Modern-Hostage Taking and the Sins of Multiculturalism

PAUL CLITEUR

Leiden University
The Netherlands

The topic I want to address in this paper is "Modern Hostage Taking and the Sins of Multiculturalism". The phrase "Sins of Multiculturalism" is inspired by an article of the famous multiculturalist philosopher Michael Walzer (*b*. 1935). In the early days of the Rushdie Affair, *i.e.* in 1989, Walzer wrote an article under the title "The Sins of Salman".[1] In my view, the article by Walzer is a highly ambivalent piece of commentary on the death verdict issued by the Iranian cleric and politician Ayatollah Khomeini on Salman Rushdie. With "ambivalent" I mean that even after careful study it is hard to determine what Walzer is trying to say about the Rushdie Affair. Of course, he does not support the death verdict (*fatwa*) on Rushdie, but he does not present a forceful defense of freedom of speech either.

My aim is not to make moral commentary on this stance (at least not in this paper). What I want to do, is trying to understand this phenomenon from a sociological, psychological and cultural perspective. In my view, the ambivalence we find in the

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[1] Walzer, Michael, "The Sins of Salman", in: *The New Republic*, April 10, 1989, pp. 13-15.

commentary of Walzer is interesting. Not all intellectuals, but a substantial number had great difficulties in supporting Rushdie.

What fascinates me is: why? Why did very well-educated, liberal, democratic and the rule of law supporting intellectuals have so much difficulties in upholding free speech? And what has that to do, if anything, with multiculturalism?

Prima facie this is a very idiosyncratic interest and not worthy of a presentation on a conference like this. But my claim is, that as soon as you delve into the subject it appears huge. And my working hypothesis is that this reluctance to defend free speech has something to with "multiculturalism". Or, inspired by Walzer's title, with the "Sins of Multiculturalism".

Now, this was a spoiler, in a sense, because now you know what the conclusion is. But because this conclusion may raise eyebrows the argument is perhaps more interesting than the conclusion. So here comes my argument. Let me introduce this with a thought experiment.

Part 1
Modern Hostage Taking

The fatwa

It is an interesting thought experiment to ask what year, what date, in the history books of the future will figure prominently. We all have had those dates, years, inculcated during our history lessons. End of the Second World War: 1945. French Revolution: 1789. What are those dates for the *future* history books?

My bets are on 1989. Two hundred years after the French Revolution. This was the year of the fall, 1989, of the Berlin wall, which marked the end of communism as a world historical phenomenon. But it was also the year in which an aggressive new ideology presented itself (to the public at large, at least). I propose to call it: *radical Islamism*.

Khomeini's *fatwa* was a clear and unambiguous manifestation of that ideology. Therefore it is enlightening to quote Khomeini's *fatwa* in his own words, so that we can really assess the impact of that document:

> I inform all zealous Muslims of the world that the author of the book entitled *The Satanic Verses*—which has been compiled, printed, and published in opposition to Islam, the Prophet, and the Koran—and all those involved in the publication who were aware of its contents, are sentenced to death.
> I call upon all zealous Muslims to execute them quickly, wherever they may be found, so that no one else will dare to insult the Muslim sanctities. God willing, whoever is killed on this path is a martyr.

In addition, anyone who has access to the author of this book but does not possess the power to execute him should report him to the people so that he may be punished for his actions. (Quoted in Pipes 2010, 30–35; Pipes 2003, 27)[2]

Islamism not Islam

Radical Islamism should, as an *ideology*, not be confused with the *religion* of Islam, as Khomeini does, apparently. Islamism is the political ideology that *derives inspiration* from Islam, but is not identical with it. We may hope that Islamism will fail in transforming the religion of Islam into a more radical direction. We may also hope, must hope, that in the end Islamism will be conquered, like fascism was in 1945, or communism in 1989 was conquered. But there are no guarantees. And more importantly we do not know *when* we will succeed in that.

To provoke your imagination: it may even be the case (and this is a most distressing idea) that what we are witnessing today, is a real "reform" of Islam. So ISIL: this is the reform of Islam. Al Qaida: this is the reform of Islam. In others words: not in the direction we may hope for, but in the sense that radical movements, radical interpretations, gain the upper hand.

Let's for the sake of argument assume that Islam, *i.e.* the *true nature of Islam* (whatever that is), may be a "religion of peace". Then we still run the risk that the religion of peace is rapidly being transformed into an engine of war.

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[2] In "Religion and Murder in the Middle East," Bernard Lewis writes that Ayatollah Khomeini "knew no English and had apparently never read the novel" (Lewis 2004, 105).

