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Across Differences: An Alternative Approach to Promoting the Understanding of Different World Views

by

Yoko Motani

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
Graduate Department of Education
University of Toronto

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Abstract

Across Differences: An Alternative Approach to Promoting the Understanding of Different World Views

Master of Arts, 1997
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This thesis attempts to develop a framework for promoting understanding across diverse world views based on cultural and social differences.

I claim the process for the understanding of different world views is a challenge which demands a major shift of our own and our students’ way of perceiving others; from the perspective constructed on the sharp dichotomy of Us versus Them to the more inclusive perspective of Us with Them.

I suggest that the recognition of the pluralistic nature of self and culture is the key for the moderation of the dichotomy. I argue that culture and self can never be understood as being in a fixed and unified state because they are socially and historically constructed. I show how, with attention to critical literacy, emotions, and dialogue, the plurality of self and culture can be recognized and an understanding of other world views can be achieved.
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Introduction

So [I say,] those who divide fail to divide; those who discriminate fail to discriminate. What does this mean, you ask? The sage embraces things. Ordinary men discriminate among them and parade their discriminations before others. So I say, those who discriminate fail to see.

- Chuang Tzu

There are two questions I kept asking while working on the thesis: What is a world view?; and How can we explain the existence of the various world views? These two grand questions were raised when I came across the notion of “incommensurability” suggested by postmodernists. My interest in inter-cultural relations goes back well into my childhood, when I learned the idea of “commensurability” between different cultures, races, and even species from story books. Although my belief in “commensurability” was challenged as I grew up, visiting different cultural areas and encountering people living there, I never thought of discarding the belief. The most recent and fundamental challenge of all was postmodernists’ claim of the “incommensurability” of different world views, followed by the “celebration of diversity”. This challenge led me to examine the key theoretical underpinning of “incommensurability”, that is, the concept of a distinct “world view”.

As I started to examine the notions of “incommensurability” and “world view”, more questions were raised regarding with the diversity of world views. For instance:

Could we never overcome these barriers? Could we understand other world views even if we shared nothing in common? What does it exactly mean to “understand other world views”? Could we understand different world views only as different, not
as discriminating against ours? How could we do that? Or, do we actually have things in common? If so, is the idea of plural realities to be given up? Does that make it easier to understand “other” world views? ....

The thesis attempts to answer these questions and show some practical ways to understand different world views. It suggests a framework for seeking to create a bridge between diverse world views.

The thesis consists of five chapters.

In Chapter 1, I argue that the notion of “incommensurability” leads to extreme relativism and isolates humans in different social groups. At best, others are understood only as “different” from us, which is problematic in four respects:

(a) The Danger of Falling into Extreme Relativism
(b) The Possibility of Strengthening the Sharp Dichotomy of Us versus Them
(c) The Problem of Overcategorization
(d) Ignoring the Dynamic, Flexible, and Complex Nature of Culture

I claim that, in order to avoid discrimination against people who hold different world views, an alternative theory to understand other world views has to be developed. I suggest that to understand other world views means to acquire perspectives of other world views at
least to a degree and to have a capacity to perceive differences without negative
presumptions.

In Chapter 2, I examine psychological, sociological, and cognitive theories which
suggest that the dichotomy of Us versus Them is inevitable for human beings. The first one
claims that the formation of identity requires others and the self is bound to disconnect and
compete against others. The second one argues that in order for a society to maintain
cohesiveness, it needs others as an enemy. The third one claims that the ability to
differentiate people, things, and phenomena is necessary for humans to make sense of the
world. By examining each position, I argue that it is possible to moderate the dichotomy of
Us versus Them and that educational effort for such moderation can be effective.

In Chapter 3, I examine the linguistically and culturally deterministic conceptions of
world views and argue that language and culture do not determine every aspect of our
perception of reality. Although world views are strongly influenced by the environment, I
claim that they are not merely transmitted but can be modified if we wish, and indeed have to
be modified to sustain any society. Culture certainly reproduces itself, but it also has to
evolve to new stages if it is to be maintained. Schools, then, have to reflect these two aspects
of culture and transmit existing knowledge while at the same time encouraging students to
"reject and surpass" it.

In Chapter 4, I examine the conventional method of teaching for the better
understanding of other cultures and world views. Noting that the method generally intends
merely to supply students with knowledge of other cultures, I suggest an alternative perspective which helps students recognize the plurality of any society and self.

In Chapter 5, in order to avoid the "mere celebration of diversity" criticized by critical multiculturalists, I suggest that a critical literacy, emotions, and genuine dialogue have to be utilized at school when students are learning the pluralistic nature of society and self. I explain how these approaches affect the understanding of other cultures and world views.

In order to avoid the "mere celebration of diversity" criticized by critical multiculturalists when students are learning the pluralistic nature of society and self, I suggest that a critical literacy, emotions, and genuine dialogue have to be utilized at school. I will explain how each concept affect the understanding of other cultures and world views.
Chapter 1. An Unfinished Attempt to Understand Different World Views

Living with the other ... confronts us with the possibility or not of being an other. It is not simply - humanistically - a matter of our being able to accept the other, but of being in his place, and this means to imagine and make oneself other for oneself.

- Julia Kristeva, Strangers to Ourselves

In this chapter, I claim that in spite of the general acceptance of diverse world views in the humanities, the social sciences, and our daily life, the interpretation of the diversity has not been settled theoretically. Postmodernists celebrate the diversity combined with the notion of “incommensurability”, but I argue this notion cannot eliminate the potential danger of excluding different world views and discriminating against them. I discuss what it means to “understand different world views” and propose the educational goal of understanding other world views.

(I) Diverse World Views and Incommensurability

About 25 years ago, Edmund Husserl stated that the subjective views of the socio-cultural life-world had long been taken for granted and had never become a serious subject of a philosophical investigation.¹ But the subjectivity and relativity of reality have come to stir serious controversies in philosophy, challenging the objective and universal view of reality established by Plato and reinforced by the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. Alfred Schutz

stated that reality has many layers and we, hindered by our subjectivity, are unable to comprehend the whole picture of it. He was one of the first to claim the relativity and plurality of reality.

Many studies have developed in accordance with the notion of subjective-relative world views, giving empirical support to that position. Research conducted by Western anthropologists in particular has provided enough records to show that world views vary among cultures, although philosophers are still divided on whether diverse world views affirm the existence of plural realities or not. As a result of the accumulating information from anthropological studies, the existence of diverse world views based on the differences of culture, historical periods, and gender is “by now an almost universally accepted truism in the humanities and the social sciences” (McGowan, 1991, p.187).

If there is more than one world view, how we should understand all variations becomes a theoretical problem. We must determine how to deal with other, unfamiliar world views and people who have different world views. Postmodernists’ interpretation of different world views is based on the notion of “incommensurability”. For example, Richard Rorty states that due to cultural and historical differences humans do not share commonalities and hence world views are “incommensurable”. He emphasizes that “[s]imply by being human we do not have a common bond” (Rorty, 1989, p.177).

By saying that world views are “incommensurable”, Rorty seems to suggest that we have to give up mutual understanding and crossing the differences of culture, gender, class, and other categories. He states that “all we can do is to show how the other side looks from

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our own point of view” (Rorty, 1979, p.364). Mutual understanding appears to be difficult without any common ground. As Nicholas C. Burbules and Suzanne Rice remark, “incommensurability” is “a denial of the possibility of inter-subjective understanding” (Burbules and Rice, 1991, p.401).

(II) Some Problems with the Notion of Incommensurable World Views

There arise some difficulties if we accept other world views and people as “incommensurable”. I would like to list four of them:

(a) The Danger of Falling into Extreme Relativism

The notion of “incommensurability” deprives us of the ability to judge people from other social groups. If we cannot understand their world views and the behaviors depending on them, how can we judge their values and behaviors based on their own world view? This is extreme relativism, which leaves no criticism at all among different social groups.4

Extreme relativism is problematic not only because it is nihilistic but also because insiders can use it to justify the manipulation of traditions when questioned by outsiders. I believe that celebration of cultural diversity should not permit the justification of any kind of oppression.

The Possibility of Strengthening the Sharp Dichotomy of Us versus Them.

Audre Lorde states that “[m]uch of Western European history conditions us to see human differences in simplistic opposition to each other: dominant/subordinate, good/bad, up/down, superior/inferior” (Lorde, 1984, p.114). Many feminists have explored the theme of this almost universal dichotomy and alienation. According to Audre Lorde, human differences have historically been treated in one of three ways:

ignore it, and if that is not possible, copy it if we think it is dominant, or destroy it if we think it is subordinate. But we have no patterns for relating across our human differences as equals (Lorde, 1984, p.115).

How human beings have treated differences has varied from society to society and from time to time, and we should not generalize about it too much. However, we know that ancient Greek culture labeled people who spoke different languages as ‘barbarians’; Chinese history tells us a similar story; and anthropologists reveal that so-called primitive peoples regard other social groups as having no human virtues or even human nature. Humans have an extensive record of excluding and despising “different” people.

As stated above, postmodernists have suggested that we should understand “different” cultures only as “different”. However, if we are to take these past and present examples seriously, to understand unfamiliar cultures and world views as “different” does not seem to

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promote better understanding of them. At the very least an explanation of how it is possible to deal with “differences” without oppressing and excluding the people who exhibit them, in spite of the past record of mistreatment, is necessary.

Without such indications, it is quite possible this emphasis on “differences” will trigger more alienation than understanding of other world views. In other words, if we accept the notion of “incommensurability”, the dichotomy of *Us versus Them* which has historically existed among humans will not be moderated but rather will be strengthened. This does not seem a description of a situation “celebrating diversity”. There is a great possibility that the postmodernists’ ideal fails to be realized by their strategy.

(c) The Problem of *Overcategorization*.

“Incommensurable” world views are based on different social groups. Culture, history, gender, class, ethnicity, and so forth are major sources of differentiating world views. Therefore, if we accept the idea that some social groups have fundamentally different world views, we are required to assume that all members of the groups have “different” world views. For example, if a French person observes that Tahitian culture has some fundamentally different values from French culture, this means that all the Tahitians have a different world view from the French. In short, this way of understanding “different” cultures forces us to generalize their world views and eventually the people.

The notion of *overcategorization* is useful to describe such a phenomenon. Lynch defines *overcategorization* as an act to “assume that all persons in a given classificatory group are the same and manifest the same values and behaviors” (Lynch, 1987, p.24). To encourage our tendency of *overcategorization* is not desirable because it makes it easier to
accept the prevailing social stereotypes. According to Gillian Klein, Milner defined stereotyping, like overcategorization, as "the attribution of supposed characteristics of a whole group to all its members" (Klein, 1993, p.13) and it is often "a construct by the dominant group about the group they wish to dominate" (Klein, 1993, p.43).

If overcategorization is accepted, it is quite likely that stereotypes, which are constructed by the powerful social group and often reflect only the views of the powerful, are also accepted without much consideration. In order to resist a negative view of subordinate social groups, the ability to critically analyze the existing stereotypes is necessary. However, the proponents of the notion of "incommensurability" do not seem to emphasize the necessity of such critical capacities. I argue that without a critical ability to analyze the ongoing social categorizations, overcategorization leads to increased social stereotypes, which eventually foster prejudices against subordinate social groups.

