# Identity, Islam and the Twilight of Liberal Values

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By

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

# INTRODUCTION

At the eve of the last millennium Francis Fukuyama published what became perhaps the most seminal book of the latter half of the twentieth century. In *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992), Fukuyama expounded his thesis that, following the French Revolution, Western liberal democracy has proven to be a better system (ethically, politically and economically) than its competitors – the one political model with sufficient moral and practical resilience to endure through the vicissitudes of future historical events. As the Cold War was coming to an end, he was able to predict that we may be witnessing not just the passing of a particular historical impasse, but

> "…the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government."[1]

Since its publication in 1992, an array of commentators has criticised Fukuyama's arguments for giving insufficient weight to liberal democracy's ethno-religious rivals. They claimed that religious fundamentalism, and radical Islam in particular, pose a powerfully resistant bulwark against the spread of liberal democracy and an influential counter-force against it. If ever there were reason to doubt Fukuyama's optimism about the continuation of Western liberal democracy, now is the time to do so.

There have been a few perceptive attempts to diagnose the cause of the West's "moral-cultural deficit". In October 2016, George Weigel speculated in *The National Review* that the secular liberal-democratic state rests on a fund of cultural capital that it cannot itself generate. Referencing the so-called Böckenförde Dilemma, Weigel surmised that liberal secular political culture paradoxically cannot sustain liberal freedom from within its own system and went on to claim that the resulting cultural malaise is more pronounced in Europe.

In a somewhat similar vein, Douglas Murray has argued that the retreat of Judeo-Christian religion in Europe left a gap at the core of European culture that modern post-Enlightenment European culture has failed to fill. Murray concurs with German philosopher Jürgen Habermas in believing

we have lost a sense of purpose in our "post-secular age" and says that an existential nihilism underlies our society.[2]

But Murray also says that instead of defending our own cultural traditions, Europeans have been persuaded to see our cultural inheritance as the enemy, and to assail it. Those who took for granted that a system of "rights" would protect women, homosexuals, and religious minorities are finding out that a growing number of people believe not only that these "rights" are not self-evident, but that they are fundamentally wrong.[3]

While these broad, historically contextualised psycho-social diagnoses of European anaemia and self-loathing have some resonance, and probably explain why religion might hold some appeal, I suspect that the failure of liberals to address Islamists' civilisation-jihadist process (their term[4]) owes less to Europeans' unfulfilled or latent affinity with religious morality than to the clever ways in which Islamists have sold their ideological product.

Islamists' ultimate aim is a global caliphate. Theocracy is a top-down form of government. While democracy is a "bottom-up" form of government designed to take absolute power out of politics, theocracy does the opposite: it takes the politics out of power. Once established, theocracies rule supreme, and there is very little that can be done to redress citizens' grievances. It is useful to remember that religion has been a politically useful tool in maintaining the stability of empire, just as empires can use and spread religion. Therefore, the notion that religion is distinct and separate from political culture is rather naïve.

In addition, the West's millennials and generation x, thanks to the hard-won civil liberties and human rights victories of previous generations, have not had any urgent need to familiarise themselves with the key tenets of liberal political philosophy. For the most part, they could assume (along with Francis Fukuyama) that the significant debates had been won and that human history had at last reached a golden age of reason, freedom and human rights. There was no need to unpack what these abstract concepts actually meant or how they function practically, whether at the local, national or international levels. Again, Douglas Murray's diagnosis captured this political disengagement when he noted that Europe's cultural sickness is due in part to the utter shallowness of consumer culture, where even the most educated among us is content to say, as his best intellectual offering, that the world is complex.[5]

We've moved from a politics of fear to a fear of politics and worse, a fear of democracy. Fear has been the main product of American media for decades, but now we are being urged to fear the president himself (and/or the very means by which he presumably got into office) and to embrace the proffered solutions to this fear as absolute necessities. It is enough that we know what Trump stands for: Trump (as symbol) is a proxy for Nazis, fascists, bigots, sexists, racists and (in a nutshell) everything that liberals hate. This makes him the ideal political "bait" for steering and manipulating liberals' sensibilities, which are basically good.

Liberals remain painfully ignorant of how easily political strategists exploit their decent moral instincts. While the political left is merrily playing shuffleboard on deck or railing against "Trump and Brexit" with people who thoroughly agree with them, the liberal ship of Theseus is being dismantled and re-built plank-by-plank into a neoliberal (and socially conservative) Titanic, with the liberal establishment's passive support. Instead of scanning the horizon for approaching enemy ships, the liberal crew should realise that the enemies are already on board and they are very busy. By the time it arrives back at port, this vessel will no longer be recognisable as the one that set sail in the second half of the eighteenth century.

## Politics as Branding

There can be no doubt that, where liberalism has espoused unfettered capitalism, it can do great harm to individuals and can lead to serious social inequalities. However, liberalism is fragmented from within, most notably in the economic sphere, where there is a gulf between classic liberalism and welfare liberalism. The former seems to have morphed into a neo-conservative hybrid creature that hates state intrusion into private wealth but loves inserting its tentacles into every other private crevice (quite literally!) of individuals' lives.

