Overlapping Territories
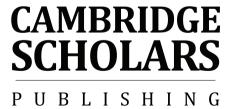
Overlapping Territories:
Asian Voices on Culture and Civilization

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P U B L I S H I N G

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

PREFACE

BAMBANG SUGIHARTO

The post-Cold War situation has given way to a new and unprecedented constellation of global interrelations. The power constellation today is not only multi-polar, but rather, 'chaotic': its configuration keeps shifting and it is determined not simply by new emerging super powers (such as China, India or Brazil), but also by any seemingly small events (such as Wikileaks or the bankruptcy of the Lehman Brothers) in non-linear modes of interaction. The interdependency between communities through networks of communication somehow makes significant changes more and more unpredictable.

Such interdependent, yet chaotic, world order, in turn, raises new philosophical questions. Identity, culture and civilization cannot be understood anymore simply in terms of traditional categories. Indeed, these categories are called into question through mutual interrogation and mutual enlargement of horizons among different communities in the world. And this inevitably entails hybridization and pluralization, even within every traditional system, be it a cultural, social, philosophical or religious system.

The Asian voices included in this book speak of recognition of and respect for the 'otherness', the other outside as well as inside of traditions. The writers mostly see globalization as well as their own cultural positions through dialogical imagination in which a Western philosophical framework is deployed to find out their Asian positions, and the reverse, the Asian reality is used to problematize the Western framework. Thereby this book attempts to shed light on the question of how we are to understand anew culture and civilization in today's cosmopolitan world.

INTRODUCTION

ROY VORAGEN

Cultures and civilizations are as old as human history, however, in the last two decades or so culture and civilization as concepts have been extensively discussed and questioned in all corners of the (academic) world. Politicians, journalists, political scientists, sociologists, anthropologists, economists, philosophers and laypeople have crowded this Babylon with virulent energy.

The fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989 aroused enormous euphoria and not only in that particular part of Europe. In this post-Cold War excitement some thought that the West provides the only model for modernization. Other parts of the world should follow the social, political and economic models that have brought prosperity to the West. And these models focus on free market capitalism; science, technology and innovation; meritocracy through the market based on equal opportunities and access to education; pragmatism in politics; democracy and peaceful negotiations; and the rule of law. Pragmatism in politics supposedly leads to an absence of ideological conflict and Francis Fukuyama concluded that history came to an end (history is then defined as ideological conflict in a Hegelian fashion).[1] This overlooks the diversity all around our world and it is clear by now that not all countries are 'progressing' towards Western liberal democracy nor are they willing to do so in the future. (The term 'progress' implies that people should only be satisfied if they live in a country like Western countries).

The end of the Cold War, however, posed many new questions. A bi-polar world was rather easy to understand after more than forty years of phony war between the United States and the former Soviet Union. Samuel Huntington designed a concept for the multi-polar world order: the

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[1] Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: The Free Press, 1992). This could be regarded as a form of *politicide*, an extreme form of depoliticization as a crisis *of* and not *in* democracy when governance is only seen in terms of policy-making.

clash of civilizations. "People use politics not just to advance their interests but also to define their identity."[2] And international politics, according to Huntington, is characterized by identity politics in the era after the Cold War. To define the West as Christian, though, overlooks the fact that the United States is very different from the European Union countries (almost five hundred million citizens) due to the secularization in many European countries. Moreover, it overlooks the fact that while many Asian countries are predominantly Buddhist, Hindu, Confucian or Islamic, there are also many Christians living in these countries. (It also remains a question, for example, how significant an impact Confucianism has on communist China or whether only lip service is paid to its tenets).

The terrorist attacks on New York and Washington of September 11, 2001 ended the joyous nineties. Some saw a new bi-polar world emerging: Islam versus the rest, particularly the West. To cope with the anxiety induced by terror, non-Muslims started to read the Quran. However, civilizations cannot clash, people can, and a person is never only a Muslim, nor is one Muslim a representation of Islam as such. By seeing an individual person merely through the perspective of community, culture, religion or civilization, is to reduce that person to a single dimension. Well before civilizations can clash, we have already limited the scope to a single perspective. Then we fall into the trap of stereotypes – sometimes with good intention. That all Muslims are (potential) terrorists is as much nonsense as claiming that all Muslims are by definition peace lovers. Amartya Sen says that we have "to distinguish between (1) the various affiliations and loyalties a person who happens to be a Muslim has, and (2) his or her Islamic identity in particular."[3] We will miss the whole picture if we only focus on the second. To read war through the prism of religion is to overlook other reasons and causes. For example, the Middle East cannot be understood if we only look at Islam and Judaism; the conflict also concerns access to land and drinkable water as after all, most of this area is desert.