Islamism as a challenge of our time

Contrary to what many western observers have thought, Islamism is fairly successful. The most recent offspring of Islamist ideology, the so-called "Islamic State" (ISIL, ISIS) is much more successful, from a military point to view, than we could have dreamt several decades ago.

Modern Islamism started with the Iranian revolution in 1979, ten years before the *fatwa*. This revolution was a huge success. Nowhere it proved possible to inaugurate a theocratic regime (with a possible exception of Saudi-Arabia), but here, in Iran, the islamists took over and have built a regime that proved sustainable; already for a period of several decades. One of the great successes of the Iranian regime was to introduce a whole new phenomenon which I call "modern hostage taking".

That brings me to the first part of the title of my talk. This "modern hostage taking", and its relation to "multiculturalism", is what I hope to highlight in my talk.

The first "modern hostage" in the sense in which I hope to calibrate the term was Salman Rushdie. He was held hostage in a completely new sense. Khomeini succeeded in making Rushdie a hostage *in his own (i.e. Rushdie's) country*. And the reason was because Rushdie violated holy blasphemy law. Not the blasphemy law of England, but the blasphemy law of Khomeini: sharia law.

The clash between Rushdie and Khomeini was basically not a clash of two personalities, but a clash of two worldviews. On the one hand there is the secularist, universalist proclamation of human rights as enshrined in modern human rights documents. On the other hand, there is the equally universalist but definitely non-secular worldview of the contemporary islamists. These point of view are basically irreconcilable and in the end one will win.

To get a clear picture of what is the essence of the secularist point of view, let me begin by explaining what I mean with Rushdie's violation of blasphemy law.

It may be helpful to start with some legal provisions which are relevant here, *i.e.* the legal provisions safeguarding freedom of thought and freedom of religion.

First Article 18 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. It states:

> Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes *freedom to change his religion or belief*, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance. (UN General Assembly 1948; italics added)

The freedom to change your religion or belief is also to be found in other human rights declarations. Article 9 (Freedom of thought, conscience and religion) of the *European Human Rights Charter* says:

> Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes *freedom to change his religion or belief* and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance. (European Union 2012; italics added)

This freedom to change your religion or belief is what I want to highlight here. In my mind, this is tremendously important. Freedom of religion is incomplete without the freedom to change your religion.

Changing your leaders and changing your religion

You may compare it to a similar phenomenon with regard to democracy. Democracy is the freedom to choose your rulers. Now, suppose you have that freedom. But suppose also that once the rulers you have chosen will always remain there. So you choose a ruler in his twenties who will be still there in his eighties: a Fidel Castro type of democracy. We all have the idea, and rightly so, that this type of democracy is not *really* democratic. Democracy as "one man, one vote, *once*" is seriously lacking from a democratic point of view. And so political theorists, like the Austrian philosopher Karl Popper, emphasized that essential for democracy is not only the right to vote your rulers into existence, but also to tell them when it is time for them to go.

In constitutional thought the last dimension is associated with the notion of "ministerial responsibility". The minister (our ruler) can stay in power *as long as he is held in power by Parliament*. But once Parliament loses its faith in the minister, the minister has to go.

Something analogous we have with the freedom of religion. On the one hand this is the possibility to *choose* a religion of your own choice, but also to *relinquish* this religion, if you want. Freedom of religion is incomplete without these two dimensions.

But this freedom to *change* your religion for another religion, and the freedom to change your religion for no religion at all (so basically to become an *apostate* or an *atheist*) is in jeopardy nowadays. The reason is that what, in human rights language, is called the freedom "to change your religion" is "apostasy," "atheism," and "heresy", according to religious terrorists. And these apostates, atheists, or heretics are to be punished by no less than capital punishment.

If the state fails to apply this sentence, the religiously motivated individual has to step in, and that is precisely what happens nowadays. When the Kouachi-brothers take their Kalashnikov's and force their way into the editorial headquarters of *Charlie Hebdo* to murder the whole editorial staff they simply execute holy law (sharia law). And what the French cartoonists did, or what the Danish cartoonists did before them, was violating divine blasphemy law. The apostate, the blasphemer, or the heretic has to be punished with death. Now, what is new to the contemporary situation of modern hostage taking is that the islamist dictator can make a hostage of Rushdie, the French cartoonists, the Danish cartoonists, or whoever may incur the wrath of the angels of revenge of radical Islamism. In my view, this is a complete new situation. The year 1989 has inaugurated a new era.

The success of theoterrorism

Modern religious terrorism (or "theoterrorism"), more in particular the Islamist kind, makes it difficult, if not impossible, to criticize (radical) Islam (See Cliteur 2013, 15–41; 2012, 127–152). And this is the most serious factor limiting religious liberty in our time.

