



# THE MUDDLE OF MULTICULTURALISM: *a liberal critique*



Salim Mansur

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# CONTENTS

## Table of Contents

About the Author .....	iv
Introduction .....	1
The Paradox of Multiculturalism .....	6
Summing Up .....	17
References .....	25
Acknowledgements .....	28

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Mansur writes a weekly column for *Toronto Sun* and his *Sun* columns are published across Canada in newspapers owned by the Sun Media. He wrote a monthly column for the magazine *Western Standard* (Calgary), and periodically for *National Post* (Canada), and has published in the *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), the *National Review Online* and *FrontPageMagazine.com* and has also written for the *PajamasMedia.com* in the United States.

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# INTRODUCTION

Sometime in the mid-1990s, when Pierre Trudeau made a rare visit to the Parliament in Ottawa, the speaker of the House of Commons arranged for a private luncheon attended by a dozen selectively invited Liberal members. Each guest was given the opportunity to pose one question to the former prime minister. Chris Cobb, writing in the *Ottawa Citizen* nearly a decade later, recalled the exchange between Trudeau and invited guests as some of those present recollected it. After several relatively routine questions, former Liberal MP John Bryden remembered asking Trudeau about the multiculturalism policy his government introduced in the early 1970s. In Cobb's retelling, Bryden asked,

*“Mr. Trudeau, you were one of the key architects of multiculturalism and now we are in a situation where many newcomers to Canada consider their ethnicity before being Canadian. Is this the outcome you wanted?”*

*There was silence around the table as the former prime minister thought before replying: “No, this is not what I wanted.”*

According to Mr. Bryden, Mr. Trudeau made no attempt to hide his disappointment that Canada and the federal presence had all but disappeared in Quebec.

“It was fascinating to hear,” said Mr. Bryden. “It was clear that he was deeply disappointed that under the Mulroney government and driven by a fear of separatism, the whole multiculturalism policy had been *twisted to celebrate a newcomer’s country of origin and not a celebration of the newcomer becoming part of the Canadian fabric*” (italics added).<sup>1</sup>

I am not quite certain if it is proper to infer from the measured response of the prime minister who initiated multiculturalism as a policy for Canada that he had come very close to renouncing the same. Trudeau died a year before the terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington on September 11, 2001, that opened a new period in world politics — the “clash of civilizations” — of which Samuel Huntington, a distinguished professor of political science at Harvard, had warned (Huntington 1996). Doubts about multiculturalism, as Trudeau expressed, and warnings about a new and troubling period in world politics following the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991, compels us to reconsider the appropriateness of multiculturalism as a set of ideas and policies within a liberal democratic country such as Canada some forty years on.

The world at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century is much different from the world at the end of the 1960s, as the promises of the earlier times have been severely shaken. The same is true about politics in Canada: the cheerful optimism of the centenary year has been jolted by the politics of separatism in Quebec, by the demographic changes through immigration in the main urban centres, by the forces of globalization and free trade agreements, and by the insidious nature of security threats from international terrorism — in particular, radical Islam or Islamism — to an open, liberal, democratic society. To those forces have been added the economic uncertainties of a global recession that came quite unannounced in the late summer of 2008.

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<sup>1</sup> C. Cobb, ‘Canada’s lost promise of multiculturalism,’ *Ottawa Citizen*, July 4, 2005.

When Trudeau initiated multiculturalism as a federal policy, Canada was still basking in the glow of the centennial celebrations, even though the “strains of affluence,” in the words of historian Desmond Morton were being felt across the breadth of the country (Morton 2000). The strains Morton described resulted from the pressures of the transition from the old Dominion of Canada to the broadly felt need by Canadians, as they celebrated their country’s centenary, to become a self-assured modern state with an increasing global presence of its own. The arrangements of old Canada were felt to be too constrictive to meet the demands of new Canada that had begun to emerge following the end of the Second World War.

Canada had risen to new prominence as an important ally and contributor to the winning of that war. And as Canadian soldiers returned home from fighting abroad, they found a new urban Canada in the making with the country shifting from an agricultural to an industrial economy. In Quebec the transition from the old to the new became so marked in every aspect of the economy, politics, and culture of the province that the changes came to be referred to as the Quiet Revolution. Quebec’s awakening, beginning in the first half of the past century, to the demands of a modern society; and the evolving effort by the French-speaking majority to attain independent statehood; would be the most serious internal challenge pushing the old Dominion to remake itself into the new Canada. Yet these internal strains paled in comparison to events in the United States and Europe; Canada, in contrast to the world outside, appeared as a peaceful, orderly, and stable democracy of much civility.

In the United States, the anti-Vietnam War movement joined with the civil rights movement in 1967 to gravely undermine public authority. In 1968, these movements came to a head when anti-war protests forced President Lyndon Johnson to abandon a second-term in the White House; and civil rights protests turned violent following the murder of Martin Luther King, Jr. In Europe, discontent with the existing political order burst out with student rebellion in the streets of Paris in May 1968. The generation of 1968 had come of age in the two decades after the end of the Second World War riding the most profound technological, economic, and social changes in world history. A decade earlier, in 1958, the Soviet Union had put a satellite into orbit around the earth, signalling that the rivalry among nation-states, especially the great powers, would be exported into space. The Soviet challenge was picked up by the United States and in 1969 an American, Neil Armstrong, descended from his spacecraft on to the surface of the moon. From the perspective of man on the moon, the earth appeared as a fragile planet on which the political arrogance of the human species to fence it off with national boundaries made no sense. For students in Europe and North America in rebellion against authority, the spirit of the time went beyond questioning the existing dominant political arrangements. Instead, for them John Lennon’s song *Imagine* with its lyrics — “Imagine there’s no countries... And no religion too,” — became a sort of anthem.

The depth and speed of change people felt at the end of the 1960s were just about unprecedented. The best-selling sociologist Alvin Toffler captured the sense of this hurtling locomotive of change in his hugely successful book *Future Shock* (1970). Change can be both exhilarating and discomfiting. For those caught in the accelerating transition from the old certainties of the past to the new uncertainties of the future, there would also be alienation from society, most acutely felt by the student generation of 1968. Around this time, two of Canada’s greatly respected academic scholars, one a philosopher and the other a literary critic, George Grant and Northrop Frye, drew attention to how their country was being affected by events and things in ways that meant, for better or worse, the demise of the old order.



In 1965 Grant published a little book, *Lament for a Nation*, in which he expressed himself somewhat “angrily” about the passing of English-Canadian nationalism as the country was being drawn into a tighter embrace of American capitalism. He wrote, “Those who loved the older traditions of Canada may be allowed to lament what has been lost, even though they do not know whether or not that loss will lead to some greater political good” (Grant: 96). In 1967, Canada’s centennial year, Frye was invited to give the Whidden Lectures at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, and he chose for his lectures the theme “The Modern Century” (later published as a book with the theme as title) to reflect on the period of history during which Canada came of age. Frye contemplated the journey the world had made during Canada’s century from 1867 to 1967 in terms of discoveries made in science, advances in technology, and creativity in arts and literature and the cumulative unintended effect of these changes on the human condition in terms of breeding anxiety and alienation. He observed that alienation arose from the “sense that man has lost control, if he ever had it, over his own destiny” (Frye: 24). Alienation from the existing order of things paradoxically also fuelled the desire for change as it was felt by the 1968 generation. And so the political realm in Canada was primed for change. But, as Frye looked around and took the measure of his country, he commented, “The loss of faith in such a world is centrally a religious problem, but it has a political dimension as well, and one which includes the question we have been revolving around all through: what is it, in society, to which we really owe loyalty?” (121).

Frye’s question was aptly phrased. It struck at the heart of the matter, politically speaking, for a generation caught in the crosscurrents of change. For the past few centuries, as European ideas were transported across the ocean to North America, political loyalty was demanded by, and belonged to, the territorially demarcated nation-states that emerged in the seventeenth century. In the second half of the twentieth century, a new idea, the “global village,” found expression. The man credited with the coining of this expression was a Canadian, Marshall McLuhan, professor of English literature and communication theorist at the University of Toronto. Though the expression at its origin had a negative connotation, by the end of the 1960s the idea of the “global village” captured the mood of the time. The world was shrinking in terms of distance, given rapid developments in the means of transportation and communication, and in this shrunken world, as the older arrangements of nation-states in Europe and North America were being skeptically re-examined, Frye’s question of where, how, and to whom people owed loyalty in a global village became moot.

