Chapter 1

Introduction

Simone Chambers and Peter Nosco

Difference, diversity, and disagreement are inevitable features of our ethical, social, and political landscape. Although difference of opinion is not a modern phenomenon, the modern world is particularly concerned with the ethical navigation of difference. What is the range of appropriate responses to deep disagreement? How should we interact with those with whom we do not see eye to eye? When does elasticity properly become diversity? These questions can be addressed to many different actors. States for example are a common place to start as they are critical agents in managing and navigating pluralism and difference. We start with traditions rather than states, however, because traditions are in some sense prior to states. How a state deals with diversity and pluralism will often be determined by the ethical tradition or traditions that find a home there.

Traditions have an immense impact on people's lives. To be brought up as a Catholic, to think of oneself as a liberal, to be at home within a Confucian social order, these ways of being in the world carry with them hosts of substantive implications. Interrogating the ethical messages that various traditions send about how to treat their opponents and rivals, and examining how these messages have been played out in the concrete histories of these traditions have proved to be a very large topic. The chapters that follow investigate the issues raised and ethical questions posed by one very particular type of opponent: the fellow traveler. We have asked our authors to lay out the distinctive features of intramural dissent in nine ethical traditions – Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Islam, Judaism, the religions of South Asia, liberalism, Marxism, and natural law – followed by a concluding Afterword.

Ethical pluralism is both extramural and intramural, and gives rise to diverse challenges in different social frameworks. Two earlier volumes in the Ethikon series tackled the management of extramural diversity, or, more precisely, how different traditions propose to deal with ethical disagreements with persons and communities outside the circle of their own adherents. *The*

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Many and the One[1] considers the management of such diversity in the framework of an ethically pluralist national community. *The Globalization of Ethics*[2] considers it in the looser framework of international society, and how it affects the willingness and ability to talk to and interact with others across transnational boundaries. We in this volume concentrate on the characteristics of internal dissent and the strategies for its management.

All moral traditions, both secular and religious, have some combination of core beliefs, key tenets, and central practices. Survival and continuity of a tradition depend on the reproduction and continued adherence to those core beliefs and practices. Nonetheless, disagreement and dissent are not only inevitable in the ongoing life of a tradition, but would also appear to be necessary to maintaining a tradition's vitality, and it is here that one observes a Goldilocks-like paradox of dissent. On the one hand, the complete stifling of criticism and argument would render a tradition static and incapable of growth and adaptation. On the other hand, a tradition's inability to discipline and at times rein in criticism could equally lead to its demise, as the center cannot hold endlessly against comprehensive dissent. Indeed, all strong and vibrant traditions, and of course all the ethical traditions represented in this volume, have found their own ways to navigate between the Scylla of stagnation and Charybdis of revolt. The tension between stagnation and change is further complicated by where one stands. Whether the exit option – when dissenters depart from the fold – is good (welcome), bad (regrettable), or neutral is contingent upon whether we are the ones leaving or the ones left behind.

The boundary between evolution and schism can be variously drawn, and the strategies of the traditions we examine have shared much but have also differed in important ways. In religious contexts, dissent has historically attracted accusations of heresy, apostasy, and schism, while in secular frameworks, similar charges are more often framed as unprincipled heterodoxy, deviation from a "party line" and disloyalty. In both instances, extreme measures have sometimes been adopted to suppress perceived existential threats to the tradition. Also to be reckoned with is the fact that intramural disagreement often brings with it an emotional dimension of betrayal, infidelity, and abandonment. It is not uncommon for traditions to deal more harshly with internal critics and challenges from within than those on the outside. At times, the responses of our traditions have been less drastic and ultimately more productive, as attempts are made to manage, channel, and contain dissidence in ways that actually strengthen the tradition. Exit is an option that moves one from intramural to extramural dissent. The line between intra- and extramural

[1] Richard Madsen and Tracy B. Strong (eds.), *The Many and the One: Religious and Secular Perspectives on Ethical Pluralism in the Modern World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).

[2] William M. Sullivan and Will Kymlicka (eds.), *The Globalization of Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

is difficult to navigate, as evidenced by the fact that all of the traditions discussed here have their origins in dissent from an existing orthodoxy. The intensity, character, and quality of the measures taken to manage dissent depend on many factors, and below we outline a number of such factors and in the process introduce themes that run though all the chapters.

Authenticity and essentialism

This book, like other Ethikon volumes, is intended to offer a platform for various ethical traditions – both religious and secular – to engage in a comparative conversation. We asked our authors to articulate how their tradition has dealt with and managed dissent and disagreement. This required our authors to construct on behalf of their traditions an initial introspective positing of a core set of beliefs, without which dissent, let alone its management, would be meaningless, and so the first point of comparison becomes how each tradition defines itself.

