Western University

From the Selected Works of Paul W Nesbitt-Larking

2009

Terrible Beauty: Globalization, Consciousness, and Ethics

Paul W Nesbitt-Larking

On
emj
can
the
by
con

On
izat
be
tive
peo
a co
idea
cabu
app
conf
toler
dive

The
lenc
unde
of O
unde
and
ally

Series in Political Psychology

Series Editor
John T. Jost

Editorial Board
Mahzarin Banaji, Gian Vittorio Caprara, Christopher M. Federico, Don Green,
John Hibbing, Jon Krosnick, Arie Kruglanski, Kathleen McGraw, David O. Sears,
Jim Sidanius, Phil Tetlock, Tom Tyler

On Behalf of Others: The Psychology of Care in a Global World
Sarah Scuzzarello, Catarina Kinnvall, and Kristen Renwick Monroe

The Political Psychology of Democratic Citizenship
Eugene Borgida, Christopher M. Federico, and John L. Sullivan

Image Bite Politics: News and the Visual Framing of Elections
Maria E. Grabe and Erik P. Bucy

Social and Psychological Bases of Ideology and System Justification
John T. Jost, Aaron C. Kay, and Hulda Thorisdottir

Forthcoming Books in the Series:

The Competent Voter
Paul Goren

On Behalf of Others

The Psychology of Care in a Global World

Edited by

Sarah Scuzzarello
Catarina Kinnvall
Kristen Renwick Monroe

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS
2009

On Behalf of
empirical insi
care in a glo
the concept
by discussing
constructed

On Behalf of
ization, multi
be reconcep
tive if we ar
people are
a complex,
ideas that p
cabularies u
approaches
conflict and
tolerance of
diverse wor

The politica
lence in a gl
understand
of Others t
understand
and psycho
ally reinfor

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Oxford University Press, Inc., publishes works that further
Oxford University's objective of excellence
in research, scholarship, and education.

Oxford New York
Auckland Cape Town Dar es Salaam Hong Kong Karachi
Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Nairobi
New Delhi Shanghai Taipei Toronto

With offices in
Argentina Austria Brazil Chile Czech Republic France Greece
Guatemala Hungary Italy Japan Poland Portugal Singapore
South Korea Switzerland Thailand Turkey Ukraine Vietnam

Copyright © 2009 by Oxford University Press, Inc.

Published by Oxford University Press, Inc.
198 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10016

www.oup.com

Oxford is a registered trademark of Oxford University Press

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means,
electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise,
without the prior permission of Oxford University Press.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
On behalf of others : the psychology of care in a global world / edited by
Sarah Scuzzarello, Catarina Kinnvall, Kristen Renwick Monroe.
p. cm. — (Series in political psychology)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-19-538555-7 (alk. paper)
1. Globalization—Moral and ethical aspects. I. Scuzzarello, Sarah.
II. Kinnvall, Catarina. III. Monroe, Kristen R., 1946–
JZ1318.O5 2009
303.48'2—dc22

2008049588

1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2

Printed in the United States of America
on acid-free paper

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements vii
Contributors ix

Introduction / 1
Catarina Kinnvall, Kristen Renwick Monroe, and Sarah Scuzzarello

PART I: THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO GLOBALIZATION, TOLERANCE, CARE, AND COURAGE

- 1. Terrible Beauty: Globalization, Consciousness, and Ethics** / 15
Paul Nesbitt-Larking
- 2. "Together but Apart, Equal but Different"—On the Claims for Toleration in Multicultural Societies** / 35
Christian Fernández
- 3. Multiculturalism and Caring Ethics** / 61
Sarah Scuzzarello
- 4. Taking Risks for Others: Social Courage as a Public Virtue** / 82
Gerd Meyer
- 5. Self-Regulation of Courageous Bystander Interventions** / 106
Kai J. Jonas

PART II: CARE, SOCIAL IDENTIFICATION, AND ALTRUISM: EXAMPLES FROM THE UNITED STATES, POLAND, AND FINLAND

- 6. The Psychology of Natural Law and Care** / 127
C. Fred Alford

Terrible Beauty: Globalization, Consciousness, and Ethics

Paul Nesbitt-Larking

Yeats's *Easter 1916* is a masterpiece,¹ the creative act of a poet at the height of his powers. The poem's rhythmic and phonetic structure gives voice to the broad reaches of human experience.² On a semantic level, Yeats's words and phrases evoke the excruciating ambivalence of personal and political decisions in a time of bloody upheaval and explosive change.³ The refrain of the poem, *a terrible beauty is born*, condenses the two faces of fundamental psychic experience in a world of global transformation, then and now. The complexities that emerge in its lines, written by Yeats in the personal and political stresses of revolutionary Ireland almost a hundred years ago, resonate powerfully in the present-day world. Yeats gives voice to the challenges of rapid and uncontrolled change, regarding violence with deep concern and yet grim approval. For him the universal and the diurnal are equally available facets of the same phenomenological experiences. Yeats's treatment of social class and nation reflect his ambivalence. From a romantic and elitist perspective, Yeats regards the common folk as bovine, and the nation as the

¹ I very much appreciate the kindness shown by my colleague Dr. Dermot McCarthy, an expert in Irish literature. Dr. McCarthy devoted a substantial meeting with me to a dialogue on Yeats's poetry, and his insights on *Easter 1916* were influential in the shaping of my ideas in this chapter. Despite this, the interpretations offered in the paper are ultimately my own, and I alone am responsible for them.