To avoid all misunderstanding, let me say this: Fundamental rights are not unlimited. All the rights enshrined in the *European Human Rights Charter* have their legal limitations. But traditionally it is the nation-state that determines what these limitations are. In the new predicament it is the islamist terrorist individual (like the Kouachi-brothers, killing the cartoonists of *Charlie Hebdo*), or the islamist organisations and states (like Iran in 1989 or ISIL in our time), who decides where the limits of free speech have to be drawn. And the traditional punishments for blasphemy, apostasy, heresy – they are *de facto* reintroduced in modern nation-states.

So the effective limits of religious liberty are not drawn by nation states, not by ordinary judicial tribunals, but by informal

theoterrorist vigilante groups applying *their* interpretation of religious law in the modern world. This essay tries to develop this issue by explaining how what I call "modern hostage-taking" has developed.

Let me try to explain what I mean by that.

Hostage-Taking in General

A "hostage" is a person seized and brought under the power of another person or organization, usually in order to compel another person or organization (including the state) to do something that would not have been done without this compulsion. There is a long history of political or military use of hostage-taking in which sometimes one organization, or one state, *willingly* brought certain hostages into the power of another organization, or state, as a guarantee of good faith, or in the observance of obligations. This element is clearly included in the definition of "hostage" that we find in *The Oxford Companion to the Law*:

> A person, usually of importance, taken from, or surrendered by agreement by one belligerent to another, to be held as security. (Walker 1980, 582)

The Oxford Companion gives us a good definition of what one may characterize as *traditional* hostage taking. For traditional hostage taking the hostage is *taken from* one belligerent camp to another. What characterizes *modern* hostage taking, is that you do not "take from" the other party someone, but you simply issue a verdict on the hostage. And under the conditions we are living now, *i.e.* in a world with open borders and radicalized believers, the effect is the same: the person targeted is in more or less in the same situation as if he were taken away from his country.

Modern Hostage-Taking

So "modern" hostage taking is different from the "traditional" hostage-taking that arose in the seventies of the twentieth century that was referred to above: the situation in which armed terrorists kidnapped civilians to enforce their will upon the state or the society at large.

This modern hostage-taking, in the sense in which I describe this phenomenon, did not start, perhaps, with a master plan. Initially, people did not even understand what was happening. It started in 1989, with the inconvenience for a writer (Rushdie) that, supposedly, he would be "hidden from the public" for a few days. It turned out differently, as we can say in hindsight.

Why Modern Hostage-Taking
Is So Effective

There are five reasons why this relatively new technique is so effective.

First:
person targeted easy to keep in your power

First, it does not require complicated actions to get the person targeted in your power. If you take someone hostage in the traditional way, then you have to capture the person first and subsequently keep him alive in some hidden place. In other words, you have to spend money and resources on this. This is all fairly complicated.

One of the complications is that the people perpetrating the hostage-taking are working under stressful conditions. Usually they start quarrelling with their fellow criminals about what has to happen, about the ransom to be paid, and other matters. These quarrels make the kidnappers weaker.

A fatwa of the type that Ayatollah Khomeini issued in 1989 (our main case of "modern hostage-taking") does not have this inconvenience for the "kidnappers." The only thing you have to do is, from another part of the world, make the statement that will cause all the havoc. Afterwards, you can continue with your own business. This shows, according to Daniel Pipes (*b.* 1949), one of the first writers to produce a monograph on the Rushdie Affair, how easily such a "kidnapping" can be organized (See Pipes 2010, 30–35). Khomeini proceeded to summon a secretary and dictate the words by which he still has the world in captive. Word which make him, is some perverse sense, immortal.

Second:
great terrorizing effect on the people targeted

The *second* reason why modern hostage-taking is so effective, is that this has a much greater terrorizing effect on the people targeted than traditional hostage-taking, because you send a much more frightening message to the people living in a foreign country than you do with the traditional terrorist techniques.

An example from the UK may make this clear. Mohammed Sidique Khan (1974–2005), one of the four suicide terrorists responsible for the London underground bombings on 7 July 2005, said, "Until we feel security you will be our targets and until you stop the bombing, gassing, imprisonment and torture of my people we will not stop this fight. We are at war and I am a soldier. Now you too will taste the reality of this situation" (BBC News 2005; also quoted in Desai 2007, 6).

