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INTRODUCTION: ADAPTIVE PREFERENCES AND GLOBAL JUSTICE

As a woman who is organized you feel... stronger with more courage to be able to speak, because before, when you had never been organized, you don't know what organization is, you are scared to speak. How were you going to speak to someone you respect? You can't. But now... I've seen the change that I've made. Before I was very timid and now I'm not; I was too shy to talk with other women, but now I feel different. I have changed.

(SONIA, *Quoted in Rowlands* 1997, 78)

A woman on her own, without anyone to help her understand the situation she is living in, she couldn't do anything.... If we met here, just feeling things we feel inside without expressing it outside... but no, through training, you start to talk about what you feel, about what you see, with the other women. I haven't forgotten when she [activist Maria Esther Ruiz] told us in a meeting that she had some friends.... "I have some friends that can help me to study...". That was to encourage us to get organized, so that we would realize that getting together and talking about problems would help us.

(ANONYMOUS WOMAN, *Quoted in Rowlands* 1997, 78)

Above are the words of two participants in a women's empowerment project initiated by the Programa Educativo de La Mujer (Women's Educational Project, PAEM) in rural Honduras in the 1980s and '90s. The general life situation the women describe having endured before coming to PAEM is common to many of the world's women—in both rich and poor countries. Before PAEM, the women lived with very limited senses of what they were capable of and faced limited opportunities for flourishing.[1] The particular women in the epigraph lived in the poor but beautiful village of El Pital, where they faced daily struggles for basic well-being (Rowlands 1997, 74). In addition to poverty, these women lived with a "clear sexual division of labor and scanty social services" (Rowlands 1997, 67). Many of them had husbands

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who severely restricted their mobility and expected them to live in isolation from one another. Sonia, the PAEM participant who is the voice of the first epigraph, had a husband who left her locked in the house for most of the day while he was gone (Rowlands 1997, 68). Another PAEM participant describes herself as encountering "serious problems" in learning "how to leave the house" (Rowlands 1997, 81), and still another says that women "never used to get out of the house" (Rowlands 1997, 79) before PAEM. The limits on these women's opportunities for flourishing were significant and persistent.

Many of the women also seem to have internalized limiting views about what they were capable of. By some of the women of El Pital's own accounts, they acquiesced to their own deprivation before they became involved in PAEM programs. Some of them described themselves as previously having been "timid" and "afraid to speak" (Rowlands 1997, 77–78). One described herself as having felt as though she were "hardly worth anything" (Rowlands 1997, 77). The village's priest described the typical woman as not believing "she is entitled to certain rights and to defend them" (Rowlands 1997, 79). Maria Esther Ruiz, the Honduran activist who founded PAEM, describes the initial problem for PAEM participants as "the way they are devalued by themselves and society" (Rowlands 1997, 97). Jo Rowlands, an Oxfam researcher who interviewed these women and others from nearby communities described them as frequently seeing "poverty as their lot and hav[ing] a fatalistic attitude toward things that has to be overcome every time they act" (Rowlands 1997, 104).

This book is about what public institutions owe to people like the women of El Pital—people who seem to acquiesce to their own deprivation. Amartya Sen writes that "there is much evidence in history that acute inequalities often survive precisely by making allies out of the deprived" (Sen 1990, 126). The story of the women of El Pital suggests that Sen is right; oppressed and deprived people sometimes become complicit in perpetuating their own deprivation. In contemporary feminist philosophy and development ethics, self-depriving desires people form under unjust conditions are typically referred to as "adaptive preferences." People with adaptive preferences experience deprivation partly as a result of their own behaviors or desires—behaviors and desires that have been shaped by unjust social conditions.

We know that not all oppressed and deprived people resist their deprivation. This fact raises a number of questions for political philosophy. Should public institutions uncritically accept deprived people's existing desires in the name of respecting people's capacities for choice or promoting cultural diversity? Was PAEM wrong to question the women of El Pital's self-subordinating beliefs and behaviors? Should PAEM have instead have refused to question the women's

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existing preferences on the grounds that the women were adults whose choices should be respected? At the other extreme, should public institutions simply override beliefs and behaviors that are deprivation-perpetuating? That is, should PAEM have forced women to leave their homes and participate in public life because that would have made their lives better? In this book, I suggest that we can answer all these questions in the negative. Public institutions need not choose between uncritically respecting adaptive preferences on one hand and flatly overriding them on the other. Nor must public institutions choose between valuing choice and cultural diversity and promoting deprived people's flourishing.

My project in this book is to offer what I call a "deliberative perfectionist approach" to public intervention in the lives of people with adaptive preferences, an approach that both prioritizes their flourishing *and* respects their right to lead the types of lives they want to lead. I attempt to show that people with adaptive preferences are simultaneously active choosers whose deeply held conceptions of the good deserve respect *and* participants in their own deprivation whose deprivation-perpetuating behaviors should be questioned. I also argue that there is a type of intervention in the lives of people with adaptive preferences that takes seriously both of these facts about people with adaptive preferences—that they are worthy sources of decisions about how to lead their lives and that they are vulnerable human beings whose flourishing needs support and attention. The women of El Pital accepted certain aspects of their own deprivation, but this does not mean that they were not reflective agents who could make meaningful decisions and care deeply about certain things. Still, the fact that the women of El Pital were reflective agents should not be taken to mean that their deprivation-perpetuating desires and behaviors were good for them. I argue in this book that public institutions should promote people's basic flourishing and that doing this requires public intervention in the lives of people with adaptive preferences. Yet this intervention need not be thought of as imposing an alien form of life on people who do not value their basic flourishing. Rather, the appropriate type of intervention can increase people's capacities to live in accordance with their deeply held desires for flourishing and their personal or cultural values.

My deliberative perfectionist approach is intended as a moral framework for this "appropriate type" of adaptive preference intervention. My approach permits representatives of public institutions, such as activists or development practitioners, to ask whether deprived people's preferences are consistent with human flourishing. Representatives of public institutions may treat desires and behaviors that seem inconsistent with a person's basic flourishing as suspect—that is, as worthy of scrutiny aimed at determining whether those desires and behaviors are likely to be adaptive. Development practitioners should interrogate such suspect preferences in order to understand the actual effects of those preferences on

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theflourishing of their bearers, and, in cases where preference transformation is appropriate, they should work *with* deprived people to come up with strategies for change.

Indeed, this is the type of intervention that PAEM engaged in with the women of El Pital. An activist from a nearby village, Maria Esther Ruiz, believed that the women of this community lacked both resources and power. She saw the women's acceptance of an unjust social order not as an injunction to respect their desires for subordination but rather as an invitation to engage these women as thinkers and deliberators who could be persuaded to choose more flourishing lives for themselves. She believed that they could imagine better lives for themselves on their own terms. The interventions she initiated were based on the belief that empowering the women to analyze and devise strategies for fighting their own subordination was the best way to change their lives (Rowlands 1997, 92–93). PAEM used reading materials based in local cultural values and a strong normative commitment to women's self-development to train women from El Pital to animate their own study circles—study circles that sometimes grew into educational circles on issues like reproductive health (Rowlands 1997, 96), sources of confidence to renegotiate relationships and resist their husbands' restrictions on their mobility (Rowlands 1997, 79–81), and the cores of income and food-generating activities (Rowlands 1997, 84). These interventions were not panaceas; the income-generating activities have not all been successful (Rowlands 1997, 74) and some of the women still face some (less severe) limitations on their mobility (Rowlands 1997, 80). And yet there is an important sense in which the women of El Pital have changed their lives by developing confidence to participate in public life. Deborah Eade, the Oxfam researcher who evaluated PAEM, noticed a change over the years where women went from covering their mouths and claiming they were too shy to speak to addressing whole crowds of other women (Rowlands 1997, 94).

The PAEM intervention in El Pital shows us that it is possible to treat people with adaptive preferences as involved in the undermining of their own flourishing and to engage them as agents who deserve to play a decisive role in determining the outcome of their lives. The deliberative perfectionist approach to adaptive preference intervention I offer in this book is an attempt to theorize the moral implications of interventions like PAEM's.

I have two more limited aims in this introduction. First, I sketch the book's argument in a fairly nontechnical way in hopes of illuminating its main points for readers who are not academic philosophers and providing a map of the book's argument for readers who are. Second, I show how my deliberative perfectionist approach responds to some of the key dilemmas facing attempts at a transnational feminist politics. Feminist theorists who want to write about the lives of third-

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world women and who endorse cross-cultural feminist interventions must be attentive to the various ways in which feminist theorizing about deprivation can function to obscure the agency of deprived people and misrepresent the causes of their deprivation. My second project in this introduction is thus to situate my deliberative perfectionist approach to adaptive preference intervention within a broader set of feminist concerns about women's agency and global justice.

Before I proceed to outline the book's argument and situate that argument within feminist conversations about global justice, I pause to make a few qualifying remarks about the terms and examples I use in the rest of this book. Specifically, I explain my usage of the terms "public institutions" and "third world" as well as my focus on examples of adaptive preferences held by third-world women. The deliberative perfectionist approach I offer in this book is intended to justify and guide adaptive preference-transforming interventions by representatives of public institutions. Readers may want to know what I mean by the term "public institution" here. Though I intend the term to include state actors, I use the term "public institution" in recognition of the fact that, in poor countries, many duties typically associated with the state in political philosophy are discharged by non-state actors. I intend the term "public institution" to include states in addition to non-state actors engaged in discharging state-like duties. These state-like non-state actors are often nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) charged with providing education for citizenship, basic social services, etc. in poor countries. I describe NGOs as public institutions both because they are entrusted with discharging state-like duties and because aid to governments is often disbursed through them.[2]

Though the term "third-world women" may strike many readers as outdated, I use it deliberately. One of my central reasons for using this term is my sense that neither of the key alternatives, "women from developing countries" or "women from the global South," accurately captures the geopolitical position of the women most frequently described in philosophical literature as possessors of adaptive preferences. I am uncomfortable with the term "women in developing countries," as it seems to suggest that traditionalindicators reliably track a country's development—an assumption I am keen to reject, given that I reject the view that human flourishing can be reduced to access to income.[3] I am more comfortable with the term "women from the global South" and do occasionally use it.