Furthermore, it is no secret that, in modern democratic societies, the mass media is effectively in the hands of an oligopoly. This means that the voices of the elites who own the media set the cultural agenda and drown out alternative voices. In today's liberal democracies, who pays the piper calls the tunes and so the free market and freedom of thought are often opposed. The "freedom" of capitalist liberal democracies is arguably the freedom to make profit – not the freedom of individuals.[6]

American society is infused with marketing culture, which creeps into almost every non-corporate space, including politics. As Canadian *No Logo* author and political analyst Naomi Klein has observed, today it is routine to see the absorption of radical political movements and ideas into the latest marketing campaigns for *Coca-Cola*, Starbucks or Benetton. But the infusion also goes in the opposite direction. Klein has observed how the seemingly disparate worlds of marketing and politics are unified by a single idea: that corporations should produce brands, not products.

Nowadays it is routine for governments to use public relations firms to sell their policies to the public. Here's what the firm 5W Public Relations, Public Affairs has to say about their services on their own website:

5W Knows How to Influence Public Opinion

The 5W Public Relations (5W) Public Affairs and Government Relations team confidently solves tough problems. Our team has done it all, from managing high-profile local issues, to handling major public affairs projects in the U.S. and abroad, to hosting foreign dignitaries on U.S. visits.

5WPR helps you manage your reputation and monitor the regulatory and legislative environments in which you operate. We work with your organization to identify the top issues and legislative battles that impact your business. From there, we identify stakeholder groups that can have an impact on your organization and then we establish and cultivate positive relationships with your key audiences.

From elected officials and news media to industry experts and academic voices, 5W engages opinion leaders who will champion your cause and serve as an ambassador to your audience.[7]

Klein points out that while President Barack Obama paraded the anti-war, anti-Wall Street image to his grassroots base, he simultaneously took more money from Wall Street than any other presidential candidate and pursued "bipartisanship" with conservative Republicans once in the White House. He sent more than 300,000 additional troops to Afghanistan, bailed out Wall Street banks and endorsed a ballooning military "security" budget that drained the national economy.[8]

Two months prior to Obama's election, world markets were limping into financial crisis and blame was being directed towards the economic deregulation and privatisation long preached from the pulpits of the US-dominated IMF and WTO. Obama didn't just re-brand America; he

revived the neoliberal economic project just when it was on the verge of facing the music. As his senior advisor and political strategist David Axelrod said, Obama ensured that "Anti-Americanism isn't cool anymore."[9] Expensive market research had found a genuine appetite in people for ideals – equality, inclusivity and civil liberties that reminded them of the former 1960s image of America. This was an image of which they could be proud. It was the opposite of torture, war, corporate politics, crony capitalism and global warming – the things that the Dubya Bush's presidency had come to symbolise. They wanted justice for all and the noble sense of self-love and communion with others that comes from knowing you're on the right side of history.

Of course, it is not surprising that Obama used the same hope-inspiring emotional appeals that any politician uses nowadays. But the lofty ideals his brand was peddling did not come close to realisation. Naomi Klein has cited how Obama nominated the first Latina to the Supreme Court while enforcing Bush-era measures in a new immigration crackdown, or how he sang the praises of "clean coal" while refusing to tax emissions (which would have actually reduced the burning of fossil fuels).[10]

Liberals were gullible in responding positively to symbolic (but ultimately empty) gestures under Obama's presidency. Now they are falling for the same emotionally driven "Trump-bashing" brand of moral righteousness. Both presidencies manipulate public perception through "personality". Obama, even when he didn't follow through with promised changes, was perceived as personally innocent of any disingenuousness: he was simply "powerless" against the will of Congress. On the other hand, Trump's persona is the epitome of evil, whatever the content of his actual policies may be (and often they are not very different to Obama's or those of previous administrations).

These criticisms of liberalism provide good arguments for regulating markets, raising taxes for the super-rich, revising international trade agreements, and enforcing tough laws on multinational corporations. Applying the harm principle[11] to giant corporations decades ago, before they grew onto enormous tails that today wag the dog, could have prevented many of the economic inequities that now exist. But there is no need to throw out the 'baby' of social liberalism along with the neoliberal economic bathwater. While selective liberal reforms may sound incredibly idealistic at this late stage of the game, the alternative is a cynical abandonment of politics, and resignation to the fact that we now live in a post-political world where only might ever makes right.

This book attempts to diagnose the ways in which European and American social liberalism has been eroded in the post-9/11 era, not due to its intrinsic flaws but because Westerners have been reluctant to defend its strengths and to apply its principles internally. Had they done so, then we might not have seen tolerance and genuine diversity replaced by a paternalistic orthodoxy that demands positive "respect" or deference towards those who oppose liberalism, secularism and democracy. The primacy and liberty of the individual (including the Muslim individual) might not have been supplanted by communitarianism and collectivism (re-branded as "culture" and "race"). Reason and anti-clericalism may never have been steamrolled by superstition and tradition (marching under the banner of "diversity" and "religious freedom"). Universal human rights, reciprocity and principled politics would perhaps not have given way to moral relativism and total subjectivism ("feelings" and "lived experience"). None of this was inevitable.

The fact that some have failed (either by accident or by design) to adhere to the principles of political liberalism in practice is not a reason to abandon those principles. It is a reason to work harder to make sure they are more effectively applied, enforced and preserved in the future.

