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## EUROCENTRISM VERSUS MULTICULTURALISM

Professor Stephen R. Levitt & Professor David L. McNaron

### Searching for an Illusory Idyll

If you had been a university professor in 1958 working in Europe, Canada or the United States, how would you have viewed European civilization? At that time, the Continent was divided between two hostile camps, NATO and the Warsaw Pact. In 1956, the Russians had brutally suppressed the Hungarian uprising; in 1939 the Nazis unleashed the most horrific war in history, which led to forty million deaths and devastation on a scale hitherto unimagined.<sup>1</sup> In 1914, the European powers went to war and succeeded in four years to kill off or cripple an entire generation of young men and to birth the first modern totalitarian state in Russia, thereby shattering the promise of the Enlightenment. In 1958, thirteen years after the ovens of Auschwitz had cooled and the rubble from bombing raids had been cleared, there were profound reasons for scholars to cast a jaundiced eye on European civilization. Conversely, the lives of the indigenous peoples of Africa, Asia and South America must have appeared, at a remove, peaceful, safe and idyllic.<sup>2</sup>

The impact that the horrors of the first half of the twentieth century in Europe had upon the outlook of the intelligentsia cannot be underestimated. A number of scholars came to view European civilization as tainted by slavery, conquest, oppression, and genocide.<sup>3</sup> This anti-European bent in the 1960s found momentum and direction not only in the rejection of European values, but also the search for a replacement doctrine: a view which was at once tolerant, anti-colonial, non-European, relativistic, and cultural; in short, "multiculturalism." The new view would lack the universalistic tendencies that rationalized the aggression of the West, an impulse that ran from Alexander through the Roman Empire, Charlemagne, and the Catholic Church to the expansionist modern state. Because its modus operandi was will-to-power, Europe's intellectual prowess, inventiveness and dynamism became highly suspect. Academics' sympathy went out instead to those who suffered under Western hegemony.<sup>4</sup> After all, it was Enlightenment thinking that spawned the industrialization that made possible, if not inevitable,

total wars and total states.

This retrenchment by academics fueled a rejection of the Enlightenment values of truth, objectivity, and rationality that extended to the rejection of Europe itself as the font of humanity and progress.<sup>5</sup> The fear of the European was acted upon by politicians on the international level in the 1960s and 1970s as well.<sup>6</sup> In order to make the peoples of the world more self-determining and autonomous, the European powers were restrained and their colonies around the world liberated (at least in the negative sense of throwing off external domination).

### The Reality of the "Third World"

Fifty years later in 2008, the geopolitical landscape has changed dramatically. First, the German problem in Europe has been resolved; central Europe enjoys unprecedented peace and prosperity. Second, not only has no international European war occurred since 1945, but with the birth of a European Union many groups have learned to live peacefully with one another under a common legal and economic framework. When one looks at factors such as longevity, income, access to culture, vacation time and medical care, European nations excel, offering quite possibly the highest standard of living and quality of life in history to the vast majority of their citizens.<sup>7</sup>

By contrast, how has the non-European world fared? African, Asian and South American nations have had at least two generations of freedom from colonial rule to set a new course and determine their own political destinies. Some, like Singapore, Taiwan, and South Korea have generated, if not democratic republics, at least legitimate governments that provide high levels of prosperity to their people. However, the vast majority of "Third World" nations appear, by comparison to Europe, as backward, corrupt, violent, and disorganized.<sup>8</sup> The rhetorical change—replacing the qualifier "primitive" with "developing"—did nothing to alter the facts.