This is an important passage, because it teaches us something about the *motives* of theoterrorists. The aim is, apparently, to make

people feel uncomfortable in their situation. The idea is to get the message across that, although people may feel safe on the territory of their own state, in fact they are not. This is very effective. The reason why this is the case, is this: many people have the idea that if *e.g.* Terry Waite goes to Lebanon to try to secure the release of four hostages and is subsequently seized and held captive himself (as happened between 1987 and 1991), this gives a feeling of unease. But this particular feeling of unease is nothing compared to the feeling people experience when, *on the territory of their own state,* they appear not to be immune from terrorist attacks and other types of aggression. It in fact brings modern societies back to earlier stages of development, when physical security was less well-developed than is nowadays the case.[3]

Third:
humiliation for the country involved

Third, the modern tactic of hostage-taking is so popular with the aggressors, because it is extremely humiliating *for the country* (and especially the government of the country) where it occurs. Usually people concentrate on the immediate victim: Rushdie, Westergaard, or the Dutch/German showmaster Rudy Carrell, who was threatened by Khomeini two years before the Rushdie Affair (Cliteur 2013, 15–41). But we should not forget (one of the reasons why this has a very nice cherry on top from the perspective of the terrorist) that also "the British" and "the Danish," as a people, are involved. As are their governments.

When in 1979 the American embassy in Tehran was occupied and sixty-six Americans were seized, this was a humiliating experience for the United States (See Carter 1983, 431ff). When in

April 1980, a rescue operation was organized and failed, this only added to the catastrophe. And when Terry Waite was captured in Lebanon, this was, of course, a difficult situation for the government of Great Britain. But no one (and here comes the point that I want to make) will think that the United States is weak because it could not forestall the taking of hostages abroad, *viz.* during the crisis indicated. And nobody will reproach the British government for not being able to maintain the civil order in Lebanon. But when a government cannot fulfill its primary function, *viz.* to protect its citizens *on its own territory,* this is a matter of grave concern. It is, in fact, utter humiliation and—consequently—great glory for the terrorizing agency.

Fourth:
the terrorist threat is permanent

Fourth, the modern tactic of hostage-taking is so effective, because the victims can never know *when the situation has been terminated.* In fact: there is no termination, no end. There was no end when Khomeini died. There was no end with new declarations of the Iranian government. In fact, there never is an end. The only end is the natural death of Salman Rushdie, as some wistful early commentaries pointed out.[4]

Suppose Khomeini had cancelled the fatwa. Then it is always possible that there is a fanatic who remains more popish than the pope.[5] And suppose the Iranian government issues a declaration

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[3] Steven Pinker's *The Better Angels of our Nature: Why Violence has Declined* offers a comparison of our own time with previous epochs with regard to physical safety (2011).

[4] Saramago wrote at the end of his open letter to Rushdie that he did not know whether they would meet one day or if Rushdie would be forever forced to live disconnected from the rest of the world (See Saramago 1992, 38). That same pessimism, or realism, you also find in Jeremy Waldron's essay on the matter (Waldron 1989, 248, 260; Waldron 1993, 134–143).

[5] Karima Bennoune describes this mechanism when referring to Anwar al-Awlaki: "Anwar al-Awlaki was indeed killed by the U.S. government about a year later, something I did not celebrate. Unfortunately, he never rescinded

that, from now on, they will concentrate on another target, *e.g.* not a novelist, but a politician. Would this save the target Salman Rushdie? Not completely, because there can always be a zealous terrorist, *viz.* someone who aspires to outbid the official leaders of the Iranian regime (which has now begun to grow decadent, less committed to the cause, has it not?). That is precisely what is characteristic of contemporary theoterrorism.

Fifth:
undermining the moral foundations
of liberal democracy

Fifth, the tactic of modern hostage-taking is also superior to the older tactics, because with the tactic of modern hostage-taking it proves to be much easier to stimulate a confusing debate about the moral foundations of liberal democratic countries.

This point is at the same time the lynching-pin to the second part of my lecture as announced: the Sins of Multiculturalism. Multiculturalism makes us vulnerable, makes us weak, undermines respect for the foundations of liberal democratic thought, it puts us in a very uncomfortable situation in the struggle against aggressive islamist terrorism, trying to undermine democratic societies.

So basically multiculturalist intellectuals like Michael Walzer and, as I will hope to show also Charles Taylor, put us in a very disadvantageous position in the cultural confrontation with Khomeini and his many contemporary followers. And with "contemporary followers" I do not primarily refer to the Iranian regime, but to Al Qaida Yemen or ISIL or terrorist individuals who basically copy the technique Khomeini introduced so successfully in 1989.

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his own death list, which remains out there in cyberspace with a long half-life" (Bennoune 2013, 24).

The successes of Islamist theoterrorism

The successes of Islamist theoterrorism are great. We may distinguish two types of Islamism.

One Islamism in its militarized capacity. Here we may think of ISIL or ISIS or "Islamic State". ISIL fights a traditional war on the territory of Syria at the moment. Although the successes of ISIL are considerable, in the long run they will not win this war, is my speculation. But there is another type of aggressive Islamism.