However, I wonder whether the term "South" accurately captures the extent to which a defining feature of the South for many Westerners is the perception of the South as culturally backward. I believe this is a reason many feminists from the global South continue to use the term "third world"; they wish to emphasize that the perceived difference that marks them in the Western imaginary is not only a difference in income but a perceived hierarchical cultural difference. Since the approach I offer

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in this book is intended to be consistent with the claim that many non-Western cultural practices can promote objective human flourishing, I choose to retain a word that emphasizes that cultural difference and economic difference mark the countries we now typically refer to as the South. Finally, I choose to retain the term "third world" because I believe the numerical ranking explicit in it rhetorically frames global justice as a problem of severe *inequality* rather than poverty alone.[4]

I also wish to make a brief remark about my frequent use of preferences held by third-world women as examples of adaptive preferences. I have chosen to focus on adaptive preferences held by women in poor countries mostly because development interventions aimed at changing the adaptive preferences of third-world women are a common occurrence in our political world, and I am interested in asking about the conditions under which these real-world interventions might be morally justifiable. I do not believe that all third-world women have adaptive preferences and my position does not logically entail this belief. Nor do I believe that adaptive preferences are held exclusively by third-world women. It seems uncontroversial that women's adaptive preferences are part of the reason that patriarchal practices persist in the West. The justification of public intervention to transform adaptive preferences that I develop in this book logically justifies public intervention to transform the basic well-being affecting preferences of women in rich countries as well as poor countries.

What Public Institutions Owe to People with Adaptive Preferences: An Overview of the Argument

This book attempts to answer the question of what public institutions owe to people with adaptive preferences. It has two main aims: to explain why we should want an explicit definition of adaptive preference and to offer an approach to identifying and responding to adaptive preferences in practice based on a perfectionist definition of adaptive preference.

Why We Need an Explicit Definition of Adaptive Preference

One reason we need an explicit definition of adaptive preference is simply that we lack conceptual clarity about what adaptive preferences are. Earlier in this introduction, I asked what public institutions should do for women "like the women of El Pital." But to say that people with adaptive preferences are people "like the women of El Pital" is to gloss over the fact that ethicists and development practitioners constantly discuss adaptive preferences without being clear about what they are. Adaptive preference seems to have become a topic of discussion in

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development ethics in the 1980s, where the problem of adaptive preference was frequently discussed as a challenge to utilitarian theories of social distribution. The basic claim of these utilitarian theories is that we can measure how well people are doing by measuring how well their desires are satisfied. Theorists of adaptive preference, most notably Jon Elster (1987) and Sen (1988, 45; 2002, 634), problematized the metric of desire satisfaction by claiming that some people would *not* be doing well if their desires were satisfied. Desire satisfaction would "attach too small a value" to the "losses" of well-being "suffered by the dominated housewife, the hardened unemployed or the over-exhausted coolie" (Sen 1988, 45–46). The underlying idea seemed to be that it was counterintuitive to take the satisfaction of certain of desires as indicative of well-being.

But what was this class of desires? Sen was more interested in criticizing utilitarianism than answering this question, so he let our intuitive reactions to some examples make his case. Certainly, satisfying the desire for exhaustion of the over-exhausted coolie does not cause the coolie to achieve well-being, or so Sen expected our intuitions to lead us to conclude. Elster, on the other hand, explicitly defined adaptive preferences as preferences whereby a person unconsciously downgraded her desires for things she could not access, like the fox in the fable who believes the grapes he cannot reach are sour (Elster 1987, 117–119).

The concept Elster named is now widely discussed in development ethics and feminist philosophy, but the notion of adaptive preference animating contemporary ethical debates is not identical to Elster's. Martha Nussbaum offers a host of examples of supposedly adaptive preferences, many of which do not fit Elster's definition—for instance, the story of Vasanti, a poor Indian woman who remains in an abusive relationship because she believes she is condemned to suffer, not because she thinks a non-suffering life is not worth having (Nussbaum 2001, 112). Sen continues to discuss examples of adaptive preference that also fail to meet Elster's criteria—like people who *consciously* adjust their preferences. For example, he groups *deciding* that "it is silly to bemoan" one's lack of political freedom and using "heroic efforts" to be happy despite caste or race oppression with "coming to terms with adversities" (Sen 2002, 634).[5]

Beyond these theoretical discussions, we find attempts to describe what adaptive preferences would look like in real people. Sabina Alkire worries that people's adaptive preferences will introduce bias into participatory evaluations of well-being. She notes that poor women in Kerala highly value their roles as wives and mothers and that some scholars have asked whether this valuing is not simply an adaptation to a lack of opportunity outside the household and customs that place a high value on women's honor (Alkire 2007a, 20). Marilyn Friedman describes as adaptive the preferences of women who endorse "traditional norms

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of femininity only because they live under circumstances that penalize contrary choices" (Friedman 2003, 24–25). Deepa Narayan writes that a real-life case of adaptive preference would look like this: "a woman's perception of herself and her world may be so skewed by her circumstances and cultural upbringing that she may say and believe that she genuinely prefers things that she would not prefer if she were aware of other possibilities" (D. Narayan 2005, 34).

A truly diverse set of preferences has been grouped together under the adaptive preference rubric. We have preferences that are formed by conscious (Sen) and unconscious processes (Elster), as well as preferences described as adaptive without any discussion of whether they were consciously formed (Alkire, Friedman, and D. Narayan). We have preferences that seem to exist because of a lack of options (Friedman and Alkire) and preferences that seem to be formed because of a lack of awareness (D. Narayan). We have preferences that undermine or "skew" people's entire senses of self (D. Narayan and Nussbaum) and preferences that may not (Elster and parts of Sen).

It is puzzling to try to figure out what all of the foregoing preferences have in common. They seem to be shaped by social conditions and they seem to be bad indicators of what the well-being of their bearers would require. It seems right to say that if we want to know what the "dominated housewife" needs, we should not assume that her desire to be dominated straightforwardly answers the question. But is this intuitive definition sufficient to guide development practice? If development practitioners and activists are going to attempt to improve the lives of people with adaptive preferences, they need to know what adaptive preferences are.

A second reason that we need an explicit definition of adaptive preference is that without one, development practitioners are likely to identify adaptive preferences by consulting their personal intuitions. We should not expect individuals' intuitions to reliably identify adaptive preferences in practice.. Readers interested in what is wrong with authorizing development practitioners to identify adaptive preferences according to their personal intuitions should consult Chapter 1. I argue there that practitioners who rely on their intuitions alone to identify adaptive preferences are likely to misunderstand the causes of people's adaptive preferences or see adaptive preferences where none exist. Attempts to identify adaptive preferences in practice are susceptible to some basic types of confusion. To identify another person's adaptive preferences and attempt to respond to them is to make judgments about the effects of—and reasons behind—her behavior. In many cases, it is also to make such judgments across differences in class, culture, or gender. Activists and development practitioners who attempt to identify adaptive preferences engage in a complex, high-stakes practice of making judgments about those who are different from them. We do not always know why other people do what they do or how their

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behaviors affect them, and this difficulty is magnified when their life-contexts differ significantly from our own.In Chapter 1, I identify three "occupational hazards" of attempts to identify and respond to adaptive preferences—three ways real-life attempts at understanding adaptive preferences are likely to go wrong. Two of these occupational hazards involve misunderstanding the reasons behind people's adaptive preferences. I call these "psychologizing the structural" and "misidentifying trade-offs." Psychologizing the structural is treating people's beliefs and attitudes—that is, their psychologies—as the proximate causes of their deprivation. There are cases where people's beliefs and attitudes are the main cause of their oppression or deprivation, cases where people's beliefs and attitudes are only one cause of it, and cases where people's beliefs and attitudes play only an attenuated role in sustaining their deprivation.

Imagine that the husbands of the women of El Pital did not restrict their mobility—say, the women did not leave their houses because they were trained in norms urging feminine seclusion by mothers who came from a different generation in which female mobility was strictly punished by men. If this were the situation of the women of El Pital, their adaptive preferences would fall into the first group I described above; their beliefs and attitudes would be the primary cause of their deprivation, and changing their beliefs and attitudes would be the best way to promote their flourishing. The actual case of the women of El Pital seems to fall into the second group I described; the women's beliefs and attitudes were *part* of the cause of their lack of mobility. By changing their attitudes, the women were able to begin negotiating with their husbands, but their changed attitudes did not eliminate barriers to their mobility. Their husbands retained significant control over them despite the women's increased resistant consciousness. Now imagine a third case—where the women of El Pital are chafing at restrictions on their mobility but remain in the house because all the roads are washed out by rain; the women in this case are unlikely to experience improvements in their flourishing because of a consciousness-raising activity, because—quite simply—they need better roads, not better self-esteem. The attitudes of the women who lack mobility because of the absences of roads play only a much attenuated role—if any role at all—in maintaining their lack of mobility. Psychologizing the structural means mistakenly treating the women in this third group as though it is their beliefs, rather than social structures, that need to be changed. In practice, we should want to sort out preferences in this third group from preferences in the first and second groups; we will endorse ineffective and condescending interventions if we do not.

Another type of mistake development practitioners may make if they rely on their intuitions is that of "misidentifying trade-offs." The error here is similar to that of psychologizing the structural in that it involves misunderstanding the

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particular character of people's adaptive preferences. But where psychologizing the structural is about inappropriately treating the beliefs and attitudes of deprived people as the central cause of their deprivation, misidentifying trade-offs is about failing to see that adaptive preferences sometimes involve accepting less of one good to attain more of another. Those who cannot access flourishing in all domains of life, may be forced to sacrifice basic flourishing in one domain to achieve it in another. Imagine now that the women of El Pital do not leave the house very much only because their husbands will beat them if they do not. Here, the women may consciously trade flourishing in one arena of life (mobility) for flourishing in another (bodily health or freedom from violence). A development practitioner who approached these women under the assumption that their problem was a lack of value for mobility would ignore the extent to which values other than the value of mobility are implicated in the women's behavior. Such a practitioner would propose an intervention in the wrong domain of life; what these women likely need instead is a health, relationship negotiation, or income-producing intervention.