The cheerful nineties became even farther away when the bank Lehman Brothers went bankrupt on September 15, 2008 and this bankruptcy

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[2] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon&Schuster, 1996), 21. Also Samuel P. Huntington, *Who are We? America's Great Debate* (London: Free Press, 2004). In this book Huntington claims that Americans should refocus on the WASP culture, tradition, religion, language and values again as a response to mass immigration from Latinos.

[3] Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence, The Illusion of Destiny* (Princeton: W.W. Norton, 2007), 61.

ignited a global financial crisis. This financial crisis is also a political crisis, because global market capitalism could only be established through political decisions. Now questions are raised whether the United States can still remain the sole super power in the world of emerging powers. This has less to do with the power of the United States declining and more to do with other powers emerging, for example: China (a country that lent huge amounts to the United States, partly to pay for the war-on-terror), India and Brazil have to be reckoned with today and in the future.[4] These historical changes in (global) society, politics and the economy raise many new philosophical questions. How to understand identity, culture and civilization in our globalized world (especially from an Asian perspective)?

Overlapping territories in a globalized world

Globalization is not something abstract, it is concrete and its consequences are real. Globalization is not out there, it is here and now. Globalization is not metaphysical; it is political (because its multiple causes and consequences are real and public). While the consequences of globalization are obviously uneven, that, on the other hand, does not mean that people have merely to accept these consequences passively without any ability to alter, appropriate and acculturate. Fatalism, after all, is the end of the power to change.

There is nothing teleological about globalization. History has no purpose and the future is not inevitable. We are not progressing toward a situation where we will all be members of a single civilization, where all peoples of the world will embrace liberal-secular democracy and free market capitalism as the end of ideological conflict. Not only is globalization not a given, its consequences are unequal and not benign (and can be bellicose).

Modernity in the era of globalization is not linear and not singular. The Enlightenment hope for progress and historical inevitability is utopian. Moreover, the Enlightenment dream of a universal civilization is Eurocentric.[5] A growing interconnectedness and interdependence does not necessarily lead to peaceful cooperation; globalization does not mean an end to all international political conflicts, interstate war remains an

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[4] Fareed Zakaria, *The Post American World* (Princeton: W. W. Norton, 2008); and Kishore Mahbubani, *The New Asian Hemisphere, The Irresistible Shift of Global Power to the East* (New York: Public Affairs, 2008).

[5] John Gray, *False Dawn, The Delusions of Global Capitalism* (London: Granta, 2002), 170.

imminent possibility. While nation-states might seem to have lost steam, it does not mean an end to state sovereignty. Globalization has impacts on everyone, but not equally. Globalization, writes Ulrich Beck, are "the *processes* through which sovereign national states are crisscrossed and undermined by transnational actors with varying prospects of power, orientation, identities and networks."[6] Globalization, Anthony Giddens writes, is a "[g]rowing interdependence between different peoples, regions and countries in the world as social and economic relationships come to stretch worldwide."[7] Giddens sees modernity spreading across the globe as globalization progresses.[8] Modernization in the era of globalization is not the same as Westernization or homogenization (hybridization, though, is the keyword). Modernization, on the other hand, becomes pluralized;[9] globalization thus means a move away from universalism.[10]

Space and time are being compressed; we can go across space within no time. Activities – from war to entertainment – can occur or be experienced simultaneously around the globe. This does not mean that space is no longer of significance, how could we be and act without it? Space is the precondition to all existence, action and interaction. We, to state the obvious, live spatially. Territory is still important and we can see a dialectic between the local and the global, i.e. glocalization. Globalization is thus still spatially constituted, however, the meaning of distance and proximity changes in a world where people, values, goods and money are mobile. I can be socially near to someone, but that person can be spatially distant (or the other way around).

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[6] Ulrich Beck, *What is Globalization?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), 11.

[7] Anthony Giddens, *Sociology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), 690.

[8] Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 63, 177. Giddens defines modernity as "to refer to institutions and modes of behavior established first of all in post-feudal Europe, but which in the twentieth century increasingly have become world-historical in impact. 'Modernity' can be understood as roughly equivalent to 'the industrialized world', so long as it be recognized that industrialism is not its only institutional dimension. […] A second dimension is capitalism […]. Each of these can be distinguished analytically from the institutions of surveillance […]. This dimension can in turn be separated from control of the means of violence in the context of the 'industrialization of war'." Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 14-5.

[9] Ulrich Beck, *World Risk Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), 3.

[10] Göran Therborn, "At the birth of second century sociology: times of reflexivity, spaces of identity, and nodes of knowledge," *British Journal of Sociology* 51, no.1 (January/March 2000), 14, 19.