² The full text of *Easter 1916* is widely available, so I have not reproduced it in this chapter.

³ This chapter is not intended as a detailed contribution to the literature on Yeats's politics. Rather, it adopts the insights of the scholars who regard Yeats's poetry as a heuristic and sensitizing orientation to a complex world, rather than as a lyrical manifesto of set beliefs (Kermode, 1967). The chapter is also grounded in Jonathan Allison's (1996) argument that the complexity and multiplicity of Yeats's poetic vision are a reflection of his own political life, encompassing cultural nationalism, anti-colonialism, worker solidarity, conservative elitism, and flirtations with fascism.

elevated repository of ancient myth, sacrifice and honor. At the same time, he declares that ordinary people can accomplish great things in unusual circumstances and that too powerful an attachment to national pride results in vainglorious heroism and unnecessary bloodshed.

Written in a world grappling with the challenges of modernity (industrial capitalism, class struggle, patriarchy, the nation-state) the core themes and the central tension of Yeats's poem nonetheless serve to open up an exploration into life in our era of late-modern globalization. The dynamic tensions of violent change, the universal in the diurnal, social status, and national identity are the key dialectics of contemporary phenomenologies of the global order. Much has been written about economic, governmental, societal, and cultural aspects of global transformations in the late-modern world, and many of these writings make reference in powerful and important ways to changing identities. A critical psychology reflective of such transformations is only suggested and partially developed, however. This chapter works through some key developments in the current social theory of globalization in order to appreciate consciousness and its ethical consequences in a fragmented and uncertain global existence.

TERROR

Economic Terror

The concept of economic terror resonates in the title of Vivienne Forrester's highly influential essay *The Economic Horror* (1999). While there is nothing new in the transnational spread of capitalism, the shrinkage of time and space has become exponential in the past three decades, and transnational economic relations have become more liquid and more elaborate. Moreover, reflecting Yeats's poem, the global and universal are experienced in direct and tangible ways in the local and everyday. This reality, which Giddens (1992, 22) refers to as the "dialectic of the local and global," has given rise to the popularity of Roland Robertson's neologism of "glocalization" (Bauman, 1999, 120). The very experience of the entire world is always already constitutive of our daily lives. The principal psychological effects have included: a growing sense of vulnerability; a decreasing capacity to locate and hold to account those responsible for economic activity; and a growing fear of unanticipated and large-scale external factors, such as massive and sudden job losses and unexpected changes in the regulatory apparatus leading to deteriorating conditions in and around the workplace, sweeping wage cuts, or cuts in the social wage. In addition to its class-mediated impact, glocalization is simultaneously and powerfully gendered and racialized.

According to Rose's (1999) theory of governance of the self and Beck's (1999) concept of risk in the era of reflexive modernity, the experiences of the current epoch are associated with a deep sense of individuated responsibility. Bauman (1999) suggests that the most appropriate expression of the character of risk in the contemporary world is the German term *unsicherheit*. This word connotes uncertainty, insecurity, and the absence of safety. Unlike danger, *unsicherheit* is not entirely external to the agent or unplanned, and unlike fate, it is to some extent under our control. Economically, physically, intellectually, emotionally, and even spiritually, we can and should plan and compensate for the contingencies of risk in our lives. The riskier life becomes and the more challenging it is to quantify, calibrate, or evade, the greater our anticipated degree of personal anxiety and guilt with respect to coping with the everyday.

The global marketplace has been moving further and further away from traditional conceptions of use value. The largest international markets today are in derivatives. Forrester (1999) tellingly describes the world of derivatives as a kind of parapsychology. She says (1999, 80):

... this form of economy no longer invests; it bets.... This speculative economy consists of betting on the variations of business which does not yet exist, and maybe never will. And from there, in relation to those virtual variations, playing around with bets on securities, debts, interest and exchange rates, now skewed of any sense, connected with purely arbitrary projections, approaching the wildest fantasy or prophesies of a parapsychological nature. It consists, above all, in betting on the results of all those bets made on the results of those bets, and so on.

Such speculation might give high rollers the adrenaline rush of an extreme sport. For the majority, the economic impact of such large-scale and uncontrollable speculation is disconcerting. Sennett (1998, 51) refers to the abandonment of highly productive and efficient businesses, with hitherto loyal employees, that are deemed to be incapable of the kind of change and adaptation or hyper-profitability demanded of the new global system.