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## Multiculturalist Revisionism

Nonetheless, rather than re-examining the paradigm created in the 1950s of a troubled Europe and utopian Asia, Africa, and South America, in light of significant changes, older scholars and many of their present-day disciples cling tenaciously to post-war notions. Instead of revising their theories in light of new evidence, they have become revisionist



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and forced these unpleasant facts into the procrustean bed of their old theories, or else developed *ad hoc* explanations of the anomalies. An example of this occurs when one reads that

the leaders of “developing” nations with poor educational policies and corrupt governments are not responsible for the situation of their failed economies. Rather, after more than fifty years some postulate that when something goes very wrong it must be the fault of Europe’s colonial legacy.<sup>9</sup> The phrase “internal colonialism” was introduced to ensure a non-falsifiable rationale. Notice that this move is itself subtly hegemonic in that it denudes non-Europeans of agency, implying that only the European can act and be held responsible. Other peoples are passive; they are merely acted upon. One could counter that it is indeed possible that the Third World’s problems do stem historically from colonial exploitation. The artificial division into nation states and the exposure to urban civilization have been anathema to some tribal peoples. Likewise, American Blacks’ problems may be owing to the legacy of slavery, racism and segregation. Be that as it may, what is to be done now, and by whom? The indigenous peoples of Africa, Asia and South America as well as the minorities in the West would be best served by focusing forwards upon the future and development, not backwards upon recrimination and blame.

All of this relates to an article by Nigel Meek, published in *The Individual* in 2003 about multiculturalism.<sup>10</sup> If scholars influence politicians, and these politicians take it as a given that European civilization and its values are wicked, then a logical next step is not only to free non-Europeans of colonial influence but to dilute European culture at home. Hence the anti-Europeanists advocate multicultural-

ism: Europe’s status, despite its pretensions, is but one particular culture among many. But all this assumes that “the European” is some monolithic tradition hostile to others. In fact, ancient Rome offers a prime example of a multicultural, successful European society. The Romans generally permitted other cultures and peoples to flourish within their borders—they neither hated nor feared them. The Romans allowed this cultural diversity because they wished to pursue international trade and commerce and to govern their territories more effectively.<sup>11</sup>

If multicultural influences are introduced to Britain and Europe for positive reasons, to enhance trade, to bring in new perspectives, to build up the arts and sciences, this will probably be a good thing. However, if immigrants are used instead to diminish “Britishness” and European values for the sake of pursuing a self-hating policy of cultural dilution and to lower wages, this state of affairs will not produce, in the long run, healthy results. When one delves into the thinking of Western multiculturalists, one sees in their exaggerated love of others a hatred of self.

This outlook is undesirable for the following reasons. In the beginning of the twentieth century what led to two horrific wars was unbridled nationalism combined with violent and irrational racism. The multiculturalists rightly rejected these values. However, in their

exaggerated rejection of these old values, they have taken the energy from racism and nationalism and transformed it into a new movement.<sup>12</sup> One has to admit that in the transformation from racism and nationalism into multiculturalism and globalism, some of the destructive energy of the former has dissipated. However, the underlying irrationalism of the old system remains a key component of the new construct. Put more specifically, what remains is a hatred and rejection of the values of Europeans and the Enlightenment.<sup>13</sup> So with the hatred of others transformed and given new life into the hatred of self, the old nationalist and white supremacist contempt for European liberalism survives and thrives, and now finds new and fertile breeding

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grounds on university campuses throughout the world.

### The Shared Outlook of the “new Left” and “old Right”

So, in this way, the new Left as well as the new and old Right share a similar viewpoint. Instead of the scientific method being applied to the social sciences, which was a central idea of the Enlightenment, the multiculturalists make use of established (i.e. accepted among themselves) ideological positions. The goal of research, teaching and writing seems more akin to indoctrination than fostering a critical attitude.

The Left seems more interested in what conclusions one holds than the arguments that can be marshaled for one's positions. This is the obscurantism of the twenty-first century, and in many respects it resembles the older version practiced by the Catholic Church in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, by the Russian Tsars in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, and by the Germans in the twentieth century during their book-burning campaigns. Multiculturalists, like their counterparts in the past, are not particularly interested in debates which challenge their outlook; rather they seek a discussion of the accepted doctrines to find new ways of “proving” the established truths.

