each other’s ideas about what is true, good, beautiful, and efficient because those ideas (and related practices) have a bearing on the perpetuation of their way of life, and what they share is that collective inheritance. Because the standard view does not assume that a culture is a well bounded, fixed, and homogeneous block, the critique of the concept of culture that starts with the observation of internal variation and ends “therefore there is no cultural system” should have been a nonstarter.

Nor does the idea of culture imply that other kinds of peoples are “other,” in the sense of being less than human or possessing qualities that entitle us to intervene in their way of life. We live in a multicultural world consisting (as Joseph Raz has put it) “of groups and communities with diverse practices and beliefs, including groups whose beliefs are inconsistent with one another.” There
are many new and creative cultural forms that emerge in multicultural contexts and the study of cultural hybridity has re-emerged as a significant area of research globally and locally.

Nevertheless, the aspirations (1) not to lose your cultural identity, (2) not to assimilate to mainstream pressures, (3) not to be scattered throughout the city, country, or world, (4) not to glorify the Diaspora, and (5) not to join the highly individualistic and migratory multinational, multiracial but (in many ways) monocultural cosmopolitan elite are real and legitimate aspirations, and those aspirations cannot be properly understood by treating them as illusions. They are certainly not the only legitimate aspirations in a multicultural world; there is much that can be said in favor of a liberal cosmopolitan life. But they are legitimate aspirations. Even in a “global world,” cultural communities and ethnic groups are not going to disappear. We cannot avoid the question, what form does and should multiculturalism take in our emerging postmodern society (see Daedalus, 2000)? Perhaps that is one reason that so many social scientists and public policy analysts look to anthropology for a useful concept of culture, not for no concept of culture at all.

Culture and Psyche Making Each Other Up

The essays in this book not only presuppose the viability of the idea of culture but also put a pluralistic conception of culture to work to understand variations in human mentalities across social groups. Much of the psychological nature of human beings is neither homogeneous nor fixed across time and space. Therefore the tenet of psychological pluralism as well as cultural pluralism lies at the heart of cultural psychology. This tenet states that the study of normal psychology is the study of multiple psychologies and not the study of a uniform psychology for all peoples of the world. Research findings in cultural psychology thus raise provocative questions about the integrity and value of alternative forms of subjectivity across cultural communities.

Cultural Psychology: What Is It?

To adequately locate the essays in this book in their proper intellectual contexts, I must say more about cultural psychology, as a subject matter and as an academic enterprise. A major aim of the discipline is to document variations in modes of (and ideals for) normal psychological functioning across cultural communities. Cultural psychology assumes nonuniformity of mentalities across time and space. The discipline seeks to document the protean cultural aspects of human psychological nature. It can be defined as the study of the distinctive mentalities of particular peoples such as Balinese Hindus, Satmar Hasidim, Chinese Mandarins (see Geertz, 1973; Greenfield and Coking, 1994; Markus, Kitayama, and Heiman, 1996; Miller, 1997; Shweder, 1991; Shweder and LeVine, 1984; Shweder et al., 1998).

Cultural psychology can thus be distinguished from general psychology, which is the study of mental structures and processes that are so widely distributed as to characterize the normal psychological functioning of all human beings (and perhaps even nonhuman primates as well). Research in cultural psychology has, for example, systematically corroborated the special status accorded to the defense of female honor in the mentality of many southern American white males (Nisbett and Cohen, 1995). Research in cultural psychology has recognized the sense of empowerment and feeling of virtue associated with modesty and the attitude of respectful restraint in the psychology of women in some regions of the contemporary non-Western world (Menon and Shweder, 1998). Such feelings of power and goodness associated with modesty contrast with
ideas about (and ideals for) psychological functioning constructed in the contemporary Anglo-American cultural region.

Cultural psychology also assumes that many mental states (and some mental processes) are best understood as by-products of the never-ending attempt of particular groups of people to understand themselves and to make manifest their self-understandings through social practices (Bruner, 1990; Geertz, 1973; Wierzbicka, 1993, 1999). That might be called the premise of self-reflexive social construction. Whether studying Inuit Eskimos or Anglo-American middle-class urban liberals, cultural psychologists try to spell out the implicit meanings (the goals, values, and pictures of the world) that give shape to psychological processes (Briggs, 1970; White and Kirkpatrick, 1985). They examine the patchy or uneven distribution of those meanings on a global scale and investigate the manner of their social acquisition—for example, by means of participation in the symbolic practices, including linguistic practices, of a tradition-sensitive cultural group. Hence comes the need for a concept of culture not unlike the one defined by Kroeber and Kluckhohn, Redfield, Geertz, and D'Andrade.