## Notes

[1] Fukuyama, Francis (1989*)*. 'The End of History?' *The National Interest* (16): 3–18.

[2] See Murray, Douglas, *The Strange Death of Europe: Immigration, Identity, Islam* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), pp. 258–260.

[3] Murray, 2017, p. 269.

[4] According to a May 1991 memorandum written by Mohamed Akram, a.k.a. Mohamed Adlouni, for the Shura Council of the Muslim Brotherhood on the general strategic goal for the Muslim Brotherhood in North America, *the process of settlement is a "Civilization-Jihadist Process" with all the word means. The Ikhwan must understand that their work in America is a kind of grand Jihad in eliminating and* **destroying the Western civilisation from within and "sabotaging" its miserable house by their hands and the hands** *of the believers so that it is eliminated and God's religion is made victorious over all other religions.* [emphasis mine]

[5] Op. Cit, p. 263.

[6] Grant Bartley, 'Knowledge & History' in *Philosophy Now* magazine, November/December 2009, Issue 76, p. 21.

[7] Accessed at http://www.5wpr.com/practice/publicaffairspragency.cfm on 3 August, 2017.

[8] Stone, Oliver and Kuznick, Peter, 'Don't Betray Us Barak, End the Empire' at *Alternet*, April, 15, 2011. Accessed on 2 Feb., 2017 at http://www.alternet.org/story/150630/oliver_stone:_don't_betray_us,_barack_--_end_the_empire

[9] Ward, Jon, Axelrod: Anti-Americanism now 'not cool', *The Washington Times*, April 20, 2009. http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/apr/20/axelrod-anti-americanism-now-not-cool/

[10] Klein, Naomi, 'Rebranding America', *The Guardian* Review, Saturday 16 January, 2010.

[11] John Stuart Mill's 'harm principle' states: "The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilised community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others." I see no reason why the same principle that applies between individual members of society, or between citizens and the state, could not also pertain between corporate 'agents' (which are vastly more powerful than individuals) and individual citizens, or between different corporate entities.

# CHAPTER ONE

# BIOLOGISM, BIGOTRY AND THE BACKWARD MARCH OF HISTORY

## From Free Individuals to Neo-Conformism

The liberal model of man that dominated the forty-year period from the end of WWII until the eighties pictured human nature as essentially adaptable and plastic – or free. Whereas naturalistic explanations for human institutions and social arrangements had de-politicised the entire realm of socio-political relationships, the revolutionary liberals of the 1960's maintained that unjust social arrangements were institutionally erected and sustained by powerful individuals and human choices.

As the dust cleared in Post-War France, Jean-Paul Sartre emphatically argued that humans are responsible for themselves, for what they do and what they become. As such, they are responsible for the future of humanity itself. He contrasted his existentialist view of man to the characters in the novels of Emile Zola, for whom, "the behaviour of [his] characters was caused by their heredity, or by the action of their environment upon them, or by determining factors, psychic or organic." Sartre claimed that most people would be greatly comforted if these excuses were accepted as explanations of their behaviour. They would say, "You see, that is what we are like, no one can do anything about it."[1]

Sartre thought we are in bad faith when we portray ourselves as passive creations of our gender, our race, our class, job, history, nation, family, heredity, childhood influences, or subconscious drives. Existentialists did not deny that cultural factors are important or suggest that we should have no compassion for victims of systemic injustice. Rather, certain conditions "situate" each of us and form the background against which we must act in the world. They define the conditions, political and personal, within which we exercise our freedom and define ourselves.

Feminist existentialist Simone de Beauvoir gave more weight than her male peers to the difficulty of breaking out of constraints like social status and cultural influences. She knew very well how an alienated sense of "self" can come from the outside – from community expectations and roles – and then become so internalised as to seem inevitable. Despite this, she maintained her belief that we remain existentially free. Her own response to sexism was not to resign herself to the status of a passive "victim" of environmental patriarchy. Rather, she chose an unconventional lifestyle, neither marrying nor raising children, and instead had many lovers and wrote philosophy. She conversed with men as their equal, authored books and actively became the change she wanted to see in the world. She left a legacy to future generations and became a role model for aspiring female (or male) philosophers.

The existentialist revaluation of identity also played out in the exchanges between Sartre and Jean Genet, who was an "out" homosexual. Genet had been an object of Sartre's admiration and was even "canonised" by Sartre in his novel *Saint Genet* (1952), a biographical work in which Sartre praised the way in which a person can take other people's labels and decide what to do with them, transforming persecution or oppression into art or freedom. Sartre especially admired how Genet, through a series of reversals and creative manoeuvres, came to *own* his alienation and his outsider status as thief, vagrant, homosexual, and prostitute. While Genet always regarded his homosexuality as more like left-handedness or hair colour than as a voluntary response to his social environment, Sartre's main point about Genet's sexuality was that the man had never let others define the *significance* of his sexuality *for him*: he was his own man, not a "type".

In the 1970's Michel Foucault critiqued the Freudian form of cultural determinism. He was ambivalent about gay essentialism, and therefore never commented explicitly on the causes of same-sex desires. He was more concerned with the generation and proliferation of social and medical knowledge *about* homosexual *behaviour*, and the interpretative role that theoretical models and language play in the generation of "knowledge" about people whose behaviour deviates from social norms.