(d) Ignoring the Dynamic, Flexible and Complex Nature of Culture (another version of overcategorization)

The notion of culture is widely used to explain human behaviors and functions in societies, mainly due to the effort of modern anthropologists. They have presented to us various kinds of cultures from all over the world, defining culture as something that provides us with basic patterns of codes and restricts our daily behaviors and thoughts. Among anthropological studies, "culture and personality" studies especially have been developed based on the assumption that each culture has a certain monolithic character which forms a certain personality for each member of the culture. However, in the real world, no culture is
so homogeneous that "basic patterns of codes" can be easily extracted and understood by outsiders. Although, according to Harry F. Wolcott, a skepticism toward the cultural determinism of personality and the conception of culture as monolithic and unified was raised as early as the 1950's, the shift to re-conceptualize the process of "cultural transmission" did not occur until the late 1980s. Consequently, what some anthropological studies have shown us is not the entire picture of culture but "a miniature replica ... of the 'culture', to be found in all members of the same society, except deviants" (Bourdieu, 1977, p.84).

Moreover, some anthropologists' efforts to "exclude the recorded phenomena of the human past, or of recorded cultural changes, in order to free their hands for the study of presently operating, internal cultural processes" (Hodgen, 1977, p.24) have created a tendency to consider culture and history separately. Culture is often considered as something stable and in a fixed state. Unfortunately, this cannot be an accurate description of culture. As James Moffett acutely points out, "culture is ... hard to define, because in reality civilizations merge, absorb each other, and at the very least influence each other" (Moffett, 1992, p.20).

However, if we accept the notion of "incommensurability", we are again doomed to understand cultures as something homogeneous and stable. We have to understand different world views as 'homogeneously' different and assume that this difference will never change and has never changed. We are unable to understand the rich and dynamic nature of culture.

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7 The concept of culture will be discussed later in pp.38-36, Chapter 3.
(III) Understanding Different World Views - The Educational Goal

Confronted with the problems stated above, I claim that an effort to develop a theory for understanding different world views, which is abandoned by postmodernists, is urgently required. The phrase “understand different world views” is problematic here since it is based on a presumption which appears to be contradictory: Human beings hold diverse world views based on social differences; but we can understand different world views. The postmodernists’ argument is: Human beings hold diverse world views based on social differences; thus, we cannot understand different world views. In other words, postmodernists deny objective understanding of others and suggest retaining relativism, giving up “understanding”. What do I mean by “understanding different world views”, when this implicitly affirms the existence of diverse world views?

The answer to this question must be two-fold: a definition of “world view” and a definition of “understanding”. “World view” is defined by many people in various fields, and there seems to be no universal definition already given. According to Leon McKenzie, originally, “world view” is a translated term of the German Weltanschauung and the formation of the concept in philosophy owes much to the late works of Martin Heidegger.9 Heidegger describes a world view as follows:

A world view always includes a view of life ... Our world view is determined by environment - people, race, class, developmental stage of culture ... [A world view] is
a matter of a coherent conviction which determines the current affairs of life more or less expressly and directly (Heidegger, 1982, pp.5-6).

As David Ingram summarizes, Heidegger considers that “[t]he linguistic forms and traditions that are inculcated in us map out a sort of destiny or pre-determined manner of viewing reality in terms of which we understand ourselves and our world” (Ingram, 1985, p.36). Now a world view is more generally understood as a frame of reference acquired through socialization and by everyone (Sire 1974, Sarason 1984). It often happens that this “frame of reference” is referred to by terms other than “world view”. For example, according to Yasuko Minoura, Theodore M. Newcomb claims that through socialization, every member of society acquires a common “frame of reference”, which is a similar conception to “world view”. More recently, Jack Mezirow’s term of “meaning perspectives”, which are “habits of expectation which govern the way we perceive and comprehend our experience” (Mezirow, 1989, p.171), seems to offer another way of referring to “world view”. Regardless of how it is referred to or defined, the conception of “world view” often emphasizes the socio-cultural aspect of world view construction, although the above stated definitions do not deny the personal aspect of it. They also generally emphasize that world views are determined by the socio-cultural environment and are transmitted rather than constructed by each individual.

In the following chapters, especially in Chapters 3 and 4, I will challenge the conventional conception of a world view and claim an alternative interpretation of it is necessary in order to reduce the negative perception of other world views (to “understand other world views” in a sense (b), which is discussed below). I will emphasize that human beings' ability to construct their own world views and the personal dimension of them cannot be ignored in a comprehensive understanding of world views.

On “understanding”, I have a hypothesis that there are many ways to describe the condition in which someone has “understood” other world views. One extreme is to consider a person who knows of the existence of other world views as having “understood” them. At the other extreme is someone who is completely bicultural-bilingual or multicultural-multilingual. An example of this is someone who was brought up crossing more than one world view and has acquired more than one way of behaving and expressing emotions.

Cultural theories proposed by anthropologists from the school of “culture and personality” assume that people usually acquire only one form of a world view in which self
is centered. This model is illustrated in Fig. 1, which shows how the dichotomy of *Us versus Them* is created. If a person is bicultural or multicultural (Fig. 2), meaning that the person has more than one world view or at least has perspectives of other world views, the self is decentralized and plural, taking the world view of "Others" illustrated in Fig. 1 inside him/her. With this model, the dichotomy of *Us versus Them* does not exist.

Here, "understand other world views" means "the acquisition of perspectives of other world views". This is the understanding which anticipates the shift of existing perspectives. As we have seen earlier, postmodernists claim that we cannot understand across different world views because they do not have a common ground. If mutual understanding has to be based on a shared culture, the postmodernists' argument is valid. However, mutual understanding can be conceptualized differently. It can mean *creation* of a shared space which is different from the existing world views. I believe, as Mikhail Bakhtin suggests, that the mutual understanding requires a two-way shift of perspectives. He states as follows:

[t]he person who understands must not reject the possibility of changing or even abandoning his [or her] already prepared viewpoints and positions. In the act of understanding a struggle occurs, which results in mutual change and enrichment (Bakhtin, 1986, p.181).

The ideal mutual understanding cannot occur when (A) is expecting (B) to be assimilated to (A)'s world view. Such understanding is possible only by creating an almost entirely new world view (A'B') which is different from both (A) and (B). I call this

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“understanding other world views (a)”. This understanding is illustrated in Fig. 2. It is to acquire more inclusive and integrative world views which can be called “bicultural/multicultural world views”. One may argue that only people who have grown up crossing two or more cultures would be able to reach the understanding of other world views in this sense of (a). Further, it could be argued that even among such people to acquire such an inclusive and integrative world view is a rare phenomenon. I intend to show in the following chapters that people can at least acquire the perspectives of other world views and thus this understanding of other world views (a) is possible, even if people were not brought up crossing multiple world views in a conventional sense.

However, “understanding different world views (a)” is not enough to reduce adequately the Us against Them feeling. As is obvious from Fig. 2, even if one has a bicultural or multicultural world view, other, unfamiliar world views always remain around him/her, since it is impossible to take in all other world views in one person. Therefore, I suggest that we should consider a strategy which moderates the dichotomy of Us versus Them. To understand other world views in this sense requires us to develop the capacity to see other world views without prejudice. Let me call this version “understanding different world views (b)”

To summarize, in this paper, “understanding different world views” means more than mere familiarity with other world views. It is the actual acquisition of more than one world view or “bicultural/multicultural world view”; the acquisition of such perspectives; and/or the recognition of the existence of multiple world views within ourselves, if such world views already exist. Further, it means the ability to face different world views without negative assumptions about them. I believe a bicultural/multicultural world view can be
encouraged by learning the perspectives of other world views and realizing the construction process of our world view.

In the following chapters, I will discuss how it is possible to promote understanding of different world views in both senses (a) and (b). The next chapter will examine some theories which claim that the dichotomy of Us versus Them is inevitable. I will examine the plausibility of the educational goals suggested above.
Chapter 2. Us versus Them - Is It Inevitable?

...All the people like us are We
And everyone else is They.
And They live over the sea,
While We live over the way.
But - would you believe it? - They look upon We
As only a sort of They!

- Rudyard Kipling

In the previous chapter, I suggested the necessity of an alternative theory to understand different world views, criticizing the notion of “incommensurability”. I have claimed its emphasis on differences among diverse world views can result in strengthening the dichotomy of Us versus Them. However, some psychological, sociological, and cognitive theories claim the sharp dichotomy of Us versus Them results from “human nature”, which is not subject to change. In other words, according to them, the dichotomy of Us versus Them is the foundation of every world view. These theories deny the possibility of moderating the dichotomy regardless of what one says about “incommensurability”. In this chapter, I will examine some of these theories and suggest that the strengthening of the dichotomy is not inevitable and the weakening of it is possible.

(I) Psychological Theories of Self and Others

According to Stephen J. Bergman, traditional theories suggest that psychological development of humans involves a process of separating self from others. To establish a firm identity, which is considered to be necessary in order to have “sound” relationships, the individuation of self is required. This process inevitably leads to viewing others as competing
with self and eventually to justifying the attempt to overcome others.\textsuperscript{12} Human relationships, created on the basis of disconnecting self from others, are basically power-over relationships. Bergman notes that traditional theorists - Freud, Erikson, neo-Freudians, Kernberg, Mahler, and Kohut - put an emphasis "on control and power - ego control, control of feelings, a power-control model - and on the basic Western paradigm based on comparison, competition, and aggression" (Bergman, 1991, p.3).

Bergman in his article, \textit{Men's Psychological Development: A Relational Perspective}, attempts to argue against these traditional theories. He states that humans (especially men) learn to disconnect from others through socialization; and he emphasizes instead humans’ primal connection with others, especially with the mother.\textsuperscript{13} Thus, he claims that it is possible and even desirable to foster the primary yearning for others and create power-with relationships, replacing power-over.\textsuperscript{14} He believes that men (and, of course, women) can "participate in non-self-centered, mutual relationship, and grow in connection" (Bergman, 1991, p.10), if the primary yearning for connection is nurtured.

A few questions arise from this article. The first is about identity. Bergman states that power-over relationships are avoidable, but does not indicate how the shift to power-with relationships affects the formation of our identity. The traditional theories suggest disconnection from others is necessary to establish identity. Can we have a sound identity even if we discard power-over relationships? In order to answer this question, we must examine how identity is formed.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., p.4
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p.10.
Identity is, according to Erik Erikson’s classic definition, “the awareness of the fact that there is a self sameness and continuity to the ego’s synthesizing methods and that these methods are effective in safe-guarding the sameness and continuity of one’s meanings for others” (Erikson, 1959, p.23). It is evident Erikson conceived the interaction of the individual and others as essential for the formation of identity, but later other psychologists have come to emphasize more the role of others.

For example, according to R. D. Laing, the actualization of identity is complementary. He states as follows in *Self and Others*:

A woman cannot be a mother without a child. She needs a child to give her the identity of a mother. A man needs a wife for him to be a husband. ... All ‘identities’ require an other (Laing, 1971, p.66).

Others are necessary for individuals to establish their own identity. We can never know who we are without the identity created and visualized by others. We need a mirror to see how we look. In this sense, others are such a mirror. These statements may suggest others are required primarily for the survival of self. One may suspect that this self-centeredness could lead to the development of self-over relationships. But I do not believe Laing implies that such development is inevitable for the formation of identity.

Laing is simply stating that identity is formed through interaction with others who describe our identity to us. I believe we are not just using others in order to establish our identity and then be able to conquer others. We need others merely because we are inter-related to them. Understood as such, the overcoming of others is not required for the formation of sound identity.
Therefore, I believe that from a psychological perspective, non-competing relations with others do not interfere with establishing identity. An identity can be soundly established while not competing with and taking control over others.