**Others' Mental States**

Cultural psychology attempts to develop a language for the comparative study of mental states that makes it possible to understand and appreciate the mental life of others. "Others" refers to members of a different cultural community who by virtue of lifelong membership in that group ascribe meaning to their lives in the light of wants, feelings, values, and beliefs that are not necessarily the same as one's own.

Cultural psychologists are interested, for example, in cultural variations in the degree to which feelings are constructed as emotions. Anna Wierzbicka (1999) has suggested that, while all human beings have “feelings” such as pleasure and pain, arousal and serenity, many of the “emotions” lexicalized in the English language are not universally available in the mental life of people around the world. Researchers have delved into the character of the particular emotions (Iñaluk “fago,” American “happiness,” Oriya “lajja”) that are important in different social worlds (Lutz, 1988; Kitayama and Markus, 1994; Shweder and Haidt, 2000; see Chapter 3).

Cultural psychologists explore population-based variations in social cognition, moral judgment, and the sources of personal fulfillment or life satisfaction. For example, they have studied the origin, significance, and place of filial piety and the social motivation to achieve in some East Asian populations (Yang, 1997). They have investigated the self-empowering aspects of ascetic denial and other forms of sacrifice among high caste women in South Asia (Menon, 2000). They have documented the divergent meanings and distinctive somatic and affective vicissitudes of such experiences as loss or success for members of different cultural communities. It is in the pursuit of such research questions that they have discovered replicable cultural differences in reports about the quality of the experience. In comparison to majority populations in Northern Europe or the United States, majority populations in Samoa and China are more likely to react to apparent loss with feelings such as headaches, backaches, and other types of physical pain than with feelings such as sadness or dysphoria (Levy, 1973; Kleinman, 1986).

Cultural psychologists also seek to document differences in modes of thought (analytic versus holistic; Nisbett et al., 2001), in self-organization (interdependent versus independent; Markus and Kitayama, 1991), and in moral judgment (reliance on an ethics of autonomy, community, or divinity across different types of groups; Shweder et al., 1997 and Chapter 2).

Most research in cultural psychology has been pluralistic in its
conception of normal psychological functioning and interdisciplin-
ary in its conception of how to go about studying the origin, mean-
ing, and social role of particular mental states on a worldwide scale.
The field draws together anthropologists, psychologists, linguists, biologists, and philosophers in its study of the diverse modes of psychological functioning that have been produced, and socially endorsed, in different cultural traditions and that have made those traditions possible. Indeed, cultural psychology is sometimes described as the study of how culture and psyche make each other up.

PSYCHIC PLURALISM

Taken together, the premises of nonuniformity and of self-reflexive social construction sum up to the tenet of psychological pluralism. Cultural psychology is thus the study of the way the human mind (understood to consist of an inherently complex, heterogeneous collection of abstract or latent schemata) can be transformed, and made functional, in ways that are not equally distributed across time or space. I once coined the phrase, “one mind, many mentalities: universalism without the uniformity,” which is meant to give expression to goals of a discipline aimed at developing a credible theory of psychological pluralism.

Cultural psychology can also be understood as a project designed to critically assess the limitations and incompleteness of all uniformitarian versions of the idea of psychic unity. Alternatively put, cultural psychology is the study of ethnic and cultural sources of diversity in emotional and somatic functioning, self-organization, moral evaluation, social cognition, and human development. It is the study of population differences in the things people know, think, want, feel, and value, and hence are customarily motivated to do, by virtue of membership in a group that has a history and a conception of its own destiny. “To be a member of a group,” the

eighteenth-century German romantic philosopher Johann Herder argued, “is to think and act in a certain way in the light of particular goals, values and pictures of the world, and to think and act so as to belong to a group” (Berlin, 1976, summarizing Herder).