In retrospect, the latter half of the past century was the second “golden age” of liberal capitalism in the modern history of the West. The first “golden age” was the period between the Congress of Vienna in 1815 and the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. During the five decades following the Second World War, liberal capitalism in the West went through renewal, innovation, and strains of affluence and expansion as it spurred globalization, eventually beating off the challenge posed by communism. No society in human history had ever been as productive and rich as the West became in this second “golden age” of liberal capitalism. The West’s success in raising the standard of living of its citizens was matched by the expansion of freedom for individuals in society recognized as fundamental human rights to be respected and protected by authorities. Canada, as an integral part of the West, contributed to and benefited from the success of liberal capitalism during this period. And the growth of the Canadian economy made it possible to smooth the rough edges of liberal capitalism — to respond to the strains of affluence — through the introduction of social welfare benefits and universal health care as common goods for the whole society.

More difficult, however, was how to respond to the strain on the idea of nationhood that was unsettling Canadians. Indeed, Canada's situation was rather unusual among the Western liberal democracies. As English-speaking Canadians began to feel uneasy about state-promoted nationalism — and in this respect they were at one with Europeans troubled by their own violent history — French-speaking Quebecers began to respond positively to nationalism that sought at a minimum a revision of the existing powers of Confederation. It was under these circumstances that the Liberal government of Prime Minister Lester Pearson announced the making of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism in 1963. Pearson's B & B Commission (as it came to be called) was launched, according to the historian Kenneth McNaught, in response to the "deepening crisis of French-Canadian aspirations, and of Anglophone reluctance to contemplate substantial changes of policy" that would affect the federal arrangements; and the task set for the Commission was "to document the sources of the crisis and to suggest paths to a federal future of equality between the 'two founding races'" (McNaught: 308). It was from the labours of the B & B Commission that the idea of multiculturalism as a policy for Canada was born in the new Liberal government of Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau after he won majority power in the 1968 election. Since then, multiculturalism has spread to other liberal democracies of the West, including Australia.

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Though the official policy of multiculturalism as set forth by Ottawa was initially well received, in time critics from both the left and the right of the political spectrum seemed to agree that it was setting ethnic groups apart rather than bringing them closer in the building of a more cohesive national identity. Among the critics on the left, one of the most prominent voices was that of Neil Bissoondath, an immigrant from Trinidad, whose book *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism in Canada* (1994) was a hard-hitting inquiry into the reality of what multiculturalism actually meant in the lives of Canadians. On the right were voices such as that of William Gairdner, author of *The Trouble with Canada* (1990), who was concerned about how multiculturalism was diminishing the traditional conservative values of the majority European population that built Canada.

In this study my main concern is with some of the unintended consequences of multiculturalism that are weakening the basic principles of a liberal democracy, such as Canada. The events of September 11, 2001 showed, I believe, how multiculturalism has become an instrument of extremist political ideology, such as Islamism, and can work against the values and interests of liberal democracies. I am a skeptic of multiculturalism as an official state-directed policy, but I am realist enough to recognize that this official policy will not be reversed or dismantled, as it has become deeply entrenched in the politics of Canada and other Western democracies. But I do believe there is room for constraining any further growth of multiculturalism at the expense of the liberal values of freedom and individual rights.

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Since my critique of multiculturalism is from a small-l *liberal* perspective distinct from the animating spirit of the contemporary Liberalism with a big-L of the Liberal party in Canada or Britain, a few words here on what I mean by *liberalism* will be useful. My education and thinking on the subject of liberalism have been influenced by the writings of Friedrich Hayek, Karl Popper,

John Stuart Mill, and Isaiah Berlin. In their work, *liberalism* is about liberty, about the freedom of the individual from any untoward coercion by the collective in society, and can be traced back “to the theme of the links between the rights to personal property and individual liberty” that first found expression in John Locke’s writing in the seventeenth century (Gray: 14). Locke’s theme would be refined and advanced later in the works of Montesquieu, Adam Smith, David Hume, and others, and it would be carried with other ideas of the Enlightenment through the eighteenth into the nineteenth century in what John Gray calls “the liberal era”. For Hayek, *liberalism* as an idea meant, he recalled, how Lord Acton always used “‘liberal’ in its true and comprehensive sense, . . . one to whom individual liberty is of supreme value and ‘not a means to a higher political end’” (Hayek 1992: 209). This meaning of *liberalism* might now best be referred to as *classical liberalism*, or *classical liberty*, with its emphasis on individual freedom in a society ruled by law.

Implicit in classical liberalism is the belief that all men are created equal and deserving of equal treatment under the law. But towards the end of the nineteenth century, another strain of liberalism emerged with emphasis on equality. The social liberals argued that for a truly equitable society to emerge it was necessary for the state to treat different groups of people differently. This would be the slippery slope for the argument to expand the powers of the state over the people, and to make the case that experts in the various social sciences possessed knowledge and insight on how to create a social order that would be more equitable and just than the social order that worked on the basis of the “invisible hand” of markets organized voluntarily and spontaneously by free individuals coming together of their own accord. It meant for social liberals that, if equality required attenuating freedom, then the state should not be inhibited in its quest to favour equality over freedom. Increasingly in the twentieth century, therefore, social liberals moved to embrace some variant of socialism and succeeded in engineering a social welfare state that is intrusive in the lives of individuals in return for state-provided benefits. My use of the terms *liberal* and *liberalism* refers to *classical liberalism*. And this reference to classical liberalism, as Hayek notes in his essay “Why I am not a Conservative” appended to his great work *The Constitution of Liberty*, is related to “the fact that the belief in integral freedom is based on an essentially forward-looking attitude and not on any nostalgic longing for the past or a romantic admiration for what has been” (2006: 354).

# THE PARADOX OF MULTICULTURALISM

Between 1967 and 2001 the tempo and substance of social change in the West was deeper and more intensive than in any period of similar length during the previous century. The list is long. The cumulative effect of the civil rights movement, the feminist revolution and the gay rights movement, anti-Vietnam War protests, revolutions in transportation and communications, the global spread of the market economy, the making of the worldwide web, the tearing down of the Berlin Wall, the unification of Europe, and the collapse of Soviet communism made liberal democracies in the West more open, accommodating and responsive to public demands. But the change that grew upon the West in these years and held the potential to affect politics adversely was the nature of immigration from the Third World countries to Europe and North America. The West in general and western Europe in particular, during this period “became a multiethnic society in a fit of absence of mind” (Caldwell: 1).

Immigration made the modern West more or less what it is becoming: nations of migrants and cultures, especially in the urban centres, increasingly hybrid, polyglot, fluid and cosmopolitan. Michael Ignatieff in reflecting on the circumstances of his family in *The Russian Album* writes,

This century has made migration, expatriation and exile the norm, rootedness the exception. To come as I do from a hybrid family of White Russian exiles who married Scottish Canadians is to be at once lucky — we survived — and typical (Ignatieff: 1).

“Typical” in terms of the evolving ethnic mix of a people is quite correct in describing, as Ignatieff does, how greatly Canada as a representative liberal democracy in the West visibly changed in these years.

I observed the change from the inside as I was part of the process that turned Canada “from a society of almost uniform colour to one that is multi-hued; from a society that was of almost uniform religion to one that is multi-faithed” (Bissoondath: 45). I arrived in Toronto a few years after the centennial year as an immigrant/refugee from war torn South Asia. I witnessed a civil war and genocide as Pakistan tore itself apart in 1971, and was lucky to escape in the midst of the killings with my mother and younger siblings from what is now Bangladesh for shelter in my grandparents’ home in my native city of Calcutta, India. My parents’ generation had been uprooted by the great partition of India in 1947, and within a generation my family was again thrown into the maelstrom of ethnically driven politics. The memory of the terror and savage killings that I witnessed and that nearly struck me and the male members of my family down — it is a mystery to me how we survived the rapidly changing currents of organized killings by the Pakistani military and the enraged response of mobs out for revenge — has remained vivid with me despite the passage of many years.

In Canada I found safety, support and the opportunity to begin a new life with all the promise my adopted home held forth for me. In time I came to feel uncomfortable with the notion of being a hyphenated Canadian. The part of me that belonged to the wider Indian culture I inherited at birth without any effort on my part. But the part of me, the much greater part, through the university education I acquired and the air I breathed as I mingled with the people around me at school, in

work, and in politics, became by choice and conscious effort Canadian. I am a naturalized citizen of a Canada that is an integral part of the West as a civilization distinct from other civilizations and cultures. It is this awareness of choosing to be Canadian and what this implies that has grown within me since I landed in Toronto in 1974.