A third hazard of allowing development practitioners to identify adaptive preferences intuitively does not involve misunderstanding the reasons for people's adaptive preferences. Rather, it involves of seeing adaptive preferences where none exist. I call this occupational hazard "confusing difference with deprivation." Confusing difference with deprivation is treating unfamiliar preferences that are fully compatible with flourishing as though they were adaptive preferences. It is likely to occur when a development practitioner fails to understand the contextual meaning of a preference, or when a practitioner assumes that the way of flourishing to which she is accustomed is the only way. Imagine, for a moment, that the women of El Pital repeatedly talk about their desire to submit to the will of God. We can see a practitioner interpreting these comments as evidence of a fatalistic attitude that prevents women from resisting their oppression. The practitioner might think that these women only want to submit to the will of God because they have never been able to direct the courses of their own lives. We can imagine the practitioner being right about this, but we can also imagine her being dead wrong. For instance, the women of El Pital may believe that God wants them to flourish and that submitting to God's will means struggling for their own survival. Educational texts put together by PAEM send the message that God wants women to be empowered (Rowlands 1997, 107–109), so it is not too difficult to imagine women whose desire to submit to God promotes, rather than impedes, their flourishing. But a secular practitioner who simply consulted her personal intuitions in order to determine which preferences needed transforming might miss the positive effects of the women's religious beliefs on their flourishing.

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Without an explicit definition of adaptive preference, representatives of public institutions are free to simply consult their personal intuitions to distinguish preferences that are reliable indicators of what deprived people need from ones that are not. In other words, deciding which preferences should be questioned because they are adaptive becomes a matter of development practitioner opinion. This can lead to morally objectionable outcomes; it can lead to treating people's preferences as adaptive just because they are different; and it can lead to ineffective interventions with inappropriate foci. There is a third reason that we need an explicit definition of adaptive preference, and it this: without a clear definition, development practitioners are likely to fall back on implausible commonsense ideas about adaptive preference that come with pernicious conceptual baggage; they suggest it is appropriate to treat people with adaptive preferences as incapable of making respect-worthy choices about their lives.

Two related commonsense conceptions of adaptive preference that we should reject are conceptions of adaptive preferences as autonomy deficits and conceptions of adaptive preferences as totally undermining an agent's self-worth. I argue against these conceptions in the second and third chapters, respectively. As I argue in the second chapter, adaptive preferences are often conceived as deficits of autonomy. In other words, we tend to think of adaptive preferences as preferences people did not choose to have. There are a number of reasons we might be inclined toward thinking of adaptive preferences as unchosen. We usually think that people's chosen conceptions of the good do a good job of telling us what their well-being would require. It would seem logical, then, if the underlying reason we think adaptive preferences are unreliable guides to people's needs were that people do not choose their adaptive preferences. Adaptive preferences are often described offhand as preferences that are "imposed" by social conditions on the people who have them, and imposition is the opposite of choice. Further, helping people move past their adaptive preferences is frequently described as giving people with adaptive preferences "real choices." If a person transforms her adaptive preferences by getting "real choices," it seems plausible to think of adaptive preferences as formed through some sort of false-choice process.

To see what it might look like to conceive adaptive preferences as choice deficits, we can return to our El Pital example. On an autonomy deficit view of adaptive preference, we might think that the women did not choose to think of themselves as unworthy of leaving the house, and we may think that this is why we do not see their initial preference not to leave their homes as a reliable guide to what their well-being would require. We might thus see their preference not to leave the house as somehow "imposed" or reflective of a lack of "real choice." However, there are real problems with treating adaptive preferences as unchosen. One of these problems is simply that it is incoherent to think of adaptive

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preferences as defined by their unchosen character. If we think that we can explain our intuition that adaptive preferences are not good guides to the needs of people who have them on the grounds that adaptive preferences are unchosen, then we should think that all unchosen preferences are unreliable guides to the needs of the people who have them. But we do not think this. There are plenty of unchosen preferences that we do not see as questionable indicators of people's well-being. If the women of El Pital uncritically decided to participate in public life because they lived in a society where women's participation in public life was the norm, we would not therefore think of their desire for mobility as adaptive.

Another problem with accepting the commonsense definition of adaptive preferences as unchosen is that it discourages us from treating people with adaptive preferences as the types of people who can make authoritative decisions about their own lives. To describe adaptive preferences as more "imposed" than other types of preferences is to ignore the fact that all of us have preferences that are shaped by our social conditions. To act as though having one's preferences shaped by social conditions is particular to deprived people is to put forward a conception of deprived people as less likely to make choices and reflect on their lives than people in positions of privilege. I see no good reason to credit this assumption. If development practitioners see people with adaptive preferences as passive bystanders in their own preference formation, they have little incentive to try to understand what deprived people's preferences mean to them and why they have the preferences they do. Further, we often think that people's capacity to make reflective choices is what protects them from being legitimate objects of coercion; public institutions should not flatly override the preferences of people who understand and identify with their preferences. Characterizing people with adaptive preferences as incapable of choice leads us toward seeing people with adaptive preferences as appropriate objects of coercion. If we see the women of El Pital as preferring to stay at home because they are incapable of choosing, we will be left with few arguments against coercing them.

Of course, having certain unchosen preferences does not turn a person into the type of being who is incapable of making choices. Even if we see adaptive preferences as unchosen preferences, it remains possible that people who are overall capable of choice can have certain preferences they did not choose to have. However, we cannot distinguish people's status as choosers from the chosenness of their preferences if we see adaptive preferences as affecting people's senses of self in a global way. The idea that adaptive preferences affect and undermine the *entire* selves of deprived people is the commonsense definition of adaptive preference I urge us to reject in the third chapter; this definition, too, is implausible and promotes morally objectionable attitudes toward people with adaptive preferences.

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People with adaptive preferences are often described, and often describe themselves, as victims of a generalized belief that they are undeserving. We need look no farther for an instance of this than the narrative of the El Pital woman who says that she believed she was not worth much before her participation in PAEM (Rowlands 1997, 77) or the comment from Maria Esther Ruiz, PAEM's founder that women "devalue themselves" before they participate in empowerment programs (Rowlands 1997, 97). Like thinking of adaptive preferences as unchosen, it makes intuitive sense to think of people with adaptive preferences as lacking a sense that they are valuable. Why would a person not resist severe restrictions on her mobility? We might answer that it is because she does not have an adequate sense of self; if she had a sense of herself as a being with rights, she would not let other people push her around.

Despite the commonsense appeal of the notion that people with adaptive preferences lack general conceptions of themselves as worthy, I argue in the third chapter that we should think of adaptive preferences as *selectively* rather than *globally* affecting people's senses of self-entitlement. It is implausible that most deprived people have generally underdeveloped senses of self, so I suggest alternative ways of understanding adaptive preferences that do not require us to see the people who have them as lacking senses of self. Adaptive preferences sometimes affect only people's conceptions of self-worth relative to certain others or certain goods; indeed, women who begin to attend PAEM groups begin by being very critical of themselves *and each other* (Rowlands 1997, 95). This willingness to criticize other women suggests a sense of self-entitlement vis-à-vis other women, notwithstanding the lack of a sense of self-entitlement vis-à-vis men. It seems that what the PAEM women tend to describe as a general lack of self-worth is not a *complete* lack of it, since some of the women clearly think of themselves as superior to other women. Further, people with adaptive preferences may internalize negative self-concepts without this internalization being total or uniform; they may experience struggles within themselves to feel positively about themselves, and they may gain positive evaluations of aspects of their own identities through relationships with other people who are similarly oppressed or deprived. For instance, we can imagine women like those of El Pital having learned to view themselves positively as women through relationships with their mothers, and as continuing to look to the self-concepts generated by these relationships for self-worth—even while they are dominated by their husbands.

Moreover, a person may express a positive or ambivalent attitude toward her self-entitlement *through* her adaptive preferences. This will seem less puzzling if we acknowledge that there are often very real incentives for oppressed and deprived people to deprive themselves. Oppressed and deprived people are sometimes able to gain social recognition or achieve higher- order goals by impeding

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their own flourishing in certain domains of life. There are women all over the world who remain mostly in their homes like the women of El Pital but do so because adherence to norms of female seclusion increases their social status. It would be odd to describe a person who actively pursues social status as a person who does not experience herself as deserving—which is what a view of adaptive preferences as general deficits in self-worth would ask us to do.

It is not only that the commonsense view of adaptive preferences as general self-entitlement deficits is implausible; it also encourages us to take certain morally objectionable views of people with adaptive preferences. Development practitioners often describe transforming the lives of people with adaptive preferences as a matter of replacing deprived people's old senses of self or helping them to develop senses of self they previously lacked. I see this notion of development projects as creating senses of self for deprived people as mystical at best and morally problematic at worst. If people with adaptive preferences lack general senses of themselves as deserving, there are good reasons not to take their desires seriously. If people with adaptive preferences lack senses of self, it seems that they have no concept of what matters to them and thus no autonomous conceptions of the good that public institutions should attempt to respect. It is also disempowering to deprived people to have to work with development practitioners who are predisposed to treat all of their desires as suspect. Further, if we see adaptive preferences as making people's entire self-conceptions suspect, there is little reason to involve people with adaptive preferences in imagining better futures for themselves at all. If all of the desires of deprived people are self-undermining, any meaningful input by deprived people into the design of development projects is likely only to undercut those projects' success.

Thinking of adaptive preferences as global self-entitlement deficits occludes the possibility that people with adaptive preferences can come to adopt preferences that are consistent with their basic flourishing *and* consistent with their existing conceptions of what is important in life. If having adaptive preferences means not having a sense of self, or not having a respect-worthy sense of what matters and what one cares about, building strategies for preference transformation around the desires of deprived people is just a way of entrenching their deprivation. We should also be wary of strategies for adaptive preference intervention that discourage development practitioners from engaging people in designing responses to their own deprivation, because such strategies are likely to produce change that people with adaptive preferences do not *endorse*. Such strategies ask people to simply give up their existing senses of what matters to them in order to flourish, and they do so unnecessarily. Instead of asking deprived people to abandon their existing values, development practitioners should favor strategies that cultivate existing resistance and positive self-images on the part of people

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with adaptive preferences. They should do so for moral and pragmatic reasons; endorsement increases people's flourishing and increases the effectiveness of development interventions. People are more likely to adopt preferences consistent with flourishing if those preferences can be fit into their networks of existing values; the story of the women of El Pital embracing their own public self-representation for Catholic reasons is a case in point.