Although the field of cultural psychology has many ancestral spirits (Giambattista Vico, Wilhelm Wundt, Wilhelm Dilthey, Edward Sapir, Ruth Benedict) and some very prominent contemporary advocates (Jerome Bruner, Michael Cole, Clifford Geertz, Jacqueline Goodnow, Patricia Greenfield, John Haidt, Giyoo Hatano, Shinobu Kitayama, Robert LeVine, John Lucy, Tanya Luhrmann, Hazel Markus, Joan Miller, Peggy Miller, Richard Nisbett, Barbara Rogoff, Paul Rozin, Anna Wierzbicka), Johann Herder is justly claimed as one of the original cultural psychologists, although he was probably not the first. For an account of the historical development of the field, see Jahoda (1991) and Cole (1996).

CULTURE AND THE CUSTOM COMPLEX

One of the contributions of cultural psychology is to revive a conception of culture, traceable to Kroeber and Kluckhohn, that is both symbolic and behavioral. In the history of twentieth-century anthropological thought, the idea of culture has been variously defined, either behaviorally (as patterns of behavior that are learned and passed on from generation to generation) or symbolically (as the categories, beliefs, and doctrines that organize, rationalize and justify a way of life). In research on the cultural psychology of a particular cultural community, the notion of culture usually refers to community-specific ideas about what is true, good, beautiful, and efficient that are made manifest in behavior. In accord with Kroeber and Kluckhohn’s approach to culture, cultural psychologists thus engage in the interpretive, symbolic, or cognitive analysis of behavior. They assume that actions speak louder than words and that
practices are a central unit for cultural analysis. Thus, what John Whiting and Irvin Child (1953) once referred to as the “custom complex” is a natural unit of analysis or starting point for a study in cultural psychology.

John Whiting was one of my teachers in the late 1960s and early 1970s in the Department of Social Relations at Harvard University. He was one of anthropology’s great positivists. His career was dedicated to the rational assessment of testable hypotheses about the prevalence, distribution, and function of cultural practices around the world (for example, male and female initiation ceremonies). He was a free thinker who embraced within his intellectual circle a variety of anthropologists and psychologists spanning all the camps in contemporary anthropology. I think the members of that circle, including graduate students and senior scholars, hung together in part because they loved John Whiting’s many intellectual and personal virtues. They loved his curiosity, his egalitarianism, his argumentative spirit, his passion for gathering new evidence, the grand scale of his research projects, and his optimism about the future of the social sciences. Whiting had more bright ideas in a day than most people have in a lifetime. It was fun to watch him smile and spin a theory. Not all of his concepts, hypotheses, and bright ideas panned out (nor did he expect them to), but some, such as the notion of the custom complex, were so good they deserved to be rediscovered.

Whiting and Child introduced the idea of a custom complex in 1953, but the basic idea was not carried forward until the rebirth of cultural psychology in the 1980s and 1990s. According to Whiting and Child, a custom complex “consists of a customary practice [for example, a family meal, arranged marriage, animal sacrifice, household sleeping arrangement, or a gender identity ceremony involving genital surgery] and of beliefs, values, sanctions, rules, motives and satisfactions associated with it” (see Chapters 1 and 4). Many labels can be placed on this type of unit of analysis, such as a life space or a habitus. Whatever the label, this unit of analysis makes it possible to conceptualize cultural psychology as the study of the way culture and psyche (what people know, think, feel, want, value and hence choose to do) afford each other’s realization, and thus “make each other up.”

**Example of a Custom Complex: Genital Surgeries in Africa**

A highly illuminating example of a custom complex is the circumcision ceremony or genital surgery that is customary for both boys and girls in many East and West African ethnic groups. In Sierra Leone, Mali, the Gambia, Ethiopia, Somalia, the Sudan, and Egypt, genital surgeries are culturally endorsed and receive high approval ratings from both men and women. Although many questions remain to be answered about the prevalence, distribution, function, and consequences of the practice, the global discourse about genital surgeries has in the past twenty years become an ethical discourse that goes well beyond any positivistic approach.