Second there is *terrorist* Islamism. Terrorists do not fight a traditional war, but a guerilla warfare. This means that terrorist individuals and organizations perpetrate attacks in European and American capitals or smaller towns, maximizing casualties, as we have seen in Paris in 2015, and in some cases directly aimed at the destruction of not only human lives but constitutional principles. The murder of the cartoonists of *Charlie Hebdo* was, like the *fatwa* over Rushdie, not only an assault on human lives, but also an assault on the principle of freedom of thought, freedom of expression, freedom of religion, including the right to *change* religion.

So we may make a distinction between two types of attacks.

The first one is the type like the one on the Bataclan. Theoterrorists try to make as many casualties as possible under the *ordinary citizens* whose sole error is that they are French citizens (and therefore complicit in what theoterrorists see as a war on Islam and its believers).

The second type of attack is directed towards people like the French cartoonists. Those cartoonists are assaulted, because they are accused of something totally despicable and worthy of forceful punishment, *i.e.* blasphemy, apostasy, and heresy. Theoterrorists do not recognize freedom of religion in the sense the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* or the *European Human Rights*

Charter define the concept, *i.e.* as the right to *change* religion. Islam is, in their interpretation, a universal religion in the sense that *everyone* can become a Muslim, but this universal right to become a Muslim is not accompanied by a universal right to relinquish the fold. Once Muslim, always a Muslim. And those who defect have to face the consequences, *i.e.* death.

Part 2
The Sins of Multiculturalism.

Terrorist Islamism and multiculturalism

And this brings me to the theme (I hope not too late) of this conference: multiculturalism. Because there is a strange, a disconcerting, relationship between terrorist Islamism and multiculturalism. This may surprise some of you and I want to emphasize this is not meant as a provocation, but there is an intricate relationship between multiculturalism and islamist theoterrorism. Let me try to explain.

One of the curious empirical observations one can make is that Rushdie, the Danish cartoonists, the French cartoonists and others who incurred the wrath of terrorists have some relationship with what one may call "multiculturalism".

What is multiculturalism?

Multiculturalism is a concept that can mean many things. A fruitful distinction to start with is between *descriptive* multiculturalism and *normative* multiculturalism.

Descriptive multiculturalism is simply a positive or welcoming attitude towards cultural diversity. In that sense there is nothing wrong with multiculturalism, of course. It is important to get this out of the way before entering into any discussion. Whoever wants to claim that cultural variety, in the most general sense, is an enrichment, makes a statement that most people will agree with.

In that sense we may echo Nathan Glazer's famous book title *We're all multiculturalists now.*

But there is another sense in which we can choose *not* to be a multiculturalist. This is what I would like to call "normative multiculturalism" or "ideological multiculturalism".

It may very well be the case that you like or even enjoy cultural diversity, that you are a pluralist in heart and soul, but that you still think that multiculturalist authors like Michael Walzer, Charles Taylor, Bikhu Parekh and many others have given us totally wrong advise in how to deal with diversity and cultural pluralism.

Ideological multiculturalism manifests itself in three cultural strands. I will call this (i) British, (ii) American and (iii) Canadian multiculturalism.

British multiculturalism

This normative multiculturalism, according to the British social theorist Rumy Hasan (*b.* 1959), in his excellent monograph *Multiculturalism: Some Inconvenient Truths* (2010) starts with the Runnymede report, *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain* (2000).[6] This is also named "The Parekh-report" after its main contributor. Bikhu Parekh made ideological multiculturalism "cool" in the UK.

In that report Britain was characterized as a "multicultural society". Or rather: it advised the government to *declare* that the United Kingdom had become a "multicultural society". Hasan comments: "It seemed that 'multiculturalism' had taken very deep roots and was a fact of British life and society".[7] But in the years following the publication of this report, Hasan tells us, this proved far from reality. The report masked profound tensions in society.

As a defining moment for a growing unease with multiculturalism he refers to the 7 July 2005 suicide bombings in London. After that, the Chair of the *Commission for Radical Equality*, Trevor Phillips (*b.* 1953), delivered his well-publicized speech on 22 September 2005 with the influential characterization that we are "sleepwalking our way to segregation".

Trevor Phillips was one of the first who pointed out that ideological multiculturalism can have adverse consequences. The glorification of "culture" and "cultures" can lead to an uncritical attitude towards immoral practices taking place within minority cultures. One of the adverse consequences was that no one dared to criticize the social segregation which was taking place.

Hasan clearly sympathizes with Phillips as a kind whistleblower and he indicates that his own book is meant to be a rethinking of the debate on multiculturalism. He aims to critique the *theoretical and philosophical basis* of multiculturalism, and to highlight some of its effects in Britain.