The largest single economic corollary of the new transnational financial order has been the onset of neo-liberal adjustment policies throughout the West and into the developing world. Most alarmingly, the principles of economic growth and development are now based on minimizing employment. This is the so-called "jobless recovery" of the 1990s. Bourdieu (in Bauman, 1999, 29) refers to the "structural violence" of unemployment. The obsolescence of paid employment was first recognized by the neo-liberal economists of the 1960s and 1970s, who theorized and proselytized the case for the non-accelerating inflation rate of unemployment (NAIRU). Most Western states had adopted the principles of this ideal by the mid-1980s. While in the Keynesian era the accepted level of unemployment was

considered to be no more than a little above full employment, under the NAIRU, the ideal unemployment rate was such that there would be enough unemployed people to dampen wage expectations among the employed.

The combined impact of the NAIRU and the decreasing requirements for workers has been to increase rates of unemployment; to increase the ranks of part-time workers, contractual and casual employees; and to reduce the economic value of the minimum wage. Forrester (1999) identifies the injustice of the new economic reality for contemporary employees and job seekers. In an era of large-scale and structural unemployment, in which work as we have known it is effectively dead, "they believe and are encouraged to believe themselves failed masters of their individual destinies..." (Forrester, 1999, 4) The entire socio-economic order remains governed by the obsolete caricatures of lifetime careers and full-time employment opportunities reminiscent of the Fordist era of mass production. Just as Beck (1999, 99) states with respect to *political* institutions in the contemporary West, the empty shells continue to exert an effect even as their agency has been drained out of them. Few are talking to the under-employed and the unemployed about the death of work. Instead, states generate programs of "workfare" or "welfare to work" that compel people to search endlessly for work that does not and will not exist. The failure to find work is highly individualized, and the victims of the jobless society are held responsible for the structural redundancies that created them.

The political economy of *unsicherheit* renders many of the apparatuses of control and persuasion unnecessary. To use a familiar expression of Marx in *The Communist Manifesto*, it is the "icy waters" of negative freedom that exert control over socioeconomic relations. Fear and anxiety are powerful disciplinarians, and they have been successful in keeping people from the *agora* of political life in civil society. As Yeats understood, however, no regime can afford to take its hegemony for granted. Yeats well understood the cultural and spiritual disorientations of a society in question. "All changed, changed utterly," he repeats at the beginning and end of the poem, emphasizing the scope of the impact through his placement of the staccato adverb dramatically at the end of the phonetically soft phrase. In the middle of the poem, Yeats uses the phrase "transformed utterly," thereby accentuating the agency of those who were able to effect such transformation. With Yeats, we recall the beauty of transformation that balances the terror of agentless change; and we return to this theme later.

Cultural Terror

Enlightenment metaphors speak of turning the traditional world upside down, of standing philosophers on their head, or of the view through a

camera obscura. The underlying assumption is that there is a coherent order that might be inverted. Late-modern metaphors speak instead of implosion, explosion, entropy, shattering, and fragmentation. Salmon Rushdie refers to the modern self as "a shaky edifice we build out of scraps, dogmas, childhood injuries, newspaper articles, chance remarks, old films, small victories, people hated, people loved" (in Sennett, 1998, 133). In this manner, the self in late-modern society becomes a matter of personal and individual responsibility and an open book in which might be written a range of narratives. Giddens refers to these personal choices as "life politics" in which an ever-broadening menu of available influences and choices is available to the self in the ongoing construction of its identity. The individual "must integrate information deriving from a diversity of mediated experiences with local involvements in such a way as to connect future projects with past experiences in a reasonably coherent fashion" (Giddens, 1992, 215). Rosenberg (2002, 336-37) makes similar points and stresses the fact that "people are being asked to actively and self-consciously participate with other people in the definition (and likely reconstruction) of their own and others' identities and in the construction of the rules and values whereby their interaction will be regulated." Given such projects, the late-modern emphasis shifts away from objective structures and representational subjective truths to the realm of social constructionism, contingent meaning and discursive understandings. The cultural reality of the late-modern condition is such that the links between signifiers and things signified are permanently in question, and therefore the most important sites of psychological research are those where meaning is made: discourses, conversations, and cultural interchanges.

The late-modern conception of self carries with it the deep and inescapable corollary of personal risk management. If we are free to choose our actions, our identities, and our life paths, then we only have ourselves to blame if we make the wrong choices (Bauman, 1999, 146). Beck (1999, 154) refers to this darkly as "the private executive branch":

This private executive branch, lest anyone be deceived, is in sum precisely the gateway through which the (nightmarish) dreams of the "New Man" can be made a fact, flesh and blood... a new nightmare of forming reality in our own image is beginning, this time in everyone's private life and on an explicitly voluntary basis.

Erich Fromm long ago appreciated the consequences of the fear of freedom, and theorized about its consequences in a world of nation-states. In the global context of today, the stakes of freedom are higher, and so the cultural responses to the breakdown of the familiar and the communal have been more dramatic. Bauman (1999, 63) refers to contemporary privatized

forms of individuality as modes of "unfreedom." In a telling juxtaposition, he says: "Scared loners without a community will go on searching for a community without fears, and those in charge of the inhospitable public space will go on promising it" (Bauman, 1999, 14). Confronted with mediated images of murder and mayhem, and living in globalized forms of privatized risk, the fortress has become the prison of the gated community or the shopping mall, in which only commodified behavior will be tolerated. In the face of global economic libertarianism and gender liberation, the panicked reaction of religious fundamentalism has taken root from Karachi to Kansas among those who live in fear of their own freedom. Fundamentalists erect their own "gated communities" with the obdurate walls of refusal. They refuse history, choice, desire, dialogue, playfulness, and ultimately hope. "The human landscape of women's liberation and men's defense of their privileges is littered with corpses of broken lives," says Castells (1997, 136), and nowhere does this exhibit itself with grimmer ferocity than in the Bosnian rape camps of the 1990s.