Human rights advocacy groups in Europe and in the United States have aggressively criticized the practice. The most comprehensive and rigorous review of the medical and demographic literature on African genital surgeries, however, suggests that widely publicized claims about the severe consequences of the custom for health, sexuality, and childbirth are inaccurate (Obermeyer, 1999; Morison et al., 2001). Nevertheless, these days one cannot avoid the stance of rational justification (what are the reasons for engaging in this practice?) and the process of moral evaluation (is this practice “good”?) when representing the socially endorsed practices of others.
For example, in a recent manuscript on the cultural psychology of male and female circumcision among the Kono people of Sierra Leone, Fuambai Ahmadu, who is both a native and an anthropologist, has written as follows (Ahmadu, 2000:301). "It is difficult for me—considering the number of these ceremonies I have observed, including my own—to accept that what appear to be expressions of joy and ecstatic celebrations of womanhood in actuality disguise hidden experiences of coercion and subjugation. Indeed, I offer that most Kono women who uphold these rituals do so because they want to—they relish the supernatural powers of their ritual leaders over against men in society, and they embrace the legitimacy of female authority and, particularly, the authority of their mothers and grandmothers."

As Ahmadu and other ethnographers who study genital surgeries in Africa have pointed out, among the goals, values, and pictures of the world (the cultural psychology) that make this practice meaningful and satisfying for the men and women for whom it is a custom complex are the following:

1. A culturally shared belief that the body (especially the genitalia) is sexually ambiguous until modified through surgical intervention. According to this picture of the world, the foreskin of a boy is viewed as a feminine element and masculinity is enhanced by its removal. Similarly, the clitoris is viewed as an unwelcome vestige of the male organ. Kono females, as described by Ahmadu, seek to feminize and hence empower themselves by getting rid of it.

2. A culturally shared aesthetic standard in terms of which the genitals are viewed as ugly, misshapen, and unappealing if left in their natural state. For many African men and women, the ideal of beauty is associated with a sexual anatomy that is smooth, cleansed, and cleaned (shaved) and free of all "fleshy encumbrances."

There is of course much more to be said about the beliefs, values, sanctions, motives, and satisfactions associated with genital surgeries in Africa. Nevertheless, in the light of these and other culturally endorsed reasons, a genital surgery is experienced as an improvement of the body in many East and West African ethnic groups (Ahmadu 2000; see Chapter 4 for a more complete discussion of the topic).

The cultural psychology of a different community's practices is likely to result in a depiction of other minds that is unsettling or at least surprising. Radical divergences in the moral evaluation of particular custom complexes, such as circumcision, are themselves an important topic for research in cultural psychology. Indeed, the cultural psychology of moral evaluation is currently an active research area (see Chapters 1–2, 4–5).

**Cultural Psychology of Morality**

The cultural psychology of morality is the study of judgments about actions and practices that are classified as loathsome, outrageous, shameful, evil, or wrong. On the basis of the ethnographic record, we now know at least five things about these judgments:

1. Moral judgments are ubiquitous. Members of every cultural community assume that they are parties to an agreement to uphold a certain way of life, praise or permit certain kinds of actions and practices, and condemn and prohibit others. In this regard, Emile Durkheim was right. The social order is a moral order vigilantly and inces-
santly sustained by small and large judgments about right and wrong, good and bad, virtue and vice.

2. Moral judgments do not spontaneously converge over time. Actions and practices that are a source of moral approbation in one community are frequently the source of moral opprobrium in another, and moral disagreements can persist over generations, if not centuries. For example, the current Western alarm over the practice of female circumcision in Africa is nothing new. Indeed, it is very much a replay of the moral indignation expressed in the 1920s by Christian missionaries and British colonial administrators as they embraced what they took to be their white man’s burden to uplift the peoples of the “dark continent” from error, ignorance, barbarism, and confusion. Then, as now, majority populations in numerous African ethnic groups held the practice in high regard and resented the implication that they are either monsters or ignoramuses for engaging in what they think of as an honorable and morally motivated custom.

3. Moral judgments are experienced as cognitive judgments and not solely as aesthetic or emotive judgments. This truth about the cultural psychology of moral judgments has been noted by the philosopher Arthur Lovejoy. He points out that when someone says “it is wrong to oppress the helpless” or “the conduct of Adolph Hitler was wicked,” they “do not in fact conceive of themselves merely to be reporting on the state of their own emotions” and mean to be saying something more than “I am very unpleasantly affected when I think of it” (Lovejoy, 1961: 253,453). On a worldwide scale, it appears that when folk make a moral judgment (for example, “circumcision is an outrage,” “abortion is evil,” “it is wrong to put elderly parents in a nursing home”), they themselves believe there are matters of objective fact to which their judgment refers and that they are making a claim about some domain of moral truth. That is what makes their judgment “cognitive.”