Globalization is not a one-way process people have to undergo passively, but, of course, not everyone has the same power to alter, appropriate and acculturate these changes. We are connected in many ways, and economics is only one way. Globalization should *not* be seen as something 'out there', it is *also* an 'in here' matter. Globalization "affects, or rather is dialectically related to, even the most intimate aspects of our lives."[11] Globalization restructures space, what Giddens calls 'action at distance' is the possibility to act without being present. 'Action at distance' is a two-way process, globalization is without 'direction' and we can no longer speak of globalization as Westernization. No one is outside, and while for a long time, the 'conversation' went only from the West to the 'other' now "mutual interrogation is possible."[12] With 'mutual interrogation' (for example the ongoing debate on post-colonialism and neo-imperialism) not only comes all sorts of forms of (violent) resistance, but also possibilities for all sides to change.

One such interrogation to resist is the three-decade-old book *Orientalism* by the Palestinian-American Edward Said. The illegitimate invasion of Iraq by the United States – by ignoring the United Nations and the territorial integrity of the people of Iraq (as a consequence the United States has lost standing in the international community and therefore the (soft) power to get things done) – proves that this book has not lost any of its persuasive power.

What Said calls Orientalism is an Orient based on the experiences of Westerners. Orientalism is a discourse to make a dividing line between 'us' and 'them', between those who are included in the making of history and civilization and those who are not. For this Said borrows from Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci. From Foucault he borrows the term discourse and from Gramsci the term hegemony. Orientalism is an academic, intellectual and cultural discourse that helps to sustain the economic, political and military hegemony of among others the United States.

According to Said, borrowing from Giovanni Battista Vico, "the Orient is not an inert fact of nature. It is not merely *there*, just as the Occident itself is not just *there* either. [...M]en make their own history, that what they can know is what they have made, and extend it to geography: as both

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[11] Anthony Giddens, "Living in a Post-Traditional Society," in *Reflexive Modernization, Politics, Tradition, and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order,* Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens and Scott Lash (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 95. Also Anthony Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy, Sexuality, Love, and Eroticism in Modern Societies* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002).
[12] Giddens, "Living in a Post-Traditional Society," 96-7.

geographical and cultural entities – to say nothing of historical entities [such as nation-states] – such locales, regions, geographical sectors as 'Orient' and 'Occident' are man-made."[13] However, Said continues, these ideas on space have real consequences for power relations in our global society.

Through Orientalism *the* Orient becomes 'Orientalized', so that the Occident can dominate the Orient. Orientalism is not merely a set of myths that can be removed by revealing the truth. Orientalism is a hegemonic discourse about the Orient to hold power over the Orient. "Orientalism depends for its strategy on this flexible *positional* superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand."[14]

Said is not saying that only women can write about women (men can be feminists, John Stuart Mill and Amartya Sen are examples), or only homosexuals about homosexuals, blacks about blacks, Asians about Asians, Muslims about Islam. Said writes that "there is a difference between knowledge of other peoples and other times that is the result of understanding, compassion, careful study and analysis for their own sakes [Said calls this form of knowledge humanism], and on the other hand knowledge – if that is what it is – that is part of an overall campaign of self-affirmation, belligerency, and out-right war. There is, after all, a profound difference between the will to understand for purposes of coexistence and humanistic enlargement of horizons, and the will to dominate for the purposes of control and external enlargement of horizons, and the will to dominate for the purposes of control and external domination."[15]

Said's book *Orientalism* is about how Westerners perceive the Orient and how this body of knowledge is used in power structures. His book is not about the Orient in general or about the Arab and Islamic world in particular. This book is also not an anti-Western book. In the Islamic world, so says Said, this book is read as such. Said calls this 'Occidentosis', which means that Muslims claim that "all the evils in the world come from the west."[16]

The Dutch-British Ian Buruma and the Israeli Avishai Margalit wrote a book about 'Occidentosis'. They write in the conclusion of *Occidentalism,*

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[13] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 4-5.
[14] Said, 7.
[15] Said, xix; Said calls Bernard Lewis a modern-day Orientalist.
[16] Edward W. Said, "Orientalism and After," in *Power, Politics and Culture, Interviews with Edward W. Said*, ed. Gauri Viswanathan (London: Bloomsbury, 2004), 221.

The West in the Eyes of its Enemies: "The story we have told in this book is not a Manichaeistic one of a civilization at war with another. On the contrary, it is a tale of cross-contamination, the spread of bad ideas. This could happen to us now, if we fall for the temptation to fight fire with fire, Islamism with our own forms of intolerance. […] We cannot afford to close our societies as a defense against those who have closed theirs. For then we would all become Occidentalists, and there would be nothing left to defend."[17] Shortly after the 9/11 attacks, George W. Bush inaugurated the war-on-terror by saying that who is not with him is against him. Bush as the commander-in-chief of this war only created more enemies. (Friedrich Nietzsche could have warned him).[18]

Orientalism by Edward Said and Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit's *Occidentalism*, are about those people who divide the world into an 'us' and a 'them', who see the other as different, unlike 'us', less than human, i.e. these are dehumanizing ideologies, which reduce human individuals to sub-human classes, which, in turn, can lead to the destruction of human lives.