A Perfectionist Definition of Adaptive Preference and a Deliberative Perfectionist Approach to Adaptive Preference Intervention

In addition to explaining why we need a clear, non-autonomy-centered definition of adaptive preference, I offer a conception of adaptive preference that can guide more responsible adaptive preference interventions. This definition appears in the first chapter. I propose that we think of adaptive preferences as preferences inconsistent with basic flourishing that a person developed under conditions nonconducive to basic flourishing and that we expect her to change under conditions conducive to basic flourishing.

There are a few noteworthy contrasts between my definition of adaptive preference and the commonsense definitions of adaptive preference I discussed in the previous section. First, my definition of adaptive preference does not ask us to think of adaptive preferences as globally—or even very generally—affecting people's senses of themselves as deserving. Nothing in my definition excludes the possibility of a person having adapted some preferences but not others. We can imagine a woman who lives in a situation like that of El Pital who does not see herself as worthy of mobility but highly values her own nutrition and thus spends a large amount of her time engaged in subsistence agriculture behind her home. Indeed, my definition of adaptive preference does not say that adaptive preferences need to be experienced as self-esteem deficits at all. I have no doubt that some adaptive preferences are sustained by oppressed or deprived people's belief that they are unworthy; the El Pital women who describe themselves as afraid of speaking before people they see as more important than themselves are a case in point. But there are other forms of adaptive preference that do not involve the conscious perception that one is unworthy. For instance, some adaptive preferences may be based on simple lacks of information; we can imagine poor women in a situation like that of El Pital eating a nutritionally inadequate diet based on straightforward ignorance of the nutritional contents of her food.

A second noteworthy distinction between my definition of adaptive preference and the commonsense ones I listed in the last section is that I do not understand adaptive preferences as undermining people's capacities for autonomy. I believe

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that people can form adaptive preferences and remain autonomous agents with reflective capacities and senses of what matters to them. The definition of adaptive preference I offer is consistent with this belief. I define adaptive preferences as characterized by both substantive and procedural features; recall that adaptive preferences are preferences inconsistent with a person's basic flourishing that she developed under conditions hostile to her flourishing. Some adaptive preferences may be formed by nonautonomous processes, but many are not. Further, it is not the nonautonomy of the adaptive preferences formed by nonautonomous processes that makes those preferences worthy of public scrutiny. If nonautonomy is not the distinguishing feature of adaptive preference, we can avoid thinking of adaptive preferences as legitimately subject to coercive overriding and avoid thinking of people with adaptive preferences as lacking respect-worthy conceptions of what matters to them. If it is not autonomy deficiency that identifies adaptive preferences, we can coherently explain why some autonomy-deficient preferences strike us as adaptive while others do not; for instance, we can explain why the El Pital woman who accepts very limited mobility without questioning the norms of her society seems to have adaptive preferences whereas the woman who moves about freely without questioning the norms of her society does not.

This brings us to the third noteworthy difference between my definition of adaptive preference and other prevailing definitions: my conception of adaptive preference asks us to think of inconsistency with human flourishing as a defining feature of adaptive preferences. We can explain why unquestioning acceptance of norms of female seclusion strikes us as an adaptive preference while unquestioning acceptance of norms of female mobility does not by pointing out that the former preference is inconsistent with basic flourishing. I argue in this book that an adaptive preference has to sustain a form of life that is bad for a personl. This is part of why the definition of adaptive preference put forth in this book qualifies as perfectionist. Moral perfectionists believe that there is an objective good for human beings and that this good lies in flourishing—developing and living in accordance with human nature. My approach says that one reason we think of adaptive preferences as bad guides to the needs of the people who have them is that there is an objective quality to people's needs for flourishing. If we think of adaptive preferences as *distorting* people's understandings of their needs, it is because we believe there is an objective truth about their needs that is capable of being distorted. A concept of human flourishing can provide us with an objective sense of what human beings need.

There is another important role that perfectionism plays in my definition of adaptive preference. I say that a preference is adaptive only if it is likely that a person will change it and endorse her change of it under better conditions. How can we claim that a person is likely to change and endorse her adaptive prefer-

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ences under better conditions? On what grounds can we say that, given the fair value of the opportunity to express themselves in public, the women of El Pital are likely to want to do just that? Perfectionism asserts that it is in the nature of human beings to flourish, and this idea supports the claim that people are likely to choose preferences more consistent with flourishing under conditions conducive to it. If we can expect people's autonomously formed preferences to remain the same under any social conditions, there is no reason to assume that people with adaptive preferences will change their preferences under better conditions. But if we believe that people have an underlying tendency toward basic flourishing, we have reason to anticipate that they will adjust their preferences in favor of flourishing when they have opportunities to do so.

I call the idea that people tend to choose in accordance with their basic flourishing "the Flourishing Claim." The Flourishing Claim explains why we can reasonably expect noncoercive adaptive preference interventions to improve people's flourishing. This is not to say that adaptive preference intervention is always successful; people internalize flourishing-inconsistent preferences with varying degrees of depth, and some people probably have internalized such preferences so deeply that there is no hope of changing them. But it is to say that we can expect a high degree of coincidence between what people want and what is good for them. Looked at in a different light, the Flourishing Claim also helps us to make sense of certain commonsense ideas about adaptive preference. The Flourishing Claim helps us to understand why activists and development practitioners often refer to adaptive preferences as imposed by social conditions; perhaps what they mean is that people's adaptive preferences would not persist under conditions that supported flourishing human life. The Flourishing Claim also helps us to make sense of why development practitioners speak of adaptive preference interventions as giving people opportunities to make *meaningful* choices for the first time; perhaps what it means to have meaningful choices is not to have the subjective capacities necessary for choice but rather to have access to options that would allow one to flourish.

Once we recognize that a central problem with adaptive preferences is that they are adapted to conditions inappropriate for human flourishing, we can develop a more honest and responsible way of conceptualizing adaptive preference intervention. Absent the clarifications of the previous paragraph, speaking of adaptive preferences as somehow choice-deficient risks treating people with adaptive preferences as though something is deeply wrong with *them*—that is, as though their capacities for reflection and choice were impaired. This problem is not only a function of speaking of adaptive preferences as choice-deficient, I would argue. I would also suggest that it is a function of the very term "adaptive preference." The term suggests that adaptive preferences cannot reliably tell us what the people who have them

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need, because their preferences are adapted to social conditions. The term suggests that the only preferences adapted to social conditions are ones held by people who are oppressed and deprived. This is clearly false. To move us away from this type of confusion, I suggest a terminological shift. In the book, I speak of "inappropriately adaptive preferences" (IAPs) rather than simply "adaptive preferences." Motivating this terminological shift is my belief that adaptive preferences are complicit in perpetuating less than flourishing forms of life. The problem with adaptive preferences is not just that social conditions influence them; it is that *bad* social conditions influence people to form preferences that are *bad for them*.

But how do we know what "bad" social conditions are and what types of preferences participate in sustaining lives that are bad for people? We need a conception of human flourishing to answer this question. Presumably, lives that are bad for people are lives that are inconsistent with their basic flourishing, but what is basic flourishing? We need a conception of human flourishing for my perfectionist definition of adaptive preference to be of any practical use, and not just any definition of flourishing will do. If we want to be able to make judgments about adaptive preference across difference, we need a definition of human flourishing that is acceptable to a diverse group of people. Moreover, if we believe that people can have reasonably different conceptions of an excellent life without having adaptive preferences—which I think we do believe—we need a conception of human flourishing that focuses on its basic levels. That is, we may believe that some forms of life are not flourishing at a high level (i.e., excellent) without thereby committing to the belief that the persons who are not flourishing at this high level have adaptive preferences. Say we believe that excellence involves superior performance at competitive sports. Even if we believe this, we probably do not think that a person who does not enjoy competition and has not had many opportunities for competition has adaptive preferences. We may believe her life is not excellent, but we do not believe that her preference against competition distorts her needs.[6] The idea that adaptive preferences misrepresent the needs of people who have them suggests that we need a conception of flourishing that is basic in order to identify them.

I argue that my perfectionist definition of adaptive preference should be supplemented by a particular *type* of conception of human flourishing. I do not say what human flourishing is, but I do lay out some stipulations for what a conception that can acceptably guide development practice should look like. A conception of human flourishing that guides development practice should be a *deliberative* conception of human flourishing. By this, I mean that the conception of human flourishing should be the result of a cross-cultural deliberative process—both because we want the conception not to substitute *one society's*

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conception of flourishing for *human* flourishing and because we want people to be judged by a conception of flourishing that is widely perceived as legitimate.

It is because I believe that we need a cross-culturally acceptable conception of flourishing that I do not propose my own conception of human flourishing. My own reflection is not a cross-cultural deliberative process, and I do not expect it to stand in for one. But I do believe we can anticipate certain features of a cross-culturally acceptable definition of human flourishing. I believe that such a definition will be substantively minimal, justificatorily minimal, and vague. By substantively minimal, I mean confined to the basic levels of human flourishing; I believe it is safe to say that we have stronger agreement about what basic human needs are than what human excellence is. By justificatorily minimal, I mean not based on a culturally specific set of justifications and compatible with a variety of different justifications; for instance, we can support basic mobility on the grounds that it is God's will for us to be able to interact with one another or on the grounds that people have rights to mobility that should not be abridged. And by vague, I mean described at a very high level of generality; we should expect a deliberative conception of human flourishing to include items like "adequate nutrition" and "mobility" rather than "access to meat" or "the capacity to go to shopping malls."

A conception of flourishing with these features will restrict the range of adaptive preference interventions that are morally acceptable. If development practitioners work with a vague and minimal conception of flourishing, it will not always be obvious whether people's preferences are consistent with their flourishing, and there will not be a single, obvious strategy for transforming adaptive preferences into preferences more compatible with flourishing. The conception of flourishing itself cannot tell development practitioners whether people's preferences are inappropriately adaptive and what should be done about it if they are. This, I believe, gives us a strong reason to support adaptive preference interventions that involve deliberation with deprived people. If it is not obvious from looking at real-world preferences how those preferences affect the flourishing of the people who hold them, dialogue about those preferences can contribute valuable information about how those preferences' well-being effects should be interpreted.