4. Moral judgments are experienced as aesthetic and emotive judgments and not solely as cognitive judgments. Despite the fact that moral judgments (“that’s good,” “that’s wrong”) are experienced as judgments about some domain of moral truth, such judgments resemble aesthetic and emotive judgments (“that’s ugly,” “that’s disgusting”). They occur rapidly and without the assistance of deliberative reason, indeed without much need for conscious reflection at all. Moreover, moral judgments motivate action largely because they produce powerful feelings of ugliness, repugnance, guilt, indignation, or shame.

5. The imagined truths or goods asserted in deliberative moral judgments around the world are many, not one. The moral character of an action or practice such as voluntarily ending a pregnancy is typically established by connecting that action through a chain of factual, means-ends and causal reasoning to some argument-ending terminal good—for example, personal freedom, family privacy, or the avoidance of physical or psychological harm. On a worldwide scale, the argument-ending terminal goods of deliberative moral judgments privileged in a cultural community are rich and diverse, and they include such noble ends as autonomy, justice, harm avoidance, loyalty, benevolence, piety, duty, respect, gratitude, sympathy, chastity, purity, sanctity, and others. Several proposals
have been advanced in the social sciences for classifying these goods into a smaller set, such as the three ethics of autonomy, community, and divinity (see Chapter 2).

Thus we know from research in cultural psychology that moral judgments around the world are ubiquitous, passionate, motivating, truth-asserting, and divergent.

Notice in this regard that a stance of moral pluralism is not opposed to universalism. Culture theorists do not divide into only two types: those who believe that anything goes (the radical relativists) and those who believe that only one thing goes (the uniformitarian universalists). I am a universalist, but the type of universalism to which I subscribe is universalism without the uniformity, which is what makes me a pluralist. In other words, there are universally binding values, just too many of them. Those objectively valuable ends of life are diverse, heterogeneous, irreducible to some common denominator such as “utility” or “pleasure,” and inherently in conflict with each other. All the good things in life cannot be simultaneously maximized. When it comes to implementing true values, there are always trade-offs, which is why there are different traditions of values (cultures) and why no one cultural tradition has ever been able to honor everything that is good.

Thus, one can be a pluralist and still grant that there are true and universally binding values and undeniable moral principles—for example, “cruelty is evil,” “you should treat like cases alike and different cases differently,” “highly vulnerable members of a society are entitled to protection from harm.” One of the claims of pluralism, however, is that values and principles are objective only to the extent they are kept abstract and devoid of content. A related claim is that no abstract value or principle, in and of itself, can provide definitive guidance in concrete cases of moral dispute. In other words, it is possible for morally decent and rational people to look at each other’s practices, react, and say, “Yuck!”

There is plenty of “mutual yucking” going on in the world today. Circumcising and noncircumcising peoples, for example, almost always respond in that way to each other. The mutual yuck response is possible because objective values cannot in and of themselves determine whether it is right or wrong to arrange a marriage. Whether it is good or bad to sacrifice or butcher mammals such as goats or sheep. Whether it is savory or unsavory to put parents in an old age home. Whether it is vicious or virtuous to have a large family. Whether it is moral or immoral to abort a fetus. Whether it is commendable or contemptible to encourage girls as well as boys to enter into a Covenant with God (or to become full members of their society) by means of a ritual initiation involving genital modifications or circumcision. Morally decent and rational people can disagree about such things, even in the face of a plentitude of shared objective values.

It is tempting to suggest that it is precisely because moral reactions are ubiquitous, passionate, motivating, truth-asserting, and divergent that secrecy, separation, and local control have been characteristic adaptations. When two or more communities passionately disagree about the virtue of a practice or action, it makes sense to live and let live and keep out of each other’s way. In our technologically wired, cosmopolitan world, which prizes the free flow of everything, it has become increasingly difficult for communities with divergent moral judgments to maintain distance or retain sufficient power to keep their judgments local.