The challenges of cultural choice can exert a stultifying and disabling effect on people. In a global climate of fear and insecurity, there is an overwhelming temptation to close down, to retreat, and to survive. Lerner (1997, 10) says: "Cynicism disempowers and powerlessness corrupts." While acknowledging that conflict and oppression are very real and tangible evils for many people, Lerner (1986, 3) bewails the fact that so many people then seem to disempower themselves even further through the quasi-protective barriers of cynicism and despair. Whether through the escapist routes of television, drugs, or alcohol, or through the adoption of a negative, one-sided view of human nature or history, people are afraid to take the power that they in fact could assume with impunity, if they would only act to assert it. Lerner advocates a "mass psychology of compassion" (1986, 283) toward oneself and significant others. Only through love of oneself can one develop the emotional wherewithal to love others and to actualize one's freedom through a calm sense of entitlement. In this process of mass compassion, social movements and community organizations have a key role to play in nurturing a sense of possibility and entitlement (Lerner, 1986, 291).

Political Terror

The post-communist world has radically called into question the nature of states and nations, and the Westphalian nation-state form itself is increasingly in question. The economic globalization of money, goods, and services, of media and electronic communications, has severely restricted the role of the nation-state in regulating and steering economy and society. Contemporary nation-states are caught in a downward spiral of giving tax

breaks to corporations and wealthy individuals. The consequent diminution in revenue further compromises the provisions of the Welfare State, even as it enhances the coercive role of the state. Power operates in the largely stateless domain of transnational interchange, and local and regional states are increasingly vying with national states for power and authority (Castells, 1997, 244). The declining authority of the national state is compensated for to some extent through individual self-governance. The new citizen is oriented toward risk-averse and risk-calculating behavior in economic terms (credentialism, personal flexibility adjusted to the needs of the corporation, the replacement of the "career person" and "company man" with the self-starting individual entrepreneur, who sells services to the highest bidder and builds his own capital) and in cultural terms (a range of personal choices in gender and familial terms, personal health, fitness, style and attractiveness, geographical mobility, and open choice in religious, political, and ideological affiliations). The common theme is the self-governing individual, who neither requires nor desires external authority in order to function effectively.

The privatization of the self finds expression, too, in the traditional domain of politics. The modern institutions of political life, notably the political parties and legislatures, are decreasingly relevant. Bauman (1999, 70) notes that in the privatized state the consistent offers of tax refunds are a matter of getting our "dues" back from the social contract of the nation-state. But deregulation and privatization does not imply the end of regulation or power. On the contrary, deregulation is the transfer of regulatory capacity from states to markets (Bauman, 1999, 74). The citizen as consumer has little power and lacks the capacity to demand what services are provided and how they are provided. Despite the New Public Management rhetoric of responsive public-private partnerships and the proliferation of these hybrids, there is in fact little connection between the needs and desires of citizens and the shape and delivery of public services. Given the impotence of parties and parliaments to influence these organizations and to regulate the community in general, it hardly seems surprising that "politics" as an activity has been draining steadily from the ostensibly political institutions to those that were hitherto "protected by politics in industrial capitalism—the private sector, business, science, towns, everyday life and so on..." (Beck, 1999, 99).

Beck (1999, 140) refers to traditional state institutions as "zombie institutions," effectively dead, but unable to lie down. Traditional parties have declined to a point of irrelevance, argue Beck (1999) and Castells (1997), and have been replaced by growing ranks of non-voters and minor parties of principle. Real political life, the vibrant life of decision, power, advantage, and bargaining, takes place beyond these traditional venues and occurs wherever the global has the most impact on the local. Thus, widespread

On Beha
empirical
care in a
the conc
by discus
construct

On Beha
ization, i
be recor
live if we
people a
a compl
ideas th
cabulari
approac
conflict
toleranc
diverse

The poli
lence in
understa
of Other
understa
and psy
ally rein

and uncontrolled pollution and climate change give rise to ecological social movements, non-governmental organizations, and Green Parties. The global spread of migration, crime, and drugs gives rise to racist gangs, anti-immigration forces, and ultra-right nationalist parties. The global decline of patriarchy results in an upsurge in fundamentalist religious movements and parties, insisting on having their voices registered in public policy on abortion, homosexuality, women's rights, and other matters. As Beck (1999, 153) says: "Now the microcosm of personal life conduct is suddenly interconnected with the macrocosm of terribly insoluble global problems."