Multiculturalists mean well, as Hasan makes clear. At the same time it may be surmised that the multiculturalists inflicted considerable harm to migrant communities. The conclusion that forces itself on the reader after reading Hasan's meticulous analysis is that multiculturalism is a grave mistake.[8] Nevertheless, it is a mistake that has deep roots in western thinking. The prehistory

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[6] Hasan, Rumy, *Multiculturalism: Some Inconvenient Truths,* Politico's Publishing Ltd 2010. See also: Hasan, Rumy, "We need a 21st century Voltaire to fight the growing power of censorship around the world", in: *The Independent,* 23 October 2012; Cliteur, Paul, "Multiculturalism: Some inconvenient truths", Review of Rumy Hasan, in: *Journal of Contemporary Religion,* 2012, 27:2, pp. 331-333.

[7] Hasan, Ibid., p. 1.

[8] Nazir-Ali claims that multiculturalism still has supporters, "even though in recent years its failings have been manifest and it has been repudiated by the very 'establishment' that gave it birth". See: Nazir-Ali, *Triple Jeopardy for the West: Aggressive Secularism, Radical Islamism and Multiculturalism,* Bloomsbury, London 2012, ix.

of multiculturalism is connected to a critical or negative attitude towards western society.

American multiculturalism:
Anti-westernism

This negative attitude towards western society is also very manifest in the American tradition of multiculturalism. American multiculturalist theory may be framed as dominantly anti-weternism.

It is the special merit of Arthur Herman's (*b.* 1956) book *The Idea of Decline in Western History* (1997) to make us realize that multiculturalism has deeper roots than the 1980s when it became prevalent in Europe. Multiculturalism in the version it became fashionable at European universities and in circles of policymakers, derives from American sources. If fact, European multiculturalism is a watered-down version of an American much more radical version.

In the book mentioned, Herman analyzes multiculturalism as the offspring of "declinism", or the idea of the "decline of the West". By the 1970s the idea of "decline of the West", as it had been developed by Arnold Toynbee (1889-1975) and Oswald Spengler (1880-1936), Herman writes, no longer held the attention of the intellectuals. That did not mean, however, the idea was left. The French cultural pessimists reveal how declinism moved "from being an explicit issue, as it still was for Toynbee and Spengler, to an implicit one in modern critical thinking".[9]

Sartre, Foucault, Fanon, and their ideological offspring, such as Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, and Jean-François Lyotard, were teaching that Western institutions, Western –style rationality,

language, and "discourse", and even the Western image of man himself were all a cultural dead end. And genuine freedom came from denying or transgressing against those Western boundaries, they proclaimed. Humanity had to look beyond the limits modern European civilization set on the authentic self.[10]

These criticisms, as well as those of Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979) and of the Frankfurt School, Herman writes, served as a springboard of a new wave of anti-Western and also anti-European ideologies.

"One of these became multiculturalism".[11]

Multiculturalism derives its inspiration from thinkers like W.E.B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, Adorno, Marcuse, the Frankfurt School, as well as Sartre, Foucault and Franz Fanon. It teaches that:

western rationality tramples out vitality, totalizes political institutions and manifests racism, imperialism, Darwinian nationalism and fascism. The West is a malign force in history.

"For the multiculturalist, Western civilization is entirely *Zivilisation*; there is no *Kultur* at its heart".[12]

Further development of
American multiculturalism

Herman makes a *tour d'horizon* along thinkers as C. Wright Mills (1916-1962), Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979) and Noam Chomsky (*b.* 1928) who compared the United States with the Soviet Union, claiming that they were virtually indistinguishable.[13] Enslavement, racial brutality, discrimination and exploitation are all the true face of American society. W.E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963)

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[9] Herman, Arthur, *The Idea of Decline in Western History*, The Free Press/ Simon & Schuster, New York, London Toronto Sydney Singapore 1997, p. 364.

[10] Herman, Ibid., p. 364.
[11] Herman, Ibid., p. 364.
[12] Herman, Ibid., p. 365.
[13] Herman, Ibid., p. 367.

draws the conclusions from this: "All white people, I think, are implicated in these things so long as we participate in American life in a normal way and attempt to go on leading normal lives".[14]

Reading this makes us realize that the sort of multiculturalism we met in the work of Charles Taylor is an innocuous and soft version. Here we have the stronger tonic.