The old Right used terror to silence discussion. The new Left, which does not respect individual rights, uses instead character assassination to silence or redirect discussion. If someone raises a question about immigration policy or cultural dilution in Europe or America, he is often portrayed by the multiculturalists as a racist or fascist.<sup>14</sup> Who among us wishes to be likened to George Wallace standing at the doors of the University of Alabama forbidding bright and capable Black students the chance to better themselves? Who wishes to be likened to a Spanish Conquistador cutting off the hands of natives when they were incapable of handing over the required yearly tribute in gold or silver? So a discussion of the most fundamental questions about the nature of society is postponed again and again, often, we aver, to avoid being smeared. And of course this all-too-common attitude among academics is mimicked uncritically by reporters and media commentators who have been schooled by them.

### Possible Responses

So what is to be done? First, there needs to be more open discussion about the direction of Western societies. For example, if there is a right for aboriginal peoples to maintain their cultures, then one must ask, is there a corresponding right for European peoples to maintain their cultural identities? If there is a right for Palestinians to have a state to pursue their “Palestinianness,” is there not a corresponding right for British persons to have a state to pursue their “Britishness?”<sup>15</sup> Second, there needs to be some better organization of the forces in the middle of the political spectrum to challenge the multiculturalists' rhetoric. To some extent, this journal is one such mechanism. Third, political parties need to become more candid about their cultural and immigration policies. If there is indeed democracy, then citizens need to be given the choice whether or to what extent multiculturalism is furthered in their land, and at what rate, as this might be the most long-lasting and fundamental decision they are ever asked to make. Fourth, it seems to us that a thorough and more honest discussion of immigration policy, and its connection to foreign policy, needs to take place—this will involve cutting through the “St. Louis dilemma.”<sup>16</sup>

In 1939, a shipload of assimilated and well educated Jews from Germany arrived in Cuba. At the last minute, the Cuban government refused to admit the refugees, and they sailed toward America. The American government under Roosevelt, although sympathetic, sent Coast Guard ships into the Atlantic to keep the ship out of American waters. Ultimately, the British, French, Dutch and Belgians gave refuge to the unfortunate passengers. The solution to the St. Louis problem, as it is postulated by liberal academics, was to allow the refugees sanctuary in the United States. Contrarily, we suggest that the solution to the problem of the St. Louis was not to grant the refugees sanctuary. The solution to the St. Louis was for the United States to step up the military pressure on Nazi Germany. Had America pursued a much more aggressive military policy in 1939, aimed at controlling the Fascists in Europe and Asia, instead of waiting until 1940 and 1941 to take action, millions of lives might have been saved. And so the St. Louis scenario repeats itself in the minds of scholars. They busy themselves saving the thousand refugees again and again from the decks of the St. Louis, and at the same time, they ignore or fail to ameliorate the plight of

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hundreds of millions. In the United States, the multiculturalists help Mexicans find refuge. This is noble and good. However, is admitting one or two hundred thousand Mexicans each year to work in low paying jobs the only response of decent persons? Isn't the best way to help Mexicans to improve the economy in that nation? The best way to help Africa is to demand higher standards from their governments.<sup>17</sup> This might include military intervention or sanctions, instead of granting a few thousand sorrowful refugees sojourn in Europe and America. And if political refugees are admitted, shouldn't they be admitted with some goal of returning to their homelands and providing an enlightened and educated intelligentsia to these nations, when their exile comes to an end?

So, while Pim Fortuyn lies dead,<sup>18</sup> the issues he raised about the nature of European society and its relationship with the outside world in the twenty-first century are very much alive. As well, in the interests of all peoples, European and American immigration policy needs to become rational. It cannot be used as a mechanism to permit an educated elite to feel self-righteous because it has saved a few thousand people. There should be genuine concern for helping the hundreds of millions who remain oppressed and hungry around the world, and sincere, long-lasting solutions must be offered to help the developing world achieve more meaningful and permanent economic development as well as peace and stability. And when we drop the irrational hatred of self, and replace it with balanced and well-thought-out policies, we in the West will be much more able to help nations around the world achieve prosperity, rather than perpetuating dependence.