To be Canadian in the fullest sense means, I believe, to embrace the West and freely assimilate its distinctive culture. It means to recognize, as I did with a mixture of awe and gratitude, that the West represents the idea of a civilization nurtured by the values of the Enlightenment that Kant famously defined as “dare to know,” its genealogy traced back to ancient Greece, its faith tradition anchored in Judeo-Christian ethics, its politics shaped by the democratic impulse of revolutions against hereditary rule, its philosophy influenced by the development of the scientific method of controlled experiments and tests, its culture open and embracing of new ideas. The sum total of these values uniquely defines the West in terms of liberal democracy; and freedom affirms the Kantian principle that man as a free agent and a rational creature is an end in himself and must never be treated as a means to someone else’s ends. My own journey from the East to the West has been an education that encourages putting aside those ideas and values that confine an individual to the requirements of collective identity and group solidarity, which Ibn Khaldun, the great Arab philosopher of the fourteenth century from North Africa, described as *asabiyya* to explain the rise and fall of political dynasties, and embracing the notions of individual liberty and freedom of conscience that Mill later most compellingly defended and that are at the foundation of politics and culture of the West.

“The struggle between liberty and authority,” Mill wrote at beginning his essay *On Liberty*, “is the most conspicuous feature in the portions of history with which we are earliest familiar, particularly in that of Greece, Rome, and England” (1974: 59). This struggle is the oldest and most persistent in all of human history, and it is tilted in favour of the collective over the individual.

In our time this struggle has been given a new edge by the aggressiveness of those who insist on group identity over the right of the individual to be free of any coercion that limits his freedom. Across the world, as globalization has accelerated, the collectivist demands of jihad are pushing hard against the values of liberalism. This is the return of the primitive and the denial of the view that progress in history results from the daring of the few to question the consensus of the many; it is bending to the wishes of the crowd and its unwillingness to protect the minority from the tyranny of the majority; it is the jihad of the tribe, of the class-based or ethnic-based or religiously-organized party against the ultimate minority, the solitary individual, standing alone against the weight of the many.

In this most primordial struggle between liberty and authority, the irony is that what is universal blossoms in the life of an individual as a free agent and what is particular is expressed in the dogmatic defended by the collective. Arthur Koestler’s novel *Darkness at Noon* captures this essential dilemma of human existence between ends and means, between the individual’s struggle for freedom of conscience and the party principle that truth is what secures and advances the collective interest. Koestler describes this conflict in a fictional setting representing Stalinist Russia to unmask the reality of totalitarian politics: “The infinite was a politically suspect quantity, the ‘I’ a suspect quality. The Party did not recognize its existence. The definition of the individual was: a multitude of one million divided by one million” (1964: 204).

In other words, an individual is a cog in a machine and, contrary to Kant's liberal ethics, a means to an end as defined by the collective. This is the politics of jihad, which has been the normal condition for humankind in history, and only for brief tantalizing moments has the promise of liberty as what *ought* to be the true condition for humankind appeared on history's stage. It is in this sense that liberalism, it might be said, is a fighting creed devoted to protecting freedom as the *necessary* condition for securing human dignity against the politics of jihad.

## II.

If the West has become multi-ethnic in a fit of absent-mindedness, as Christopher Caldwell has suggested, then the cure proposed and turned into an "official" policy of multiculturalism increasingly appears to have been hastily conjured out of bad faith in response to the political needs of the moment. In Canada the Trudeau initiative of October 1971 to promote multiculturalism as an official policy was merely an initiative — once we strip away the words of the prime minister delivered in Parliament — as a feel-good public pronouncement that would do no harm, an afterthought to the more urgent need to quell the nationalist fervour of the French-speaking population in Quebec. Six months later, in April 1972, Canada went to the polls, and the Liberal party under Trudeau barely managed to cling to power. For Trudeau the electoral result was a moment of catharsis, an awakening to the brutal reality that politics, as most things in life, is driven by passion, not reason. It is surprising that Trudeau as a political philosopher of some merit had not paid sufficient attention to this reality, which the Scottish philosopher David Hume (1711-76) addressed by pointing out that human action is a product of passion or desires, and that reason is at best the slave of passion, directing it once man has been moved to act.

Trudeau had entered politics with the reputation of possessing a rational intellect for cool, dispassionate, and tough analysis to handle the most delicate file in Canadian politics: the pressures on the federation as a result of the growing alienation of Quebec from English Canada. Multiculturalism as an idea was not on his mental horizon. But the 1972 election sent a tremor through him as he stared at the real likelihood of losing power, which would amount to a personal defeat in public. In an extended and privately revealing post-election interview with Patrick Watson in December 1973, Trudeau said:

I'd almost say that my faith in politics, my faith in the democratic process has changed a bit. I used to think it would be sufficient to put a reasonable proposition to a person, for the person to look at it reasonably, without passion, but that's obviously not true. Nine-tenths of politics — debate in Parliament, speeches in the hustings, commentary by the media, nine-tenths of it appeals to emotion rather than to reason. I'm a bit sorry about that, but this is the world we're living in, and therefore I've had to change (Quoted in Gwyn 1980: 138-9).

And so Trudeau emerged in the period after 1972, in the words of one of his biographers, Richard Gwyn, as a "northern magus," a leader who would relate to his party and his country by responding to the political needs of the moment, by appealing to emotions that moved people. It was out of such political calculations that the vaguely conceived multicultural initiative of 1971 was made into official policy of the government of Canada, while it became an electoral switch for the Liberal party to secure immigrant votes permanently for itself and place it at a commanding advantage in national politics over its main political rivals, the Tories and the New Democrats. "Trudeau had been criticized for ignoring the Queen; in 1973, the Queen came to Canada twice," wrote Gwyn, "a

history-making precedent, with Trudeau at her side every step of the royal progress. So he had been accused of sloughing off the ethnics; up sprang a trebled multiculturalism program that functioned as a slush fund to buy ethnic votes” (1980: 139).

Politics, especially in a liberal democracy and generally under normal circumstances, occurs on the grounds where broad consensus exists among the people on most issues publicly discussed; therefore, smart politics that makes for electoral victories tends to be opportunistic. Elections are won or lost on how political leaders can exploit the passion of the moment among the voting public; but passion disallows serious contemplation of what is on offer to the public, and how any set of policies proposed by political leaders for what they are worth should be weighed by considering their unintended effects as positive or negative rather than the immediate benefits as promised. Multiculturalism was clearly a policy on offer in the early 1970s in Canada aimed at the requirements of a political party, the Liberal party, and similarly it would be on offer by centre-left parties in other liberal democracies of the West, to capture for the long term in politics marginal votes in electoral districts of the newly arriving immigrants. It is the difference in marginal votes in closely contested electoral districts that accounts for winning or losing in elections, and by securing the ethnic-immigrant votes in the urban centres where immigrants settled on arrival, the Liberal party — as would the Democratic party in the United States, the Labour party in Britain, the Socialist and social-democratic parties in France, Germany, and other western European countries — arranged for itself an electoral advantage that its rivals would find increasingly difficult to overcome in the polls. Political opportunism set aside the consideration that multiculturalism would give sanction to group identity and political demands on the basis of what serves the collective interest of an identifiable group based on ethnicity, religion, and, later, sexual orientation in a liberal democracy that presumably stands for protecting individual rights ahead of collective rights.

Multiculturalism thus was a policy born of bad faith that undermined liberal democracy by deliberately creating a wedge between new immigrants from Third World countries and the settled population that no longer viewed itself in terms of group identity as citizens, or was actively discouraged to do so, and those who did were liable to be accused of promoting “white supremacist” or racist politics. The inherent bad-faith aspect of multiculturalism in Canada was further underscored by the Citizenship Act of 1977, which reduced the residency requirement for citizenship from five to three years.<sup>2</sup> With citizenship, new immigrants acquired the right to vote after living in the country for less time than the normal life of an elected majority in Parliament. The provision, in fact, smacked of rank political opportunism to secure the immigrant vote for the Liberal party.

