The general idea for this book started life with an invitation to speak at the Colloquium 'Identities in conflict, conflict in identities' at the Masaryk University in Brno, the Czech Republic, in 2010. My idea for this talk was, quite simply, to reflect on the elements that constitute the idea of 'human' identities. I have since been able to try out some of my arguments in various conferences, workshops and lectures in: Berlin (2014), Brno (2012) Buenos Aires (2011), Cambridge (2015, 2016), Jena (2011), Leeds (2012), Loughborough (2010), Paris (2015), Rome (2015), Santiago (2010, 2013, 2014, 2015), Temuco (2013), Trento (2012), Turin (2013), Valparaiso (2013) and Warwick (2010, 2014, 2015). I am grateful to the organisers and participants of these events; I hope that they will see that their suggestions and criticisms have been put to good use.

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The last part of Chapter 3 builds on: 'The theorisation of social coordinations in differentiated societies: The theory of generalised symbolic media in Parsons, Luhmann and Habermas' (*British Journal of Sociology* 53(3): 431–49, 2002).

A handful of paragraphs of Chapter 5 draw on: 'Jürgen Habermas: Modern social theory as postmetaphysical natural law' (*Journal of Classical Sociology* 13(2): 254–73, 2013).