A new approach will ultimately involve demanding much higher standards from the leaders of the developing world and their peoples and responsible conduct. In a Europe free of self-hatred, academics and politicians will no longer find excuses and *ex post facto* rationalizations for bad behavior by irresponsible leaders in the Third World because they feel guilty about being European. Immigrants will be invited to Europe to further European interests, not to put a band-aid on the bleeding wounds of the Third World, to artificially lower wages, or to assuage feelings of guilt and self-loathing.

Most importantly, as the last buildings destroyed in World War II are now being re-

paired,<sup>19</sup> hopefully the European psyche can be healed from the catastrophes of the twentieth century, such that it will exhibit a healthier and more rational demeanor.

#### Notes

(1) See Norman Davies, *Europe: A History* (London: Pimlico, 1997). Davies estimates that there were slightly more than fourteen million military losses as well as more than twenty-seven million civilians killed. The figure of eight to nine million military deaths attributed to the Soviet Union includes "3-4 million Soviet POWs killed during Nazi captivity or on repatriation to the USSR" (p. 1328).

(2) About seventy-five thousand German Jews found refuge from the Nazi regime in Central and South America. See: <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/article.php?lang=en&ModuleId=10005468> The German film, *Nowhere in Africa*, is a fictionalized version of a true story of a Jewish family who finds refuge from the Nazis in Kenya. See Zeitgeist Films page for more information: <http://www.zeitgeistfilms.com/film.php?directoryname=nowhereinafrica>.

(3) Rosa Luxemburg argued in the second decade of the twentieth century that modern capitalism itself generates wars in order to create profit for the ruling class. One sees Luxemburg's view reproduced in the following passage written by Clara Zetkin in 1919 found at: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/zetkin/1919/05/junius.htm>:

*"But it was German imperialism, late-born and madly aggressive, which, by way of the provoking ultimatum of Austria to Serbia in 1914, carried out the war stroke that lit the pyre of capitalistic civilization. It was driven on irresistibly by the gold-hunger of German finance—represented in particular by the German Bank, the most concentrated, best organized institution of capitalistic finance in the world—which longed to exploit Turkey and Asia Minor, and the lust of profit of the armament industries; it received its ruinous fool's liberty from the barely-curbed despotism of Wilhelm II and the voluntary weakness of the bourgeois opposition."*

One of us (Levitt) believes that one should not exclude economic profit as a factor that might explain why governments support wars. However, the authors of this paper reject a mono-causal explanation for historical phenomena.

In the 1960s, not only the system of economics of the West came under attack, but the entire civilization. John Searle writes:

*"It runs something like this: The history of Western Civilization is in large part a history of oppression. Internally, Western Civilization oppressed women, various slave and serf populations, and ethnic and cultural minorities generally. In foreign affairs, the history of Western civilization is one of imperialism and colonialism. The so-called canon of Western civilization consists in the official publications of this system of oppression..."*

John Searle, "The Storm over the University" in *Debating PC: The Controversy of Political Correctness on College*

**"A new approach will ultimately involve demanding much higher standards from the leaders of the developing world..."**

*Campuses* (New York: A Laurel Trade Paperback, 1992), p. 93.

(4) "It is primitive cultures that we are asked to study, to appreciate and to respect—any sort of culture except our own. A piece of pottery copied from generation to generation is held up to us an achievement—a plastic cup is not... An oxcart is an achievement—an airplane is not. Stonehenge is an achievement—the Empire State Building is not ..." Ayn Rand, *The New Left: The Anti-Industrial Revolution* (New York: First Meridian Printing, 1993) p. 168.

(5) Paul Berman writes in the introduction to *Debating PC*: "According to the accusations, a new postmodern generation from the 1960s has come into power in the universities, mostly in the humanities departments but also in the central administrations. The post-modern professors promote a strange radical ideology that decries the United States and the West as hopelessly oppressive and that focuses on the reactionary prejudices of Western culture" (p. 1).