The incapacity of the state to regulate the ebbs and flows of risk in the global arena has the effect of promoting a politics of attack and retaliation. In an era of invisible threats, an identifiable enemy is in fact quite comforting. Bauman (1999, 49) puts it well:

Threats to safety, real and imputed, have the advantage of being fleshy, visible and tangible; this advantage is topped and reinforced by another—that of the relative facility of confronting them and perhaps even defeating them . . . no wonder . . . that as a result the popular concerns about safety, nicknamed "law and order," dwarf the popular interest in the productive mechanisms of insecurity and uncertainty and the popular unwillingness to arrest or at least slow down their operation.

Nations exist in the historical imagination of Western subjects to be invoked and invented anew as they are needed. Nationalism remains as the most powerfully rooted and culturally resonant ideology in the late-modern era (Archard, 2000, 159). A pluralistic and civic nationalism is quite feasible, but it is the conservative-romantic form of exclusivist ethnic nationalism that emerges panic-stricken in the era of the decline of the nation-state to rage against the empty and threatening anomie of the global order. As Beck (1999, 62) points out, the boundaries of class, nation, family, and gender role are eroded under reflexive modernization: "Counter-modernization asserts, draws, creates and solidifies all boundaries over again."

The state and the nation are powerfully called into question in Yeats's *Easter 1916* in a way that prefigures the explosion of ethnic nationalist uprisings of the late 20th century. In an evocation of the tension between pragmatic politics and Romantic absolutism, Yeats's final stanza of the poem asks whether the sixteen Irish martyrs needed to die at all. Were the Irish martyrs blinded by their uncompromising love of country? Some analogous sentiments occupy the minds of Israelis and Palestinians as they vacillate between the details of the various peace accords and the uncompromising demands of the combatants. American and British citizens continue to ponder the invasion of Iraq. Was it necessary to remove the regime? Might the objectives have been achieved anyway through less violent modes of intervention?

BEAUTY

Economic Beauty

Written soon after the British authorities had executed sixteen Irish nationalist rebels in 1916, the cadences of *Easter 1916* urge us toward celebration of the spiritual cleansing of heroic bloodshed. Such is the unmistakable effect of the litany of heroic names coupled in a dancing march as the poem comes to an end. At the same time, its sad rhetorical punctuation requires us to stop and ask, "Was it needless death after all?" Yeats's dialectics are condensed into the expression "terrible beauty." The dialectic between these pairs of opposites is evoked through Yeats's naturalistic third stanza, in which he juxtaposes the permanence of stone (symbolizing abiding Irish national consciousness) with the transience of the living stream (a symbol for pragmatic adjustment to changing circumstances). The stone appears to divert the water and compel its flow. However, if we look long enough, the water erodes the very stone that is resisting it. This metaphor of stone and water serves us well as we begin to consider the apparently obdurate compulsion of the global economy. To treat the global economic order as a monolithic and irresistible force is to reify it and to ignore the very real dialectics that the agents whose practices sustain it have set in place. Hirst (2000, 179–182), among others, reminds us that it was a series of voluntary and deliberate state actions that deregulated capital markets and removed exchange controls in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The global economy is then very much an object of state control and policy choice. Moreover, the extent to which markets have been globalized is exaggerated. According to Hirst (2000, 182), the principal indicators demonstrate that economies are more closely tied to the nation-state than is commonly supposed. Ratios of trade to gross domestic product (GDP) among the various nation-states differ little today from their magnitude in the past. Foreign direct investment is highly concentrated, and capital markets are "resolutely domestic." There are few genuine transnational corporations (those with no substantial domestic base), even if there are substantial numbers of multinational corporations that operate from a clear domestic base.

Populist discourse is replete with reified notions of the impact of the global economy. State elites across Western nations have consistently promoted the line that national economies must deregulate, privatize, cut taxes, and limit the welfare state in order to "stay competitive." These ideas have become the nostrums of late-modern political rhetoric. There is little doubt that the policy changes induced by such ideas have exerted serious social and psychological damage, as we saw above. The growing gap between rich and

On Beha
empirical
care in a
the conc
by discus
construct

On Beha
ization, n
be recon
tive if we
people a
a comple
ideas th
cabulari
approach
conflict
tolerance
diverse v

The poli
lence in
understa
of Other
understa
and psych
ally rein

poor, the pervasiveness of unemployment and precarious semi-employment, the unwillingness of leaders and political parties to retake control of national economic levers, the erosion of safety-net provisions and the welfare state have resulted in widespread disillusionment and even despair. The only relief has been in the distractions noted above of whipped-up xenophobia and panic campaigns concerning highly dramatic but low-probability events.