The “immoral” or “barbaric” other is now in your home on a regular basis, made readily available by CNN or the New York Times. Even as you rest in your living room, you may be incited by words and images to react emotionally against someone or some practice
on the other side of the globe. Postmodern humanists and the discipline of cultural psychology have a duty under such conditions of diminished understanding to urge caution in arriving at moral judgments and to supply a fuller exegesis of local meanings. As impossible as it may seem, one aim of postmodern humanism and cultural psychology is to develop a hard-nosed and critical capacity to see validity and virtue in the different beliefs and practices of others.

Cultural Psychology: What It Is Not

The tenet of psychic pluralism and the emphasis on goals, values, and pictures of the world as a source of psychological differences between cultural communities distinguish cultural psychology from other fields of study such as cross-cultural psychology and national character studies, with which it should not be confused.

It Is Not Cross-Cultural Psychology

Research in cultural psychology proceeds on the assumption that psychological diversity is inherent in the human condition, and that culture and psyche are interdependent and make each other up. It should be noted, indeed emphasized, that any theory of psychological pluralism would lack credibility if it denied the existence of any and all universals. Indeed, cultural psychology presupposes many psychological universals, including feelings; wants; goals; and ideas of good and bad, of cause and effect, of part-whole relationships (see Shweder et al., 1998). However, the search for and the privileging of things that are uniform across all peoples is a project that goes under other names—for example, general psychology or perhaps even cross-cultural psychology.

Segall, Lonner, and Berry (1998) have described some of the goals of cross-cultural psychology. One goal is "to generate more nearly universal psychology, one that has pan-human validity" and to attain "a universally applicable psychological theory." A second, closely related goal is to "keep peeling away at the onion skin of culture so as to reveal the psychic unity of mankind at its core." It is for that reason that cross-cultural psychology (not to be confused with cultural psychology) can be viewed as a vigilant cousin of general psychology; they both share the same uniformitarian goals. Such goals give a special character to cross-cultural psychology. And they help explain why the following kinds of activities are typical of research by cross-cultural psychologists and distinguish that field from cultural psychology.

Cross-cultural psychologists study the boundary conditions for generalizations created in Western labs with Western (mostly college student) subjects—generalizations that, prior to critical examination by cross-cultural psychologists, have been presumptively interpreted as fundamental and universal. They do not try to represent the distinctive cultural psychology of particular peoples nor pursue research focused on differences in the way members of communities perceive, categorize, feel, want, choose, evaluate, and communicate that can be traced to differences in community-based goals, values, and pictures of the world. Rather cross-cultural psychologists seek to make sure that the hoped-for universal psychology is truly universal and to throw out any claim that only holds in the Anglo-American world. This is an extremely useful corrective for the tendency of Western psychologists to overgeneralize their findings, but it is not the same as undertaking a project in cultural psychology.

A second goal of cross-cultural psychology is to establish comparability or equivalence for measuring instruments across different populations. Often the point here is to show that people in differ-
ent cultures really are alike, and that any reported differences in performance were due to noise, inappropriate measuring instruments, bad translations, or misunderstandings about the way to ask and answer questions. The instincts of a cultural psychologist run in quite a different direction. For a cultural psychologist, the "noise" is interpreted as a signal about true differences in cultural meanings and not as something to eliminate or overcome. Indeed, cultural psychologists are likely to worry if measuring instruments travel easily and well from university classroom to university classroom around the world and display the same psychometric properties. They may suspect that they are not in a truly different culture. This is because "peeling away the onion skin of culture so as to reveal the psychic unity of mankind at its core" is not what cultural psychology is about.

A third major goal of cross-cultural psychology is to focus on "independent variables" of the cultural environment, for example, nucleation of the family, literacy versus nonliteracy, that are thought to either promote or retard psychological development. In such research, development is almost always defined in terms of universal norms for cognitive, emotional, or social functioning (for example, Piaget's notion of formal operational thinking or Ainsworth's notion of healthy attachment). Cultural psychology, in contrast, is primarily concerned with the elaboration and discovery of alternative or plural norms for successful psychological development (LeVine, 1990; see Chapters 1 and 5).