More important, a vague conception of human flourishing *underdetermines* what strategies for adaptive preference change should be chosen in any case. PAEM activists may have known that the women of El Pital did not have sufficient income and that they had a fatalistic attitude toward this fact, but this does not mean they knew what any particular group should do to increase their income, and different groups of women in El Pital came up with different income-generation projects like growing vegetables, running a community mill, and cooking and selling food (Rowlands 1997, 74). Since the conception of flourishing does

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not dictate what should be done to improve people's flourishing in any particular case, the desires of people with adaptive preferences should shape strategies for change. There are a variety of ways a person or group of people can improve their flourishing; people with adaptive preferences should play an important role in deciding which flourishing-compatible course of action should be adopted. To say this with reference to an example, if there are a variety of ways to achieve a basic income, deprived people themselves should participate in determining what strategy for achieving a basic income they pursue.

The deliberative conception of flourishing and my perfectionist definition of adaptive preference are the moral conceptions that guide my deliberative perfectionist approach to adaptive preference intervention. Deliberative perfectionist interventions proceed from the idea that preferences inconsistent with basic flourishing developed under bad conditions are preferences people would likely change under conditions more conducive to flourishing. In the typical deliberative perfectionist intervention, a practitioner will begin by suspecting that a person's (or group of people's) preferences are inconsistent with their flourishing. The practitioner will then attempt to understand—through deliberation with the person or people—how those preferences affect their flourishing. If the practitioner's suspicion that the preference is inconsistent with flourishing is warranted, she will involve the people with adaptive preferences in normative discussion of the preferences and designing a strategy for change. It is this type of process that PAEM activists used to transform the adaptive preferences of women in El Pital. Maria Ester Ruiz began by suspecting that the women of El Pital lacked the confidence to negotiate relationships with men and participate in public life (Rowlands 1997, 92–93). She worked with them to create discussion groups in which they were both encouraged to ask moral questions about their own subservience. Through these discussions, women envisioned their own strategies for change—strategies Ruiz sometimes did not anticipate. For instance, Ruiz was surprised to learn that some of the women prioritized learning how to negotiate sexual decisions with men (Rowlands 1997, 96). The women came to recognize their own subservience as a problem and design their own strategies for decreasing that subservience.

Readers may wonder why this deliberative perfectionist approach requires an objective conception of flourishing at all. Would interventions like PAEM's not do just as well without a conception of flourishing, as the conception is so vague? I ask readers concerned with this question to turn to Chapter 5 , where I discuss some of the difficulties of conducting adaptive preference interventions without an explicitly normative conception of empowerment. There, I show how a definition of adaptive preference that refers to a concept of human flourishing (i.e., a normative conception) can improve development interventions aimed empower-

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ing women. I demonstrate this by showing how my flourishing-based conception of adaptive preference responds to problems with contemporary empowerment interventions. Feminist development theorists and practitioners increasingly describe the lack of clarity about what empowerment is as a practical problem; the lack of clarity has allowed neoliberal development actors to present development projects that do little to change gender roles as "empowering" to women. Development theorists and practitioners also describe a number of practical difficulties that arise in attempts to identify states of empowerment and disempowerment in real people. I argue in Chapter 5 that these problems suggest a need for development practitioners to refine choice-based (e.g., very thinly normative) theories of empowerment. These theorists see defining empowerment as choice as requiring counterintuitive and morally problematic judgments about what the preferences of an empowered woman look like in the real world. Further, development theorists and practitioners note that the lack of an explicit conception of empowerment has justified foisting a culturally specific vision of the empowered woman on deprived people. I argue that concepts I have developed as a part of my deliberative perfectionist conception can motivate a more coherent and respectful development practice—one that can explain why not all chosen preferences intuitively seem empowering while simultaneously refusing to mold the lives of women with adaptive preferences according to a culturally specific vision of women's empowerment.

I believe that development practitioners cannot consistently and honestly respond to adaptive preferences without a conception of human flourishing, and this is why I advocate the deliberative perfectionist approach. But I also believe that development interventions can be normatively laden and express a high degree of respect for differences in people's conceptions of the good. We can accept the deliberative perfectionist approach and believe that individuals deserve the right to decide what types of lives they want to lead. We can also accept deliberative perfectionist adaptive preference interventions while believing that it is appropriate for different societies to promote different values. I urge readers who are interested in seeing how perfectionist adaptive preference intervention is compatible with moral diversity to turn to Chapter 4 (in this volume). In the Chapter 4, I show that *deliberative* adaptive preference interventions are fully compatible with a high degree of respect for individual autonomy; deliberatively encouraging people to make their preferences more compatible with flourishing does not involve coercing them and actually entails opportunities for them to build their capacities for autonomous agency. I also show that deliberative perfectionist adaptive preference interventions do not always require people to sacrifice values that are culturally important to them; instead, deliberative perfectionist interventions encourage people to imagine strategies

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for preference transformation that are compatible with their values *and* compatible with flourishing.

The Deliberative Perfectionist Approach and Transnational Feminist Politics

So far, I have described my deliberative perfectionist approach to adaptive preference intervention. The deliberative perfectionist approach understands adaptive preferences as preferences inconsistent with basic flourishing that are causally related to conditions nonconducive to basic flourishing. It understands basic flourishing according to a deliberative conception that is cross-culturally acceptable, minimal, and vague. The approach holds that practitioners should suspect preferences of adaptiveness based on a combination of their content and the processes by which they were formed, but it insists that deprived people must play a role in diagnosing their own adaptive preferences and envisioning strategies for change.

However, I have said very little about how an approach to adaptive preference intervention fits into the larger feminist project of achieving global justice. Though my goal is not to offer a complete feminist theory of global justice, I explicitly delimit the role of adaptive intervention in the struggle for global justice. Some other feminist philosophical projects focused on improving the lives of deprived people have unintentionally reproduced colonial attitudes toward third-world women. Taking a stance against deprivation without representing third-world women and third-world societies through a colonial lens is a more difficult task than it may originally seem. It is important for feminist interventions in global ethics to avoid the dangers of perpetuating colonial representations of third-world women, and it is for this reason that I explicitly discuss some of the dilemmas facing feminist theorists who wish to persuade public institutions to take seriously the grave deprivations that women the world over face without thereby encouraging those institutions to accept colonial representations of deprived people. In this section of my introduction, I spell out the implications of my project for three dilemmas of transnational feminist praxis: dilemmas I term "the global justice dilemma," "the agency dilemma," and "the culture dilemma."

The Global Justice Dilemma

It is a fact that our unjust global economic order is a major cause of the deprivation of many women in the South.[7] We live in a world in which poverty is not only widespread and debilitating but also gendered (Jaggar 2002). We also

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live in a world where Western feminists—and citizens of rich countries more generally—are complicit in perpetuating wide-scale deprivation, at least to the extent that their governments drive the unjust global economic order. Illuminating the injustice of the global economic order is an important task for feminist philosophers who are concerned with the deprivation of women in the global South. I do not take this to mean that we should never write about oppressions and deprivations that are not directly caused by the global economic order. But it does mean we should be wary of philosophizing about the oppression of women in the global South in ways that deflect attention from the injustice of the global economic order. We should be especially wary of deflecting attention from the global economic order given the potentially colonial tendency of Westerners to fail to understand the ways in which their governments promote the deprivation—economic and otherwise—of women in the South.

Given the reality of an unjust international economic system, a project like mine—focused as it is on justifying IAP intervention—may seem to get off on the wrong foot about global justice. It may seem to distract us from changing the global economic order. Indeed, it runs the risk of adding to two problematic trends in contemporary discussions of global justice: the feminist philosophical trend toward treating cultural practices as the main cause of Southern women's deprivation and the more widespread cultural trend of recommending individual solutions to structural problems. If adaptive preferences are primarily matters of women's complicity in perpetuating local patriarchal traditions, my project participates in creating the impression among Western academics that non-Western cultures—rather than the global economic order—are the primary source of women's oppression. And if I am claiming that adaptive preference intervention is the main solution to the deprivation of Southern women, I am guilty of proposing individual or community-level solutions to systemic problems—in precisely the way apologists for the neoliberal economic order often do. An important dilemma faces feminist philosophers who want to philosophize about the deprivation of women in the South without focusing on the global economic order. Is it possible to offer nonsystemic responses to women's deprivation without thereby occluding the systemic nature of global injustice?

My project in this book is to justify and provide a moral framework for IAP intervention, and it would be disingenuous of me to characterize it otherwise. However, I want to clarify how I see adaptive preference intervention as fitting into the larger struggle for global justice. I do not see adaptive preference as caused exclusively—or even mostly—by local cultural practices, and I do not hold that adaptive preference intervention is an adequate solution to our unjust economic order. Nothing in this book implies that it is primarily local cultural practices,

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Southern men, or local income-generating inadequacies that cause the deprivation of women in the global South.

We can discern a somewhat problematic focus in recent feminist philosophical writing on women in the global South. Susan Moller Okin's (1999) work on global justice emphasizes cultural practices like polygamy, female genital cutting, and child marriage and the ways in which those practices undermine respect for women as persons. Martha Nussbaum's work discusses the plight of poor women in India but does not extensively analyze the causes of their poverty; rather, Nussbaum (1999; 2001) emphasizes cultural impediments to their flourishing—impediments like norms of female seclusion and submission and patriarchal religious practices and family law. Alison Jaggar argues that work like Nussbaum and Okin's inaugurated a philosophical trend that describes cultural practices—rather than poverty or global inequality—as a source of third-world women's deprivation (2005b). Jaggar describes Nussbaum and Okin's work as having the "nonlogical implication" that third-world women are oppressed primarily by their cultural practices.