So what of beauty? It resides in those sites and practices of resistance that refuse the inevitable. In psychological terms, it incorporates aspects of accommodation and resistance in a range of domains. There is the quiet and grim pragmatism of the Third World worker, confronted with the choice between extreme privation in the rural hinterland or a toxic and oppressive job for a multinational branch plant in the shantytown. We can also consider the First World single mother who must leave her kids unattended on a Friday evening for a few hours while she works a minimum-wage shift at the convenience store. In both instances, the attachment of the worker to the business is so brittle and contingent that it makes little sense to construe the contact as safe or assured. Quite to the contrary, the risks are as evident for employers as they are for employees: Those ripped from their families and communities will seek to compensate or at least substitute in some way the organic warmth that has been removed. Oppressed workers, simply put, have a tendency to organize in various ways. If they cannot actually unionize, they may accommodate each other to make life more bearable, irrespective of the benefit to the company. They may not be able to overtly protest, to grieve, or to go on strike, but they can be sullen, uncooperative, strategically and punctiliously co-operative, slow, or deliberately stupid. They can fantasize, sabotage, borrow, steal, and evade attention. Scott (1990, xiii) says, "poaching, foot-dragging, pilfering, dissimulation, flight. Together, these forms of insubordination might suitably be called the intrapolitics of the powerless . . ." Scott's work on what he refers to as "hidden transcripts" offers an anthropological reading of the myriad ways in which those with few resources survive oppression through the application of their wits and organize in a covert manner for the opportunity to rebel more actively once the conditions are safe. In identifying the hidden transcript, Scott (1990, 120) refers to "unspoken riposte, stifled anger, and bitten tongues created by relations of domination . . ."

By definition, Scott's acts of subversion are concealed. As he says: "If anonymity often encourages the delivery of an *unvarnished* message, the veiling of the message represents the application of varnish" (Scott, 1990, 152). But not all resistance to globalization emanates from the least powerful or the most vulnerable. There is also the vast and growing overt intellectual

resistance to globalization evident in the minor parties, social movements, and non-governmental organizations. These social forces bare the actual political choices that underpin economic forces, and they insist on transparency in the crafting of new deals. They take to the streets and make common cause with those who are disadvantaged or disgruntled, in order to retard or even reverse state decisions. They have powerful tools in the new media of spectacle and shock. To the extent that they are able to convey their message through whatever means they have available, they question the legitimacy of those promoting the global economic agenda. To the extent that they keep alive the alternatives to the negative impacts of global capitalism, so they sustain the belief that people can change their own circumstances. Their actions sustain a sense of purposeful agency. Torres (in Castells, 1997, 81) raises the important point that the global economy stands or falls on the basis of trusted and dependable information. Thus, the manipulation of information becomes critical to the sustaining of global competitiveness and profitability. For Torres, "information can be much more powerful than bullets."

Easter 1916 is populated by those Yeats knew personally, with all the beauties and blemishes of everyday people. One (MacDonagh) is "sweet"; another (MacBride) "a lout." Invoking theatrical techniques, Yeats invites us to regard himself and his *dramatis personae* in their diurnal trials from the ironic and detached perspective of role and performance. As Brecht understood, such alienation (*verfremdungseffekt*) is a necessary concomitant of both understanding and action. It is also, of course, a barrier against pain and loss. The dialectical play of self and other, role and person, that occupies Yeats draws us to the defensive strategies that we employ to contend with our existences in the age of globalization. Against the impersonal global reach of corporations and commodities, controlled from metropolitan and affluent centers, stands the familiarity of the local, the vernacular, and the sacred. Confronting the terror of cold spatial domination is the beauty of warm temporal coexistence. Both Castells (1997, 123) and Innis (1971) recognize this dialectical struggle. Technology and information are in play in this dialectic and are never entirely captured. While it is sensible to attend to the huge and devastating human impact of sudden and colossal transfers of liquid capital from Asia or Mexico, we should not overlook the possibilities of "weaving a hyperquilt of women's voices throughout most of the planet" (Castells, 1997, 137).

Cultural Beauty

The emergence of human awareness from early infancy, through which any conception of self and other is made possible, depends upon the acquisition of language, which is "intrinsically public" (Giddens, 1992, 51). There is a

On Bel
empiric
care in
the con
by disc
constru

On Bel
ization,
be recd
tive if v
people
a comp
ideas t
cabular
approac
conflict
toleranc
diverse

The pol
lence in
underst
of Othe
underst
and psy
ally rein

powerful sense of openness in the realm of discourse. Such openness is explored in Kristeva's (1986, 89–136) dialectic of the semiotic and the symbolic. While the symbolic is a constant necessity to provide order, coherence, and structure, the semiotic breathes life into the symbolic; affirming, challenging, or refusing its meaning. The semiotic is equivalent to Rose's "stutter" (1999, 20) that interrupts the fluency of the narrative: "digging under its stories, cracking open opinions, reaching regions without memories, destroying the coherence of 'the self'." The very rupturing of the taken-for-granted, the sutured, or the dominant narrative brings into stark awareness the arbitrariness of the sign, and thereby the entire edifice of power.