(6) Consider for a moment some of the resolutions of the United Nations from the 1960s and 1970s. Resolution 1514, "Declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples," passed on December 14, 1960, states in the preamble that "the process of liberation is irresistible and irreversible...an end must be put to colonialism and all practices of segregation and discrimination associated therewith..." A full copy may be found at: <http://daccess-ods.un.org/TMP/993392.4.html> Resolution 3070, "Importance of the universal realization of the rights of peoples to self-determination and of the speedy granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples for the effective guarantee and observance of human rights," passed on November 30, 1973 states in the preamble "Recognizing the imperative need to put an early end to colonial rule, foreign domination and alien subjugation, 1. Reaffirms the inalienable right of all people under colonial and foreign domination and alien subjugation to self-determination, freedom and independence..." A full copy of this resolution may be found at the following site: <http://daccess-ods.un.org/TMP/787421.html>.

(7) According to the United Nations Human Development Index Rankings for 2007, twelve of the top twenty nations are members of the European Union. The other eight are: Iceland, Norway, Australia, Canada, Switzerland, Japan, the United States and New Zealand. See: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/>.

(8) According to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index 2007, the ten most corrupt nations are respectively: Laos, Afghanistan, Chad, Sudan, Tonga, Uzbekistan, Haiti, Iraq, Myanmar and Somalia. The least corrupt nations are: Denmark, Finland, New Zealand, Singapore, Sweden, Iceland, Netherlands, Switzerland, Canada and Norway. See: [http://www.transparency.org/policy\\_research/surveys\\_indices/cpi/2007](http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2007).

(9) BBC, "Africans on Africa: Colonialism" July 5, 2005. "Tajudeen Abdul Raheem, General-Secretary of the Pan-African Movement, believes that the corrupt and despotic governments that preside over many African countries have their roots in the colonial power structure." <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4653125.stm>.

(10) Nigel Meek, 'The UK is Not a "Multiracial, Multicultural" Country', *The Individual*, No. 34, May 2003, pp. 7-10.

(11) Donald R. Dudley, *The Civilization of Rome* (New York: Meridian Books, 1993) pp. 179-180.

(12) In his introduction to *Debating PC* Paul Berman writes that "a new generation of writers came along... who were worried about the mind-blowing ultra-radicalism of the older generation. These younger writers began to suspect that '68 Philosophy, in turning so ferociously against liberalism, sometimes bore a closer relation to the old German romantic philosophies of the far right (the cult of irrationalism, the eagerness to disparage universal ideas of rights, etc.) that anyone seemed to imagine when the theories were in vogue" (p. 10).

(13) Allan Bloom writes: "The American university in the sixties was experiencing the same dismantling of the structure of rational inquiry as had the German university in the thirties." *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), pp. 312-313.

(14) Stephen Levitt, "Newspeak: When Words can Kill," *The Individual*, No. 34, May 2003, pp. 2-3.

(15) The problem of self-determination and the question what could and should constitute the "nation" is universal. Senator Elma Campbell, in her maiden speech before the Upper House of the Bahamas Parliament, stated "The people of the Bahamas have long expressed their dissatisfaction and displeasure with the immigration problem in our country... They claim, Madam President, that the immigration problem has contributed to a growing burden on our nation's education, health and social services, and increasingly, the cultural identity and way of life of Bahamians... we have a problem, and that, if not addressed, it could tear us apart as a people and as a nation." This speech is found on the webpage of the political party, the Free National Movement, at: <http://www.freenationalmovement.org/news.php?id=424&cmd=view>.

(16) For a good discussion of the St. Louis incident see Nora Levin, *The Holocaust: The Destruction of European Jewry, 1933-1945* (New York: Schocken Books, 1973). She notes that "the St. Louis was one of a small fleet of refugee ships roaming American waters at the time in search of a port" (pp. 141-142).