All traditions have a history, and each of our chapter-authors has had to strike a balance between the essentializing impulse to define a tradition, and the historicizing impulse to document its transformation over time. William Galston in this volume defines a tradition as "a way of thinking with a history," and as we are dealing with ethical traditions, we would simply add "a way of thinking about what matters in life, with a history." All traditions point back in time to something like a "sacred history" with authoritative texts, pivotal historical moments, and founding figures as common components. Our traditions are themselves epic narratives of sorts, with a genesis that represents their own rupture with the past. The tradition as narrative will typically (though not necessarily) have foundational figures whose radical difference with conventional wisdom goes well beyond that of forerunners. It will also likely have apostles who sustain the tradition (re)defining its boundaries and shaping its trajectory.

Some histories are more centered than others. For example, the Abrahamic traditions and Sikhism have clear central figures, founding moments, and agreed upon authoritative texts. By contrast, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Marxism appear less centered, with disagreement often about which texts or which individuals to think of as pivotal, despite having larger-than-life "founding figures." And relative to these, liberalism and Hinduism appear positively diffuse, though this is surely a consequence of the circumstances surrounding their respective constructions. One even observes how traditions can interact and operate in tandem, as in the case of a Buddhist liberal, or Jewish Marxist, or Confucian Christian. Thus, even though history and narrative continuity are central elements of all traditions, not all traditions define core beliefs through a form of historical originalism. Sources of authenticity are actively contested, as we see when we ask who really speaks authentically nowadays for doctrines like Buddhism or Confucianism.

Traditions are moving targets if you will, and what is dissent one day can as easily be orthodoxy down the road. This means that the questions we asked our authors had a self-referential dimension to them, and thoughtful readers will likely at times disagree with (indeed dissent from) how our authors depict their traditions. Traditions are made up of complex multidimensional and contested narratives. The request to state as clearly as possible the core beliefs and central tenets of a tradition necessarily led our authors to weigh contesting claims of authenticity and different understandings of what is fundamental or essential. The chapters that follow thus represent to some extent intellectual and spiritual exercises in diplomacy, as well as analysis.

All authors in this volume have had to grapple with the questions of which actors speak for the tradition and which actions represent the authentic response to dissent. The challenge posed by issues of authenticity is well illustrated in Andrew Levine's chapter on Marxism. Many individuals and movements, not to mention parties and regimes have been labeled or have self-identified as Marxist. But despite this fact, many actions taken in the name of Marxism, such as the brutal enforcement of orthodoxy in the Stalinist era, have nothing to do with Marx, who simply did not write about this sort of thing. The question thus becomes, is the Marxist tradition to be defined in relation to an authentic originary set of core beliefs found in Marx or can we think of the tradition as the historical actions done in the name of Marxism? All traditions have to confront this question to some extent, and not everything done in the name of a tradition or by adherents of the tradition is representative of how that tradition deals with or how it teaches how to deal with dissent.

But drawing this line between authentic and inauthentic expressions of a tradition can be quite tricky. A classic case is the Spanish Inquisition, which Nietzsche and others have pointed out was not a very Christian undertaking. But it would be disingenuous to argue that since the Inquisition was an abhorrent interpretation of Christianity as well as a set of practices that Jesus is not likely to have endorsed, the Inquisition should then not be considered as an example of how Christianity has managed dissent. There are other cases in which this argument might be more persuasive, however. Liberalism for example endorses toleration, liberty, and non-coercion as the main principles through which to deal ethically with dissent. But there have been many professed liberals acting on behalf of liberal states who have failed quite strikingly to live up to these principles. Here we might want to identify an inevitable tension between "isms" and "-ists," that is, what one's ethical tradition says you can do with or to dissenters and what people have actually done in the name of the tradition.

To navigate this thorny issue, the authors have had to articulate some version of the tradition for which they claim authenticity and although all the authors stress that their respective traditions are complex and plural they nonetheless have had to come down somewhere. This necessarily renders our

authors open to the charge of essentialism. Perhaps there is no essential core to Confucianism; maybe Buddhism is different in every era and in every place; conceivably liberalism is too capacious to be properly captured as one tradition. These are all possibilities, which the authors themselves often discuss directly. But the nature of the enterprise is such that some core must be identified from which individuals and groups dissent.