### III.

The world is naturally diverse in being multi-ethnic and multicultural. This diversity is also naturally respected as a given wherever the liberal democratic arrangement in politics is strong and institutionalized. But the moral strength of liberalism comes from its refusal to make a fetish of this diversity. The liberal vision sees above and beyond diversity in respecting individual rights, and by defending liberty on the basis of securing individual rights liberalism acknowledges that the

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<sup>2</sup> The legislation passed by the Trudeau Liberals, was long required, since Canadian citizenship until then had been an undefined category, and technically Canadians were by statute native-born or naturalized British subjects : see Young (1998).

naturally given diversity finds its best unfettered expression through the lives of individuals as free agents in history.

Official multiculturalism, however, muddies the core liberal principle that, in a conflict, however it arises, between the right of the individual to exercise his freedom of conscience and the collective demand that the individual bend to the wishes of the group, the right of the individual takes precedence over that of the group. Multiculturalism is the slippery slope that leads to the acceptance or appeasement of the politics of jihad within a liberal democracy. Until 9/11 the fundamental contradiction between multiculturalism and liberal democracy remained obscure. This was due to the inherent bad-faith politics of multiculturalism, which exploits genuine feelings of generosity toward the disadvantaged in our world and the guilt feeling that troubles the liberal conscience when confronted with the agony of others.

Multiculturalists disarm and seduce liberals with the argument that “we” are responsible for the “other,” that the advantages the West enjoys come at the expense of those who are disadvantaged in the less-developed non-European countries that were once colonies and dependencies of the European colonial powers. This reading of history suggests the West is culpable for the wrongs done to the people of the Third World and their cultures, and even though those wrongs cannot be entirely undone, the West can begin to meet its responsibility to make amends for those wrongs by recognizing this history. Paradoxically, however, this recognition of past wrongs by the West absolves Third World people and cultures of their own responsibility in history; it tells them that their disadvantages relative to the West are mostly, if not entirely, the result of colonial exploitations by the European powers, and that their historical progress in keeping with their own cultural values was denied them as a result of the West’s colonial-imperial aggression against them.

Guilt feeling can be cathartic for individuals and societies jolted by the information and images of the inequalities in the world and by the sheer absurdity of the overabundance of commodities available to the people in the West. French writer Pascal Bruckner describes what this means:

These images clearly describe the failures of our age. Their horror leaves no place for hope. Rather than broadening human possibilities, the dying hundreds of thousands in the Southern hemisphere defy the plans of others with their endless agony, deflating the values we hold dearest, ridiculing the greatest scientific and artistic achievements of the international community. We feel that our moral faith in mankind will not recover from this wound. And, because every day the media give the human race the knowledge of its own misfortune, an apocalyptic vision of the universe begins to spread. By setting forth daily the balance sheet of suffering around the globe, radio and television networks give our planet a terrible image — that it is unquestionably the worst of all possible worlds (Bruckner 1986: 44-5).

The liberal mind is readily disposed to see injustice when confronted with such disparity, and in becoming riddled with shame over that portion of history in which Europeans ruled over the non-Europeans for their own benefit, the liberal mind seeks atonement. The problems of the world are, however, immense, and the thought of finding solutions can also lead to a paralysis of the individual will to act. Governments can do better, and Western governments have been driven by a complex of reasons such as prudence, self-interest, and compassion, and prodded by liberal guilt feeling to provide economic, technological and other sorts of assistance to Third World countries. But to what extent such assistance has helped developing countries is another matter — some economists have



raised serious doubts about the contribution of foreign aid to economic growth in the Third World (see, for example, Easterly 2006; Moyo 2009). The generosity of the West has been substantial: over the past 50 years, according to the World Bank, US \$2.3 trillion has gone from advanced industrial economies to the developing countries of Asia, Africa and South America (Easterly: 4). While the West has shared its own developmental experience, it is reluctant to provide any critical assessment of how the prevailing cultures in Third World countries might be holding them back. The past weighs heavily on the liberal mind, and the resulting guilt forbids any suggestion that might undermine the multiculturalist doctrine that all cultures are essentially of equal merit and deserving of equal respect. This is the conundrum that silences liberals who are otherwise open to reasoning and analytical judgment. The multiculturalist thus wins the argument by default.

The Islamist assault on the liberal West, however, has exposed the hollowness of multiculturalism as an official policy of Western governments and the mainstream political parties that refuse to question it. The overt assault in the form of terrorism can be effectively dealt with by appropriate security measures, but it is the covert attempt to undermine liberal democracies from within by infiltrating their institutions that poses the more serious long-term Islamist threat. Like dope addicts, however, Western governments and the ideologues of multiculturalism insist that the answer to defusing the Islamist jihad by stealth is more multiculturalism, including appeasement by incrementally conceding to Islamist demands to accept *shari'ah* as a parallel legal norm for Muslim populations in the West alongside the rule of law that is secular and based on the hard-won principle of the separation of church and state.

It is because of their self-imposed inhibition that liberals in the West will not publicly state the obvious — that *shari'ah* is incompatible with the workings of the modern world. But no such inhibition constrains modern liberal Muslims. They recognize, as the modern scholarship of Islam and Muslim history illustrates, that “the classical theory of Shari’a law was the outcome of a complex historical process spanning a period of some three centuries,” that “the growth of Islamic law was linked to the current social, political and economic conditions,” and that this “classical exposition represents the zenith of a process whereby the specific terms of the law came to be expressed as the irrevocable will of God” (Coulson: 4). In other words, while traditionalist-minded Muslims and Islamists insist that the *shari'ah* is the divine ordinance, irrevocably complete and “embodying norms of an absolute and eternal validity, which are not susceptible to modification by any legislative authority” (ibid.), modern liberal Muslims see *shari'ah* as a human effort to construct a religion-based (Islamic) legal system from the piecemeal nature of pronouncements taken as legislative decrees found in the Qur’an that were in keeping with the cultural norms of the time and place when this effort was formally initiated and closed between the first century (seventh century C.E.) and the third century of Islam (tenth century C.E.). *Shari'ah*, therefore, in the view of liberal-minded Muslims, is contextually bound to the value system of the ancient and medieval world. This is how Mohamed Charfi, professor emeritus in the law faculty in Tunis and a former minister of education in Tunisia, describes *shari'ah*:

Muslim law is based on three fundamental inequalities: the superiority of men over women, of Muslims over non-Muslims, and of free persons over slaves. It recognizes the maximum advantages in the case of a free and rich Muslim male, and the fewest rights in the case of a non-Muslim female slave.... Muslim law is therefore fundamentally discriminatory. It might be said that this is a harsh judgment. Indeed it is — an unfair judgment even. But what makes it necessary, unfortunately, is the existence of a fundamentalist movement that demands a return to the sharia and therefore

compels us to measure the past by the standards of the present. An objective evaluation would require us to place Muslim law in its historical context and to compare it with the legal systems of other old civilizations. It then takes on a rather different aspect (Charfi: 78-9).

It is likely true that, in the post-9/11 world of Islamist rage, most Muslims who have seriously considered such matters might not defend publicly Professor Charfi's view. But it is another matter when non-Muslims in the West shun or deny the view Professor Charfi expresses and when such a view is at the heart of the struggle for reform of Islam among Muslims. When political leaders and public figures in the West openly engage in discussing how to make room for *shari'ah* based provisions in liberal democratic societies, then undeniably such discussions are evidence of appeasement of Islamists-in-the-making disguised as multiculturalism.

In giving the foundation lecture in February 2008 at the Royal Courts of Justice in London, Archbishop of Canterbury Dr. Rowan Williams raised the likelihood that Britain might need to consider the partial adoption of *shari'ah*. The main concern he expressed was around the issue of how civil and religious law should be reconciled in a manner that preserves the rule of law while accommodating different religious norms that reflect the pluralist nature of a modern multi-ethnic and multi-faith society. He suggested that "we have to think a little harder about the role and rule of law in a plural society of overlapping identities" and he offered the view that "[i]t would be a pity if the immense advances in the recognition of human rights led, because of a misconception about legal universality, to a situation where a person was defined primarily as the possessor of a set of abstract liberties and the law's function was accordingly seen as nothing but the securing of those liberties *irrespective of the custom and conscience of those groups which concretely compose a plural modern society*" (Archbishop's Lecture 2008; italics added).