The Orientalist sees the other as the 'lazy native', as the 'exotic savant' (often pictured in erotic and feminized terms). The native is backward because of his irrationality, and this justifies colonialism and imperialism. Colonialism and imperialism are justified as civilizing forces, so the argument goes.

Orientalism is as one-dimensional as Occidentalism, but now it dehumanizes not the peoples of the Orient but the peoples of the Occident. Both ideologies have real and violent consequences. Buruma and Margalit's book is an attempt to understand those who hijacked airplanes that destroyed the WTC in New York on an early September morning that reset the mood for this new millennium.

It is the spiritual and profound East versus the coldly mechanical, shallow, rootless, destructive, sex-obsessed, and materialistic West. Today, Occidentalists often focus on the United States, however, "anti-Americanism is sometimes the result of specific American policies […]. But whatever the U.S. government does or does not do is often beside the point. [… Occidentalism refers] not to American policies, but to the idea

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[17] Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit, *Occidentalism, The West in the Eyes of its Enemies* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 149.

[18] Friedrich Nietzsche, "The wanderer and its shadow," in *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), section 208. Also Matthew 12:30 and Luke 11:23.

of America itself, as a rootless, cosmopolitan, superficial, trivial, materialistic, racially-mixed, fashion-addicted civilization."[19]

How to deal with contingency, disagreement, indeterminacy, inconsistency, incoherence, incongruity, ambivalence, heterogeneity, opacity, paradox, risk and uncertainty in our globalized era? Friedrich Nietzsche is the philosopher that warned us that ontological uncertainty causes anxiety, and possibly violence against the 'stranger', against what is 'alien'.[20] According to Zygmunt Bauman the task of philosophy today is to teach us how to deal with uncertainty and contingency. No matter how much we need common ground, the search for absolute and universal values, though, is the existential need for security.[21] In a traditional society the stranger would live on the other side of a mountain or sea (the Greeks called those strangers barbarians), today we no longer have that luxury.

Some long to return to a traditional society, for it gives ontological security a society in present-day modernity cannot provide, with all the consequent anxiety. In a pre-modern society the question of what a society is remains unasked. Within a tradition, a person lives in a pre-established order. In present-day modernity the individual has to ask the questions how (global) society should be ordered. We can no longer rely on pre-established answers for these questions.

Modernity held the promise that we can find security in rationality. However, modernity is now primarily characterized by insecurity and instability. Radical doubt is turned against itself: how can radical doubt lead to certain and stable knowledge with which we can colonize the future? What we do not know – or: cannot know – is probably as large as what we do know now. Many dangers we face in this world are manufactured by ourselves (for example: global warming or the economic crises of 1997 and 2008). Many factors cannot be given, which makes calculating the probable consequences of risks impossible.

We can know how to act if we are able to understand a situation. Indeterminacy makes global society a risk-prone environment. The more complex society is – i.e. the complexity of the network of interactions – the more insecure and instable. A high-risk environment can lead to anxiety and alienation. We live in an ambivalent territory, as Bauman writes: "life is carried on by strangers among strangers."[22] How to decide

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[19] Buruma and Margalit, *Occidentalism*, 8.

[20] Tony Davies, *Humanism* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 32-3.

[21] Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 81-2.

[22] Zygmunt Bauman, *Life in Fragments, Essays in Postmodern Morality* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), 125.

how to act if the actions of others are unpredictable (because who the other is, is unknown)? This can make life fragmentary. Bauman states that there is a gap between what we need to know to know how to act and what we can know about how to act among people we perceive as 'strange'. Civilization and the freedom to sustain and create cultural values are no longer feasible when fear takes over (see for example the European Union captured in the image of a fortress).

The individual has to negotiate the proximity of differences. The stranger is near but socially distant. The high mobility in present-day modernity makes this situation even more complex. The danger is a renewed longing for community-hood – a community of thick relations of care – to exclude the stranger.

That brings us to the moral problem of cultural relativism. There is an old saying: "In Rome do as the Romans do." Does that mean there is no room for universal values that cross the boundaries of space and time? One such universal value could be the respect for human life. However, the debates concerning abortion, euthanasia and the death penalty seem to show that we do not have a consensus on the question of what constitutes man. What is then the normative source of morality if our moral values and norms merely reflect the cultural conventions of a particular space and time?

The anthropologist Clifford Geertz defines culture as "an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life."[23] Geertz is thus a relativist. And indeed, different cultures do have different values and norms. What can be considered as right in one culture can be perceived as wrong in another, and it is then naïve to assume that our norms have universal validity.

Cultural relativists assume that there are no universal truths in ethics, i.e. that every normative standard is only valid within a culture. Cultural relativists conclude from the fact that there are cultural differences that we cannot find any agreement on morality. Rachels calls this the 'cultural difference argument'. "The premise concerns what people *believe* […]. The conclusion, however, concerns *what really is the case*."[24] This argument is therefore logically fallacious. As if the simple point that we disagree means that no true position can be found (for example, for a long

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[23] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 89.
[24] James Rachels, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995), 19.

time most were convinced that the earth was flat and the center of the universe). Cultural relativism overestimates our differences.