There are all sorts of ways we may disagree with principles that do not make us dissidents. Dissidence involves opposition and challenge in a way that ordinary disagreement may not. But in order to oppose, there has to be a "there there," to borrow a famous phrase from Gertrude Stein. Even in arguably the most open tradition in our group, the liberalism described by Galston as entailing "the maximum feasible scope for diversity and dissent," dissent and not mere disagreement are evident. This is because liberalism has throughout its history had to fend off challenges to prevailing or widely held ideas. All traditions then, and even the most capacious, open the door to dissent.

Modernity

It is often said that the modern world is characterized by pluralism, difference, diversity, and disagreement. But it might be more accurate to say that modernity contains new ways to think about, manage, and perhaps value pluralism, difference, diversity, and disagreement. Difference and disagreement have always been with us, or as Peter Steinfels says in his contribution, "Christianity looks like one long argument." What changes in modernity, then, is how we deal with difference or how we value argument.

For all the traditions discussed in this book the transition to the modern world has had an immense impact on the management of dissent. This impact, however, has not been uniform. For all religious traditions finding a home within liberal democracies, but with a special impact on Christianity, the transition to modernity has brought with it the separation of church and state on the one hand, and the rise of toleration as a widely held value on the other. Burning heretics at the stake, capital punishment for apostasy, and withholding civil benefits from dissenters are no longer possible or accepted methods of managing dissent in liberal democracies. In modern liberal societies the tool of excommunication, while still available, no longer carries the civil consequences that it once did.

For religious traditions at home or in the process of becoming naturalized in Western liberal democracies, the consequences of secularism and a liberal political culture go beyond the fact that states no longer enforce orthodoxy. Liberalism exerts both internal and external pressure on religious traditions to come in line with the broader culture and to become more liberal in how they manage dissent. Internal to traditions, we see liberal Muslims, Jews, and Christians raising dissident voices against conservative and old world methods

of managing dissent. Changing attitudes toward heresy within many Christian
contexts is just one example, and as Steinfels notes, "in recent times heresy
trials have become an embarrassment, the very notion of heresy now being
associated with intellectual daring and courage rather than spiritual deforma-
tion." External to traditions, by contrast, we often see traditional practices
held up to public scrutiny and subjected to criticism by non-adherents. As
Meena Sharify-Funk observes, "negotiation between Islam and cultural liber-
alism is likely to be prolonged and in some cases difficult."

Ethical traditions that find themselves within a liberal political culture will
understandably resist embracing the maximal toleration of dissent found in
the liberal tradition itself. Another way to articulate this point is to highlight
an important difference between the state, arguably the primary host institu-
tion of liberalism, and the associations of civil society that host ethical
traditions. Pluralist liberal states and liberal societies at large are not con-
stituted by the pursuit of an identifiable good in the same way as associations
and organizations of civil society. So for example, we might disagree with
the way the Anglo-orthodox community forced Rabbi Louis Jacobs from a
leadership role in the orthodox community because he voiced nonconformist
ideas, but it is not illegitimate per se for religious organizations to promote
one common set of core beliefs. This type of creedal policing would be
illegitimate for a liberal state however. Thus liberal states cannot expel
citizens for beliefs at variance with liberal ideology, but a liberal club or
even a liberal party enjoys the latitude to exclude and discipline internal
dissent and dissidents.

Although one cannot complain about the de-legitimization of violence as a
means of managing dissent, the changing circumstances of liberal modernity
pose a significant challenge to the survival of ethical traditions, and in parti-
cular religious ones. The value placed on pluralism and toleration in the
society at large often puts efforts to hold a center together in a bad light.
In modern societies the attempt to manage intramural dissent can have the
ironic effect of provoking dissent. But to maintain coherence and continuity a
tradition must find ways to stabilize a central set of core beliefs and convictions
or risk becoming something else.

All traditions that find themselves within modern liberal political culture,
including and perhaps especially liberalism itself, face the double effect of
freedom. On the one hand, liberal political culture represents an hospitable
environment in which to pursue and practice one's tradition in freedom.
On the other hand, modern values of toleration, pluralism, openness, *and*
freedom of thought can gently and sometimes not so gently push traditions
onto a centrifugal course where the center is always challenged and sometimes
cannot hold.