Even Martin Luther King, Jr.'s philosophy of non-violent resistance was fed by his reading of Sartre, Heidegger and the German–American existentialist theologian Paul Tillich. King's most lasting legacy is perhaps to be found in his understanding that the litmus test of human character is not to be found in the static facts of biology but in the dynamic acts undertaken by the individual in the project of living. We can respond to

the circumstances and facts of our lives in myriad ways, and these choices become the measure of our manhood.

Bayard Rustin, one of King's key political strategists and a chief organiser of the March on Washington (mostly unknown because of his homosexuality), argued that the African-American community was threatened by the appeal of identity politics, particularly the rise of "black power". He thought this position repeated the political and moral errors of previous black nationalists, while alienating the white allies needed by the African-American community. Rustin argued that the relevant question was

> "… not whether a politician is black or white, but what forces he represents. Manhattan has had a succession of Negro borough presidents, and yet the schools are increasingly segregated…
>
> What I am saying is that if a black politician is elected because he is black and is deemed to be entitled to a "slice of the pie," he will behave in one way; if he is elected by a constituency pressing for social reform, he will, whether he is white or black, behave in another way."[2]

Rustin thought that proponents of "black power" imagined themselves to be leading the Negro people along the same path that past immigrant groups (Irish, Italians, Jews) had travelled to achieve political power, by sticking together along the lines of group identity. But, says Rustin, the reality was that it was through alliances with other groups, whether in party politics or unions, that these groups acquired sufficient power to have a voice in American society. "They certainly did not make isolation their primary tactic." What united these allies was not biological similarity but shared values and ideals, or a common goal that transcended superficial differences in the interest of more important affinities.

Since the mid-nineties, the broad liberal consensus on the primacy of the individual has been eroded both by the deterministic assumptions of sociobiology[3] and a therapeutic culture of "victimhood" in which all human behaviour is read through the lenses of childhood trauma or social victimisation.

Dr. Ruth Hubbard of Harvard University forewarned in 1993 that the incipient shift from nurture to nature was part of a conservative backlash against the gains of the civil rights and women's movements. The nurture model had shown that the inferior social status of women and African Americans was a product of institutionalised racism and sexism, not of "natural" inferiority or "innate differences". She urged her readers to go

beyond "defining [women as a whole] as victims of male power and dominance," and pushed for women everywhere to show independence and individuality while learning to accept and embrace the biology that is continuously used by male chauvinists to undermine them. While it was important to recognise that "inferiority" was a product of socialisation and not nature, the cultural determinism implicit in perpetual "victimhood" was also too reductionist and implied cultural determinism.

Veteran British anti-racist broadcaster and politician Trevor Phillips OBE has also disparaged the idea that under-achievement or failure amongst people of colour must stem solely from unequal treatment by the dominant society. He claims that this "patronising guff" implies that all those who come from minority groups "have no agency other than that allowed by whites. People of colour, for example, become puppets of others' prejudices, with no capability of managing or improving their own lives."[4]

Identity politics has severed identity from agency, turning back the clock on the progressive gains made in the twentieth century's post-war period. In a February 2017 British television documentary titled "Has Political Correctness Gone Mad?", Phillips argued that left-wing political activists need to re-think their approach to identity politics. Attempts to muzzle – rather than engage with – the arguments of outsider parties may have been responsible for the popularity of leaders like Nigel Farage and Donald Trump, he suggested.

It is time for liberal Londoners and their clique of jet-setting university-educated friends to contemplate whether the failure of the liberal left to engage with the concerns and complaints of allegedly xenophobic groups or individuals (many of whom are minorities themselves) has left a vacuum that the far right has filled. Phillips argued that the left would do well to learn to live with offense and to stop mistaking symbols for substance. He suggested that liberalism and the peculiar fear of offending minorities had stifled legitimate debate in a way that had backfired.

Yet the liberal left has never taken any responsibility for the apparent recent rebirth of nationalist sentiments in the UK. This, they presume, is the doing of those backwards bigots – white British brutes who lurk in the midlands and the north, far removed from London's international intelligentsia.

Phillips is probably correct. In refusing to confront the complexities of immigrant cultures and the ultra-conservative religious ideologies some immigrants bring with them, liberals left a vacuum that was bound to be filled by less nuanced thinkers from the far-right. Not only have London's smug elite failed to comprehend the complex make-up of "immigrant cultures", they have also been remarkably snobbish in their refusal to listen to what their own compatriots have to say. Urbane Londoners have failed to notice that the complaints raised by these "rednecks" and "backwards yobs" have often been more closely aligned with traditional liberal values (including minority rights) than the accommodations and exceptions flogged by mainstream British policymakers and media. The latter have used the *rhetoric* of "diversity" to peddle policies that have substantially curtailed any genuine liberal dissent from the establishment's orthodoxies and politically correct posturing. This has resulted in a decrease in intellectual diversity and the fetishisation of tokenism and taboo.