But what if we would take cultural relativism seriously? What are the consequences if we do not have a normative point of view from outside a certain culture? The first consequence is that we can no longer perceive cultural practices as morally inferior to our own practices, i.e. we no longer have a tool for moral criticism (in the debates on human rights and Asian values this position is often taken, criticism is then not seen as enlightened but as a new tool of imperialism). Second, we can only judge our society by the standards of our own society. So, even when we know that our society is not perfect, we have no tools to morally improve it. And third, moral relativism not only makes criticism impossible, it also makes moral progress infeasible. Relativism does not give us a standard to judge something as being better or improved, which makes social reform impossible.

Many of our values are indeed products of our cultural conventions and it is mere arrogance to assume that our moral values are based on an absolute rational standard and therefore ultimately better than other moral systems. We should be wary of prejudices. Cultural relativism criticizes the dogmatism of universalism. However, cultural relativists go a step further, a step that leads back to universal morality. Anti-dogmatism, so claim relativists, could lead to the virtues of tolerance and respectfulness; these are, though, moral values, which according to relativism cannot be independent from culture.

Multiculturalism, the theory that is often connected to cultural relativism, has two major flaws (beside the ones discussed above). First, just as the world cannot be divided into homogenous civilizations, so a society cannot be divided into homogenous blocks of separate cultures. Global society is one of overlapping territories and interdependent histories, according to Said. And second, multiculturalism locks individuals up in separate cultures by reducing their identity to a singular identity.

Amartya Sen wants to make clear in his book *Identity and Violence* that nations are not diverse because they are federations of peoples, each nation, on the other hand, is a collection of individual citizens and each individual inhabits a wide range of identities. It depends on the context, according to Sen, which part of our identity gets focus. No matter how constrained we are by circumstances, we still have to choose and for making choices we need to reason, i.e. to give arguments and justifications.

Identity is a complicated matter. And identity matters. Identity matters for the way we are, think and act. "When we shift our attention from the

notion of *being identical to oneself* to that of *sharing an identity with others* of a particular group […], the complexity increases further."[25] Huntington is right to claim that there are differences between the East and the West, but he makes those differences too pronounced, there exists considerable overlap. "Civilizational or religious partitioning of the world population yields a 'solitarist' approach to human identity."[26]

We all have plural identities according to Sen and he claims that it depends on a particular context which part gets importance. "When the prospects of good relations among different human beings are seen […] primarily in terms of 'amity among civilizations', or 'dialogue between religious groups', or 'friendly relations between different communities' […], a serious miniaturization of human beings precedes the devised programs of peace."[27]

Society is a 'collection' of strangers; acknowledging this fact is an important step to the cosmopolitanization of society. Cosmopolitanization entails pluralization and hybridization instead of homogenization. The wider world becomes a part of society. Resisting ambiguity can lead to violence: "someone who affirms and elevates 'his own' will almost inevitably rejects and despises the foreign."[28] Prejudices are reflections of fear.

Asian voices on culture and civilization

The Asian voices included in this book speak of recognition and respect for the otherness of the particular other. This recognition and respect is a universalism without uniformity. These writers claim that we have to recognize differences without falling back on sameness and a single value order. The writers, therefore, call for a questioning of power. The voice of the stranger should no longer be silenced. Global power needs to be scrutinized so that our societies can become more just and democratic, and can develop values, cultures and civilizations, and can peacefully coexist in our globalized era. For this to work, we have to realize that the identity of the self, a culture or civilization can never be fixed; we have to live with the uncertainty that comes with this dynamism and we have to keep the cosmopolitan dialogues open.

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[25] Sen, *Identity and Violence,* xii.
[26] Sen.
[27] Sen, xiii.
[28] Ulrich Beck, "The Cosmopolitan Society and its Enemies," *Theory, Culture and Society* 19, no.1-2 (2002), 38.

In the opening chapter "Of Borders, Death and Footprints," the poet and journalist Goenawan Mohamad claims that unidentifiable identities are transformed into foreigners by rejecting the strangeness of strangers. Through metaphoric space, borders function to exclude the alien. These borders change time into space. Identity should be readable and is therefore shaped by fixed demarcations. However, boundaries do in fact shift. From time to time, different interpretations are ossified by the logic of difference, i.e. borders are volatile. This volatility signifies contingency with a never fulfilled desire: a desire for clarity without surprises. Borders signify a philosophy of difference as a movement from the same to the other. And 'we' represent ourselves in public, but this representation is a misrepresentation, because we have to use a symbolic order embodied in language, law, community and/or the state. We portray ourselves by pre-existing significations that reduce our identities into fixed abstractions. The 'we' is defined by a 'them' – the gaze of the Other. This gaze can be experienced as a violation, because it signifies power and not choice. However, identity is a never-ending search, an on-going formation, and always tentative. A frontier can therefore also be seen as an invitation to other, unknown places.