Such cultural subversion is a sublimely creative act and begins with the simple acts of thinking and speaking. As Forrester (1999, 63) says: "There is no more subversive action than thinking . . . Thinking is political. And not only political thinking is, far from it. The mere *fact* of thinking is political." Benhabib (in Maclure, 2003, 7) points out that acts of reflection and deliberation lead to critical thinking, and that articulating views in public "imposes a certain reflexivity on individual preferences and opinions." To employ the cultural capacity to redefine one's role is not necessarily to position oneself. Indeed, such reflection and articulation entitle one to disclose anything (or not) and to essentialize oneself (again, or not). To demand the space to define oneself is simply to refuse the definitions and corresponding structured limitations of others' delineation of oneself. Reflecting on the possibilities of queer identities in Hong Kong, Ho and Tsang (2000, 135) speak of the creativity inherent in the "individualized interpretation of a collective name . . ." In a simultaneously terrifying and exhilarating sense, then, in the late-modern era one's identity is less given and more open than ever before.

To the extent that we open up our own identities and explore the lineaments of their constitution, we sharpen our awareness of the need to recognize and validate difference in others. To reflect in this manner is to risk disrupting, interrogating, and then recombining the pieces of one's own identity. There is, of course, a substratum of coherence in this process, and the degree to which one engages—alone or socially—in acts of deconstruction is variable. Of course, such self-exploration threatens existing identity. But, as Howarth and Stavrakakis (2000, 13) point out: "if dislocations disrupt identities and discourses, they also create a lack at the level of meaning that stimulates new discursive constructions, which attempt to suture the dislocated structure." Renewed identities can be liberating. Patrick (2000, 39) raises to consciousness the cultural masculinism of Rawls's "veil of indifference" that undergirds his conception of distributive justice. She argues that Rawls's concept "presupposes an account of the self in which reason and affectivity are opposed." Lupton (1999, 105–106) opens the door to

alternative affectively informed rationalisms, such as those grounded in familiarity and comfort or custom and those based on fatalism. How people contend with risk and opportunity is the consequence of their particular biography as well as their personal idiosyncrasy. Lupton (1999, 122) reminds us of the importance of practical consciousness and of esthetic and hermeneutic judgments formed through the taken-for-granted ideas of acculturation. Monroe (1997) in her critique of rational choice theory offers an alternative in "perspective theory." This theory develops the notion of a broad range of normative, expressive, and social-identity characteristics governing decision-making that go beyond the narrowly conceived logic of rational choice.

Not all action fits within even Monroe and Lupton's generous parameters of plausible motivated behavior, and some of it stretches our interpretation of universally accepted criteria of rationality. Given the potential for boredom and the oppression of strict self-governance, it is not surprising that extreme risk-taking activity becomes attractive in and of itself. The attraction of the bawdy, the extreme, the uncouth and the carnivalesque as vehicles to free oneself from the bonds of the diurnal and the regulated is familiar to all. It is a form of self-actualization. This is the politics of bungee jumping, body piercing, extreme sports, and one's fifteen minutes of fame on reality television.

Against the cultural terror of *unsicherheit*, of risk, Beck (1999, 162–173) posits the beauty of doubt. Between the twin evils of despair and cynicism, both grounded in a disabling sense of determinacy, lies the creative power of doubt. Employing purely phenomenological ideas, Beck regards doubt as a bodily separation out of one's own and others' senses, to "give space and an ear to his own astonishment, his own voice" (Beck, 1999, 164). Refusing to accept anything more than contingent and partial truth, doubt becomes an ally, an agent of our own empowerment. The obsession with caption, with suture, and with the Truth converts doubt into despair of finding the right answer. But a permanent orientation of doubt is a weapon of the weak. To live in radical doubt and a pluralized unwillingness to grant cognitive or affective closure means avoiding the verities and absolutes on which is grounded violence, ethnic hatred, and war. Doubt is "kind and deeply humane" (Beck, 1999, 171); and, in a lyrical moment, Beck describes doubt as "the anti-religious religion of self-limiting modernity" (1999, 171). The dynamics of doubt and the possibilities of agency find reflection in the psychosocial orientations of ethical and critical care as developed by Alford and Scuzzarello in their chapters in this volume. The possibilities of doubt are further echoed in both Scuzzarello's and Fernandez's critiques of multiculturalism in their chapters below. The refusal of doubt is illustrated in the empirical findings of Ferguson in this volume. Based upon his research in

Northern Ireland, Ferguson demonstrates that high levels of identification with a religious denomination correlate substantially with reduced levels of moral competence and a greater propensity to support a "culture of violence."

There is something profoundly liberating about the notion of refusal, of personal and social role-redefinition, and of radical sustained doubt. The will and promise to reconstruct the very real world of oppressive ideological closure and hegemony through the alternative reflexive discourses of stutter and semiotics, through hidden transcripts and through the courage to recognize oneself as having suffered from surplus powerlessness, evoke a powerful feeling of liberation. There are those, of course, who revert to terror and argue that not only does terror trump beauty in many cases, but that the very celebration of *jouissance* and alternative reality construction is insensitive to the agents who have no choice. Criticizing Beck, Lash asks rhetorically "just how 'reflexive' is it possible for a single mother in an urban ghetto to be? Just how much freedom from the 'necessity' of 'structure' and structural poverty does this ghetto mother have to self-construct her own life-narratives?" (Lash in Lupton, 1999, 114-115) Similarly, Smith takes Giddens to task for his statement that "However oppressively the burden of particular circumstances may weigh upon us, we feel ourselves to be free in the sense that we decide upon an action . . . the actor 'could have done otherwise' . . ." (Giddens in Smith, 1999, 147). Smith says: "I don't think Giddens would have felt comfortable telling an audience of Iranian workers that 'we feel ourselves to be free' when 'we' is intended to include them . . . 'we' who are men do not experience masculine sexualization of women's public life as young women might; we are not Iranian workers, and so on" (Smith, 1999, 152).