(17) Prime Minister Tony Blair on visit to South Africa said: "African governments should deliver their promises to consolidate democracy, build the capacity of government institutions to deliver essential services, redouble efforts to stamp out corruption, and encourage the private sector to grow. African governments should also hold other African governments to account." [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/politics/6708917.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/6708917.stm). (May 31, 2007).

(18) See: BBC News: "Obituary: Pim Fortuyn" <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/1971462.stm>. May 6, 2002.

(19) As recently as October 30, 2005 a moving ceremony occurred at the Church of Our Lady in Dresden. Among the six hundred distinguished guests were President Köhler, Chancellors Gerhard Schröder and Angela Merkel, as well as the ambassadors of France, Russia, the United Kingdom and United States. The Duke of Kent represented the British royal family. <http://www.frauenkirche-dresden.de/weihegottesdienst.html>.



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ada and completed a Bachelor's degree in History at York University (Toronto), a first professional degree at Osgoode Hall Law School (LL.B., 1985) and a Master of Laws degree at the London School of Economics and Political Science. His teaching and research interests include international law, comparative law and comparative government.

## THE TROUBLE WITH MULTICULTURALISM

Professor David L. McNaron

### Introduction

In our accompanying essay, Stephen Levitt and I have argued that multiculturalism has outrun its original justification and is having a pernicious influence. I wish now to enumerate its logical and ethical liabilities.<sup>1</sup> First of all the term "multiculturalism" is a rhetorical device: a "slanter" expression akin to the emotive phrases "pro-life" and "pro-choice" in that its denial seems to commit one to an indefensible position, "monoculturalism." The multiculturalists' alternative is the equal validity of all cultures—evidently at the expense of what was hitherto the dominant one. So I take multiculturalism, as an outlook, to consist of the conjunction of something like the following claims: (1) All cultures are equally valid or valuable; (2) Europe has oppressed and exploited other cultures; (3) justice requires that we promote cultural diversity. Claims (1) and (3) will be the subjects of my discussion.

### The Superiority of Western Philosophy

Let us begin by understanding the intellectual underpinnings and origins of what we call "the West." Western civilization began in ancient Greece. The Greeks were the first thinkers to separate reason from myth. They provided naturalistic explanations of phenomena—and, indeed, of the cosmos itself—and developed systematic philosophical inquiry. While other cultures made advances in science, mathematics and engineering their discoveries never went beyond the realm of practical application.<sup>2</sup> The Greeks were the first to devise formal proofs and to conceive the world in purely rational terms based on logical argument and evidence. So what we refer to as *Western* is not so much a set of doctrines as

open-ended inquiry that follows the argument wherever it leads.

Frankly, Western philosophy *is* philosophy. The word "philosophy" may be used in a popular non-technical sense, so that it is true to say that most anyone has a philosophy in the sense of a general outlook. However, the term, when used to name a distinct academic/intellectual discipline refers to an enterprise that began in Greece and continued, in Europe, through the modern period on to this day. The fact that thinkers in other cultures held views on the nature of things does not make them philosophers. It's the *kind* of answers the Greeks gave (the kind that could be improved upon) and the way they *rationaly justified* their views that sets them apart. "Eastern Philosophy" is hence something of a misnomer, since historically no non-Western country divorced rational thinking from myth and religion or self-consciously focused on the resolute analysis of arguments. Rational theoretical inquiry—philosophical and scientific—undertaken for its own sake began in ancient Greece and provided the West with its characteristic outlook. For these reasons Antony Flew allots little coverage to Eastern thought in his *A Dictionary of Philosophy*, adding these words of explanation:

*"This, and not European parochialism, is why the classics of Chinese philosophy get such short shrift. The Analects of Confucius and the Book of Mencius are both splendid, of their kind. But neither sage shows much sign of interest in the sort of question thrashed out in [Plato's] Theaetetus. The truth is that these classics contain little*

"Frankly, Western philosophy *is* philosophy."