There are two other questions which can be raised from Bergman’s article. First, how can individuals transform from a relationship of power-over to power-with, if the larger society surrounding the self is competitive and aggressive? Bergman believes that such changes are possible and are already happening. But can we have power-with relationships simply because we once experienced that type of relationships when we were children? We cannot forget that the author has emphasized the cultural pressure on men and women when the self is being developed. He describes how difficult it is for men to have power-with relationships because of the different cultural expectations toward women and men. Unfortunately, he does not elaborate much on this matter. How can we cope with the social influences if they have already formed our minds and behaviors and are quickly being transmitted to the next generation?

Second, if Bergman is correct in claiming that the shift to valuing relations with others is occurring, what are the factors causing this change? He seems to imply that the shift takes place because people just happen to realize the virtue of relationships with others, or because these people have somehow been nurtured in this type of relationship. But are there other reasons? Can we be more “relationally minded” by merely wishing to?

Essentially these two questions are concerned with the same theme: Can individuals affect the greater society in spite of the strong social influence on them?

I will come back to these questions in the next chapter. For now, let me examine another theory which claims that societies require the existence of different people against whom dominant members can discriminate.
(II) Societies and Different Social Groups

As noted in the previous chapter, humans have had a long history of discriminating against "different" people. Many psychological, sociological, and anthropological studies report that humans repeatedly produce and reproduce enemies based on trivial differences, which trigger inter-group friction and conflict. According to social psychologist Stephen Bochner, Sherif explains that "inter-group conflict stems from the participants making an 'us' and 'them' differentiation, in effect a distinction between who belongs to the in-group and who is a member of out-group" (Bochner, 1982, p.11). The reason for making such an "us" and "them" differentiation is explained by Tajfel, who claims humans have a generalized norm of hostility toward out-groups. Bochner states: "Tajfel suggests that individuals construct a subjective social order based on the classification of 'we' and 'them', and learn that the appropriate attitude is to favor a member of the in-group and discriminate against a member of the out-group" (Bochner, 1982, p.11-12). However, Tajfel does not explain why humans have to acquire the tendency of forming hostility toward out-groups based on certain differences and how they are chosen to differentiate the in-group and out-group.

Anthropologist Masao Yamaguchi's theory of "center and fringe" is useful to explain humans' acquisition of the generalized norm of hostility. Yamaguchi claims that the structure which culture creates is based on the basic rule of exclusion. According to him, human beings are order creating animals and, as a result of this "human nature", every culture has a center and a

\[ \text{Masao Yamaguchi, Bunka to Ryogisei (Culture and Polysemy) (Tokyo: Iwanami-shoten, 1975), pp.64-65.} \]
fringe. The center is well structured and ordered, governed by rules, but the fringe is rather chaotic. The center can be viewed as the mainstream of the culture. The fringe is composed of certain areas where humans failed to give an order and therefore is excluded from the mainstream. These fringe areas may be recognized by people in the mainstream culture on some occasions, but the daily life world usually does not recognize them. Yamaguchi states that to “recognize the order, to draw a boundary (between Us and Them) is a necessary condition” (Yamaguchi, 1975, p.87) and only by so doing are societies able to be sustained.17

According to Yamaguchi’s theory, order and the issue of cohesiveness are the two key elements for human societies to exist. I would like to discuss the issue of cohesiveness here.18 Applying his theory, one can conclude that the more society is cohesive, the more distinct the boundary between Us and Them becomes and the more inter-group conflict occurs. In other words, if we could decrease the cohesiveness of society, it would be possible to moderate the dichotomy of Us versus Them. The question is: Does human society require a certain level of cohesiveness as Yamaguchi claims or can it exist even if the cohesiveness is relatively low?

I think it is inappropriate to give a generalized answer to this question. Rather, I would argue that the scale of society and other factors such as the environment have to be taken into consideration to give an answer to such a question. For example, we could assume high cohesiveness was and is required for traditional, simple village-type communities. However, we can argue that since such small communities now rarely exist in isolation but are gathered

16 Ibid., pp.224-242.
17 Similar theories of explaining the nature of societies can be found among anthropologists and sociologists who apply the semiotic theory to their analysis. For example, see Ernst Cassirer. The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, Vol. II: Mythical Thought trans. R. Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press,1955).
18 I will discuss about the first element of Yamaguchi’s theory, which is humans’ tendency to seek order, in the following section (p.25-28).
together to form much larger communities, often with success, high cohesiveness is not necessarily required to form and maintain society.

Further, Yamaguchi’s theory still does not explain why the boundary between Us and Them is often made on the basis of certain differences such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender, and so forth. In other words, his theory does not discuss the possibility of creating a “we-feeling” across differences mentioned above. I believe that creating a society which consists of various social groups is possible and that we should not presume a “we-feeling” can be created only on the basis of the same race, culture, gender and so forth.\(^1\)

The distinction between coercive and collaborative relations of power proposed by Jim Cummins is useful to explain how the treatment of different people can differ depending on the type of power relations exhibited in society. He states that coercive relations of power are “the exercise of power by a dominant group (or individual or country) to the detriment of a subordinated group (or individual or country)” (Cummins, 1995, p.9) and are based on the assumption that each society has only a fixed quantity of power. Therefore, these relations result in the dominance of a certain group over the subordinated group, defining them as inferior.\(^2\) We see the exercise of this way of relating in everyday life.\(^3\)

However, as Cummins claims, “coercive relations of power are not inevitable” (Cummins, 1995, p.2). We have all experienced the collaborative relations of power, for instance, when a coach helps athletes and when people love each other. Collaborative relations of power show that power can be generated when people inter-relate with each other. Cummins

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\(^1\) Later, I will discuss how emotions can create “we feeling” across differences (p.67, Chapter 5).


\(^3\) Ibid., p.2 of Chapter 1.
claims that collaborative relations of power can be nourished to affect the greater society and replace the coercive relations of power which subordinate different social groups.

One may still argue that human societies need more than a certain level of cohesiveness and so coercive relations of power are necessary. However, many of the fundamental problems facing each human society have already become global. Scientists have discovered that the ozone layer is thinning and warn of global warming. Overpopulation is certainly a global problem since foods are internationally distributed. The list of global concerns can go on. As Cummins points out, even the powerful social groups of coercive relations of power are also facing the global crisis.22 Considering these serious problems, I do not think it is appropriate to insist on high cohesiveness for every society. If human societies were existing with quite limited inter-relations, the maintenance of a high level of inner cohesiveness might be justified. But it is becoming clearer and clearer that societies are no longer alone and often face the same serious dangers. Human societies which used to maintain a high level of cohesiveness must evolve to being less cohesive societies, adapting to the changing environment facing them.23

(III) Generalization and Humans’ Understanding of the World

In this section, I would like to examine some theories concerned with our tendency to generalize, since the generalization or rather the over-generalization of Us and Them is the basis of forming the dichotomy of Us versus Them and resultant inter-group conflicts. We must

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22 Ibid., p.11 of Chapter 1.
23 Later, I will examine the relations between individuals and societies and discuss possibilities of individuals’ having influences on the greater societies (Chapter 3).
examine whether the tendency to generalize is part of human nature and whether the dichotomy of *Us versus Them* can or cannot be weakened.

As Ludwig Wittgenstein remarks in *The Blue Book*, we seem to have a tendency to generalize our experiences, urged by "our craving for generality". According to him, this tendency results from a number of tendencies toward philosophical investigations. These include the tendency "to look for something in common to all the entities which we commonly subsume under a single term" (Wittgenstein, 1958, p.17) and "to think that someone who has learned to understand a general term, e.g., 'leaf', has thereby come to possess a kind of general picture of a leaf, as opposed to pictures of particular leaves" (Needham, 1972, p.112).

It is often argued, however, that categorization of the kind Wittgenstein is criticizing is a necessity in everyday life: humans need to generalize, categorize, and name entities so that communication is possible. For example, trees are well known for their distinctive individual characteristics. The word *tree* has more specific instances such as *maple*, *oak*, *pine*, *elm* and so on, but no two trees are exactly the same even when categorized under the same specific term. It is said that a monk who sweeps a garden of a temple every day can tell to which tree a fallen leaf used to belong. However, for the people who do not have as a close relationship with trees as a monk, it is enough to call them *tree* or *maple*, *oak*, and so on. People do not name each tree but generalize certain characteristics of some trees, categorize them and use a term such as *maple*. Otherwise communication would be impossible.

Again, it is often maintained that humans need to generalize and categorize in order to make sense of the world. Some anthropologists define culture as humans’ necessary praxis to create order from nature, using categorizations. For example, Robert F. Murphy states that "[t]he apparent world is in a state of phenomenological flux, which humans attempt to overcome by the
imposition of categories upon phenomena and through which process they convert phenomena into experience ...” (Murphy, 1971, p.97). We also noted Yamaguchi’s theory according to which the creation of order is at the core of human conduct. But why do we have to understand the world in a simplified way? Can’t we just understand that the world is complex and can never be fully simplified? Regarding these questions, Jerome S. Bruner suggests that human cognition limits the way we understand reality. Humans simply do not have the capacity to make sense of the world without generalizing and categorizing. He states as follows:

There is, perhaps, one universal truth about all forms of human cognition: the ability to deal with knowledge is hugely exceeded by the potential knowledge contained in man’s environment. To cope with this diversity, man's perception, his memory, and his thought processes early become governed by strategies for protecting his limited capacities from the confusion of overloading. We tend to perceive things schematically, for example, rather than in detail, or we represent a class of diverse things by some sort of averaged 'typical instance’ (Bruner, 1979, p.69).

This tendency to “perceive things schematically rather than in detail” and to “represent a class of diverse things by some sort of averaged ‘typical instance’” is studied by George Lakoff (1987). He states that in order to understand each category as a whole, humans must use metonymic devices. This phenomenon is explained by using an example of the phrase working mother, which is a social stereotype that “may be defined with respect to only one of the base models of an experiential cluster” (Lakoff, 1987, p.80). He argues that all women who are

24 Refer to pp.21-22.
biologically or legally parents and working are not categorized as *working mother*. Working mother actually means only women who currently live with their family, have at least some responsibilities for household matters for the entire family, and, in addition to those household duties, are working. For instance, if a woman is divorced and living by herself, even if she is biologically mother and working, she is not called *working mother*. A single mother who has not married and is working is not categorized as *working mother*, either. Therefore, the actual connotation of the phrase *working mother* is based on a single case of mothers who are working, somehow excluding other females who are mothers and working. This example illustrates that we create categories that would describe only one distinctive case excluding many other possible cases.

Lakoff also claims that “[i]t is common for people to use familiar, memorable, or otherwise salient examples to comprehend categories” (Lakoff, 1987, p.89) and make judgments based on these examples. For example, right after the Hanshin (Kobe) earthquake in Japan in 1995, one European art museum decided not to rent out their pictures to that area. The curators in that museum used salient examples to make probability judgments about the category of natural disasters. From the two examples above, we can conclude that we have a tendency to understand the whole category using only one example, ignoring many other possible examples.

Much of how we actually come to learn categories and how we derive generalizations from experience so that they can be stored in a certain category is still a mystery. But since it is obvious that most people learn categories used in our daily life, we can say that humans frequently transmit these categories to following generations. Thus, it is likely that our tendency

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to depend on metonymic devices or salient examples, which justify over-generalization, is also transmitted. We are bound to accept the ways of categorization as well as social connotations of entities which represent certain categorizations. Because of the limited capacity of human cognition and yet, at the same time, the need to have meaningful communication, humans' learning of categories and ways of generalization may need to be reproduced again and again.