The archbishop's remarks ignited a fury of discussions in the British media over whether or not he had called for the adoption of *shari'ah*. His predecessor, Lord George Carey, responded that the archbishop had "overstated the case for accommodating Islamic legal codes. His conclusion that Britain will eventually have to concede some place in law for aspects of sharia is a view I cannot share."<sup>3</sup> The context for the controversy was the militancy of a growing portion of the Muslim immigrant population in Britain and Islamist attacks carried out in that country, as well as the appearance of *shari'ah* tribunals within the wider Islamic community in Britain dealing with family disputes, marriages, divorces, child custody, inheritance and property rights. One US critic of the archbishop and the Anglican hierarchy observed, "The problem, shared by much of the Anglican establishment, is a culture of political correctness that is at once too generous and too stingy: an eagerness to overlook the staggering problems in Islamic thought with regard to democratic rights, but a reluctance to claim any decisive role for biblical religion in the formation and defense of those rights" (Loconte 2008). But the archbishop's remarks on *shari'ah* were in keeping with the goals of multiculturalism to accommodate in the politics and law of a liberal democracy the group-based identities of people belonging to immigrant communities, and to accept the cultural norms by which these communities live. Such recognition also would be consistent, he suggested, with the expansive meaning of human rights that had evolved in a liberal society such as Britain.

A similar effort was made in Ontario by a former attorney-general, Marion Boyd, with the release of a report in December 2004 counselling the Liberal government of Premier Dalton McGuinty to

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<sup>3</sup> Quoted in R. Butt, "Gordon Brown backs archbishop in sharia law row," *Guardian*, February 11, 2008.

adopt provisions of *shari'ah* for the purpose of arbitration in family and inheritance matters. McGuinty declined to accept Boyd's recommendation given the public unease with the post-9/11 reality, yet the push for recognition of *shari'ah* in a Canadian jurisdiction remains a priority for Islamists in Canada. A Muslim activist-lawyer writing in the magazine for the legal profession in Ontario, *The Lawyers Weekly*, observed:

Boyd's report merely affirms *our* Constitutional right to religious freedom, equal treatment under the law, [and] multiculturalism and ensures that we are in compliance with our international obligations. Indeed, Article 27 of the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights**, to which Canada acceded on May 19, 1976, imposes a positive duty on a state to assist its minorities to preserve its [*sic*] values by allowing them to enjoy their own culture and to profess and practise their own religion. (Kutty 2005.)

It is the vulnerability of liberal democracies that the tools by which liberals have advanced the principles of individual rights and secured them in law are equally available, and often provided by liberals themselves, to those who either do not believe in such principles or subordinate them to collective rights on the basis provided for, as Kutty claims in making his case for recognition of *shari'ah* provisions, by multiculturalism and international covenants on human rights. If this were only a matter of bad faith to be held up for ridicule, a critic of multiculturalism writes, about a political philosopher of Indian origin whom Prime Minister Tony Blair made life peer in 2000 plainly to secure ethnic Indian votes, as follows: "One professor of race relations, Bikhu Parekh, has even suggested that Britain should change its name, which has so many negative historical connotations for millions around the world. Now that Britain has become so ineradicably multicultural, he says, there is no justification for it to be 'British' any more" (Dalrymple: 216).

This vulnerability was acute during the Cold War years, when the internal enemies of liberal democracy on the left (communists) and on the right (fascists) made claims for their right to espouse anti-democratic views on the basis of liberal values. As the French political philosopher Jean-François Revel remarked, "Democratic civilization is the first in history to blame itself because another power is working to destroy it...What distinguishes it is its eagerness to believe in its own guilt and...is zealous in devising arguments to prove the justice of its adversary's case and to lengthen the already overwhelming list of its own inadequacies" (Revel: 7-8).

In the post-9/11 world, guilt feeling in the West has been debased into political correctness that frowns on any critical inquiry into the validity of the general assumptions of multiculturalism. Political correctness comes wearing the garment of anthropologists whose training in studying the minute details of different cultures and faithfully rendering them — as Clifford Geertz, a distinguished member of the discipline, calls for — through "thick description" prevents them from assessing cultures on the basis of some objective and independent standard (see Geertz, chap. 1).

Cultures are inherently different from one another, but the important question is not how cultures differ but what do such differences indicate in terms of their past achievements and current ability to contribute to the advancement of our increasingly shared history. Since such a question invariably points to the objective reality that all cultures are not equal in terms of either past achievements or current viability according to some agreed independent standard of measurement, political correctness forbids asking it. Instead, multiculturalism promotes the notion of cultural relativism, which states that since each culture is by definition unique, any independent standard to

distinguish among cultures would itself represent cultural bias nullifying the objectivity of any test applied. The syllogism of the proponents of multiculturalism is therefore a closed loop where differences among cultures amount to the proof that all cultures are equal, and the questioning of this syllogism then indicates racism — the dreadful “R” word, the scarlet letter in the politically correct world of multiculturalism that disarms liberals and prevents critical thought.

Moreover, the claim that cultural relativism reflects an openness of mind to connect with and learn about other cultures paradoxically has the opposite effect — that this politically correct openness is shallow in the absence or prohibition of critical thinking on matters related to cultures. Allan Bloom discusses this paradox as follows:

Men cannot remain content with what is given them by their culture if they are to be fully human. This is what Plato meant to show by the image of the cave in the *Republic* and by representing us as prisoners in it. A culture is a cave. He did not suggest going around to other cultures as a solution to the limitations of the cave. Nature should be the standard by which we judge our own lives and the lives of people. That is why philosophy, not history or anthropology, is the most important human science. Only dogmatic assurance that thought is culture-bound, that there is no nature, is what makes our educators so certain that the only way to escape the limitations of our time and place is to study other cultures.

This point of view, particularly the need to know nature in order to have a standard, is uncomfortably buried beneath our human sciences, whether they like it or not, and accounts for the ambiguities and contradictions I have been pointing out. They want to make us culture-beings with the instruments that were invented to liberate us from culture. *Openness used to be the virtue that permitted us to seek the good by using reason. It now means accepting everything and denying reason's power.* The unrestrained and thoughtless pursuit of openness, without recognizing the inherent political, social, or cultural problem of openness as the goal of nature, has rendered openness meaningless. *Cultural relativism destroys both one's own and the good.* What is most characteristic of the West is science, particularly understood as the quest to know nature and the consequent denigration of convention — i.e., culture or the West understood as a culture — in favor of what is accessible to all men as men through their common and distinctive faculty, reason. Science's latest attempts to grasp the human situation — cultural relativism, historicism, the fact-value distinction — are the suicide of science. *Culture, hence closedness, reigns supreme. Openness to closedness is what we teach* (Bloom: 38-9; italics added).

In the post-9/11 world, the indiscriminate openness of cultural relativism that leads to tolerating the politics of jihad reveals the absurdity of multiculturalism. Political correctness in such circumstances is a death wish by denying our critical faculty, the mind, through reasoning to discriminate among things, circumstances, opinions, dogmas, people, institutions, and so on in liberating us from superstition and from the closed circle of tribal politics.

#### IV.

The politics of multiculturalism works in tandem with the politics of immigration. A generation after the immigration reforms of the 1960s — whether resulting from the rising liberal optimism about the future as the West repaired the terrible wounds of the Second World War or from the tumbling birth rates and the need for workers in low-end jobs — the population of the West has

undergone a visibly changed ethnic profile. By the 2001 census, 18.4 percent of Canada's population was born outside the country; in Australia, the foreign-born accounted for 22 percent of the population (Statistics Canada 2003: 5). But any critical examination of immigration policy in Canada, as in the rest of the West, is taboo due to the politics of multiculturalism. There is a public consensus that Canada as a country of immigrants should be welcoming of immigrants, as they contribute to its economic well-being and are an answer to the problem of an aging population. This is a view that no one in politics or the mainstream media is willing to question or examine objectively.

There was a time, however, between the end of the Second World War and the immigration reforms of the 1960s when immigration into Canada, as in most countries of the West, was controlled on the basis of prevalent economic conditions. This changed in the 1970s and 1980s, as James Bissett, a retired Canadian diplomat and senior public servant in Ottawa, explains. Once immigration was politicized, all political parties sought electoral advantage by supporting open immigration with higher numbers of immigrants granted entry. According to Bissett,

[in] 1985 the newly elected Progressive Conservative government of Prime Minister Brian Mulroney raised immigration levels despite evidence of an economic down-turn. This was the signal that the Conservative party was determined to win ethnic votes by supporting high immigration levels. In 1990, the then Minister, Barbara McDougal, convinced her cabinet colleagues to raise the levels to 250,000, by arguing that higher levels would help the party to establish stronger ties with ethnic communities. Later, the Minister said in an interview that a political party was not doing its job if it failed to reach out to ethnic groups. There was political capital to be gained by high numbers whether they were needed or not (2009: 4).