This focus on cultural practices as the primary source of third-world women's oppression is nothing new in Western feminist writing. Uma Narayan finds a similar focus in radical feminist discussions of first and third-world women's oppression from the 1960s and 1970s. Narayan identifies a disproportionate Western fascination with oppression caused by the cultural practices of "other cultures." She argues that discussions of *sati* (widow immolation) in India tend to represent "Indian culture," rather than colonialism or economic motivations, as the cause of *sati* (U. Narayan 1997, 84). Narayan argues that the portrayal of Indian culture as the source of *sati* is both incoherent and inaccurate, given that there was no single "Indian" culture prior to British colonization and given that *sati* seems to have become more common in India after the British fascination with it marked it as an "Indian cultural practice." Further, Narayan claims that the valorization of *sati* is partly attributable to the economic motives of people who depend on maintaining pilgrimage sites related to *sati* for their livelihood. Indeed, Narayan coins the term "death by culture" to describe Western feminist understandings of the causes of the more contemporary phenomenon of dowry murder. She does not see it as a coincidence that a Western culture intent on proving its superiority to Indian culture represents Indian *culture* as the source of Indian women's oppression.

My point in discussing this focus on culture in feminist global ethics scholarship is not to conflate Nussbaum and Okin's arguments with those of the radical feminists of the 1970s whose beliefs clearly contained much more unquestioned colonial residue. Nussbaum and Okin are clearly concerned about poverty as a form of deprivation, and I am indebted to their pathbreaking work on feminist global ethics. I also do not wish to suggest that Nussbaum and Okin are wrong

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that oppressive cultural practices can function to impede women's flourishing; as the rest of this book makes clear, I hold that cultural practices that impede women's basic well-being are deeply wrong—and wrong in a way that merits public intervention.

Rather, the point I want to make is primarily epistemic. Many Western feminists tend to refer to different variables to explain third-world women's oppression than they do when explaining Western women's oppression. Specifically, Western feminists often treat cultural practices as the explanation of first resort of the deprivation of third-world women. Further, they tend to treat the cultural practices that cause women's oppression as practices specific to the third world and often fail to link the proliferation of oppressive practices to economic and political structures. For the purposes of our present discussion, I wish to point out—as Jaggar has done on multiple occasions—that the assumption that most deprivation of third-world women is caused by oppressive cultural practices may encourage feminist philosophers to draw false conclusions about what ending the deprivation of women around the world would require.

In order not to abet the belief that most oppression of third-world women is caused by their cultural practices, I wish to separate my focus on adaptive preference intervention from the idea that third-world women's *primary or only* source of oppression is their cultural practices. As I argued earlier, the view expressed in this book is compatible with the view that women all over the world—in both rich and poor countries—have adaptive preferences that are worthy of public scrutiny. For instance, many battered women in the United States rationalize their abuse, despite living under better economic conditions than many women struggling for basic nutrition and economic survival (Ferraro and Johnson 1983). Furthermore, cultural practices are not the only cause of adaptive preferences. A person may have adaptive preferences caused by poverty or social and economic marginalization. One of the examples of adaptive preference that Sen consistently repeats is that of the poor person who contents herself with what she has. Once we accept that the global economic order can encourage the poor to develop adaptive preferences, we recognize that discussing adaptive preferences does not require erasing the effects of the global economic order.

But seeing poverty as a cause of adaptive preference and understanding the structural causes of poverty are not the same thing. So even if my project does not treat cultural practices as the primary source of the deprivations of Southern women, it still may detract attention from the global economic system. A second problematic trend in Western perceptions of the deprivation of women—and men—in the global South is the trend of erasing or ignoring the systemic causes of poverty and the concomitant suggestion that individual charity is the best solution

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to the problem of global poverty. Andrew Kuper (2002) and Uma Narayan have both argued that this tendency is alive and well in the general field of global ethics. Narayan observes that philosophical discussions of global poverty tend to concentrate on persuading the rich to give charity to the poor—a focus which discourages Westerners from asking why the poor are poor in the first place.[8]

Outside academic philosophy there is a parallel trend toward providing small-scale solutions to systemic economic problems—a trend that may also encourage people to ignore the injustice of the global economic order. One place we encounter this trend toward small-scale solutions is in contemporary discussions of microcredit—both within development institutions and within the popular media. The public debate about microcredit is almost univocally celebratory, and microcredit has become "the primary *economic* component of the WID [Women in Development] agenda" (Poster and Salime 2002, 194, emphasis in original). Winifred Poster and Zakia Salime argue that the widespread celebration of microcredit as the *solution* to the deprivation of women in the South constructs a particular impression of what the *problem* is. Poster and Salime describe microcredit as an individualistic and neoliberal solution (Poster and Salime 2002, 194). If giving women small-scale credit is the best way to empower them, it may seem that the primary obstacle to their empowerment is a lack of credit (Poster and Salime 2002, 194). Further, if we see international banks and corporations as solving women's poverty by funding microcredit programs, we may lose sight of the ways in which those banks and corporations sustain an international economic order that is causing those women's poverty. Microcredit proposes a small-scale response to a structural problem, and Poster and Salime's analysis helps us to see how this type of feminist strategy can function to efface the causal role of the global economic order on women's deprivation.

Like a focus on microcredit, my focus on adaptive preference intervention may be taken to construct a false impression of what the causes of the deprivation of many Southern women are. If adaptive preference intervention is the solution, it may seem that the main problem of deprived women is their adaptive preferences. It may even seem as though I am suggesting that the beliefs and attitudes of deprived people are the main cause of their problems—that if deprived people just changed their beliefs, they would be able to flourish. I do not believe that either of these descriptions of the problem is accurate. I also believe that we can endorse adaptive preference intervention without accepting either of the above constructions of the causes of deprivation of women in the South. We can support intervention without believing that adaptive preferences are the main causes of women's deprivation in the South or believing that changing deprived women's beliefs and attitudes is always the best way to combat deprivation.

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In order to see how this is possible, we need to clarify the role of a theory of adaptive preference intervention in a theory of global justice. I emphatically do not intend my justification of adaptive preference intervention as a complete theory of global justice. In fact, I believe that the basic premises of my argument for adaptive preference intervention weigh against treating adaptive preference intervention as the main method for combating global injustice. My justification of adaptive preference intervention is based on the broader assumption that public institutions should promote people's basic flourishing; a global economic order that impedes millions of people's basic flourishing is clearly objectionable on the grounds of this assumption. Adaptive preference intervention is also clearly an inefficient way of increasing the flourishing of all of the deprived people in the world. Further, even if small-scale adaptive preference interventions could successfully increase the flourishing of all of the world's deprived people, it would not follow that this set of arrangements was just. From the perspective of justice, there are clear reasons to prefer social arrangements that do not produce the types of inequalities and deprivations that make adaptive preference intervention necessary. In sum, I am not suggesting that adaptive preference intervention is *the* solution to the deprivation of women in the South; it is one small part of the solution.

Now let us turn to the idea that focusing on adaptive intervention creates the perception that it is the attitudes of deprived women in the South that are primarily responsible for their deprivation. If we think adaptive preferences are real, we think that people can participate in their own oppression and deprivation. When we acknowledge that people's desires can be complicit perpetuating in those people's deprivation, we always risk treating people's desires—rather than the conditions that shaped them—as the most proximate cause of their deprivation. This is a serious risk. However, my deliberative perfectionist approach to adaptive preference intervention takes this risk seriously and attempts to offset it. My approach insists that we cannot read people's reasons for their behavior off their preferences, and that development practitioners need to understand why people have the preferences they do in order to engage in effective interventions. My emphasis on deliberation encourages practitioners to ask whether changing people's beliefs and attitudes is a plausible response to their deprivation; adaptive preferences that are utility-maximizing adaptations to unjust conditions that will not change probably require interventions that are directly aimed at changing those unjust social conditions. Increasing the flourishing of people with adaptive preference will often require some combination of psychological transformation and social change, and the deliberative perfectionist approach encourages practitioners to see that this is possible. To say that adaptive preference intervention is

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part of the solution is not to say that changing individuals' attitudes will always bring about social change on its own.

My approach discourages development practitioners from treating deprived people's beliefs and attitudes as the first-resort explanation of their deprivation. Many cases of what seem to be inappropriately adaptive higher-order preferences will simply be inappropriately adaptive lower-order preferences that will only change under more just social conditions. My approach to adaptive preference intervention cautions explicitly against "psychologizing the structural"—that is, against assuming that people's attitudes are always the primary cause of their deprivation. However, I maintain that there are cases in which people's beliefs and attitudes are among the primary obstacles to their flourishing. People's adaptive preferences may be obstacles to social change, or they may hold onto adaptive preferences even after social conditions have already changed. So even if changing people's beliefs and attitudes will not always be the best way to improve their flourishing, there are cases where it will contribute positively to their flourishing. Adaptive preference intervention can play a limited but important role in a global ethics—that of guiding public institutions when they encounter people for whom some form of preference change is required for their basic flourishing.

There is another, more attenuated, role adaptive preference intervention can play in the struggle for global justice; adaptive preference intervention can motivate oppressed and deprived people to demand systemic change. Certain types of adaptive preferences—especially adaptive preferences that cause people not to see injustice against them as injustice—can prevent people from struggling for greater justice for themselves and communities. Many of the women of El Pital had these types of adaptive preferences. Recall the epigraph of this introduction, where a woman recalls not having understood "the situation she is living in" and having repressed her dissatisfaction with the conditions of her life until she began discussing her situation with other women. For these women, realizing that they had accepted injustice was the first step in a journey toward "becoming organized" and seeking social change on behalf of themselves and other women. Nussbaum writes, "to recognize the adaptive nature of one's preferences is the beginning of a search for independence" (Nussbaum 2001, 150). Adaptive preference intervention, then, may contribute toward changing structural injustices by helping people to *recognize* injustices so that they can begin to *organize* against them.

The Agency Dilemma

Feminists who theorize about oppression and deprivation are faced with a balancing act—that of trying to represent deprived people as agents without thereby obscuring the reality of their victimization. This dilemma is front and

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center when we attempt to theorize about adaptive preferences. When we say that a person has an adaptive preference, we are essentially saying that that person has become an agent of her own deprivation. But we can understand the meaning of the term "agency" here in different ways. We sometimes describe a person as an "agent" to mean that she is carrying out the will of another. Feminists often portray people with adaptive preference as agents in this sense—as engaged in doing the bidding of others who would seek to exploit them; in his famous claim that men seek not only women's obedience but also their sentiments, Mill describes women as the agents of men's desires rather than their own (Mill 2002, 135). Treating people with adaptive preferences as the agents of others has the advantage of foregrounding the fact that people's desires can be socially shaped. But it has the disadvantage, to use Uma Narayan's words, of making deprived people look like "prisoners"—people who are have "various forms of patriarchal oppression imposed on [them] entirely against [their] will and consent" (U. Narayan 2002, 418).