(IV) **The Possibility of Resisting the Tendency toward Generalization**

Thus, Wittgenstein's problem remains unsolved. He states that the "craving for generality" has developed "the contemptuous attitude towards the particular case" and "contempt for what seems the less general case" (Wittgenstein, 1958, p.18). This is also my concern. Is it beyond humans' ability to understand the complex nature of the reality? Can we never stop generalizing, even for a certain case? Can't we just become aware of the complexity the world presents to us?

I have observed many people manage not to generalize the entire population of a country in which they are living. For example, a British friend of mine is almost always aware that she does not represent the entire country. She is very aware of the differences that exist among the British based on class, religion, region, and so on. This particular person is also careful when she tries to derive some generalizations about other countries with which she is not very familiar. However, there are many other people who, though aware of variations in their own country, tend to over-generalize the people of foreign countries. From what I have observed, I cannot say that there are major differences of cognitive capacity between my British friend and the latter people. This example, then, questions the assumption that there is a simple correlation between
the capacity of human cognition and generalization and that over-generalization is inevitable to
make sense of the world.

One may argue that the existence of many people who tend to over-generalize regarding
people of foreign countries illustrates human cognitive limitations with respect to unfamiliar
things. One can conclude that people tend to recognize the details of a phenomenon if it is
culturally meaningful and necessary to them. There is probably a co-relation between familiarity
and the tendency to over-generalize. However, this cannot be used to rationalize our tendency of
over-generalization with respect to the unfamiliar and the different. Humans are capable of
making predictions based on available information. We are also able to use our imagination if
such information is limited. If humans have these capacities, how can we rationalize the
tendency to over-generalize the unfamiliar, as if this tendency can never be avoided? If humans
tend to over-generalize the unfamiliar, and that over-generalization is caused by unfamiliarity,
not by limited cognitive capacity, I believe an educational effort to moderate humans’ tendency
to over-generalize could be effective.

There is empirical research which confirms the effectiveness of prejudice reduction by
moderating students’ tendency to over-generalize. Wilder (1978) states that if the unfamiliar out-
group members are individuated, making them appear to have distinctive opinions,
 discrimination is reduced. Katz (1976) also reports that prejudice reduction was achieved by
teaching students to associate distinctive names with people of different race, ethnicity and
culture. This type of education aimed at reducing the tendency toward over-generalization with
respect to people of different social groups can be described as effective in promoting the
understanding of different world views in sense (b) (see pp.15-16, above).
I would conclude, therefore, that through education, the human tendency to make generalizations and over-generalizations can be effectively modified and, as a result, can reduce negative perception of differences.
Chapter 3. Language, Culture and World Views

Otherwise we must all perish, for behind specific historical and cultural developments, East versus West, hierarchical versus egalitarian systems, individualism versus communism, lies the simple fact that man is both a structural and an anti-structural entity, who grows through anti-structure and conserves through structure.

- Victor Turner, Dramas, Fields and Metaphors

In the previous chapter, I have argued the formation of the dichotomy of Us versus Them is not inevitable as some psychological and social theories claim. I have also argued that educational effort to reduce the tendency toward over-generalization can be effective in moderating negative perceptions of people who have different world views. In this chapter, I will explore the possibility of developing a more inclusive world view Us with Them. If, as I stated earlier, cultures and languages determine world views, the shift of world view from Us versus Them to Us with Them appears to be difficult even if the dichotomy of Us versus Them is not inevitable. Therefore, I must ask the same question as I raised in Chapter 2 (p.20) based on Bergman’s article: If human beings have already acquired their own world views, how can they be modified?

In this Chapter, I will attempt to give an answer to this question. In order to clarify the nature of the concept of “world view”, I will analyze the process of how world views are considered to be transmitted through language and culture, ultimately influencing individuals. I will argue that, in spite of the strong influence of language and culture emphasized by linguistic and cultural determinism, human beings are capable of modifying
existing world views, since language, culture and individuals interact with each other. I will also argue that teachers can encourage their students to surpass acquired world views.

(I) Language and World Views

The famous classical theory about the influence of language on world views of human beings is proposed by Benjamin Lee Whorf, known as the ‘Sapir-Whorf hypothesis’. This hypothesis suggests that language symbolizes its culture and influences the way people perceive reality. It suggests it is language that determines world views. Further, Whorf claims that our world views differ from language to language since the language we use creates the reality.26

Let me illustrate with a simple example that explains this hypothesis. In Japanese, there are two words corresponding to the English word "brother"; they are "ani" and "otouto", which mean "elder brother" and "younger brother". People must have difficulties in talking about their brother in Japanese if they do not acknowledge whether their brother is younger or older than themselves. In English, on the other hand, people can talk about their brother without mentioning whether he is older or younger than themselves (Fig.3). A linguist suggests we can hypothesize that the distinction between "elder brother" and "younger brother" came to exist when the Japanese society allowed the oldest brother to have privilege over younger brothers.27

If this linguist's claim is valid, this example illustrates that language represents culture and reflects the larger social contexts, affecting the way we perceive reality. Further, from the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, we could conclude that English speaking people and Japanese speaking people have different world views based on these category differences.

Similar views on language have been proposed and analyzed by many scholars, before and after the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis appeared. For example, Rousseau stated that different languages, "as they change the symbols, also modify the ideas which the symbols express. Minds are formed by language, thoughts take their colour from its ideas" (Rousseau, 1911, p.73). How language affects the way we think and perceive reality has been one of the major themes in philosophy and social sciences since language is one of the primary media we use to express our thought. It has been largely agreed that language has strong influences on our thoughts and, as Whorf suggests, is the primary factor in constructing world views. This view of the relationship between language and world views can be called linguistic determinism.
But, language determinism is not without problems. Actually, many serious problems have been raised by research conducted to examine the validity of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. For example, Rosch’s study provides an empirical example which calls into question the hypothesis that language pre-determines world views. According to George Lakoff, Rosch shows that speakers of Dani, a New Guinea language that has only two basic color categories, are able to distinguish among more colors, even though they are not named. She conducted the research by showing different colors to Dani speakers and making them learn made-up terms for each color. She argues that if language determines the way we see reality, Dani speakers should be seeing the world in two colors and should be unable to learn new names for different colors. But Rosch observed that Dani speakers could learn new made-up terms quickly, which showed that they could distinguish more subtle color differences than just two. Her study shows language does not entirely create reality but they can exist separately.

Overall, the difficulty of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis could be summarized in terms of its placing too much emphasis on language. For example, even if it is not very common for English-speaking people to distinguish “elder brother” from “younger brother”, this doesn’t necessarily mean that they cannot recognize the difference between the two. After all, from time to time, English speakers do distinguish their older brother(s) from their younger one(s). And while Japanese speakers are forced to distinguish linguistically between older and younger brothers, often today there is not a very important conceptional difference.

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Further, people who speak the same language can belong to very different cultures. For example, Amish in the United States who speak English and non-Amish New Yorkers who also speak English must be considered to belong to two different cultures and thus to have two different world views. It might be argued these two culturally different groups of people who speak English actually speak two different types of English with different daily vocabularies and expressions. Still, I think this example raises a serious question about whether world views can be reduced merely to a matter of language.

If it is only language that determines world views, this means that even someone who is forced to learn and speak a foreign language would have to almost automatically acquire a foreign world view when through acquiring the foreign language. For example, when it was common to force the colonized to learn the language of the colonizers, they must be considered to have acquired the world view of the colonizers. However, it is without question that the colonized’s and their children’s acquisition of the colonizers’ language never completely changed theirs or their children’s world views.

From the above examples of problems regarding the hypothesis, it is quite questionable whether it is appropriate to affirm the position that language plays a fundamental role in constructing world views. We must now examine in a more systematic way just what is the relationship between language and world views. The argument will explore three ideas, namely: (1) Something more than language determines world views; (2) The conception of language itself has to be re-examined; and (3) Language does not determine world views.

Going back to the definitions of “world view” proposed by Heidegger and others, “culture” is also referred to as a factor that determines world views. The distinction between
language and culture is sometimes vague and language is often considered as a representative of the notion of culture. According to Samuel Fleischacker, D. M. Taylor describes language as "the vehicle of culture" and C. F. Voegelin claims that "it is relatively easy to ... define linguistics without reference to culture...; it is much more difficult to ... define culture ... without reference to language" (Fleischacker, 1994, p.129). But, as noted above, people who speak the same language can belong to different cultures. Therefore, first, I would like to examine how world views are determined following the possible direction of argument (I).

(II) Culture and World Views

Definitions of the word culture are presented by many people and the notion of culture is hard to define.29 However, it is apparent that varieties of culture exist on the surface of this planet and each culture seems to provide us with a set of codes and patterns that are necessary to lead daily lives within it. For example, Alfred Schutz states people experience the social world as "a tight knit web of social relationships, of systems of signs and symbols with their particular meaning structure, of institutionalized forms of social organization, ... etc."(Schutz, 1971, p.230) and that people usually take the meaning of these elements of the social world for granted.30 These ‘taken for granted’ elements of the social

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29 Edward B. Tylor defined culture as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (Tylor, 1877, p.1). Clifford Geertz emphasizes its role of symbolic meaning transmission; “[Culture is]... a historically transmitted pattern of meaning embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge and attitudes toward life” (Geertz, 1968, p.89).

world can be called the norm of culture\textsuperscript{31} and such a norm is a world view which offers a "frame of reference". In other words, culture has a fixed and stable part which offers us the common world view for every member of the society. This conception that culture is a world view, or, at least, that world view is a part of culture, has been developed by cognitive anthropologists. Ward Goodenough describes culture as follows:

A society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members ... [Culture is] the form of things that people have in mind, their models for perceiving, relating, and otherwise interpreting them (Goodenough, 1957, p.167).

If the norm of culture is unintentionally acquired by most of the members, it is likely to be sustained and reproduced again and again. Antonio Gramsci's notion of hegemony explains how culture reproduces the norm from the perspective of power-relations. According to Darder, Gramsci argues that the dominant world view is produced "through the moral and intellectual leadership of a dominant society over subordinate groups" (Darder, 1991, p.87). The Marxist and neo-Marxist educational theorists have widely argued hegemony is created to maintain the status quo and schools are one of the main factors responsible for its reproduction.\textsuperscript{32} Seen from this perspective, culture's main function is to maintain the norm - or the hegemony, if we use Gramsci's term - and to reproduce itself. If

\textsuperscript{31} This corresponds to other notions such as 'a cultural focus' suggested by Melville Herskovits (1947) and 'hegemony' by Antonio Gramsci (1971).

\textsuperscript{32} See, for example, Raymond A. Morrow and Carlos A. Torres, Social Theory and Education: A Critique of Theories of Social and Cultural Reproduction. (State University of New York Press: Albany, 1995).
our world views are culture or a part of culture, it appears that they are also unintentionally acquired and keep being reproduced.

So far it appears that, whether it is conceived that language determines world views or culture is in part or whole world views, the deterministic nature of the conception of world views remains intact. The examination of the determinants of world views along the direction of argument (1) did not reveal new perspectives on the relations between world views, language and culture. Now I would like to take another possible direction, which is to examine the conception of language (and culture) following the direction of argument (2).

(III) Language and Change

We have seen theories claiming that language and culture determine and construct our world views and that these social factors maintain the order of our daily lives. Does this mean that we have no autonomous self separate from our social environment? I must answer that there is considerable truth in this view. Human beings are not as independent as many Western philosophers until the end of the Enlightenment believed. Every one of us is affected by our society because we are social beings. We can never completely stay away from social influences. Language is one of the most prominent social influences human beings have to face. We cannot choose our mother tongue for ourselves. The first language we learn to use is already determined by external circumstances over which we have no control.