Since the immigration tap, once opened, creates its own pressures that will not allow for it to be closed easily, making the West more multi-ethnic and multi-faith likely will remain irreversible. This fact should not necessarily be a cause for alarm, except for the reality of the post-9/11 situation.

Since 9/11 the Muslim population in the West has not shown forthrightness and determination in repudiating Islamism as an ideology that increasingly makes a mockery of Islam as a peaceful religion tolerant of other faith-traditions or in isolating the Islamists. In Europe, in particular, there is concern about what the growth of Muslim immigrants means for the continent's culture and for liberal democracy. Muslims in Europe are now estimated to number in around 38 million, or about 5 per cent of the population. As Caldwell writes, "In the middle of the twentieth century, there were virtually no Muslims in Western Europe. At the turn of the twenty-first century, there were between 15 and 17 million Muslims" (2009: 12). In contrast, Muslims account for less than 1 percent of the total population of Canada and the United States (Pew Research Center 2009: 32-3). These numbers will increase relatively quickly through immigration, especially under the family re-unification policy, and a higher fertility rate within the Muslim immigrant communities compared than among the native non-Muslim population. It is the meaning of these numbers projected into the future that raises alarm, especially among those Europeans who fear their culture is being undermined by the twin forces of immigration and multiculturalism.

The European dilemma as a cautionary note for North America is in how its liberal democratic culture is becoming increasingly relativistic by adopting the politics of multiculturalism and

contending with immigrant cultures, particularly that of Muslims, confident of their values. There is the easy conflict-avoidance path of appeasement based on the hope that the more Europe accommodates Islam, the more Muslims will respond by respecting European values and resisting demands that make a mockery of European liberalism. Islamists, however, are not ideologically motivated to seek coexistence on terms set by others; for them, coexistence means setting the terms for others on the basis of *shari'ah* values that are incompatible with liberal values. In the end, the European dilemma means, as Caldwell summarizes, “[w]hen an insecure, malleable, relativistic culture meets a culture that is anchored, confident, and strengthened by common doctrines, it is generally the former that changes to suit the latter” (2009: 349). A Europe turned into a “Eurabia” then would be the legacy of immigration joined with multiculturalism as official policy that tolerates the intolerant and lethally undermines a civilization from the inside. Or in the words of Arnold Toynbee, the historian of civilizations, as Mark Steyn reminds us, “Civilizations die from suicide, not murder” (Steyn 2006).

The paradox of multiculturalism was unavoidable and predictable once a liberal democracy, such as Canada, willingly embraced an idea that was a concoction of loose thinking and bad faith. It also turned out to be a sort of soft bigotry — “a racism of the anti-racists: it chains people to their roots” (Bruckner 2007) — disguised as the high-minded virtue of being open to diversity and respecting differences among cultures but that amounted to viewing immigrants from the Third World not as individuals but as people confined within the particulars of their birth cultures. This meant that such immigrants were neither expected nor asked to make the passage from their traditional cultures and embrace modernity with its liberal values. This is also the paradox of multiculturalism, according to Bruckner, as “it accords the same treatment to all communities, but not to the people who form them, denying them the freedom to liberate themselves from their own traditions. Instead: recognition of the group, oppression of the individual” (ibid.). In celebrating diversity on the basis of cultural relativism and pushing political correctness, multiculturalism has done its share to weaken the confidence of the West in its own cultural inheritance by undermining critical thinking about cultures when most needed to push back the politics of global jihad.

# SUMMING UP

In an April 23, 2010, newspaper column, Ujjal Dosanjh, former premier of British Columbia and Member of Parliament for Vancouver South, called on Canadians to “ask the tough question”: “What will Canada look like in 50 years? Will we still have a country that is fair, compassionate, just, integrated and socially cohesive, bound by fundamental core values? Or will we live separately, in communities that are islands unto themselves? Could there be separatist voices rising from communities in Canada, so extreme and so violent that we may long for the days of the peaceful advocacy of the Parti Québécois and Bloc Québécois?”<sup>4</sup> Dosanjh’s words carried the weight of his own harrowing personal experiences as a victim of political violence. He had been physically beaten, and was fortunate to escape with his life, for publicly opposing extremists in the Sikh community to which he belongs. In his column, Dosanjh contends, that minority communities — that is, mostly those of non-European origin — by being “obsessively focused on injustices” in their native countries and thereby importing quarrels from distant lands, threatened social harmony within Canada.

It was the obsessive focus on injustices faced by Sikhs in India — irrespective of the fact that the Sikh community is one of the most successful minority groups in the Hindu-majority country and, as I write, Manmohan Singh, the prime minister of India, happens to be a Sikh — that led Sikh extremists in Canada to plan and execute the worst terrorist act before 9/11 when they blew up an Air India plane, killing all passengers on a flight from Toronto to New Delhi in June 1985. Similarly, conflicts in the Middle East, in South Asia, in Africa, and elsewhere have generated tensions among ethnic minorities in Canada, Europe, the United States, and Australia. The effect of such politics, as Dosanjh notes, brings increasing stress on tolerance in a society with a rapidly changing demography, as is Canada. This unpleasant fact was discussed in a cover story by *Maclean’s* magazine in its May 4, 2009 edition.

The *Maclean’s* story investigated “What Canadians think of Sikhs, Jews, Christians, Muslims...” based on a poll that asked respondents about religion and faith-based identity. The findings were disturbing for a country that has made multiculturalism its credo. The report indicated that 72 percent of Canadians thought favourably of Christianity, while only 28 percent viewed Islam favourably and 30 percent viewed Sikhism positively (the figures for Hinduism, Buddhism and Judaism were, respectively, 41 percent, 57 percent and 53 percent). When asked how far governments should go to accommodate minorities, 62 percent agreed with the statement “Laws and norms should not be modified to accommodate minorities.” In Quebec, “74 per cent were against changing laws or norms, the highest negative response rate on the accommodation question in the country.” Divisiveness within Canada emanating from cultural differences as the *Maclean’s* poll revealed, was a surprise for those Canadians who had convinced themselves of the virtue of multiculturalism and that it made their country “a model for the world of how all sorts of people can get along together.”

Multiculturalism is based on the premise that, because the world is culturally diverse, this diversity needs to be acknowledged and promoted as public policy within liberal democracies, since these societies as a result of immigration increasingly reflect that diversity within their respective state

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<sup>4</sup> Ujjal Dosanjh, “Ask the tough questions,” *National Post*, April 23, 2010.

boundaries. As Bhikhu Parekh notes, the multiculturalist perspective takes into consideration “the cultural embeddedness of human beings, the inescapability and desirability of cultural plurality, and the plural and multicultural constitution of each culture” (2001). But exponents of multiculturalism ignore, or deliberately set aside, the unique nature of the culture that evolved in the West and flourishes in the liberal democracies of Europe and North America, the progeny of the Enlightenment that fundamentally altered man’s conception of God and nature and his relationship to both. The modern West shaped by the Enlightenment did not repudiate religion, but instead subjected religion to the scrutiny of reason. The result was the making of the secular conscience based on the universality of reason in contrast to religious conscience based on the dictates of religion and the authority of the church (Dacey: esp. 8-22). Secularism, as the conservative philosopher Roger Scruton explains, is a sort of religious belief and duty where worship of an abstract God is a private affair and tolerance of religious and other differences is the cardinal virtue. He writes:

Voltaire and the Encyclopedists, Hume, Smith, and the Scottish Enlightenment, the Kant of *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* — such thinkers and movements had collectively remade the God of Christianity as a creature of the head rather than the heart. God retreated from the world to the far reaches of infinite space, where only vertiginous thoughts could capture him. Daily life is of little concern to such a God, who demands no form of obedience except to the universal precepts of morality. To worship him is to bow in private towards the unknowable (2002: 43).