In the next chapter, "Cosmopolitanism, Between Cosmopolis and Chaosmopolis," the philosopher and art critic Bambang Sugiharto rethinks cosmopolitanism in the era of globalization from a historical perspective to reconsider its ethical principles. He claims that it has always been a part of the Western utopian imagination, however, it was also a part of colonializational forces. Modernity is then also a 'civilizational' force: to emancipate and liberate through the use of reason. And this 'civilizational' force became centered in the nation-state. This cosmopolitan utopia is Eurocentric in that Europe sees itself as the home of civilization and as a consequence it sees itself as having the duty (or burden) to 'civilize', if necessary by force. The nation-state, though, has been contested in the post-colonial period. Questions emerge whether the nation-state remains the adequate entity to respond to the new conditions. Globalization is becoming part of our everyday life: cosmopolis. Cosmopolis takes shape in a 'dialogical' and not in the previous Eurocentric 'monological' imagination. The dialogical imagination searches for alternatives and recognizes the otherness of the other. The cosmopolitanism of the era of globalization comes with a consciousness of a shared future but without the institutionalized answers to respond to the new questions. A new infrastructure needs to be created, but not one with one panoramic perspective from a central point. There are as many points of view as there are cosmopolites, this is characterized by mobile 'centres' to (re-)invent

the world. This reinvention has yet to take shape and could take a dystopian turn: the disembedding and dissolving of localities, an increase in global inequalities. Cosmopolis could thus very well turn into chaosmopolis. This calls for a rethinking of the meanings of hospitality, responsibility and reflexivity, which have to be sensitive to pluralism and pluralization, contradictions, risk, uncertainty and instability. However, openness to the world as cosmopolitan virtues require is far from easy. Cosmopolitan virtues can only work realistically if we can imagine the emergence of a global polity.

Tran Van Doan claims in "The Claim of Truth and the Claim of Freedom in Religion" that standards of 'truth' and 'justice' are set by the powers-that-be. Knowledge and power are two sides of the same currency owned by the rulers and truth is then only a tool to remain in power, which contradicts the spirit of the Enlightenment, because this use of knowledge/power is not for the benefit of humanity at large. Morality is now used to consolidate the power of the rulers. True intellectuals voice their criticism against this abuse of power, knowledge and morality. Therefore, we should be critical of colonialism and neo-imperialism disguised as benevolence. Absolute truth is then having absolute power, and vice versa, to change the world by force and this is called unconditional freedom to force one's truth on the unbelievers, which results in human rights violations and oppression. Freedom is then also un-freedom and truth is then also anti-truth. We should therefore re-examine the meaning of truth in connection to freedom. The problem lies with a lust for power expressed in truth-claims and claims for freedom to express and enforce truths. Through this lust for power, truth in life is twisted to truth as life. Freedom should be properly understood from within our life, with its finitude and dependency; therefore truth should be understood as truth in life. Then the question should not be what constitutes truth, but what constitutes life and how to be faithful to life should be the objective of philosophers. Truthfulness means a loyalty to life and to be faithful. Freedom means then liberation with a recognition of dependency.

In "A Case for Pluralism in a Relativistic Environment" Andrea Bonazzi states that pluralism can be a bad thing, it can take the form of conflicts. Therefore there is a need for a reconciled pluralism: a symphony instead of cacophony presupposes a unitary principle that is commensurable through the appeal to experience. If one claims that there are no criteria to decide what is good then one is a relativist. Pluralism is a fact of life, however, pluralism does not necessarily imply relativism. Rules that guide our co-existence are needed, i.e. a need for a form of universalism which faith can provide. If this universalism is not feasible, i.e. incommensurability

governs our social world, then we fall into solipsism, because we have nothing in common, which could result in conflicts. Solipsism means that we are stuck in our own private universe, because it assumes that we are absolutely different and thus isolated from each other, and mutual understanding, let alone the creation of cultures and civilizations, becomes impossible. The plea of relativists for absolute tolerance is a contradiction, for it means that we ought to tolerate the intolerant and their cruelty. Dialogue is only possible if and only if we accept a common ground with certain universal truths. This common ground is extra-subjective and the universal truths are accessible to all parties, because they transcend them, so truths need to be mutually respected and affirmed for them not to be partial. In turn, the truth makes us truly free and democratic in a civilized way to set common goals. For this to work, intellectuals should speak freely and openly.