However, at the same time, we cannot forget that it was human beings, us, who invented the way to communicate using language. As language came to be circulated among
certain numbers of people, it became a social phenomenon, able to be handed over to later generations. So, even though human beings created languages, we feel powerless in front of language because now it is a social, collective phenomenon.

This paradoxical relation between language and human beings seems to suggest that language and people interact with each other, in spite of the strong pressure of culture on people. Although we may not realize it, everyday language is constantly changing. The bases of language are grammar (syntax) and vocabulary (semantics), which are fairly stable and ruled by traditions. The conservative nature of language is understandable since its primary purpose is communication. As David Corson states, “[l]anguage is the key factor in reproducing and maintaining the conventions and traditions of cultures and societies” (Corson, 1995, p.193). Ferdinand de Saussure (1959) also argues that language is not socially mutable and changeable. However, in spite of this conservative nature of language, we can see it change over time. A dictionary wouldn’t become outdated in only a day, a month, or a year, but in ten years it goes out of date, although it can still provide a vast amount of basic information about vocabulary. English in Shakespeare’s plays and contemporary American English show many differences in both vocabulary and grammar.

More linguistic research has to be done to understand why and how language changes. Some linguists suggest that these changes are caused by certain phonological rules, over which humans have no control, following the Saussurian trend.33 However, some studies of socio-linguistics suggest that humans intentionally initiate linguistic changes.34 I believe that humans have some control over the language they use, since I see new usage is

33 The major group of proponents of this position is called Junggrammatiker in German. See Katsuhiko Tanaka, What Is Linguistics? (Tokyo: Iwanami-shoten, 1993), pp.52-64.
born, circulates and sometimes dies out, which is a phenomenon only explainable by the conduct of human beings. I do not completely deny language's influence on the construction of world views. Even though the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis and linguistic determinism have received much criticism, language must affect the way we think since human beings often depend on language when they think.\textsuperscript{15}

My position is that the construction of world views is not entirely dependent on language and that human beings have some control over language and thus over world views. This way of viewing language is congruent with the position of Lev Vygotsky, who states that "[just as a mold gives shape to a substance, words can shape an activity into a structure. However, that structure may be changed or reshaped when children learn to use language in ways that allow them to go beyond previous experiences when planning future action" (Vygotsky, 1978, p.28). Language may first determine the basis of a world view, but this initial transmission of a world view certainly does not determine the entire component of it. I believe Vygotsky's conception of language suggests a possibility that world views can be constructed in part by individuals. I emphasize the interaction of language and human beings and reject linguistic determinism.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., pp.170-183.
\textsuperscript{15} Therefore, I do not develop my argument following the direction of argument (3); Language does not determine world views.
(IV) Culture and Change

We have seen above how language and human beings interact with each other. As I have already discussed, if language is only a part of the cultural phenomena\textsuperscript{16}, it would be appropriate to examine the concept of culture here.

The idea that human beings have no control over social phenomenon such as language and culture has been articulated by a certain trend in anthropology. According to Zygmunt Bauman, some anthropologists developed the idea of the “superorganic” nature of culture, which gave culture an existential status from human beings.\textsuperscript{37} This attitude toward society is echoed in Leslie A. White’s statement: “Culture may be considered, from the standpoint of a scientific analysis and interpretation, as a thing \textit{sui generis}, as a class of events and processes that behaves in terms of its own principles and laws and which consequently can be explained only in terms of its own elements and processes” (White, 1948, p.xviii). Alfred L. Kroeber also stated that “[c]ulture, while it exists only through or in men [sic], has an existence of its own” (Kroeber, 1928, p.493). These views of culture follow Emile Durkheim’s view of society and culture. He stated that “collective ways of acting or thinking [i.e., culture] have a reality outside ... individuals ... they exist in their own right” (Durkheim, 1938, p. lvi). From this perspective, human beings have no control at all over reproducing and creating their culture and thus world views, since culture pre-determines world views, as Heidegger and others suggest. This conception of culture may be called cultural determinism.

\textsuperscript{16} See pp.34-35.

However, as Pierre Bourdieu points out, culture is not simply governed by codes, but is constantly intervened in by human practices, which initiate historical cultural changes.\textsuperscript{38} Culture and human beings interact, just as language does. Culture cannot be ‘superorganic’ since it is often affected by human conduct. Therefore, I claim that the deterministic views of culture stated above that deny any intervention of human beings are not appropriate, since they fail to describe the interaction of culture and human beings. I believe, for instance, that Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s notion of the ‘ambiguous human dialectic’ more accurately describes the nature of culture, since it enables us to see humans not merely as passive creatures imprisoned by their own creation but as agents who can create new variants on the continuing traditions. He states that ‘ambiguous human dialectic’ is

... first manifested by the social or cultural structures, the appearance of which it brings about and in which it imprisons itself. But its use-objects and its cultural objects would not be what they are if the activity which brings about their appearance did not also have as its meanings to reject them and to surpass them (Merleau-Ponty, 1963, p.176, emphasis added).

This perspective on culture is also supported by the Entropy Law. It is the second law of thermodynamics, but it has been applied to the analysis of human societies by many scholars.\textsuperscript{39} This law states that the universal tendency of all isolated systems is to pass from


more to less organized states and this process is called 'increase of entropy'. Culture is also a kind of system. Therefore, if it is completely closed and unrelated to the outer environment, only reproducing itself without any change, entropy continues to increase and the culture is eventually forced to inertia and regression. If on the other hand culture is being sustained, it means that a cultural process to control ever-increasing entropy is succeeding. Culture has to have a structure, the maintenance of which may require the keeping of the tradition. But merely keeping the tradition means the system is closed. Culture needs to break its own boundary which isolates itself from the outer environment so that it can interact with other sources of energy, thoughts, ideas, and so forth and add entirely new dimensions to the existing cultural structure. I believe if a cultural system is closed, human beings can and must make an effort to open it, even though little by little, and change the closed structure of society.

This perspective which includes initiatives of human beings in bringing about cultural changes, not denying the collective force of cultural codes, is crucial to understanding the dynamic nature of culture. The protection of the established codes is necessary to communicate among the members of culture. If the culture fails to reproduce such traditional common ground, it is doomed to extinction. However, this does not mean that the existing codes, including rather fixed codes such as language, govern all human conduct. Social factors which construct world views and human beings simply interact with each other. I believe that these two aspects of culture always have to be taken into consideration in analyzing the relations between culture and human beings. Robert H. Lowie states that "[c]ulture is a thing sui generis which can be explained only in terms of itself" (Lowie, 1917, p.66) and Bauman that “[t]he culture may exist only as an intellectual and practical critique
of the existing social reality” (Bauman, 1973, p.174). Each represents one of the two aspects of culture, but ignores the other aspect. I would like to suggest that we should treat culture as having both characteristics and analyze it from both perspectives.

Therefore, these two aspects of culture should also be reflected in the conception of world views, since world views are culture, or at least a part of it. World views may be determined, first, by language and the norm of culture, but this determination is not permanent in nature. We should be able to surpass the once learned world views, constructing our own world views, not restricted by the norm of culture.

(V) Implications for Education

The relationship between society and school has historically been vied in a way rather similar to that between culture, language and human beings. Especially during the 1970’s, it was popular to consider schools as a means of socialization and a “mirror” of the larger economic and political environment. Schools were seen as a passive recipient of social influences, having no capacity to bring about social change. Major proponents of this kind of view of school are Marxist and Neo-Marxist critics, who claim that societies are reproduced through schools and other cultural and religious institutions for the benefit of the ruling class. They conclude that the entire society needs to be changed to bring about a more democratic society and that schools cannot function as an agency of social change.

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40 See, for example, Walter Feinberg and Jonas Soltis, School and Society. (New York: Teachers College Press., 1992), for a detailed history of schools of thought about the relations between school and society.
41 Ibid., pp.56-62.
42 Ibid., p.62.
If human beings have, however, the ability to surpass the existing cultural and social structures, as Merleau-Ponty states, schools should be able to encourage such activities and not stay just as a "mirror". But on the other hand, a drastic change of the entire society does not seem to be the ideal way to aim for a better society. In our modern history, we have seen societies which underwent revolutionary changes guided by lofty ideals end up forming societies at least as repressive as before the revolution. Even if their intentions were noble, to go from one extreme to the other does not seem effective in bringing about a desirable and meaningful change for most members of the society. A philosophy of cherishing both traditional and new (popular) elements was proposed quite a long time ago by a Japanese haiku poet Matsuo Basho (1644-1694). He claims that two factors, fueki and ryuko, are essential for good haiku. Fueki, literally meaning "no change", is to cherish a traditional style or meaning which is not directly affected by recent movements and ryuko, literally meaning "popular", is to acquire a new trend which has become popular among other poets.\(^{43}\)

I claim that schools should aim for both the transmission of traditional knowledge based on existing social and cultural structures and the "rejection" and "surpassing" of such knowledge. If these two broad aims of schools are well balanced, schools can function to prevent the ever-increasing entropy of the society and to open it up to external environments.

Kenneth Burke stated the following with respect to society and schools:

Fluctuation between one extreme and the other seems to be the usual way in which society considers individual persons enacting roles in the social order (and, at times of

radical upset, certain of the categorical roles themselves undergo such fluctuation).

But might it not be possible that, were an educational system designed to that end, this very fluctuancy could be intelligently stabilized, through the interposing of method? (Burke, 1984, first edition 1935, p.294)

Burke seems to have believed that education can be used to "stabilize" such a human fluctuation. Though I do not claim the stabilization of the society is the main goal of schooling, the two aims of schools I suggested above may result in stabilizing fluctuation, if sought with a balance.

I am afraid we will never be able to measure such a balance in a completely reliable way, but it appears that schools have been traditionally good at the former task: transmitting the prevailing knowledge. For example, Paulo Freire’s notion of the “banking system of education”, which is to memorize existing knowledge and not question its validity, illustrates the traditional approach to public education.44 To foster reflective thinking in the mass education system is rather a recent proposal.45 More emphasis on the latter aim of the two, which is to reject and surpass existing knowledge, is required for balanced education. This emphasis will also enable us to moderate the existing dichotomy of Us versus Them.

In the following chapters, I would like to consider how we can “reject and surpass” the existing dichotomy of *Us versus Them* and at the same time promote better understanding of other world views, in both senses (a) and (b).
Chapter 4. Learning the Plural Nature of Society and Self

The moral struggle goes on within people and not only between them. As people's valuations are conflicting, behavior normally becomes a moral compromise. There are no homogeneous "attitudes" behind human behavior but a mesh of struggling inclinations, interests, and ideals, some held conscious and some suppressed for long intervals but all active in bending behavior in their direction.

-Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*

In previous chapters, we examined theories predicated on linguistic and cultural determinism. I have argued human beings can re-shape their world views and that schools should encourage students to "reject and surpass" the existing world view. In this chapter, I will discuss how schools can encourage students' creativity and critical ability so that they come to understand other world views in both senses (a) and (b). I will argue that the realization of the pluralistic nature of society and self is essential to reach a better understanding of other world views.

(I) The Conventional Method

The educational effort of promoting a better understanding of various world views observed in cultural differences has been traditionally made in the classroom of foreign languages and, more recently, under slogans such as multicultural education and intercultural education in many Western societies. In Japan, too, foreign language classes in public as well as private schools have long been devoted to promoting the understanding of different
cultures (though, unfortunately, the target cultures are usually restricted to other English-speaking industrialized Western nations). Further, the Ministry of Education has begun to emphasize the importance of respecting other cultures in the program called “Education for International Understanding”.