## Millennials' Erosion of the Post-War Liberal Consensus

The merging of biology and character so beloved of twenty-first century identity politicians is what the post-war liberal social justice movements *opposed* and sought liberation *from*. The reduction of a person's character to a general or abstract "type" to which they belonged (an identity group) is what every progressive left social critic – from Simone de Beauvoir and Martin Luther King Jr. to Michel Foucault – rejected or critiqued. Minorities were, to be sure, victims of injustice. But they were most harmed by the assumption that their group identity *mattered*, while their individual moral or intellectual merits did not. Group identity was the prison that chained individuals forever to skin colour, biological sex or sexual orientation. Group identity was at the very root of their victimhood, not the thing that would liberate them. Sexists, racists and homophobes had disempowered members of these ostensible "groups" on the basis of the reductionist biologism that claims nature is destiny, or culture and social arrangements are fate – the inevitable outcome of natural selection.

Often it was not so much even a *natural* feature of minority groups that was fixated upon so much as a reified[5] theological or cultural belief *about the natures* of these peoples that had been foisted onto them by the dominant culture's propaganda. Against group slurs, positive identity slogans like "Black is beautiful" or "Gay and proud" or "Born that way"

were positive rejoinders to the reductionist biologism that had assigned unflattering personality or character traits to biology or physiology. "Naturalising" the inferiority of some social classes absolved the human agents who kept minorities "where they belonged" (whether in the kitchen, the closet or the prison) of accountability and blame.

The liberating solution to reductionist biologism was not simply to use *the same logic* of naturalistic generalisations but to flip them in the other direction, by saying that *all* women are superior, or that *all* black people are inherently "civilised" (whatever that means), or that *all* gay people are morally virtuous. Inversion only retains the dominant culture's binary and its generalisations. Instead, progressive social movements *subverted* naturalistic group generalisations: they stressed common *human* abilities like reasoning and reflection and demanded to be seen primarily as individuals who could choose to "make something of themselves" by means of their choices. Minorities did not expect their "groups" to be idealised instead of demonised. They wanted individuals to be released from abstract "group identity" and treated as free moral agents who could take responsibility for their behaviour and whatever praise or blame their choices merited.

Indian economist and philosopher Amartya Sen has observed that staunch communitarians take community identity to be paramount and predetermined, which implies that identities exist without any need for human volition or supporting institutions, just "recognition".[6] By contrast, he argues that reasoning and scrutiny play a major role in identity formation. Identities are not merely *discovered* so much as they are selected and prioritised by human agents. This is not denial of our situated selves, but an acknowledgement of the need to decide, when conflicting loyalties arise, on the relative importance of the different identities we have inherited.

Identities are not merely discovered and then passively "recognised" but also actively reinforced and/or maintained by customs and traditions, which in turn are upheld by community leaders. The social legitimisation and reinforcement of group "identity" (uniformity) or community standards by religious and cultural institutions (like social custom, modes of dress, and cinema and television) implies active human agency, not just the inevitable workings of nature.

# Political Ideologies 101

Classic social liberalism holds an "atomistic" view of society as an aggregation of individuals. The Enlightenment championed a vision of human flourishing linked to personal autonomy and the belief in universal reason. The natural rights theories that emerged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries treated individuals as "ends in themselves", each worthy of respect and dignity, and not merely "means" to the ends of others. Consistent with that outlook, twentieth century liberals strived to establish conditions in which people could be free to pursue their own vision of the "good life" (as each defines it) without state authorities or majority groups prescribing to the individual how he must live. Although the individual is sovereign over her own body and mind, each must respect the fact that every other individual enjoys an equal right to liberty, such that everyone is entitled to the widest possible liberty consistent with reciprocal liberty for all.

A belief in the primacy of the individual is *the* characteristic theme of liberal political ideology, even if it has developed in a variety of ways. Liberals advocate individuality not just for its own sake, but as a condition of social progress and human flourishing. In his 1859 essay *On Liberty*, John Stuart Mill wrote:

> "Where, not the person's own character, but the traditions or customs of other people are the rule of conduct, there is wanting one of the principal ingredients of human happiness, and quite the chief ingredient of individual and social progress."

Liberal democracy is above all concerned with protecting the freedom of individuals from the tyranny of the majority in society and preventing coercion in spheres of activity and thought that many view as private.

By contrast, traditional conservatives have rejected the "atomistic" view of society as an aggregation of autonomous individuals in favour of a more communitarian perspective. Conservatives tend to give less emphasis to the private sphere and do not recognise a sharp division (if any at all) between the private and public spheres. Conservatives do not primarily stress the individual's rights but the bonds of duty and obligation that hold the "social fabric" together. Conservatives have traditionally held a view of society known as "organicism", stressing that societies are not human constructs based on reason and innovation, but are more like living organisms, in which the whole is more than the individual parts. An organic society is

formed not by human ingenuity or abstract principles, but by natural necessity.

The organic metaphor has profound implications. If natural forces beyond human comprehension or control have shaped society's arrangements and institutions, then its delicate "fabric" should be conserved and adhered to by the individuals who live within its structures. Religious conservatives have seen social arrangements and hierarchies as God's creations. To flaunt the 'natural' arrangements is to reject God, and this has variously been construed as a form of moral disobedience, "sin" or corruption.