Preciosa de Joya sees history in "History as the Burden of Inheritance and Opportunity for Justice" as crucial to civilization. The memory of our history shapes the identity of nations as well as individuals. Memory can also prevent future cruelty occurring again, but remembering is mostly a selective process, therefore history can always be under suspicion. The unity of historical narratives goes with 'silencing' and thus exclusion. So we need a representation of the past within the present to link the present to past injustices so we can avoid those in the future and so that history is not merely the victors' perspective. The past is never finished and will remain relevant to us today and in the future. Without such understanding of the past we remain ignorant of its implications, even if we claim the truth of our historical narrative, such forms of history only teach us to forget instead of truly remembering. The failure of remembrance makes it impossible to rectify past injustices and acts of barbarity will continue. We have a moral duty to avert forgetfulness. The past has to be experienced politically based on respect and retroactive justice. We owe this debt to our past.

"The Beautiful Difference" by Eunjoong Kim criticizes Western prejudices against Asia. Cultures can be full of meaning without us being able to tell what culture is more significant. However, Westerners believe that their cultures are superior to Asian cultures without providing any reasonable grounds. This sense of superiority can also be seen within Asia. Feeling superior denies valuable differences and can lead to violence (and the justification of violence). The otherness of the other is denied when it is considered different from or inferior to logos. Logos does not allow for differences and logos is a central part of modernity, therefore it leads to exclusion, suppression or conquest. However, difference is the nature of

our existence and not hidden under sameness. This pluralization of the living world is not a form of nihilism, but a starting point of civilized co-existence in which a creative cultural convergence is possible with an open attitude to heterogeneity. Freedom is then openness to the otherness of the other and self, the other exists in the self. A philosophy of difference should be developed so we can co-exist freely in a multi-dimensional world.

Jove Jim S. Aguas defines civilization in "Cultural Pluralism and Cultural Dialogue" as a distinctive, complex and advanced society. Cultures are different in the ways they define human perfection and cultures evolve through human interaction on an individual and collective scale. Therefore, cultures are dynamic. It is culture that makes us human and we express ourselves to the world through culture. Identity and difference are connected, because we define ourselves through contrasts. These intercultural interactions are not necessarily characterized by equality. There is then an inherent danger to define culture and civilization from the perspective of those who have power – Westerners – who define what is and what is not cultured and civilized. To become cultured or civilized is then to follow the ways of the West. So instead of diversity, the dichotomies of cultured/uncultured and civilized/uncivilized remain, imposing a single order. No matter what, pluralism prevails and to make co-existence peaceful, recognition of this empirical fact is mandatory. Cultures are not parts of one single, universal culture we can access through the use of reason and rationality. A dialogue can work if the different parties bring in their particularities. A respect for the other as a unique, individual other with a genuine concern for differences can open dialogues. We should not objectify the other to a mere abstract being, but respect the other as the bearer of values and dignity. Through intercultural dialogues we can mutually change if these dialogues are conducted in a just manner. No one has a monopoly over values, however, universalism should not lead to uniformity.

Christal Huang in "Tracing a Cultural Fold in an Asian Context" reinterprets Asia. To interpret Asia in a new way can lead to a situation in which Asians can make better use of their multiple differences as a powerful identity. This requires a cultural fusion of horizons, and this requires 'tracing' the 'folds' of Asia to create a new Asia for a new era. This new fold Asia becomes then the new totality, the new wholeness within which we can reinterpret differences and recreate collaborations between different but interlinked cultures. Collaborations within the Asian fold can lead to mutual change. The togetherness of the Asian fold might even lead to a decrease of intercultural conflicts. That means that the sign

'Asia' has to become newly signified and through the newly signified sign 'Asian' links can be created between folds within the fold Asia.

In "Exposing the Hidden Dimension of Gender in Discourses on Civilization and Culture" Natividad Dominique G. Manauat links culture and civilization to privilege and exclusion, especially if these concepts are overly moralized. Competing claims institutionalize values in different ways. The danger is that a 'choice' for one claim leads to exclusion (and an enlargement of the West). However, exclusion explained by geography, class or race is gender insensitive. Justice, freedom and autonomy are forms of false universalism when not extended to women, as can also be said of anti-colonial writings. The universal should also reflect the particular of subjectivities, particularly of women in Third World countries. The links between space, race, class and gender are further complicated if sexual orientation is added, because the norm is heterosexuality. Non-heterosexual subjectivities are considered deviant and immoral, in some countries these are even criminalized. To fight these forms of marginalization, the private has to be brought into the public without commodification, however, in a conservative setting a backlash is possible and public recognition is therefore necessary.

John T. Giordano writes in "Garuda Indonesia – A registered trademark" that in our globalized era we undertake projects that are eclectic and not unified. These projects are characterized by universal tensions, struggles and uncertainty. The dynamic of cultural transmission is therefore different from the law, e.g. intellectual property rights. Culture is a public good, whereas intellectual property rights are connected to private interests. However, global impacts are absorbed and syncretized into localities, and these impacts are never fixed, always fluid, because they are always fragile. If power becomes destructive by being one-sided, then philosophers have a role to mediate and to address imbalances of power and conflicts.