Although how these educational programs have been actually practiced in the classroom must vary from country to country and from school to school, the notion of culture and the basic philosophy of how to promote the “understanding” of different cultures are essentially the same: Culture is defined as “a single, unified set of patterns passed down from generation to generation which governs life within a community” (Quantz and O’connor, 1988, p.95) and students are expected to acquire knowledge of the differences of traditions, habits, customs, or world views of cultures other than their own.

For example, according to Gail N. L. Robinson, Nostrand stresses the importance of knowing the rules of behavior in different cultures and Seelye claims to understand the reasons for the way people act in different cultures. This conception of culture and method of understanding cultural differences is also embodied in the aims of multicultural education. According to Martin, the U. S. government defines multicultural education to include “knowledge of cultures and of subcultures, with a special emphasis on those minority groups which are pervasively represented in American communities” (Martin, 1993, p.14). Connors remarks that also in Canada, Aoki (1978) observed “the dominant approach within multicultural education is one in which knowledge about ethnic groups is the primary focus of educators” (Connors, 1984, p.105). These methods of promoting understanding of cultural

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differences can be called the cognitive approach, or banking-style approach, since they all intend “to understand” different cultures by “acquiring knowledge of” them.

The problems with the cognitive approach are exactly the same as the ones I raised regarding the postmodernists’ notion of “incommensurability” in Chapter 1. Since this approach emphasizes the importance of knowledge of different cultures, learners can increase their sense of alienation from other cultures. The concept of culture behind this approach also neglects the dynamic, complex and historical nature of culture that I mentioned earlier. In short, this approach does not seem to promote the understanding of different world views in either sense of (a) or (b). In the following sections, I would like to seek alternative methods of “understanding” cultural differences which could overcome these problems.

(II) An Alternative Method (a)

Although we saw earlier the rather pessimistic view of how humans have treated “differences”, there exist some records of people who have positively accepted human differences in the past. One of the few examples is introduced by Nora Groce, who studied how an unusually high rate of profound hereditary deafness in Martha’s Vineyard from the seventeenth through the early twentieth century led the community to treat deaf people quite differently from the rest of the United States. Groce states that deaf people were treated no

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48 See pp.6-11, Chapter 1.
49 See pp.10-11, Chapter 1.
50 See p.7, Chapter 1.
differently than people who were not hearing impaired, who communicated in sign language even when they were not talking with deaf people.51

Referring to Groce’s work, Martha Minow argues that what she calls “inclusive solutions” are the key to reducing the tension between “the normal” and “the different”. By “inclusive solutions” she means, for example, the approach of making all the students learn sign language if one of their classmates is hearing impaired and to have a sign language translator. By “resisting the temptation to treat the problem as belonging to the ‘different’ child” (Minow, 1990, p.84), she claims the “inclusive approach” to the treatment of a deaf student would succeed in producing a community which does not exclude those who are different. She states:

Involving classmates in the solution affords a different stance toward the dilemma of difference: it no longer makes the trait of hearing impairment signify stigma or isolation but responds to that trait as an issue for the entire community (Minow, 1990, p.84).

Minow’s suggestion is one of the most serious attempts to create a community which embraces differences. This method is insightful because it suggests that the majority of students who represent the norm of the class should make an effort to assimilate to the deaf community, which is often marginalized in the outside world. It is usually the case that marginalized people are expected to acquire the norm of the existing society which is primarily governed by groups of powerful people. By insisting on going against the current

of the existing power relation, Minow shows her method seriously considers creating ground for mutual understanding between two groups holding two different world views. Her method makes it possible to overcome the difference between the two groups by changing the norm of the existing community and establishing the completely new space where people belonging to both groups can communicate. In other words, this method requires all students to acquire deaf children’s world view.

As the author admits, the problem of this method arises when not all students are eager to learn how to sign. They could argue it does not make sense for all of them to learn sign language since even the rest of the students do not usually communicate with each other all the time among themselves, even if all of them already know how to communicate. They would see deaf students as receiving special treatment because of the difference they have. This perception would illustrate that a deaf student is still labeled as different from the norm. Further, this method simply cannot be applied to some other types of difference for practical reasons. For example, if there are some indigenous people in the class who have felt marginalized outside and inside the classroom due to cultural difference, but who can communicate perfectly well with the rest of the class in a common language, say, English, there is nothing this method can offer to change the norm of the classroom which makes the indigenous students feel marginalized. Moreover, the more groups of marginalized students there are in the class, the more the other students have to learn to deal with the differences, and the class could end up merely learning sign language, foreign languages, how to read Braille, and so forth. Considering all these possible problems, Minow’s method may be considered generally impractical, although quite useful in some specific areas.
(III) Seeking Similarities Across Differences

I have argued in section (I) of this chapter (p.48) that the cognitive approach can increase learners’ sense of alienation from other cultures due to its emphasis on the importance of the knowledge of different cultures. Therefore, I would like to suggest we should develop a method which encourages students to seek similarities across cultures. Actually, the importance of “seeking similarities across differences” has been articulated by many educational theorists, philosophers, and so forth. However, just how we can seek similarities across differences has not been well explored and developed.

In the Western philosophical tradition until the end of the Enlightenment, rationality was considered the commonality among all human beings. The intention of this movement may have been to make people nicer to each other, but it was not quite realized. In attempting to promote the acceptance of differences, it does not help simply to point out that different people are all rational. As Richard Rorty states, “[r]esentful young Nazi toughs were quite aware that many Jews were clever and learned, but this only added to the pleasure they took in beating them up” (Rorty, 1991, p.124). Moreover, this method can justify the inhuman treatment of “different” and “irrational” people from the perspective of the dominant Western norm. We must avoid the mistake of this philosophical tradition when we encourage students to seek similarities.

Having noted the direction which should be avoided, however, we find ourselves faced with a difficult task of seeking “similarities across differences”. The difficulty of promoting better understanding of other world views is that we cannot simply propose
resistance against generalization about other world views because some of them are different. In other words, the conventional method of learning about other cultures and world views discussed above is sometimes necessary for understanding. How then can we reduce the prejudiced perception if the teaching of differences can increase the dichotomy of Us versus Them? Is it a contradictory task and impossible to practice in educational settings?

I believe Yasuko Minoura's claim that personality is not entirely a cultural construction helps us to solve the dilemma discussed above. She claims, as I have previously noted, that "world view" is not purely a cultural or social construct but there is a personal dimension which can be distinguished among individuals. However, in the comparative study of cultures, the public dimension has been emphasized, and it has not even been discussed whether or not the public dimension always outweighs the personal one. In my view, the question of how personal as well as cultural and social experience affect the development of one's world view has to be studied before a valid comparison between diverse world views can be made. I suggest the above stated dilemma of promoting the understanding of different world views is largely due to the lack of recognition of the two dimensions in world view. By emphasizing individuation of people belonging to the same social group but providing necessary knowledge about the actual differences between groups, I believe "seeking similarities across differences" can be practiced in educational settings. I will suggest a method of "seeking similarities" in the following, but will not argue to discard the conventional method. More emphasis on "seeking similarities" may be required, since

the emphasis in the past has been on the differences. But I believe the two do not exclude each other and can be combined to promote understanding of different cultures and world views.

(IV) An Alternative Method (b)-1 - Plural Society

I believe one possible way to encourage students to seek similarities among different world views, thus avoiding the almost exclusive emphasis on universal rationality among human beings seen in Western philosophers from Plato through Kant, is to let students realize that every society is *plural*, comprised of many variations. It is to show students the *pluralistic* nature of all human societies. Multicultural education is also perceived as being based on the notion of pluralism, but as we have already seen, it largely emphasizes differences between cultures or social groups. Moreover, since multicultural education emphasizes present ethnic and cultural diversities, the practice of it is usually restricted to industrialized Western countries such as the United States, Canada, Australia, and United Kingdom.

By pluralism, I mean the acceptance that every society is pluralistic, as Richard Pring and Ward H. Goodenough point out.54 This may sound a very simple suggestion, but it can lead to various significant consequences. First, by encouraging students to realize the pluralistic nature of society, students can avoid simple and generalized conceptions of different cultures. Even if students have observed that there are certain tendencies among

people from different cultures, they can avoid over-generalization of different cultures. In other words, they can avoid hasty generalization from "familiar, common, and salient examples" about different cultures. I believe this conception of society would make us more sensitive to details of different societies, even when we lack extensive knowledge of them, and enable us to develop more inclusive world views.

Robin Richardson cites an example of a journalist who pointed out that not all Iranians are "students, mullahs or heroin smugglers" (Richardson, 1993, p. 25) but rather they vary to a great extent, including some atheists, contrary to the generalized stereotypical perception of most of the Western media. This journalist's observation may have been possible because of his abundant knowledge of Iranians, gained from both direct contacts with Iranians and second-hand sources. However, if we are accustomed to expect that variations in people exist in any society, only a little knowledge would enable us to reach the level of a well-informed journalist's understanding about different cultures.

Second, this notion of pluralism also articulates the plural nature of our own society, or ones with which are familiar, which the conventional cognitive method does not emphasize. This is useful in understanding different cultures, because it enables us to seek commonalties across cultural diversities. If people are aware that they do not represent their entire culture and that variations exist in their culture, it will help them imagine the variations in different cultures and the similarities between cultures. If we are aware of the pluralistic nature of both our culture and unfamiliar ones, then it is possible for us to imagine the similarities between two completely different societies. For example, although we accept the observation that Mexican and Japanese cultures provide different cultural codes to their

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55 See p.27, Chapter 2.
people, we may be able to imagine that indigenous people in Mexico and Japan have many similarities in spite of cultural differences between them.

Third, notions and movements aimed at transformation of certain parts of a society can be justified and promoted. Let me explain this statement using an example. According to some feminists and anthropologists, women’s oppression is almost a universal phenomenon. But since the modern feminist movement started in Western societies, many non-Western societies can be considered more oppressive to women than Western ones. One of the difficulties in achieving women’s equal rights in non-Western countries is people’s hesitation to accept the feminist movement for fear of losing their cultural heritage.

According to Angela Miles, in Africa, feminism “is branded as an imperialist, cultural-domination ploy and therefore anti-African” (Miles, 1996, p.87). South Asian feminists are also called Western and bourgeois. Feminists in non-Western societies are constantly accused of not respecting their own cultural tradition and being traitors to their cultural heritage.

The criticism of non-Western feminists shows the absence of understanding of their own culture as composed of many elements. Although it is clear that non-Western feminists are not trying to promote the total “Westernization” of their cultures but rather to reject only one element of them, some people still fear that their entire cultural heritage will be lost. I am aware that their fear may never vanish even if they understand that these feminists are criticizing only one aspect of their own culture, because fear is often difficult to eradicate by

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56 For example, Albert P. Blaustein states as follows: “Of all deprived groups in the world today, women seem to have suffered the most throughout history. Racial, ethnic, and religious discrimination has produced numerous victims, but women, members of a majority group, have suffered even more than members of these minority groups” (Blaustein, 1989, ix).
logic. However, I insist it is still worthwhile to argue against them since fear is often based in part on false assumptions derived from limited knowledge.