Traditional conservatives tend to believe that society is naturally hierarchical. They perceive various classes and groups in society as having specific roles. There are natural leaders and followers, and those who go out to work and get paid for it and those who stay home and raise children (without pay). Natural inequality of wealth and social position is justified because there is a corresponding inequality of social responsibility: those who have more liberty also have the responsibility to "protect" the less autonomous. Paternalism is thus deeply implicit in conservatism. Authority is beneficial because it gives individual human beings the security of knowing "where they stand" and what is expected of them. In British conservatism, organicism is exemplified in the traditionalist mantra of "faith, family and nation" as vital elements in the moral fabric of society.[7]

## The Guilt-Shame Dynamic

Today's young social justice warriors virtue-signal their bans on offensive words in the belief that they are noble defenders of minorities even as they subject them to new horrors. We are witnessing a full-scale re-branding of conservatism that has bent and twisted the political spectrum beyond all recognition. The result is a political culture in which the religious right's ultra-conservative spokespersons enjoy exclusive immunity from criticism, socially constructed ideas and concepts are again being reified as biology, and would-be liberal critics of these regressive cultural shifts are shut down. We should not be surprised if far right voices and parties have filled the void produced by this situation.

Like conservative communitarianism, identity politics pictures individuals as "embedded" in a particular cultural, social or ideological context. Multiculturalism emphasises how culture shapes the values, norms and assumptions through which the individual forms his identity

and his worldview, as though all members of a culture were both passive receptacles and identical in their needs, values or interests. Encouraged by these new cultural models, many individuals nowadays tend to see themselves primarily as products of biological bigotry who have inherited "baggage" from others (whether family or cultural forces) that will eternally define their place in society as victims, and therefore entitle them to special consideration without any need to prove the merits of their views. Guilt-tripping those who disagree with them will suffice in place of mustering a better argument: all whites are guilty of racism until proven innocent, all men are "privileged" and all transgender sceptics are bigots or "transphobes".

What political commentators today refer to as "liberalism" tends to be a politics that has been transformed into little more than conservative (and often deeply religious) social politics re-branded with liberal labels, images and semantics. Counter-Enlightenment ultra-conservatism has hijacked the moral prestige of liberal terminology and transferred it to an ultra-conservative social politics while retaining the libertarian economic policy of free markets. As Pakistani-American broadcaster, journalist and author Tashbih Sayyed has argued,

> "By casting its fascist agenda in terms of human rights and civil libertarian terms, political Islam has successfully been able to use the American liberal and progressive groups to project itself as an American phenomenon and win American intellectual elites, liberals and the media with left leanings on its side. Islamist organizations like CAIR and MPAC have transformed our democratic institutions of free speech and academic freedoms into a weapon of mass destruction to defend their jihad by creating an environment of doubt about the U.S. policies among the masses, with tragic results."[8]

While much of U.S. foreign policy deserves to be "doubted", Sayyed's basic point about how political Islam has projected a false image that has captured the sympathies of liberals and transformed democratic institutions is perceptive.

Like Sayyed, Ayaan Hirsi Ali has explained how the ideological infrastructure of political Islam has continued to grow, largely by means of the organisational infrastructure known as *dawa* that political Islamists use to inspire, indoctrinate, recruit, finance, and mobilise those Muslims and non-Muslims whom they win over to their cause.[9] She warns that the refusal to engage in a battle of ideas against political Islamism is a grave error.

On this point Hirsi Ali is in good company with Maajid Nawaz, co-founder of *Quilliam* (a counter-extremism organisation) who has been at the vanguard of the battle of ideas between genuine and faux liberalism (as the latter has been deployed by Islamists). Nawaz is a former member of Hizb ut-Tahrir, the first Islamist group to popularise the idea of creating an "Islamic State". He has a broad understanding of the machinations of political Islamism as well as militant Islamism, noting that violence is not the primary means by which the former seeks to impose its views, but rather gradualism and the ballot box are used to infiltrate the West's non-Islamic social institutions from within.

In their objective to dismantle the political institutions of a free society and erect strict Sharia in their stead, Islamists deploy both violent and nonviolent means. One such non-violent means is to misrepresent themselves as "moderate Muslims" and to gain official sponsorship by Western states. A variety of Islamist groups enjoy the status of "moderate Muslims". They include The Council on Islamic-American Relations (CAIR), The Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC), the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) and The Islamic Society of Boston.

Violent acts of terror have the effect of misleading people into thinking that anything short of terrorism is "moderate". But the ideology of an organisation may be extremist and deeply illiberal even if the group does not utilise direct violence to promote its views. Indeed, it may not need to if people are sufficiently afraid. It is more and more common to find people afraid not only of physical violence but of transgressing the politically correct ideologies that permeate social media and college campuses.

As Institute of Ideas director Claire Fox says at the end of her book *I Find That Offensive* (Provocations Series, London: BiteBack, 2016), university students complaining about safe spaces and "respect" for their fragile identities are simply reciting from an orchestrated script prepared for them by cultural authorities. These self-styled "rebels" are kicking an open door, singing from the cultural relativists' PC hymn sheet, not saying anything new. Their unpaid youthful zeal lends credibility to existing policies that leave *real* progressive leftist causes floundering. Authentic rebels need the kind of moral autonomy and independence that is achieved through genuine intellectual argument, not just smearing the opponent or appealing to infantilizing authoritarian "protection" from his superior reasoning. Today's zeitgeist, says Fox, venerates the vulnerable victim

form of personality such that strength is demonised as arrogance or misrepresented as violence.