Thus, the unique transmutation of Western culture and civilization brought about by the Enlightenment and the new scientific method pioneered by Galileo led to the separation of church and state, religion and politics, and a new form of association and membership or belonging — that is, one of citizenship — within the state. Membership is the prerequisite of every society, giving an identity to the individuals who belong to it; in this sense, such an identity is pre-political, and the culture it produces becomes instrumental in the making of political institutions and politics of that society. Again Scruton:

Membership is defined in different ways at different times and places. For many societies, religion is an important part of it, so that the infidel is cast out or marginalized, as in traditional Islamic society. Although religion has been an important part of European identity, it was gradually, under the influence of the Enlightenment, pushed into the background by nationality, and subsequently by the rise of the nation state. And it is thanks to the nation state that we enjoy the freedoms and secular jurisdictions that are so attractive to immigrants — and especially to those immigrants who define their pre-political membership in religious, rather than national, terms. For national loyalty is a form of neighbourliness: it is loyalty to a shared home and to the people who have built it. It makes no specific demands of a religious or ideological nature, and is content with a common obedience to a secular rule of the law, and a common sense of belonging to the land, its customs and its habits of peaceful coexistence. Communities founded on a national rather than a religious conception of membership are *inherently open* to newcomers, in the way that religious communities are not. An immigrant to a religious community must be prepared to convert; an immigrant to a national community need only obey the law (2006; italics added).

The notion of citizenship is what brings people together in a liberal democracy and binds them in a relationship of mutual obligations. The sense of belonging as a result of membership in a modern



state is qualitatively different than one in a tribe, a family, or a club, since the obligations that come with membership, are to strangers with whom an individual shares in common the association of belonging to that state. Citizenship is the identity by which an individual claims he has a country to call his own and shares in its sovereignty (Dunn: 117). A citizen, as one writer on the subject has noted, is “someone who possesses rights which are denied in a legally stratified or segmented society to non-citizens and in all societies to resident aliens and foreigners” (Heater: 247). In his judgment in *Perez v. Brownell* (1958), US chief Justice Earl Warren wrote, “Citizenship *is* man’s basic right for it is nothing less than the right to have rights. Remove this priceless possession and there remains a stateless person, disgraced and degraded in the eyes of his countrymen” (quoted in *ibid*; italics in original).

But this idea of citizenship is modern and secular. It is the fruit of the Western civic culture, and while other cultures have borrowed this idea, it is only in the West that citizenship is vested in a free individual with rights and responsibilities. The animating spirit of a free individual as citizen is the loyalties he shares in common with others to the territorially demarcated state to which he belongs, to the liberal democratic or republican constitution of that state which he is sworn to uphold and defend, and to the laws of the state in whose sovereignty he has a share. And the identity provided by citizenship in a modern liberal democratic state takes precedence over all other identities, those of the political left and right or of overlapping ethnic, religious, cultural, and professional identities that proliferate in an open society.

Multiculturalism, however, works to weaken or dissolve citizenship identity by suggesting that the cultural identities which immigrants bring with them deserve to be recognized and treated with equal respect. As I have indicated, tolerance is the virtue esteemed in liberal democracy and its inherent characteristic is acceptance of other cultures. But this acceptance cannot mean a denial of its own historically evolved civic culture represented by the modern and secular idea of citizenship. The problem arises and persists when multiculturalism demands that liberal democracy recognize in law cultural practices that are not merely different, but contrary and oppositional to its core values of citizenship rights and responsibilities, individual freedom, and democracy. Any concession to group-based identity — for instance, recognizing in law the status of women in accordance with Islamic practice based on *shari’ah* — would undermine the principle of gender equality in a liberal democracy.

Increasingly multiculturalism, in espousing acceptance of other cultures, irrespective of how such acceptance diminishes liberal democracy’s unique set of values — most importantly the place of the individual citizen as a minority of one protected by the full panoply of the state’s power based on the rule of law — has turned out to be an insidious assault on freedom in the West. This espousal by proponents of multiculturalism is motivated in part from a sense of both generosity given the immensity of capitalist wealth, and guilt of the West’s history of colonialism and imperialism; it is also motivated by a loss of faith in the legacy of the Enlightenment and opposition to the idea of the nation-state as it originated and evolved in the West.

There are enemies of the West who hate its civic culture, its freedom and democracy, as do the Islamists who organized the terrorist strikes on 9/11. And ironically these enemies find that multiculturalism increasingly in the post-9/11 world works in tandem with their interests to weaken the West politically and culturally from the inside. The reason multiculturalism gives comfort to the enemies of the West is explained, Robert Fulford says, by lack of self-confidence: “Since the

success of Martin Luther in the sixteenth century, the West has revered self-criticism. We all know that the states in North and South America established themselves by violence and that Europe grew rich through its colonies. In the universities the young learn one central belief: We are guilty! In comparing ourselves with other forms of society, our first self-hating instinct is to adopt a perverse moral disarmament.”<sup>5</sup> This self-hating instinct, Pascal Bruckner reminds us, is also uniquely Western. “Europe against itself: anti-Occidentalism, as we know,” he writes, “is a European tradition that stretches from Montaigne to Sartre and instills relativism and doubt in a serene conscience sure that it is right” (2010: 9). Whatever once were the good intentions behind multiculturalism, it has become, in the post-9/11 world as a post-modern ideology, the tool of “guilt peddlers” — Bruckner’s apt description of those who reflexively fault the West for most, if not all, of the world’s problems — to tear down the West.

## II.

Multiculturalism as public policy in Canada and in other liberal democracies is not likely to be disowned and dismantled by governments in the immediate future. It has acquired a momentum of its own, and those who have invested in propagating it since the early 1970s have succeeded in entrenching it within all the major institutions of the country. Hence multiculturalism as a doctrine, much like the socialist creed, is resistant to the test of falsification: no matter how compelling is the contrary evidence to the claims of multiculturalism, no matter how insidiously it corrupts the core values of liberal democracy, there is the “progressive” appeal for social justice derived from the notion of equality ahead of liberty, and adorned in a contrite language pushing for reform as atonement for past wrongs, that makes multiculturalism an attractive notion to many members of an open society.

The best that might be done under these circumstances to oppose multiculturalism and to seek its eventual repudiation both in the realm of ideas and in legislation is to contain its further spread into the workings of liberal democracy. The rise and spread of militant Islamism with the success of the Islamic revolution in Iran — ironically, this movement coincided with the push for adoption of multiculturalism as public policy in Canada — and its combativeness against the West poses the most serious challenge to the proponents and defenders of multiculturalism in government, in schools and institutions of higher learning, in the media, and in mainstream political parties. This Islamist assault on the West provides the opening to question the basis of multiculturalism and to contain its further spread.

Since 9/11 there has been a growing sense of alarm in the West among people at large that their open, tolerant society and its unique civic culture are under siege by their own governments, which are seen as excessively sensitive to the cultural needs of new immigrants instead of defending their ways of living. In Quebec, residents of Hérouxville, a small township outside of Montreal, brought this alarm to a head when they published a charter that called for anyone moving into their township to abide by its terms. The Hérouxville charter resonated among the majority population of French-Canadians in Quebec, and in order to be seen as a responsive government, Quebec’s Liberal premier Jean Charest set up the Bouchard-Taylor Commission to look into the grievances and come forward with recommendations. The commission’s report, released in 2008, called for “reasonable accommodation” between the native-born population and the growing numbers of newly arriving

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<sup>5</sup> R. Fulford, “The West has work to do,” *National Post*, December 26, 2009.

immigrants from non-European cultures. The commissioners conceded, “Our society is sufficiently divided at present and we must seek to reduce splits and tensions instead of exacerbating them. The time has come for compromise, negotiation and balance” (Bouchard and Taylor: 10).

Yet the dilemma with “reasonable accommodation” is how the majority population can insist that new immigrants adopt the civic culture of liberal democracy when government-approved multiculturalism rejects the need for assimilation in favour of extending equal recognition to other cultures. This contradiction was exposed in the controversy surrounding the subject of the *niqab* — the practice by some Muslim women of fully covering of their body and face except for the eyes — when Quebec immigration minister Yolande James approved the expulsion from class in a Montreal school of a student, an Egyptian woman, for refusing to bare her face and insisting that male students in the class refrain from facing her. In the weeks following this incident Premier Charest introduced Bill 94 in Quebec’s National Assembly in March 2010 requiring anyone employed by the government and publicly funded institutions — Crown corporations, hospitals, schools, universities, daycare centres, libraries, and other municipal facilities — or receiving their services to uncover their face for the purposes of identification. For multiculturalists, Bill 94 is a violation of the rights of minorities to maintain their respective cultural precepts, and if the bill becomes law it is very likely it will be taken to the human rights commissions in both Quebec and Ottawa and appealed in the courts.