Fourth, this pluralism can avoid the rejection of the entire society on the basis of "differences" from the familiar one. I used to have a friend who justified his hatred of the Arabic culture on the basis of its sexist aspect. I argued against him stating that I could understand disliking the sexist part of the culture, if it does exist (I had little knowledge of Arabic culture at that time), but that he was being irrational in rejecting the whole culture because of that part. Since he was happy to be irrational on this matter, I could never change his opinion. However, if he could have agreed that cultures are in essence plural, I might have had a better chance to at least change his attitude toward Arabic culture.

(V) An Alternative Method (b)-2 - Plural Selves

In the context of contemporary multicultural education, pluralism has been mentioned only to describe ethnic and cultural diversities. But pluralism is also applicable to explain human beings themselves. According to Don S. Browning, William James identifies three constituents of the self - the material self, the social self, and the spiritual self. The social self has more sub-divisions since "a man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him and carry on the image of him in their mind" (Browning, 1980, p.91). These divisions can co-exist harmoniously, but can be "discordant" with one another.

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59 Ibid., p.92.
example, we all must have faced the situation in which our values conflict with each other and we have to prioritize them. James explains that this reflects a conflict between values held by the material, social, and spiritual selves.\(^6\)

This conception of pluralism is also congruent with Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of “heteroglossia”. This term implies that “culture and society, as well as individuals, are constituted by multiple voices” (Quantz and O’Connor, 1988, p.95). According to Richard A. Quantz and Terence W. O’Connor, Bakhtin emphasizes the social aspects of language and dialogue, arguing that individuals construct private thoughts called “inward speech”. I believe this speech is not articulated in the public dialogue for various reasons. It may not fit the norm of culture, it may be dangerous to articulate it in public, the individual may be shy, and so on. I also believe this “inward speech” itself is “heteroglossia” and thoughts and values among “inward speech” may contradict each other. Because of this “multivoicedness”, individuals as well as culture must be considered to hold more than one voice.

This way of viewing self leads to two important consequences. First, we will become more careful when judging people. People are usually judged by their action and not by the process leading to the action. However, when we realize our plural selves, how someone prioritized their values becomes crucial in judging people’s action. I clearly remember watching a nun talking on TV, when I was in junior high-school. She was talking about how she sympathized with criminals because, in most cases, to commit a crime was their last choice. If they had seen other possibilities, they would have chosen not to commit a crime. But they didn’t, so they were forced to commit a crime. If somebody else, who was

\(^6\) Ibid., p.96
considered a "good" person, had been put in exactly the same situation, they too might have committed a crime. This nun seemed to suggest that the wall dividing criminals and non-criminals is not as solid as people usually imagine it to be, at least with certain cases. She must have been aware that most people are not absolutely "evil" or "good", but somewhere in between, and that the level of evil or goodness changes as we make judgments according to values which happen to outweigh other values, depending on the ever-changing circumstances. In other words, she was well aware of the plurality of selves. I believe the realization of plurality would lead to a better understanding of people who act differently from ourselves by drawing our attention to the process leading to the acts.

Second, it makes it easier to see similarities even if there exist major differences between people. The previous example of the nun’s comments about criminals also illustrates this point. Because she was aware of the nature of plural selves, she was able to treat criminals not as people completely different from us. She did not completely differentiate criminals from herself in her mind because she was able to see similarities between them and her. Cultural barriers are often similar to this boundary dividing criminals and non-criminals. In both cases, we tend to consider that if people have set such boundaries, the people labeled according to the boundaries are completely different. However, if we are aware that such labels usually portray only one of many selves, it will become possible to find a self which is familiar to us in many ways. It would be unrealistic to state that we can find a similar self in every person from every different culture, since we would not expect this to happen even in the same culture. But we should be able to find at least similar functions of some selves. Thus, "understanding other world views" in sense (a) becomes possible.
For example, as a Japanese growing up in Japan, I acquired the generalized knowledge that Korean and Japanese cultures are different. But when I actually made friends with a Korean international student in Japan, most of the time, I believe, we did not feel the cultural difference that was supposed to exist between us. Rather, we found so many similarities between us, probably because we had similar interests arising, for example, from belonging to the same seminar and being of the same gender. But if I had firmly believed in the existence of cultural differences, I might have failed to see similarities between us, even if they were there.

(VI) Similarities across Differences - The Question of Discontinuity

One may argue that this kind of similarity can exist only among cultures which have some similarity in historical background, as, for example, in the case of the Korean and Japanese cultures. These cultures and world views are similar because both had a long historical period when they were strongly influenced by China, especially by the doctrines of Confucius. It might be thought that if there existed a clearer discontinuity between two cultures, similarities would never be discovered.

I can think of two examples that might be used to illustrate such a clear discontinuity between cultures: Western and Eastern cultures and so-called "primitive" and modern cultures. However, even these two cases have recently come to be considered as being on a continuum. According to James Moffett, historian Martin Bernal argues that "the Greek language and culture derived from Egypt and Phoenicia, as stated by the Greeks themselves, but that European scholars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, mostly British and
German, discredited these derivations from Africa and the Orient for ethnocentric and racist reasons, establishing instead an ‘Aryan Model’ that kept the founts of ‘Western’ civilization in Europe ...” (Moffett, 1992, p.59). If ancient Greek culture, which is the basis of Western culture, had roots in Africa and the Orient, it seems inappropriate to consider that Western and Eastern cultures are basically different. Rather than emphasizing differences between the two cultures, seeking this kind of connection between them is necessary to understand the dynamic interactions among human cultures.

Claude Levi-Strauss also emphasizes the inter-connections among human societies:

Men have doubtless developed differentiated cultures as a result of geographical distance, the special features of their environment, or their ignorance of the rest of mankind; ... however ... [h]uman societies are never alone.... We should not, therefore, be tempted to a piece-meal study of the diversity of human cultures, for that diversity depends less on the isolation of the various groups than on the relations between them (Levi-Strauss, 1952, pp.11-12).

If we agree that interconnections among cultures exist, it would be inappropriate to make an exception in the case of “primitive” and non-primitive cultures. They have already encountered each other, which is why both know about the existence of the other. Further, it is not difficult to imagine that the process of growing up in a “primitive” cultures is not totally different from that in a “non-primitive” one. Children would play, be socialized, go through initiations, then become adults. The forms of each process may vary, but this whole process exists in every culture.
As Nicholas C. Burbules and Suzanne Rice point out, *difference* implies *sameness*.61 They argue that no matter how different the two opposing things, phenomena, or people, the difference becomes a topic because they are compared on the basis of certain similar structures, elements, and so forth. For example, when I first read descriptions of differences between Western and Japanese gardens written by a Japanese and saw the example pictures, my eyes perceived the differences described there, but my mind did not actually feel that the two types of garden were as different as the author insisted. To me, they were just gardens. Japanese gardens embrace more naturalness, the author stated, but I thought the picture of the Japanese garden looked no less man-made than the Western one.

Often sameness or similarity across differences is overlooked because it is considered to be obvious and unimportant. It is thought to be more important to be able to see and explain differences and sameness is not mentioned or explained. The celebration of differences, claimed by postmodernists and promoted by multiculturalism, has denied our search for similarities across differences. However, in order to understand differences, the sameness also has to be understood. The plurality of society and self shows that similarities exist, and to raise students' awareness of such pluralities helps to identify similarities across differences with ease. I believe the conception of pluralism described in this chapter enables understanding across cultural and other sorts of boundaries.

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Chapter 5. Critical Literacy, Emotions, and Dialogue

In the previous chapter, I argued that to become aware of the plurality of society and self is the key to reaching a better understanding of different cultures and world views. I showed that the recognition of plurality itself enables us to see similarities across different world views. In this chapter, I will discuss the importance of critical literacy, emotions, and dialogue in avoiding the mere “celebration of diversity” in seeking similarities across differences criticized by critical educational theorists.

(I) Liberal Multiculturalism versus Critical Multiculturalism

As Shane P. Martin notes in analyzing the concept of multicultural education, educational theorists have not yet come to a consensus about the definition of the concept. What it actually means varies depending on the author. However, according to Martin, recent trends show that there exist basically two opinions on this issue. He thinks that the difference between the two depends on whether the concept of cultural pluralism is still conceived as valid or not. One considers the aim of multicultural education as the implementation of cultural pluralism in an educational setting. The proponents of this position include Suzuki (1984), Cole (1984), and McCormick (1984). I call this trend liberal multiculturalism. The other views the concept of cultural pluralism critically and considers that the understanding of more specific concepts such as racism, sexism, prejudice, discrimination, oppression, and so forth should be articulated in multicultural education. This position is proposed by
According to Appleton, the goals of cultural pluralism are:

1) cultural diversity, 2) membership in a common politic and some minimal interaction between and among groups, 3) relative parity and equality between and among the groups, and 4) a perceived value for the continuance of diversity (Appleton, 1983, p.23).

As Martin argues, if critical multiculturalism emerged because one of the goals (the third one, above) of cultural pluralism has not been reached by the advocates of liberal multiculturalism, the factors behind this failure must be examined. I did not say that equality between and among the groups holding different world views could be attained by the implementation of my version of pluralism. Equality has many dimensions: equality of economic status, political rights, civil rights, welfare, well-being, and so forth. It would be inappropriate to expect that any educational method could bring about all sorts of equality. However, I agree that it is desirable for every equality to be realized and it is worthwhile to consider how to effectively tackle these issues in educational settings.

The theorists of critical multiculturalism criticize cultural pluralism as merely accepting plurality or diversity and avoiding serious discussions about the inequality and power relations of marginalized social groups. This tendency toward the mere celebration of

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plurality or diversity is strongly supported by many postmodernists. For example, Zygmunt Bauman writes: "[w]hat the inherently polysemous and controversial idea of postmodernity most often refers to ... is first and foremost an acceptance of the ineradicable plurality of the world" (Bauman, 1988-1989, p.23). Jean-Francois Lyotard's description of postmodernism also emphasizes the celebration of plurality.61

Critical multiculturalists criticize this postmodernist tendency, stating the abandonment of universality would not automatically create a harmonious state of plurality. Peter McLaren states as follows:

... Lyotard's celebration of multiplicity and plurality and his call for a radical tolerance of incommensurability can fall prey to the very liberal pluralist stance he is criticizing. For instance, an uncritical celebration of multiplicity and heterogeneity can be used in the politics of multiculturalism as an alibi to exoticize 'otherness' in a nativistic retreat that locates difference in a primeval past of cultural authenticity. We see a tendency in Lyotard to romanticize the pagan theater of the subversive and the unknown in which the elimination of grand narratives would lead to the dissolution of power and confrontation (McLaren, 1995, pp.242-243).

I argued in the last chapter the importance of an awareness of plurality of culture and self. I do not think this awareness would single-handedly solve the problem of inequality associated with different world views. However, at the same time, if students fail to perceive

the existing power relations behind diverse world views, they have failed to become aware of
the plurality of culture and self. They would have a different kind of awareness from the one
I believe should be realized. I insist that students’ consciousness must be raised about both
the plurality of culture and self and the socio-cultural realities behind the plurality.

(II) Critical Literacy

Radical educational theorists suggest the importance of the development of a critical
literacy for the promotion of students’ ability to understand the power relations exhibited in
their cultures and the world. The framework of a critical literacy is taken from the theories of
Gramsci, Mikhail Bakhtin, Paulo Freire, and others, and defined by Ira Shor as follows:

[a]nalytic habits of thinking, reading, writing, speaking or discussing which go
ten beneath surface impressions, traditional myths, mere opinions, and routine clichés;
understanding the social contexts and consequences of any subject matter;
discovering the deep meaning of any event, text, technique, process, object,
statement, image or situation; applying that meaning to your own context (Shor, 1993, p.31).