There are also centripetal forces at work in modernity that press in
the opposite direction, however. Here, it is instructive to contrast the three
Abrahamic religious traditions with the three historically less centered Asian

traditions. For Confucianism, Buddhism, and Hinduism, modernity appears to have pushed them in centripetal directions, encouraging the traditions to posit static core beliefs that are fundamentally ahistorical. Thinking of them as "isms" at all is to impose a conceptual coherence and metaphysical center where perhaps none ever existed. The move to think about these three in terms of religion, or even more particularly in terms of ecclesiastic structures and lineages, can be tied to Western ideas of religion with roots in the Enlightenment. This in turn of course has links to colonialism and the Western aspiration not just to profit globally but also to make the world over in its own image. Therefore the Enlightenment mind imagines a Buddhism and Hinduism that, because they are religions, must be analogous in some respects to Christianity.

Indeed there is little question that modernity has encouraged the consideration of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Hinduism as religions in the Western sense, and so seeks to rein in disparate practices and beliefs into the semblance of a coherent whole. To use Anne Murphy's phrase this involves an exercise in boundary setting, but boundaries like borders need policing. Further, the push to bring these traditions into and under an Enlightenment conception of religion has often been exacerbated and complicated by political forces also pushing centripetally.

There are two primary political forces that push in the direction of consolidation and centering and therefore conduce toward stricter management of dissent. The first is a clear adjunct to the Enlightenment conceptualization of these dispersed practices as unified religions and involves the state harnessing the power of an ethical tradition for nation building. Peter Nosco describes how the early modern Japanese state used networks of Buddhist temples as population registries and instruments of consolidation, and Richard Madsen describes something similar in the use of Confucianism in the forging of Chinese identity and state ideology. Similarly, Islam has often been used for political purposes, whereby its spiritual principles and communities have served to undergird modern states.

The second modern political force at work in the centering of traditions is the rise of identity politics. Ethical traditions are exceptionally well equipped to address questions of who we are, where we came from, and how we arrived here. They can also be effective instruments of orientation, as they place us temporally and spatially in our respective here and nows, especially when reinforced by organic conceptions of society. But when political parties become host institutions, as for example in the case of Hindu or even Buddhist nationalists, this introduces a new dimension to the need to manage dissent effectively, for no longer is it just the cultural survival of a tradition at stake. Now we begin to see the spoils of the state itself at stake in keeping a disciplined center alive. Modernity thus looms large in all of these traditions but it does not produce a singular outcome, and history shows that modernity can conduce to consolidation as much as pluralism.

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Host institutions

As Peter Nosco points out in relation to Buddhism, but with application to all the ethical traditions discussed in this volume, intramural dissent is "managed in different ways depending principally on the host institutions." These host institutions are often charged with the task of managing dissent, as well as inculcating orthodoxy, and appear to fall into two categories. On the one hand, there are institutions in which there is a coincidence between the goods of the institution and the goods of the tradition, in the sense that the institutions exist to be hosts for traditions. Religious institutions such as churches, synagogues, temples, and mosques are the clearest example of this sort of institution. Monasteries and other religious custodians of culture might represent interesting outliers, because one can imagine monasteries pursuing internal goods (for example communism) that are not part of the tradition's broader set of core beliefs and might at times even come into conflict with those broader values or beliefs. On the other hand, there are host institutions – families, political parties, universities, and of course states – that have other and additional purposes, which do not coincide perfectly with those of the tradition.

These two categories of host institutions frequently come into conflict and tension. Religious institutions such as churches and temples often represent a near perfect coincidence between the promotion of the core values of their respective ethical traditions and the promotion of the good of the institutions themselves. That is to say, the good of the religious institution is defined almost entirely in a manner that supports and is supported by the good of the religious tradition. But this is not always true for the second type of institution, and especially in the modern era when this category of institution is typically secular, with universities offering a nice example. A Catholic university has a mission to promote Catholic values and beliefs, but universities in general are institutions that are defined by the internal goods associated with higher education. There is no necessary contradiction between these two sets of goods, but it is not difficult to see how they might come into conflict. One of the more visible cases of this is discussed in both the natural law and Christianity chapters and involves the case of Charles Curran. Curran developed strongly dissenting views within Catholicism especially with regard to questions of contraception. As a consequence of his teaching of these views, in 1967 the trustees of the Catholic University of America decided to deny him tenure. Student and faculty protest resulted in the reversal of this decision, and Curran continued as a professor at CUA and continued to dissent. In 1986 the Catholic Church again tried to discipline him, but this time the disciplinary action was taken with an effort not to violate standards internal to the university. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith revoked Curran's "right" to teach theology but did not revoke his tenure or his position as a professor at the university.