Very important for the anti-western views that were to become part of multiculturalism's philosophical basis were also the ideas by Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), who had embraced Franz Fanon's (1925-1961) wretched of the earth as the new humanity of the future.[15] As Herman says: "Orientalism's noble savage reemerged as the Third World peasant or the ghetto dweller".[16]

The seventies saw the birth of the "radical chic" as "political pilgrims"[17] who travelled from Europe and America to Cuba, Nicaragua, China and Angola to discover the virtues which Du Bois had professed to see in Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah (1909-1972). Fidel Castro (b. 1926) and Che Guevara (1928-1967) became cult heroes in Saint Germain des Pres.[18]

It is with this background that the proponents of multiculturalism inveighed against the traditional idea of the melting pot, Herman writes.[19] American sociologists like Will Herberg (1901-1977), in Protestant Catholic Jew: An Essay in

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[14] Du Bois, quoted in Herman, Ibid., p. 368.

[15] See on Sartre also: Lévy, Bernard-Henri, Le siècle de Sartre: Enquête philosophique, Grasset, Paris 2000.

[16] Herman, Ibid., p. 370.

[17] Hollander, Paul, Political Pilgrims: Travels of Western Intellectuals to the Soviet Union, China and Cuba, Oxford University Press, New York / Oxford 1981.

[18] Sévillia, Jean, Le terrorisme intellectuel de 1945 à nos jous, Perrin, Paris 2004 (2000), pp. 60-61; Wolin, Richard, The Wind from the East: French Intellectuals, the Cultural Revolution, and the Legacy of the 1960's, Princeton University Press, Princeton & Oxford 2010.

[19] Herman, Ibid., p. 371.

American Religious Sociology (1955), argued that immigrants must retain some form of "social identification" with their ethnic group as a matter of self-preservation.[20] Jonathan Kozol (b. 1936) argued that mainstream American education for negroes meant a "sentence to death" and it was implicitly "racist" to conform to the standard of the majority.

Pessimism about American culture was rampant. James Baldwin (1924-1987) thought that whites would never be able to admit blacks to true equality because that would destroy their (the White's) identity, which was, after all, constructed on the myth of racial superiority.[21]

The most formative influence of Black identity was W.E.B. Du Bois's longing for a lost community in Africa.[22] Martin Luther King (1929-1968) was despised as an Uncle Tom.[23]

Not infrequently this attitude leads to condoning or even admiration of violence. In a notorious passage in Advertisements for Myself (1959) Norman Mailer (1923-2007) had praised the vitalism and the courage of hoodlums when they murder a neighborhood store owner. The reason is simple: "For one murders not only a weak fifty-year-old man, but an institution as well".[24] Which one? Private property! The murder would therefore not be "altogether cowardly".

Outrageous these ideas might now seem, they were fairly common in that time. Western culture was inherently rejectionable. Or, as Edward Said (1935-2003) proclaimed in his influential

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[20] Herman, Ibid., p. 373.

[21] Herman, Ibid., p. 375.

[22] Herman, Ibid., p. 376.

[23] See also: Malik, Kenan, Multiculturalism and Its Discontents, Seagull Books, Calcutta 2013, p. 38 ff.

[24] Mailer, Norman, Advertisements for Myself, New American Library, New York 1960, p. 504.

Orientalism (1978): Western culture is a culture of imperialism.[25] This totally negative attitude towards Western culture brings us to *contemporary* multiculturalism which is, unfortunately, infected by many of the ideas of the older American multiculturalism.

Canadian multiculturalism: the politics of recognition

Although contemporary multiculturalism derives inspiration from and further develops some tenets from the American anti-western attitude, it is much more sophisticated from a philosophical point of view. Canadian multiculturalism starts with an essay by the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor: "The Politics of Recognition" (1994).[26] In Taylor's work elements from both British and American multiculturalism come together. There is the preoccupation with multi-ethnic or multicultural society that we find in British multiculturalism. But there is also – although

more difficult to notice – an undercurrent of anti-westernism that we find in American multiculturalism.

Recognition

From a perspective of political influence, Taylor's work was tremendously successful. Karl Marx founded scientific socialism. John Stuart Mill and Friedrich Hayek became great influences on liberalism. Peter Singer's ideas on animal welfare are at the birth of a whole new movement of animal liberation. Philosophers can have a real influence in the world in which we live (always a comforting idea on conferences like these). And Charles Taylor had a great influence on the ideology of multiculturalism which some countries (Canada for instance) have given pride of place in their national identities.

Taylor made multiculturalism philosophically respectable. Not some muddle-headed well-meaning utopianism, but a full-blown philosophy, derived from Hegelian metaphysics.