Many would-be liberals have erred in believing that Leftist liberation movements of the past were based on biological or cultural identity. As Mitchell Blatt argued in *The National Review*, "The problem is social-justice liberals view the world entirely through a prism of identity. To them, no one is an individual, but rather an amalgamation of stereotypes associated with their race, gender, or group."[10]

The latest fashionable neologism, "intersectionality", is yet another instance of pseudo-intellectual semantics being introduced to the political terrain without critical scrutiny. Intersectionality adds nothing new to identity politics, other than multiplying its force by encouraging individuals to see themselves (yet again) as possessors not of a single, but multiple, stereotypical group identities, seemingly to facilitate score-keeping on the victimhood charts.

So potent is the guilt-shame dynamic for securing political privilege that it invites the invention of new biological minorities. Race (identity) and religion (ideology) are routinely conflated, making valid criticisms of religious doctrines or symbols a crime tantamount to "hate speech".

Gender too has been re-biologised and reified, despite the fact that liberal feminists and queer activists of the twentieth century made their social gains by exposing gender as a flimsy social construct. Today gender is re-defined variably as an intrinsic, heritable or deeply significant part of the human "psyche" (sometimes understood biologically) such that "Trans kids" have either male or female "minds" (or brains) and what distinguishes one from the other is somehow *not* a product of cultural conditioning. Apparently, gender-bending social progressives were just wrong: men really *are* from Mars and women from Venus. Consequently, valid criticisms of the clinical "transgender" model (that arguably pathologises homosexual children) are unanimously dismissed as "Transphobic" (more on this in chapter 10).

The Enlightenment ideals embodied in documents like the US Constitution, even if the U.S. State Department has not always acted in harmony with them, have been seriously eroded in the past decade by academics and the mass media. At universities, the liberal value of tolerance for *all* views (irrespective of content) has been ditched in favour of PC gate-keeping. The young social justice warriors responsible for this

U-Turn have been duped into thinking they will be on the right side of history. In reality, they are on the right side of the political spectrum.

# Notes

[1] Sartre, Jean-Paul, *Existentialism and Humanism*. Based on a Lecture given in Paris at *Club Maintenant* in 1945. In Kaufman, W. (ed), *Existentialism from Dostoyevsky to Sartre*. Trans. Mairet, P. Meridian Publishing Company, 1989; World Publishing Company in 1956.

[2] Rustin, Bayard, *'Black Power' and Coalition Politics* (Commentary, 02 – '65), accessed online on 19 June, 2017 at:
http://cf.linnbenton.edu/artcom/social_science/clarkd/upload/BLACK%20POWER%20and%20Coalition%20Politics-Rustin.pdf

[3] The term "sociobiology" was introduced in E. O. Wilson's *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis* (1975) as the "systematic study of the biological basis of all social behavior" (Wilson, 1975, 4).

[4] See Phillips, Trevor, *Race and Faith: The Deafening Silence*, London: Civitas, 2016.

[5] Reification is when an abstraction (an abstract belief or hypothetical construct) is treated as if it were a concrete, real event or physical entity -- when an **idea** is treated as though it were a material substance.

[6] Sen, Amartya, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007.

[7] These three values can be gleaned from the *Generation Conservative* website, in an October 20, 2016 piece by David Sergeant titled "Can We Please Stop Pretending There's Anything Remotely Conservative About Free Markets?", accessed online on 19 June, 2017 at: https://www.genconservative.co.uk/single-post/2016/10/20/Can-we-please-stop-pretending-there's-anything-remotely-conservative-about-free-markets

[8] Sayyed, Tashbih, "Are Islamist Leaders Winning Over American Muslims?", 21 March, 2007, *Islam Watch*, accessed on 21 June, 2017 at http://www.islam-watch.org/TashbihSayyed/Islamist-Leaders-Winning-American-Muslims.htm

[9] Hirsi Ali, Ayaan, *The Challenge of Dawa: Political Islam as Ideology and Movement and How to Counter It* (Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University), 2017, p. 2.

[10] Blatt, Mitchell, "Why Social-Justice Warriors Think It's OK to be Racist Towards Asians" in *National Review*, Feb. 18, 2017, accessed on 17 June, 2017 at http://www.nationalreview.com/article/445044/asians-face-racism-social-justice-warriors-accuse-them-privilege

# CHAPTER TWO

# MULTICULTURALISM:
# THE ILLUSION OF DIVERSITY

Many educated Europeans, when they hear the word "multiculturalism", assume it to be synonymous with diversity. This is not surprising, since the word seems to be a conjunction of "multi" (many) and "cultural" (cultures). So, the logical conclusion is that multiculturalism is simply a doctrine that says mixing lots of cultures together is good. Cosmopolitan Europeans are accustomed to living among a wide variety of people from a vast array of cultural and ethnic backgrounds who speak different languages and pray to different Gods. This is an enriching experience. It allows us to see our own background beliefs and perspectives as less than obvious. Beliefs or assumptions we may have taken for granted are relativised, their universality or absolute "truth" called into doubt by the encounter with others who do not share our worldview. Thus, cultural mixing improves our education and expands our critical faculties. It makes us better able to empathise with others and to see their human experiences as valuable.