**It Is Not National Character Studies**

Attempts to characterize whole populations in terms of generalized dispositions such as authoritarianism, Apollonianism, or high need for achievement went out of fashion in anthropology in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Looking for variations in types of personality traits to explain differences in cultural practices or custom complexes (and vice versa) turned out to be a dead end. In efforts to describe individuals within and across cultural communities in terms of general dispositions or traits of character, within-group variations typically exceeded between-group variations. National character researchers discovered that "individuals within cultures vary much more among themselves than they do from individuals in other cultures" (Kaplan 1954) and hypothesized modal personality types typically characterize no more than a third of the population in any particular cultural group. Psychological anthropologists and cultural psychologists have long recognized that (quoting Melford Spiro, 1961): "it is possible for different modal personality systems to be associated with similar social systems, and for similar modal personality systems to be associated with different social systems."

A major insight, although a fragile one, of recent work in cultural psychology is that it is better to represent and interpret human behavior the way sensible economists do rather than the way personality trait theorists do. That is to say, it is better to think about behavior as emanating from agency, and to analyze it as the joint product of preferences (including goals, values, and ends of various sorts) and constraints (including beliefs, information, skills, material and social resources, and means of various sorts). This approach avoids the hazards of dispositional approaches in which behavior is interpreted as the by-product of mechanical forces pushing both from inside (in the form of personality traits) and outside (in the form of situational pressures). Ultimately, a fully successful piece of research in cultural psychology must avoid nominal dispositional categories such as holistic versus analytic and render behavior intelligible in terms of the particular goals, values, and pictures of the world that motivate and inform the domain-specific behaviors and routine practices of specific inten-
tional agents. To do otherwise is to reify cultural stereotypes and fall into some of the traps of the past.

The Future: Going Indigenous
The field of cultural psychology that has re-emerged on the North American and European scene during the past twenty years is quite similar to an intellectual movement that has grown up in the non-Western world and is increasingly known as "indigenous psychology." One of the most eminent theoreticians of this movement, Kuo-shu Yang, the Taiwanese psychologist, lists several ways to indigenize psychological research. Here are four of Professor Yang’s virtues for the aspiring indigenous psychologist of China (Yang, 1997):

1. “Give priority to the study of culturally unique psychological and behavioral phenomena or characteristics of the Chinese people.”
2. “Investigate both the specific content and the involved process of the phenomenon.”
3. Make it a rule to begin any research with a thorough immersion into the natural, concrete details of the phenomenon to be studied.
4. Let research be based upon the Chinese intellectual tradition rather than the Western intellectual tradition.

These virtues define cultural psychology as well, although it remains to be seen how many of us can live up to such demanding standards. Even today, with the rebirth of cultural psychology, not all research actually begins with fieldwork or with a thorough immersion into the natural concrete details of the phenomenon to be studied. All too often, research still starts with a published finding from some Western lab, which is then subjected to critical examination by means of various attempts at replication with populations from other societies. But things are changing. Given the increasingly international and interdisciplinary character of collaborative scholarship in cultural psychology, I look forward to more research that keeps faith with Kuo-shu Yang’s high ideals.

One looks forward as well to deep and lively debates about the questions most central to this book. What stance should one take toward multiculturalism in our contemporary liberal democratic society? How is it possible to be a pluralist who values difference without saying that anything goes? What is the role of a liberal education in promoting the ideals of a postmodern humanism?

That last topic is most directly treated in the essay “Fundamentalism for Highbrows,” which was originally an address on the aims of education delivered to the incoming class at the University of Chicago. In the context of this particular collection of essays, it is my hope that “Fundamentalism for Highbrows” might be lifted out of its original academic setting and viewed as the continuation of a lifelong conversation about the meaning and value of life in contemporary liberal democratic societies. These days, however, post-September 11, the question looms large, what is and what ought to be the role of postmodern liberal educational institutions in developing the moral life of the mind in a multicultural world? Can they, should they, help us achieve the view from manywheres?

This collection of essays seeks to give character and definition to the proposition that the knowable world is incomplete if seen from any one point of view, incoherent if seen from all points of view at once, and empty if seen from nowhere in particular. Could it be that the recognition or revelation of that universal and fundamental truth is one of the more momentous experiences one might have at school, and is one of the noblest of ends toward which a genuinely liberal education might be aimed?