A way to get beyond this problematic portrayal of deprived people may be to use "agency" in a different sense. We may think of agency as the capacity to make decisions and shape one's world in accordance with what one cares about. If we think of agency in this way, we can see people with adaptive preferences as doing something other than univocally perpetuating their deprivation. We can see them as struggling to advance their own interests and desires, even if the struggle to do this must occur within the confines of limited opportunities. The recent trend in feminist scholarship about deprivation emphasizes this sense of the agency of deprived people (Mahmood 2005, 6). An advantage of valorizing agency is that it helps us see the desires of deprived people as rational and respect-worthy. But a disadvantage is that it does not help us see the conditions that shape people's desires and constrain their actions as a moral problem. Some feminist discussions of agency simply celebrate the fact that women who seem deprived do care about certain things and try to shape their worlds in accordance with the things they care about. If we accept the view advanced by this family of feminist discussions, however, we will have difficulty taking seriously the fact that oppressive conditions may encourage women to care about the *wrong* things or make it impossible for them to effectively advance their interests.

This is how we usually pose the agency dilemma in feminist theory: we ask, should we see oppressed people as agents whose choices are worthy of unquestioning respect or victims who cannot make genuine choices? But I think posing the question about adaptive preferences in these terms does not get us very far, because there are significant disadvantages to seeing deprived people in either way. If we see people with adaptive preferences simply as victims, we see them as needing to be completely reshaped into agents. Alternatively, if we see them only

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as agents whose choices we should celebrate, we cannot see anything particularly problematic about adaptive preferences. My approach to adaptive preference intervention describes people with adaptive preferences as both agents and victims. People with adaptive preferences make reflective choices and care deeply about certain things, but social conditions have encouraged them to sometimes choose and care about things that are not consistent with their flourishing. My contentions that adaptive preference affects people selectively rather than globally and that adaptive preferences do not destroy autonomy support a view of people with adaptive preferences as agents. But I insist that chosenness is not the only morally relevant feature of people's preferences. Adaptive preferences can be chosen and still worthy of public scrutiny because they inhibit people's flourishing.

But strong proponents of valorizing deprived people's agency will not be satisfied by the brief remarks above. In order to see how my approach to adaptive preference intervention does not deny the agency of people with adaptive preferences, I think we need to get clearer about what is at stake in the agency dilemma and why it might produce discomfort about adaptive preference intervention. We canunderstand two separate families of concerns as underlying the desire to treat oppressed and deprived people as agents. The first family of concerns, which I term "paternalism concerns," motivates a belief that respecting people with adaptive preferences as persons requires uncritically valorizing their agency. The second family of concerns, which I term "third-world positionality" concerns, motivates a belief that uncritically valorizing the agency of deprived people is the best way to counter a colonial tendency toward offering simplistic explanations of the lives and decisions of third-world women.

Let us begin with the paternalism concerns. Many feminist theorists who write in favor of valorizing deprived people's agency do so in the name of opposing coercion. Uma Narayan, for instance, sees policies designed to coerce deprived women into changing their behaviors as based on an "eclipsing of their agency" (U. Narayan 2002, 427). A better understanding of deprived women as agents—one that understood them as "bargaining with patriarchy"[9] rather than simply manipulated by it—would provide reasons to oppose coercive intervention in their lives.

This move toward valorizing agency responds to a very real problem in feminist theorizing about deprived people. There is a specific argument form that recurs in feminist philosophical debates about public intervention in the lives of women who seem to have adaptive preferences. The argument, which tends to happen in brief exchanges, goes something like this: one feminist philosopher argues for intervention in the lives of people with adaptive preferences. Another replies that women with adaptive preferences should not be subject to paternal-

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istic coercion. I will not rehearse the many examples of this here, but I mention two of them, so that we might have a sense of what instances of this argument form actually look like. Okin, in her influential essay, "Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?" argues that minority cultures in liberal states can function to undermine women's autonomy and seems to favor intervention in cultural practices that undermine it (Okin 1999). In a response to Okin, Azizah Al-Hibri brings up the example of Muslim veiling practices and asks rhetorically whether she should "organize to *force* those sisters to unveil their heads" (Al-Hibri 1999, 46, emphasis added).[10] Similarly to Okin, Susan Babbitt claims that people who lack senses of self would benefit from interventions that gave them greater opportunities (Babbitt 1993, 256–257). And similarly to Al-Hibri, Diana Meyers replies by wondering whether "*foisting* a new set of opportunities" on women who support female genital cutting "is an ethical and efficacious way to increase their autonomy" (Meyers 2000, 488, emphasis added).

Both sides in this debate trade on an ambiguity about the word "intervention" here. Interventionists like Okin and Babbitt do not seem particularly worried about what *type* of intervention they should endorse; they just want to answer the question of whether intervention should happen. Meanwhile, antipaternalists like Al-Hibri and Meyers rightly care about the type of intervention that should happen, and they thus focus their responses on opposing coercive intervention. I see many feminists who valorize agency as wanting to find a principled reason to side with the antipaternalists who oppose coercive intervention.

But I reply that it is possible to oppose the coercion of deprived people, valorize their agency, and support intervention that enhances their flourishing. We need not see intervention and support for agency as at odds. My deliberative perfectionist approach focuses on noncoercive intervention and on deliberative interventions that actively expand people's capacities for agency. Readers particularly interested in these paternalism problems can turn to my discussions of the implications of noncoercive intervention in the Chapter 4 and my view's implications for agency in Chapter 3. But for now, I want to simply state that my deliberative perfectionist approach says that preferences can be *suspect* of inappropriate adaptiveness without necessarily being so. Because my approach recommends intervention in part to determine whether people's preferences are inappropriately adaptive, it also insists that supporting intervention to improve the flourishing of people with adaptive preferences does not mean supporting coercion. When we separate suspicion and intervention from coercion, adaptive preference intervention seems less incompatible with a desire to respect the agency of deprived people.

Still, the compatibility of deliberative perfectionist adaptive preference intervention with valorizing agency depends on what we mean by "valorizing agency." If valorizing agency means uncritically accepting people's behavior as a guide to

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what their well-being would require, we cannot support adaptive preference intervention and valorize agency. My approach will not satisfy critics who insist on such uncompromising respect for agency. However, I ask whether uncritically respecting people's existing choices is the best way of respecting those people *as persons*. I argue this point in more depth in Chapter Four.

The second set of concerns motivating the desire to valorize agency are what I call "third-world positionality concerns." These concerns oppose a specific portrayal of deprived people as lacking agency: that of third-world women as, to use Chandra Mohanty's (1995) term, "unconscious reactors." Many third-world feminist scholars have pointed out a tendency in Western feminist theory and activism toward portraying third-world women as passive recipients of the norms of their patriarchal cultures. This view has at least two negative consequences for practice: it can function to relax the epistemic standards to which explanations of third-world women's oppression are held and it can create the impression that deprived third-world women are in need of "saving" by Westerners.

Each of these consequences has the potential to perniciously influence adaptive preference intervention. If practitioners see third-world women as passive recipients of their deprivation, they will offer simplistic explanations of adaptive preferences in third-world women. Third-world feminist scholars have repeatedly documented a type of *disproportion* in the epistemic standards used to understand the deprivation of third-world women. Where there is a tendency to see the oppression and deprivation of women in the West as stemming from complex and diffuse causes, there is a need to expand "debates about gender in non-Western societies beyond the simplistic registers of submission and patriarchy" (Mahmood 2005, 6). The oppression and deprivation of third-world women is also frequently chalked up to abstract and imprecise causes such as "culture," without a deeper examination of the economic and institutional structures that may cause deprivation or motivate third-world women's strategies for resisting and manipulating it. The idea of third-world women as victims can motivate development practitioners to apply similarly lax standards in order to understand the causes of deprived women's adaptive preferences.

The idea of third-world women as victims in need of saving by Westerners can also detrimentally impact adaptive preference intervention. At its most pernicious, it can disqualify third-world women from being seen as bearers of visions of the good life who can help people to overcome their adaptive preferences; conversely, it can make it seem as though Westerners are the only appropriate interveners. If third-world women are passive victims, the only people who are capable of opposing and seeing the oppression and deprivation of third-world women as such are outsiders. The notion of third-world women as victims whom only Westerners can "save" also promotes a type of adaptive preference intervention

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that treats all third-world women as though they have adaptive preferences, that ignores the objectiveself-interest that is expressed in certain adaptive preferences, and that assumes that adaptive preference explains all differences between third-world women's preferences and Western women's preferences. If Western interveners see third-world women as victims in need of Western saving, they are likely to view differences between third-world women's values and their own only as examples of adaptive preference—even in cases where third-world women's preferences do not negatively impact basic well-being.