What needs to be stressed is that critical literacy does not assume the political
neutrality of language. As Henry A. Giroux states, language and power are seen as
"inextricably intertwined" (Giroux, 1988, p.65) and language is situated in a context of social
and political conflicts. By accepting the social aspect of language which dominates human agency and constitutes the hegemony, but also avoiding the deterministic view of language, a critical literacy sees that it is possible to “decode and demythologize both their own cultural traditions as well as those that structure and legitimate the wider social order” (Giroux, 1988, p.64).

The practice of critical literacy can be summarized as asking critical questions which require the understanding of greater social and political contexts. Referring to Alma Ada’s framework of critical literacy, Jim Cummins writes that questions such as “Is this perspective valid? Always? When? Do these actions benefit everyone alike? Are there any alternatives to this situation?” (Cummins, p.18 of Chapter 6, 1996) are asked of students. These questions require not only the general reading and comprehension of texts but also the ability to analyze them examining the sociopolitical realities in which the texts are written. Cummins explains that as students “gain the power to think through issues that affect their lives, they simultaneously gain the power to resist external definitions of who they are and to deconstruct the sociopolitical purposes of such external definitions” (Cummins, p.18 of Chapter 6, 1996).

These questions to encourage students to examine the validity of perspectives presented by the author of the text and to seek alternative perspectives outside the text can also be a practical way to become conscious of the plurality of culture and self, since the sociopolitical realities always reveal their plurality. If the text is read merely as the representative voice of certain cultures, the consciousness of the plurality will never be

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raised. However, with the practice of critical questions, the notion of pluralism I suggested in the last chapter will be successfully realized. Therefore, I would like to emphasize the importance of critical inquiries within the framework of critical literacy to raise students’ consciousness of plurality about culture and society.

(III) Emotions

The role of emotion in educational settings is not always emphasized by educational theorists.65 However, some of them have begun to question the validity of the dualistic approach of education which recognizes the importance of reason over emotions. They suggest a holistic approach, which cares for the whole person, since they see the close interrelation between cognitive and emotional development.66 As Clive Beck and Clare Madott Kosnik state, “Cognitive development requires social understanding; social maturity relies on emotional depth and openness; physical health is dependent on emotional health; and so on” (Beck and Kosnik, 1995, p.2).

I believe emotion is an essential concept for the understanding of different world views. If a person is emotionless and trained to accept only “logical” people and phenomena, s/he would not be able to accept the complex and almost contradictory reality of people and culture. This person would not understand the plurality of people and culture and would attempt to generalize it in a “logical” but superficial way. Moreover, as Gail L. N. Robinson argues, “[e]motion plays a critical role in cultural transmission” (Robinson, 1990, p.27) and it


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is reported that successful inter-cultural understanding at least partially depends on emotions. According to Robinson, Burner and associates remark that "[b]y concentrating on the information giving aspects of films on the Eskimos, prejudice increased, but by encouraging children to try to understand the feelings, they decreased the danger of prejudice" (Robinson, 1990, p.28).

In other words, emotions open another way to encourage students to seek similarities across differences. If students are encouraged to understand the feelings of people holding different world views, no matter how different they appear for certain students, they can find similar feelings within themselves, especially when the theme represented in a text can be associated with fundamental emotions such as love, justice, sympathy and so forth. The search for similarities across differences can sometimes be very superficial. But if students can recall personal experiences which gave rise to feelings similar to those of people holding different world views, this consciousness can be a strong base to understand differences, reducing or eliminating prejudice. We know that people with similar experiences join together and share their experiences, which strengthens the bond of a group. For instance, there are many groups of people who have lost a close family member through cancer or an accident. They form groups even if they do not agree about some political or moral issues because they think how other members of the group felt about certain experiences which were fundamental to their lives. Sometimes they have few similarities apart from the feeling they experienced, but they still see it is worth having the connection. This example illustrates the strong and powerful role emotions play in our relations with other people.

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66 See, for example, John P. Miller, *The Holistic Curriculum* Revised and expanded ed. (Toronto; OISE Press, 1996).
In the essay “On Human Rights”, Richard Rorty also stresses the importance of sentiments over rationality for the establishment of a “human rights culture”, which does not tolerate discrimination based on difference. He points out our tendency to see emotions such as sentiments as too weak a ground for certain opinions and to seek something much stronger, for example, Kantian ideas of “unconditional moral obligation”, for the reduction of human conflicts. However, emotions are often in fact much stronger than a sense of obligation and, as I argued above, emotions have a critical role to play in making a bridge across differences. More efforts to articulate the role of emotions in educational settings are required to resist the overall tendency to perceive rationality as something superior to and stronger than emotions.

(IV) Genuine Dialogue and Teachers’ Authority

For the reduction of negative perceptions about different cultures and world views and the promotion of better understanding of them, the role of teachers cannot be a conventional, authoritarian one. The teacher-student relationship has to be based on mutual respect and trust. The concept of dialogue, articulated by critical educational theorists including Paulo Freire, Henry A. Giroux and Peter McLaren and also by Jurgen Habermas, is currently the most recognized method of learning that challenges authoritarianism.

However, for Freire, authoritarianism can be avoided without discarding the authority of teachers. He states as follows:
What one cannot do in trying to divest of authoritarianism is relinquish one’s authority as teacher. In fact, this does not really happen. (Freire and Macedo, 1995, p.378)

He claims that dialogue can happen if the teacher’s offering is not a “paternal” one and s/he is committed to help learners develop the critical ability to understand the world.67

On the other hand, Clive Beck stresses the equal relations of teacher and student when learning through dialogue. He considers that “a hint of” superiority and authority of teachers exhibited in Freire’s writings hinders the occurrence of “genuine” dialogue and may fail to respect students’ voices.68

My position is closer to Beck than Freire, since in the context of teaching about pluralism using critical literacy and emotions, I do not believe the teacher’s knowledge can be deeper and broader than students’. It is quite likely that students come from, for example, families of ethnic minorities and a teacher from the middle-class, dominant ethnic group. How can the teacher be more of a specialist in understanding other world views and the power relations behind them? Even if a teacher comes from a marginalized social group, s/he may not be familiar with certain other cultural groups. There are so many types of differences that it would be almost impossible to become an expert about the plural reality. Teachers may be able to accumulate knowledge about the nature of plural society and self by having classes on this matter again and again, but the accumulation of knowledge is the very

practice Paulo Freire and other critical educational theorists condemn. They propose a dialogical method of teaching instead of a banking style of education, since "the free and uncoerced exchange of ideas and experiences" (Darder, 1991, p.95) between a teacher and students is required to critically reflect on their reality and take part in the "historical process in becoming human beings" (Shor & Freire, 1987, p.99). It makes much more sense for them to insist that a teacher and students learn together, as Beck argues, when they have dialogue.69

Even if a teacher is so familiar with students' reality that s/he may appear to be entitled to have a little authority and superiority over students, I still maintain the necessity of genuine equality and trust in the teacher-student relationship for the following two reasons. First, since there exists a directive nature in the teacher's role in virtually every educational institution, to grant even a little authority can escalate the teachers' power over students and the teachers can become manipulative and directive. Historically and realistically, teachers have been on the side of the establishment. Freire argues that liberating teachers never manipulate students since manipulation occurs only when teachers accept the status quo and established myths about reality. According to him, the difference between liberating teachers and domesticating teachers is that while the former "unveil the actual manipulation and myths in society", the latter accept the myths.70 However, as I argued above, since teachers cannot be an expert on every aspect of "actual" manipulation, the sense of authority the teachers have can result in showing little respect for or even ignoring the students' voices. If liberating teachers are committed to be on students' side all the time, these teachers have to always learn from students. In order to learn from students, even a little authority in teachers

69 Ibid., p.272.
70 Freire and Shor, A Pedagogy for Liberation, p.172
could limit the construction of a dialogical relationship between teachers and students based on mutual respect and trust. I believe even if teachers are determined to “unveil the actual manipulation and myths in society”, if they consider themselves an authority in this matter it is possible that they believe they are unveiling the “actual manipulation” even if they actually are accepting the existing myths. In order to have openness to every student’s experience and critically analyze socio-cultural reality, it is necessary to resist every aspect of teachers’ authority.

Second, if teachers fail to establish an equal relationship with students and ignore students’ voices in a directive manner, even if they are aware of the myths, teachers would not be able to lead the students to realize the myths. Henry A. Giroux gives an example of what happens when a teacher challenges in a directive manner a student who considers a myth to be reality. He claims the middle-class teacher would not be able to change the sexist attitudes exhibited by male students in her classroom by merely presenting feminist articles, films and other materials because this approach “disallows the possibility for the students to ‘tell’ their own stories and to present and then question the experiences they bring into play” (Giroux, 1988, p.71). He continues as follows:

... by denying students the opportunity to question and investigate the ideology of sexism as a problematic experience, the teacher not merely undermines the voices of these students, she displays what in their eyes is just another example of institutional/middle-class authority telling them what to think ... The teacher’s best intentions are thereby subverted by employing a pedagogy that is part of the very dominant logic she seeks to challenge and dismantle (Giroux, 1988, p.71).
I am aware a dialogical engagement would not always assure the successful result of "illuminating reality" for every student. However, I believe genuine dialogue respecting students' voices has a better possibility of leading students critically to examine their acquired myths than merely telling them the correct, uncovered reality the teachers know.

Elizabeth Ellsworth argues that genuine dialogue which is based on "trust, sharing, and commitment to improving the quality of human life" (Giroux, 1988, p. 72) is impossible because "at this historical moment, power relations between raced, classed, and gendered students and teachers are unjust" (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 316). She claims, for example, that the unequal power relation among different social groups results in over-representation of certain groups with regard to time to speak in the class. Although I agree with Ellsworth that there exist unjust power relations between various social groups, I do not think this reality makes it impossible to engage in genuine dialogue. Rather, I believe teachers can play a role as a professional to prevent such inequality from being exhibited in the class. Dialogue requires teachers to resist every aspect of the authoritarian nature of education, but they certainly have a professional role in educational settings. It is an essential professional role for teachers to take the initiative in establishing a safe classroom environment, specifically because such social inequalities exist in greater societies. By resisting authority usually taken for granted but taking the initiative to intervene against the unequal power relations which reflect the reality, I believe genuine dialogue will become possible.

Dialogue is especially useful in classrooms where students from many cultural and ethnic backgrounds are present. But even if the classroom is rather homogeneous, dialogue can be effective in promoting understanding of different cultures and world views. In today's
world where goods, services, and people literally travel around the world, inter-cultural contacts are happening everywhere. If students have traveled to areas where they think they have contacted other world views, not necessarily foreign countries, they can reflect on and share their experiences. If students have not had much experience themselves, the class can have other people - parents, other teachers, other community members - share their experiences about encountering other cultures and world views.

Further, we can also make use of the electronic media surrounding us. The news on TV provides a considerable amount of information about other countries, not only on economic and political issues but also on entertainment and cultural matters. Using the Internet, students can actually talk to students in other countries and exchange opinions. The Web pages on other cultures are also useful resources. By not taking the stories and information gathered simply as unproblematic knowledge but being encouraged to critically analyze them, students are able to recognize the plurality and social realities associated with the stories. Teachers can help this process by engaging in dialogue with students about the stories. Therefore, I conclude that the learning about other cultures and world views through dialogue is valid regardless of the cultural and ethnic diversity exhibited in the classroom and is effective in reducing negative perceptions of differences.


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