In "Javanese-Islam Value Consensus, Remarks on Value Pluralism" Donny Gahral Adian states that political liberalism recognizes value pluralism through the use of the concept of an overlapping consensus, i.e. everyone must agree with this consensus to develop one's thick conception of the good life. Donny Gahral Adian, however, claims that most societies are monopolized by a single comprehensive ethical system. Religion can be regarded as such a comprehensive doctrine, which can be regarded as ethical monism. An overlapping consensus then becomes difficult to attain, yet it is needed to make democracy and civil society function peacefully. However, Donny Gahral Adian asks whether this view of religion is fair. He claims that this view is not correct in regard to Islam on

Java. Islam and Javanese mysticism have been able to create an overlapping consensus and live peacefully side-by-side.

The political scientist and philosopher Roy Voragen claims in the concluding chapter "Civil Society and Democracy in Post-Soeharto Indonesia" that diversity, as a fact of life, and religion, particularly Islam, do not necessarily endanger the prospects of democratization. For democracy to function properly the state should not be in opposition to society. What is needed is mutual reinforcement between a liberal democratic state and civilized civil society. After all, democracy does not just mean to vote once in a while, but also to demonstrate respect and tolerance towards one's fellow citizens.

Obviously, the Asian voices presented in this book do not write – and should not be read – as one voice.

OF BORDERS, DEATH AND FOOTPRINTS

GOENAWAN MOHAMAD

In the streets of the world, there is always a stranger. She is the one whom we meet, who walks with us and probably lives among us, or even lives within us, since, as the Book of Leviticus says, we were once strangers.

A stranger is by definition an unidentifiable entity. At a crucial moment, however, a stranger is transformed into something else; she becomes a foreigner. It is the moment of inclusion and exclusion; it is the moment when the border is pronounced.

Border is a concept, or a metaphor, generated by a paradigm of space. In practice, borders are made as markers. As markers are signs, geography becomes sites or/and communities where space is intertwined with time, practices, and power. After all, "places are marked, noted, named," as Lefebvre puts it in his magisterial work *The Production of Space*.[1]

Border as a narrative of ossification and death

In the beginning was the body. Space, as Lefebvre points out, may then be marked physically. Animals use smells the way human groups use visual or auditory indicators to rediscover a place. In the very earliest stage of organized society, people marked particular locations and indicated routes by means of fires. Ultimately, space may be marked with abstraction, 'by means of discourse, by means of signs'. One of modernity's achievements is the birth of intelligible social zones.

The drive for intelligibility, or better, readability, has its own history. In Lefebvre's thesis,[2] it is "the intense onslaught of visualization" in the production of social space that impels it. This takes place when a space is produced in which 'the eye of God', or the 'Father', or 'the Leader' lays

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[1] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell, 1977), 118.

[2] Lefebvre, 261.

hold of whatever serves its purpose, bringing about "a space of force, of violence, of power restrained by nothing but the limitations of its means."[3]

Parallel to it, the pronouncement of borders, like other main thrusts of modernity, entails the conversion of time into space. It stabilizes and regulates difference on, as it were, a flat surface. It makes difference no longer something radically exterior to any representation, no longer a quality that is always yet to come and whose absence conditions the possibility of meaning.

Border thus assumes a certain degree of constancy, abolishes the dynamics of difference, and rejects the strangeness of the stranger, by making her a 'foreigner' – as well as fortifying one's identity.

As such, it embodies a peculiar role. It is analogous to the 'mirror stage' in Lacan's thesis on the birth of the subject: as a child, one (mis-)recognizes in his/her mirror image a stable, coherent, whole self. It is 'this Gestalt', as Lacan puts it, that "symbolizes the mental permanence of the I."[4]

The production of 'the mental permanence of the I' is comparable to the act of naming. It is interesting that the Bible describes naming as a decisive moment of creation. God sets man free through language and gives man the power to name the animals. Adam assumes a creative role, just as God did, through words.

But naming turns out to be an ambivalent undertaking. On the one hand, it attempts to grasp the enigma of the singular. It tries to prevent things from being transposed into mere concepts or numbers or items of classification. On the other hand, to name is to inaugurate an identity; it ossifies things out of difference, which is essentially a movement of, in Adorno's word, 'non-identity'. In entering the symbolic order, naming betrays our desire for presence or any kind of finality.

This is because a name, like my name when I was a child, is always given under a set of certain linguistic and cultural systems. This is the core of Lacan's argument: an identity, so conferred, is formed by others. One may believe him/herself to be a sovereign individual, but an individual is determined by a symbolic order structured around *le nom du père* (the name of the father) – words indistinguishable from *le non du père* (the father's no).

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[3] Lefebvre, 262.

[4] Jacques Lacan, *Écrits, A selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Routledge, 1977), 2.