To counter these tendencies, some third-world feminists suggest that scholars and activists should focus on portraying third-world women as agents. I agree with this suggestion. I offer the deliberative perfectionist approach contained in this book precisely in hopes of offering an approach to adaptive preference intervention that refuses to see third-world women simply as victims. Before I explain how my approach to adaptive preference intervention discourages development practitioners from seeing third-world women as in need of Western saving and from offering simplistic understandings of third-world women's deprivation, I clarify a couple of points about what my deliberative perfectionist approach does and does not imply about third-world women's agency. First, as I have already stated, nothing in my deliberative perfectionist approach implies that third-world women are the only people who have adaptive preferences and whom adaptive preference intervention would help to flourish. I have situated my project within conversations about development ethics that focus mostly on how to improve the lives of women in poor countries, but it is a logical implication of my approach that the basic flourishing of many Western women could be improved with deliberative perfectionist interventions. Similarly, my deliberative perfectionist approach does not imply that Westerners should be the primary interveners in the lives of third-world people who have adaptive preferences. I discuss this issue a bit more in depth in the final section of this introduction—the section on the culture dilemma. But for now, it is worth noting that many of the examples of adaptive preference intervention I cite as exemplary in this book are interventions initiated *by third-world women* in the lives of other third-world women. For instance, the PAEM movement in El Pital discussed in this introduction, was initiated by a Honduran activist, Maria Ester Ruiz.[11]

Let us return to the question of how my deliberative perfectionist approach encourages development practitioners to valorize the agency of deprived third-world women. Recall that one problem of seeing third-world women as victims is that it licenses development practitioners to apply lax epistemic standards in understanding their deprivation. My deliberative perfectionist approach insists that practitioners cannot assume out of hand that they know why deprived people make the choices they do. It encourages development practitioners to

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deliberate with deprived people to gain a clearer understanding of those choices. My approach thus asks practitioners to complicate the simplistic, victimizing judgments about people's behavior that they may initially be inclined to draw because of their (implicit or explicit) beliefs about the victim status of third-world women. A second insidious way in which the belief that third-world women are passive victims might influence adaptive preference intervention is by causing development practitioners to overlook resistance and assume that all differences constitute deprivation. My deliberative perfectionist approach also discourages interventions that overlook resistance. I argue that adaptive preferences have selective rather than global effects. This means that people with adaptive preferences may have preferences that harm their flourishing but may also retain partly positive self-images that IAP intervention should focus on helping them cultivate. If we see adaptive preferences as selective, we need not see oppression and deprivation as extinguishing people's desires to flourish. Thus, recognizing the fact of adaptive preference need not entail seeing people with adaptive preferences only as victims who have no idea what is good for them. My approach encourages development practitioners to look for resistance to oppression in the lives of people with adaptive preferences and to work with people with adaptive preferences to design strategies for change that build on this resistance. This is a significant departure from the view of third-world women as victims who need the conceptions of the good of outsiders to simply replace their existing ones.

The Culture Dilemma

Feminist philosophers interested in global justice face important dilemmas about how to characterize deprivation. We have already discussed two of these dilemmas: the global justice dilemma, which asks feminist philosophers to choose between addressing systemic injustice and promoting small-scale interventions to improve women's lives, and the agency dilemma, which seems to oppose recognizing deprived people's agency to recognizing that they may sometimes be complicit in their own deprivation. A third dilemma about how feminist global ethics should characterize deprivation is what I call the "culture dilemma." Simply put, the culture dilemma asks us to choose between opposing deprivation and respecting the cultures of oppressed or deprived people. The interest in respect for cultures responds to a serious tendency, on the part of Westerners in particular, to assume the superiority of their cultures and to force or encourage people in "other cultures" to adopt the values of Western culture. Meanwhile, feminist critics of "respect for cultures" point out that many cultural practices have the deprivation of women as their goal and claim that respecting cultures that harm women is morally irresponsible.

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This conflict produces two separate sub-dilemmas for adaptive preference intervention: one ontological and one epistemological. The ontological culture dilemma poses the question, is it possible to oppose oppressive cultural practices and support the right of people to live according to culturally specific values? The epistemological culture dilemma poses the question, who is qualified to oppose cultural practices that promote deprivation? Given the tendency of outsiders to misunderstand the practices and values of cultural others, they are likely to see adaptive preferences where none exist. But given the likelihood that cultural insiders will not have developed critical perspectives on the sources of deprivation within their own cultures, they may be inclined not to condemn deprivations that are morally very serious.

Let us begin with the ontological dilemma. As I mentioned in my discussion of the global justice dilemma, Western scholars tend to represent the deprivations of third-world women as caused by their cultural practices. I have already agreed with the third-world feminist scholars who argue that this representation is harmfully reductive. But there is another important problem with representing "cultures" as the sources of people's deprivation. If we see cultures as the primary cause of people's deprivation, it may seem that the best way to improve their lives is to abolish their cultures. In "Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?" Okin comes very close to suggesting that getting rid of deprived people's cultures would make their lives better. She writes that women who live in cultures that undermine their autonomy "*might* be better off if the culture into which they were born were to become extinct..." (Okin 1999, 22, emphasis in original). Okin does not suggest that this is the only solution; she also suggests that the culture altering itself is a potential solution (Okin 1999, 23). Still, she has been widely interpreted as suggesting that cultures whose practices deprive women of autonomy should cease to exist (Al-Hibri 1999, 41; An-Na'Im 1999, 64).

Deliberative perfectionist intervention will, in many cases, require opposing oppressive cultural practices and seeking to change them. But, I want to suggest, this is not tantamount to eradicating the cultures that sustain these practices. To suggest that changing a culture's harmful practices is the same thing as destroying that culture is to support some highly dubious idealizations about cultures. It requires assuming that change must cause cultural extinction. But this is clearly false; if change destroyed cultures, there would be no cultures. Cultures are perpetually changing and redrawing their boundaries (U. Narayan 1997; Tamir 1999, 51). Further, the view that change means destruction suggests that all forces that favor changing a culture are exogenous. Cultures are not monoliths, and it is doubtful that there are cultural practices that undermine basic flourishing that have univocal endorsement "within" cultures.

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My deliberative perfectionist approach is based on a rejection of the idea that we have a choice between respect for cultures and flourishing. I claim that a vague and minimal conception of flourishing should motivate adaptive preference intervention. This has two significant consequences for the preservation of cultural values. First, because the conception of flourishing is minimal, my deliberative perfectionist approach only recommends changing preferences that are inconsistent with *basic* flourishing. My approach provides no imperative to change cultural differences in perceptions about excellence or the ultimate ends of human life.

Second, the conception of flourishing I advocate is vague and thus *underdetermines* the concrete strategy for changing adaptive preferences in any case. The deliberative perfectionist approach holds that it is a good thing for people with adaptive preferences to change their preferences into flourishing-compatible preferences they can endorse. But the vague conception of flourishing does not give an exhaustive list of what flourishing-compatible preferences will look like. Instead, it says that deprived people should participate in envisioning flourishing-compatible ways of life that allow them to retain the cultural values that matter to them. Maria Ester Ruiz of PAEM worked with women in rural Honduras to create a manual about women's empowerment that was rooted in Catholic values. This is a strategy that the deliberative perfectionist approach would embrace, and it is one that did not require the women to abandon Catholicism wholesale in order to embrace increased mobility and negotiating power within relationships. The deliberative perfectionist approach provides a framework for interventions that find flourishing-compatible strains of cultural values and build on them. This moves us beyond the false choice between preserving and destroying culture.

My answer to the epistemological culture dilemma is more complicated. Adaptive preference intervention usually requires third parties to make preliminary judgments about the adaptive preferences of others. Most people who seem to have adaptive preferences will be people who seem not to be resisting their deprivation, so third parties may have to be the ones who initiate questions about why they are not resisting and how they might lead more flourishing lives. Who is qualified to make decisions about the moral acceptability of culturally embedded preferences, if outsiders are likely to misunderstand them and insiders are likely to accept them? This is not a question that admits of a categorical answer, and I think we should avoid giving it one. I believe there are good prudential reasons to prefer insiders over outsiders in most cases, especially in deliberative perfectionist interventions. Good deliberative perfectionist interventions will be based on intimate contextual knowledge of the type that insiders are more likely to have. My deliberative perfectionist approach says that third parties are

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often right to intervene, but third parties need not be culturally foreign third parties.

On the other hand, I resist incorporating a categorical preference for cultural insiders into the deliberative perfectionist approach. There may be cases in which people with adaptive preferences do not want interventions from other members of their communities and would be uncomfortable being honest with them. This is particularly likely to be the case where communities contain significant hierarchies (Purkayastha 2002) or where cultural taboos initially prohibit discussion of certain preferences. Moreover, categorically preferring insiders means accepting a rigid dichotomy between insiders and outsiders. In reality, even cultural insiders who conduct interventions are often separated from people with suspect preferences by differences in class or education, and preferring cultural insiders does not eliminate the difficulties of understanding across difference. Accepting the insider/outsider dichotomy can also lead to the delegitimization of critics of flourishing-inhibiting cultural practices who are members of a culture. Conservative forces within cultural contexts often call insider critics "outsiders" in order to decrease the credibility of their criticisms (U. Narayan 1997, 22). The question of who should intervene is, in my view, largely a situational one that I do not seek to answer with my deliberative perfectionist approach. I do, however, hope to make clear that nothing in the deliberative perfectionist approach suggests that cultural outsiders—or Westerners in Southern contexts more specifically—are the best interveners. I believe that activists and development practitioners can be cultural insiders and critics, and that people like this are usually best situated to deliberate with deprived people about how to improve their flourishing.[12]

My overarching aim in this book is to offer a moral framework for identifying and responding to adaptive preferences. I began this introduction by summarizing the deliberative perfectionist approach. My approach is based on the belief that adaptive preferences are one type of preference incompatible with basic human flourishing. Practical attempts to identify and respond to them require a conception of flourishing, but not just any conception of flourishing will do. We need a conception that has been deliberated on and promotes deliberation with deprived people.

In addition to summarizing the deliberative perfectionist approach, I also hope to have given some sense of its role in transnational feminist praxis. I see adaptive preference intervention as only one part of the struggle for global justice—one that cannot take the place of action to reform the international economic order. I also see deliberative perfectionist intervention as compatible with the goal of seeing deprived people in general, and third-world women in particular, as agents. Finally, deliberative perfectionist intervention is based on

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the hope that it is possible for deprived people to transform their adaptive preferences without simply giving up their culturally particular sources of meaning.

I now turn to arguing for the deliberative perfectionist approach. My argument proceeds in the body of the book as follows. In Chapter 1, I describe the deliberative perfectionist approach and explain how it avoids many practical difficulties that face attempts at adaptive preference intervention. In Chapter 2, I attempt to show that my perfectionist definition of adaptive preference is superior to autonomy-based ones. There I conduct an extended demonstration of the incoherence of seeing adaptive preferences as autonomy or choice deficits. In Chapter 3, I focus on showing how people can retain agency despite having adaptive preferences and claim that the deliberative perfectionist approach promotes—and should promote—strategies for adaptive preference transformation that cultivate the existing agency of people with adaptive preferences. In Chapter 4, I defend the deliberative perfectionist approach against charges that it is incompatible with respect for people's capacities to decide what types of lives they want to lead. In the final chapter, Chapter 5, I examine some actual examples of adaptive preference intervention in more depth. I show that concepts I have developed as part of the deliberative perfectionist approach can help development practitioners move beyond some of the paradoxes of defining empowerment that make it difficult to identify real-world adaptive preferences.

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