Quebec is not alone in demanding that Muslim women unveil in public — the issue has become even more volatile in Europe. The linguistically divided Belgian parliament voted overwhelmingly to ban face covering in April 2010, setting a precedent for France and now possibly the Netherlands to follow. Jean-François Copé, the majority leader in the French National Assembly and the mayor of Meaux, explained, “This is not an article of clothing — it is a mask, a mask worn at all times, making identification or participation in economic and social life virtually impossible.” In anticipating opposition similar to the condemnation by Amnesty International of the Belgian ban as “an attack on religious freedom,” he then continued,

in both France and the United States, we recognize that individual liberties cannot exist without individual responsibilities. This acknowledgment is the basis of all our political rights. We are free as long as we are responsible individuals who can be held accountable for our actions before our peers. But the *niqab* and *burka* represent a refusal to exist as a person in the eyes of others. The person who wears one is no longer identifiable; she is a shadow among others, lacking individuality, avoiding responsibility.<sup>6</sup>

It is quite proper that people in liberal democracies and their representatives in government remain wary about defending individual rights and freedoms without breaching the same of others in society. The *niqab* controversy illustrates, however, the difficulties when the principle of citizenship is set aside or not given precedence over cultural norms as basis of identity that are inconsistent with modern secular values.

In resisting the corrosive effects of multiculturalism on a liberal democracy, the principle of citizenship with its rights and responsibilities needs to be reaffirmed and protected. People need to be reminded repeatedly what it means to be a citizen in a modern secular state, and why any form of multicultural citizenship or dual and multiple citizenship that most liberal democracies, including

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<sup>6</sup> J.-F. Copé, “Tearing away the veil,” *New York Times*, May 4, 2010.

Canada, have adopted in practice is a contradiction in terms, weakening and diminishing the identity of citizens who are joined together in commonly shared loyalty to their state. In his usual trenchant style, George Jonas dissects this contradiction as follows:

I'm often called a Hungarian-Canadian. It doesn't bother me, but it's inaccurate. I'd only be a Hungarian-Canadian if I were a citizen of both countries, and I'm not.

I was born and raised in Hungary, survived it and when an alternative opened up, I became a Canadian. That was about half a century ago. I've been a Canadian ever since. Not a Hungarian-Canadian, but a Canadian....

A person may derive his or her identity from many things, including occupation, sex, race, religion, class, nationality and citizenship. Not all identities are exclusive. Some can obviously overlap or may even be complementary....

Other identities are exclusive. They cannot be hyphenated. If you are, or choose to be one thing, by definition you cannot be the other. It would be difficult to describe a person as a "Canadian woman-man" (even if you think someone you know fits the definition). What about hermaphrodites, someone may ask. Well, what about them? They have a category of their own.

The point is, there are identities that don't exist in multiples. Genders, citizenships, marital statuses, and the like cannot be stacked without altering their essence....

A citizen is a spouse. He or she can be attracted to several countries, but married to only one. There are Turks living in Denmark, and Danes with memories of Turkey, but no Danish Turks. I've many memories of Hungary, including some fond ones, and feel enriched by knowing something of its language, literature, music, customs and geography, but find patriotism as indivisible as Solomon's baby. My reservoir of patriotic feelings is exhausted by Canada, and citizenship without patriotic feelings is a sham.

Dual citizenship appears to me a loveless marriage, a marriage of convenience. I've fond memories of previous wives and know something of their geography and music, but my current wife exhausts my reservoir of spousal feelings. She's entitled to my unhyphenated commitment. So is my country.<sup>7</sup>

Jonas is certainly not alone in his patriotic sentiment, in his affection for and singular loyalty to his country that comes with an awareness of the meaning of citizenship. My sentiments are similar to those of Jonas, and it would be with most people who value their citizenship, whether they are native born or naturalized. These sentiments are in the best sense deeply felt and nurtured, are as natural as is familial affection or love between two people and not merely some sort of convention, utilitarian, artificially rigged, and bureaucratically supervised. But dual and multiple citizenships make a mockery of patriotic sentiments and reduce the principle of citizenship with its rights and obligations to a matter of convenience. Together with multiculturalism, dual and multiple citizenships work to hollow out the modern secular state and turn it into an attractive hotel, a comfortable and convenient way station for people on the move in the age of mass migration, of globalization of finance and commerce, and of rapid transportation and instant communication. But as a result, whatever gains or profits are declared in the audited annual reports of national treasuries

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<sup>7</sup> G. Jonas, "Dual citizenship : A contradiction in terms," *National Post*, June 9, 2010.

and multinational corporations, the incremental loss of individual freedom in a liberal democracy over time becomes irreversible and the future of open society becomes increasingly bleak.

### III.

An open society, liberal democracy, and the rule of law are not the natural state of man but historical achievements that have come about at great expense. Though their values are universal, they have been realized, if not in their entirety, at least in great measure only in the West against the indefatigable opposition of those who decry the role of reason over religious doctrines, loathe openness and freedom in favour of the closed circle of tribal and collectivist values, and denounce democracy as a recipe for anarchy. The enemies of open society are vast in number and, like tidal waves relentlessly beating down on dykes that, if not regularly attended, would break and be washed away, they remain unforgiving and tireless in their effort to wreck the open society and freedoms that distinguish liberal democracy from any other form of political arrangement in the history of man and society.

The first and most important line of defence of freedom as the foundation for the open society and liberal democracy on which rest the historical achievements of the West is education. It means first learning and then being repeatedly reminded of how Canada's founding values are those of the open society and liberal democracy. Brian Lee Crowley writes, "Central to this view of the character of Canadians and their institutions was a notion of individual freedom and responsibility, a belief that each of us was endowed with a nature that required us to be responsible and accountable for our choices. The corollary was that if we deprived men and women of their freedom and responsibility for themselves, we prevented people from being fully free and fully human" (2009: 44).

Crowley cites as a reminder the inspirational words of Richard Cartwright, spoken in the legislature of the United Province of Canada in 1865: "I think every true reformer, every real friend of liberty, will agree with me in saying that if we must erect safeguards, they should be rather for the security of the individual than of the mass, and that our chiefest care must be to train the majority to respect the rights of the minority, to prevent the claims of the few from being trampled underfoot by the caprice or passion of the many. For myself, sir, I own frankly I prefer British liberty to American equality" (45).

There is in Cartwright's speech a resounding echo of Mill's liberalism and Tocqueville's concern over the tyranny of the majority; and there is the clarity of understanding that the strength of a liberal democracy comes from its unbending defence of freedom in which the "security of the individual" — the ultimate minority of one against a majority that can turn into a mob — is its defining virtue as the good society. This understanding of why a liberal democracy cannot be improved on by the flawed logic of multiculturalism needs to be *re-discovered*, *restated* and *reaffirmed* without apology or equivocation if freedom and democracy are to remain secure against the scheming of their enemies.

Finally, and one more time, it needs stating that the worm inside the doctrine of multiculturalism is the lie that all cultures are worthy of equal respect and equally embracing of individual freedom and democracy. The concerted assault by the Islamists on the essential and life-affirming values based on individual rights and freedoms is proof of this lie. A large portion of the world's population, quite likely the majority, at the beginning of the twenty-first century live under some sort of

authoritarianism of one-party rule headed by leaders without humour or any other redeeming qualities, such as kindness, humility, intelligence, wit, that free people instinctively recognize and respect. A liberal democracy such as Canada is inherently open and accepting of the other, and whenever and wherever there is an impediment to such acceptance it can be met with and overcome through reasoning and dialogue. There is, moreover, in a liberal democracy no basis for ethnocentric prejudice by the majority population to reject the cultural norms of ethnic minorities. But when any aspect of such cultural norms collides with the core values of a liberal democracy, then that aspect needs to be reformed or rejected accordingly. In order for this to occur, for any reasonable accommodation to work in an ethnically diverse Canada, there needs to be a clear understanding without any ambiguity among all Canadians, irrespective of their ethnicity, that there is a unifying Canadian culture deeply embedded in the values of the West and shaped by the Enlightenment. This Canadian culture is open and inclusive, embracing of others, tolerant and generous and deserving of the unapologetic support of all who cherish freedom as God's most precious gift.

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