The 1967 action and the 1986 action provide an interesting study in contrasts. In the first, doctrinal conformity trumped scholarly and teaching excellence, but dissent and opposition to this call forced a reversal. In 1986, however, the Vatican acknowledged that conformity to core beliefs was not an appropriate criterion to judge academic merit or to award or withhold university goods such as tenure and promotion, even though they determined that they could revoke the credentials and status of Curran as a spokesperson for the church's doctrine. In the secular world outside the academy, this would immediately be recognized as a form of "brand protection," but as an example of intramural dissent within a religious host institution, it continues to provide fruitful grist for the understanding of both the rationale underlying and the ethics of managing heterodoxy and dissent.

Modern universities in particular are interesting cases for the question of managing dissent. Modern universities are central host institutions not so much for ethical traditions as a whole or in their totality (Catholic University of America being an obvious exception) but for the intellectuals and scholars who individually articulate, reflect, and often preserve the traditions. This is particularly true for ethico-philosophical traditions such as liberalism, Marxism, Confucianism, and natural law theory, but it is also true for the ethico-religious traditions of Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Islam. In the case of universities we see a dilemma analogous to the one we encountered above with regard to liberal political culture. There is a sense in which the very idea of orthodoxy or even managing dissent is anathema to the university. Andrew Levine puts this nicely in his discussion of Marxist theory. To be accountable to an academic community means in principle to go where the argument leads and to make truth and not solidarity one's first priority. Disagreements abound but ideas of dissent have no place. We all know of course that universities and intellectual communities do not always live up to these lofty ideals. But oftentimes attempts to manage and discipline deviations from any and all orthodoxies explode into debates about political correctness, academic freedom, and free speech.

An interesting case study concerned the question of who is and is not allowed the free use of space in on-campus inter-religious and student centers. As is well known, modern universities typically dedicate some portion of their student centers to religious and political organizations with little regard to the respective ideologies or theologies represented so long as they do not conflict with the core values of the university community itself. But what does one do with an organization such as the Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles (CARP), which became controversial on a number of campuses not for the substance of the ideas it espoused, which amounted to little more than a kind of unitarianism, but for its suspected affiliation with the KCIA-supported Unification Church led by the Reverend Sun Myung Moon (1920–2012). Similarly, how should a university respond if one of its official salaried chaplains represents the doctrines of her/his faith in a manner deemed

unorthodox by the external host institution? Or, to take these questions to something like their logical conclusion, should a secular university be concerned about hiring Charles Curran to teach Catholic Church history and dogma? The answer would appear to be obviously not, but the question is not by itself ridiculous.

Orthodoxy and orthopraxis

An interesting distinction that comes up often in these chapters is between theory and practice, or orthodoxy and orthopraxis. Some traditions, such as Buddhism and liberalism, appear to center on a creed or set of core beliefs and convictions. Others, such as Judaism and Confucianism, are defined in terms of what Richard Madsen has described in his chapter as "orthopraxis." In Confucianism core beliefs that remain static over time are more elusive, and "Confucianism" developed out of certain core practices that later scholars articulated in the form of core beliefs. This is especially evident in such Confucian concerns as family values, household continuity, and hierarchical structures of veneration over many generations. The distinction here is not fully captured by the simplistic binary of spiritual versus this-worldly, because even as secular a philosophy as liberalism can be placed within a creedal camp in that it has roots in such abstractions as rights, individualism, and liberty more than in lifeworld or semi-ritualized practices.

But identifying the core or heart of a tradition is not necessarily a predictor of where dissent will be tolerated and where it will not. So, for example, liberalism is a creed but it does not directly police belief. Liberal states usually try to inculcate adherence to some general liberal values through schools and other forms of soft power, but as a state ideology liberalism is more concerned with behaviors and practices than belief. Citizens are permitted to defend patriarchal doctrines, but they may not themselves discriminate against individuals based on gender in hiring practices.

Whether a tradition is concerned with doctrinal dissent or behavioral deviance also forms a dividing line *between* traditions that does not always fall where one might think, and Judaism and Christianity form an interesting contrast in this respect. Alan Mittleman confirms that Judaism has no creed, and that behavioral norms rather than right belief are where the tradition seeks compliance. This view is illustrated in a famous Talmudic adjudication of a doctrinal dispute between the House of Hillel and the House of Shammai. The Talmud says both are right on the principle of the matter, but that when it comes to acting in the world, one should follow Hillel. Judaism accordingly has a long history of tolerating doctrinal disputes and deviation in belief, focusing instead on behavioral norms. Belief of course is not absent in these discussions, but the focus tends to be on practice and not abstract principles of faith.

Peter Steinfels tells quite a different story with regard to Christianity. Creedal and core beliefs are central and important loci of difference.