Taylor's main thesis is that our identity is for a considerable part determined by our "recognition" or "non-recognition" by others. This is a tremendously important concept: recognition. We also find it in the title of today's conference. Taylor writes:

> The thesis is that our identity is partly shaped by the recognition or its absence, often by the *mis*recognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being.[27]

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[25] Said, Edward W., *Orientalism: Western conceptions of the Orient,* With a new Afterword, Penguin Books, London 1995 (1978). See on Said: Ibn Warraq, *Defending the West: A Critique of Edward Said's Orientalism,* Prometheus Books, Amherst, New York 2007. Nazir-Ali warns us not to let post-colonial guilt "dominate the policies of today's Britain". See: Nazir-Ali, *Triple Jeopardy for the West: Aggressive Secularism, Radical Islamism and Multiculturalism,* Bloomsbury, London 2012, p. xiv. The most sharp rejection of Said's *Orientalism* stems from Robert Irwin, an author who tries to salvage the reputation of orientalists which had been wrecked by Said. Irwin writes: "To set my cards out on the table (...) that book seems to me to be a work of malignant charlatanry in which it is hard to distinghuish honest mistakes from willful misrepresentations". See: Irwin, Robert, *Dangerous knowledge: Orientalism and its Discontents,* The Overlook Press, Woodstock & New York 2006.

[26] Taylor, Charles, "The Politics of Recognition", in: Taylor, Charles, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition,* Edited and introduced by Amy Gutman, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey 1994, pp. 25-75.

[27] Taylor, Ibid., p. 25.

"Non-recognition" by others does not only result in "lack of due respect", but can cause a crippling self-hatred ("saddling its victims with a crippling self-hatred").[28] This had to be the basis of a "politics of recognition" or "identity politics".

Three leading ideas
in the politics of recognition

In this passage quoted above, we can identify a three leading ideas.

First, multiculturalists believe that "recognition" is an important need for human beings. If people are not "recognized" by others, people really suffer.

Secondly that recognition is something a human person derives from group-membership. Multiculturalists believe in the "groupishness" of human beings. So the multiculturalist will not stress individual talents, *e.g.* the ability of Suzie to play a sonata by Chopin, but that Amanda belongs to a group, a religious group, an ethnic group, from which she derives his respect.

Third, especially when it comes to the culture of minority cultures this culture is not supposed to be criticized. Doing this is, especially when criticism comes from a western critic, inflicting a severe injustice on the members of minority cultures.

So there are some convictions coming together here. We may call them:

The universality of the need for recognition thesis;
The primacy of the group over the individual-thesis;
The non-judgementalism-thesis

One may, of course, distinguish these different theses and judge them differently. Personally I do not have much against the universality of the need for recognition thesis. I can understand

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[28] Taylor, Ibid., p. 26.

that: we all need a certain appreciation for what we are, for what we do. But this is definitely not the same as saying that the group should have priority over the individual. On the contrary, I think that is a harmful idea. And I think that multiculturalists have made a great mistake in giving the members of minority groups recognition *not* for their individual achievements, but simply for *being a member of a religious or ethnic group.*

It is certainly not helping Ahmed when sophisticated philosophers like Taylor and Parekh praise Ahmed for being a member of a religious group and they require Suzie to play the Chopin sonata, before they praise her. It may all be well intended, but it is a harmful in its consequences. It does not encourage Ahmed to play the piano. Ahmed becomes an underachiever, being lavishly praised for believing things that Taylor, Parekh and no sensible person really believes. This, in my view, is harmful.

The non-judgmental-ism thesis is even more dangerous. Non-judgmental-ism sounds fine but all kinds of nasty practices *within* religious or ethnic communities can flourish under the respectful eye of the sophisticated multiculturalist.

A good example of this is the existence of the sharia councils operating in Great Britain and where women are denied the right of "one law for all".

But for the theme of this paper the attitude towards freedom of speech is more important. I think that Michael Walzer, Charles Taylor and many other contemporary intellectuals are hampered in their assessment of the Rushdie Affair because of their multiculturalist non-judgmentalism. They think that if Khomeini is so obsessed with free speech and religious criticism they do not have the right to deny him his obsession. The "Sins of Salman", to quote Walzer's essay again, were no more than that he wrote a novel which he was perfectly authorized to do under British national law and European Human Rights law. But multiculturalists do not think in terms of universal human rights but in terms of religious

communities. And they think Rushdie has done something "harmful", something "disrespectful", he has "misrecognized" Others, *i.e.* the supposed needs of a non-western community.

Taylor went even as far as that in de days *after the shooting in Paris,* when the cartoonists of *Charlie Hebdo* were all murdered, he could not bring himself to a negative judgment on the shooters. This is embarrassing, but it should also give us food for thought on the notions involved here. Especially the elusive term "recognition". What should be recognized, is the worth of the individual personality. And in accordance with that worth we should recognize a set of individual human rights, human rights that nor the state, nor society, nor the religious community may take away from them.