However, "multiculturalism" is not the same as cultural diversity. In political theory it refers to an approach that states adopt in order to negotiate the relationship between specific cultures and other members of society. Multiculturalism as a political ideology grew out of a rejection of modern Enlightenment values, which historically extended civil rights and liberties to blacks, Jews, gays and women. Multiculturalism is rooted in the belief that universal citizenship, equality before the law, and equality of opportunity are insufficient and that citizens in liberal states must be obligated to recognise and positively respect members of a cultural minority, should not be permitted to offend them, and must actively support the protection of their cultural beliefs from insult or criticism.

In practice, what this policy has meant is that only Western Europeans can benefit from seeing their own background beliefs and perspectives as less than absolutely True. Only Westerners' beliefs can benefit from the

perspective that comes from exposure to other cultures. Non-Westerners' beliefs and assumptions are sacred and absolute. If non-Western citizens cannot respect other people's beliefs, then they alone are permitted to assert their own cultural identities and to take offense to Western host cultures and demand deferential respect for their practices and customs. Their intolerance towards other ways of life is "culture". Western principled tolerance, (and the expectation that others in Western states will reciprocate it) is "cultural imperialism" or "xenophobia".

In order to understand how illiberal multiculturalism is, and what kinds of demands it places on citizens, it is important to understand its paternalistic concept of "respect". It does not require that respect be earned through robust debate and argument. Rather, "respect" is enforced under threat of legal sanction or penalty. In his book, *Why Tolerate Religion?,* Brian Leiter distinguishes between "recognition respect" and "appraisal respect". The latter involves the notion that religious convictions *per se* have a special kind of value that others (including the non-religious) should appraise highly.

British philosopher Simon Blackburn has noted that "respect" is an ambiguous term. He describes the phenomenon by which the request for principled toleration "turns into a demand for more substantial respect, such as fellow-feeling, or esteem, and finally deference and reverence."[1] This "respect creep" (Blackburn's term) goes beyond liberty to practice religion without interference. It imposes a claim right that requires *all* to bow down to other peoples' sacred cows.

As British political columnist Nick Cohen has pointed out, this is the kind of "respect" that Tony Soprano might demand. One must perform a silent, polite deference towards doctrines that one disbelieves and/or disrespects, even to the extent of repressing one's own opposing views. The demand is not merely that citizens refrain from harming or legally discriminating against others with whom they disagree. It is that they must behave as though they have positive regard or esteem for others' views or practices. This entails that they may not express objections to, say, ideologies or religions, even if they are deeply offensive or arguably harmful to others. This demand goes far beyond merely tolerating (putting up with) other people's beliefs while at the same time finding them unpersuasive or downright distasteful or immoral. It is a demand that everyone in society behave as though they are silent or vocal followers of the "other's" belief system, effectively turning the concept of tolerance into a demand for deference.

To truly understand the extent of the demand this type of "respect" makes upon us, imagine telling a conservative Muslim that he has to have positive respect for the homosexual lifestyle, or for Western feminism's doctrines or dress codes. This would mean that he could not preach (whether in his mosque or in written pamphlets or on social media platforms) the immorality of homosexuality without risk of prosecution under "hate speech" legislation. Nor could he criticise the "immodest" way that Western women, or liberal Muslim women, behave or dress. Effectively it would mean that an imam could not express his own religious beliefs but would have to silently conform to Western liberalism's beliefs. Multiculturalists understand that a Muslim should not have to positively "respect" non-Muslims, but they do not seem to recognise the reverse. In a liberal society, non-Muslims should not have a duty to act or to speak as though Islam were good or even morally acceptable. Like the religious fundamentalist, non-religious citizens too should be permitted to voice their objections to lifestyles and practices, without being caught in the "hate speech" net.

Liberal tolerance (which entails voicing disagreement, satire, and active engagement with opposing ideas) shows respect for the other by treating him or her as an adult capable of resilience in the face of disagreement. Instead of granting a minority culture's ideas special immunity, and treating its adherents as fragile infants, it treats them as adults capable of submitting their beliefs to public scrutiny and of defending them in response to critical examination or of coping with defeat if they cannot do so. Former *Quillliam* spokesman Haydar Zaki has referred to this patronising attitude towards Muslims as the "racism of low expectations", whereby Western Europeans assume that minorities cannot be expected to have the same sort of resilience to opposing views and arguments as everyone else does. They cannot be expected to defend their values or ideas on the same rigorous grounds as *we* do. This "lowering" is just a form of insult, but one that wears the face of a kindly patron.

Nowhere is subjecting viewpoints to critical public scrutiny and debate more important than when religious or political ideologies are concerned, since neither are private matters and both involve (sometimes huge) claims about how others should live, what they should value or honour, and what they may or may not say, wear, eat, drink or do with their own bodies.

Multiculturalism has been influenced by an assertive identity politics. Because it is closely related to communitarianism, identity politics is conservative and reactionary. It is grounded in the belief that individuals'