The simple correctness of Lash and Smith's claims needs to be registered. It is always hazardous to adopt the voice of the other, and one needs to be cautious in imputing consciousness in others. The point is that *no one* can adequately claim to speak for anyone else beyond a certain level of tentative generality. The question remains whether Beck and Giddens' claims about reflexivity and agentive choice are sufficiently generalizable to be universal. My contention is that they are indeed. Even agents whose life circumstances exhibit the greatest structures of oppression have agentive powers and the capacity to reflect. Lash and Smith are right to compel our attention toward the oppressions and limitations conditioning the lives of "the wretched of the earth." But, of course, this does not mean that the agents remain entirely powerless. Ghetto mothers can fight back against drug dealers and reclaim neighborhoods, and Iranian workers rose up against the Shah and may well do so again against the ayatollahs. There is, in the end, a rather dismissive

pessimism in the words of Lash and Smith. The Iranian workers and the ghetto mothers do not need Smith and Lash to defend them, any more than they need Giddens and Beck to define their reflexive and agentive possibilities. What separates these analyses is that Beck and Giddens are aware of this fact and as a consequence exhibit less propensity to restrict the discursive potential of these oppressed people through preemptive closure than do those who would champion them, Lash and Smith. In this regard, Beck and Giddens exhibit an ethics of critical enquiry that consciously promotes the politics of hope.

Political Beauty

Among the greatest dreads associated with the spread of globalization is the notion that the decline of the nation-state has impeded the principal expression of the people's sovereign will. Those who express this concern clearly have a point. Supranational and regional forms of governance have usurped the functions and authority of national states, and both sovereignty and governance capacity are increasingly fragmented. As Hirst (2000, 185) indicates, however, the nation-state remains the critical order of governance in that it controls a territory and it defines citizenship. Essentially, he says that nation-states "donate sovereignty and legitimacy 'upwards' and 'downwards'—to supranational bodies and treaty regimes and to regional governments" (Hirst, 2000, 185). To the extent that Hirst is correct in his analysis of state power, much depends upon how citizens perceive their roles and capacities. If they in fact exhibit a sense of surplus powerlessness vis-à-vis their roles as citizens and the capacity of the national state to act on their behalf, then both the manner in which this is sustained and the potential for it to change need to be explored in psychology.

An important aspect of such research is to investigate the moments when citizens act. Meyer, in this volume, develops the concepts of popular resistance and civil disobedience, and in so doing illustrates how social courage is balanced with fear. Meyer's research brings to mind the following report that appeared in *The New York Times* on December 21, 1989: "The young people started to boo. They jeered the President, who still appeared unaware that trouble was mounting . . . It was a moment that made Rumanians realize that their all-powerful leader was, in fact, vulnerable" (in Scott, 1990, 204). The will to boo Ceausescu, to stand up and be counted (or in the case of the Soweto teenagers, gunned down), to say "no" or even to absent oneself in passive resistance, should never be underestimated. Castells (1997, 39) says that "communities may be imagined, but not necessarily believed." Any regime or ideologically motivated force can make a claim for authority and influence, but all depends on the extent to which such narratives are

incorporated into the hearts and minds of the relevant people. Once they decide to end the oppression that has been visited on them, they are often stunned by the ease with which they can achieve their desired ends. Their small-scale and low-level actions become integrated into an evolving sense of self-respect, dignity, and mass defiance (Scott, 1990, 224). With respect to the velvet revolutions of Eastern Europe, Beck (1999, 100) says:

There, the citizens' groups—contrary to all the evidence of social science—started from zero with no organization, in a system of surveilled conformity, and yet, lacking even photocopiers or telephones, were able to force the ruling group to retreat and collapse just by assembling on the streets . . . In a society without consensus, devoid of a legitimating care, it is evident a single gust of wind, caused by the cry for freedom, can bring down the whole house of cards of power.

To the extent that the movements just described are to be successful, they must be grounded in a consciousness of possibility. The fear of risk must be complemented, if not supplanted, with the will to doubt. There needs to be a radical rethinking of boundaries, and an autonomous calibration of "inside and outside," and "us and them." Neighbors come to be regarded as friends, rather than strangers, and foreigners regarded as complementary others, rather than a threat. Lowe, Muldoon and Schmid, later in this volume, report on the importance of those whose social identifications and categorizations transcend familiar either/or categories of "in-group and out-group." The authors report that increased levels of complexity in social identity are related to greater understanding as well as more positive and inclusive attitudes toward others. They remind us that the massive sense of political impotence, the notion that citizens can do little if anything to change their worlds, needs to be overcome by an awareness of the potential of human agency, both individual and collective. There are signs that increasing numbers of people are beginning to live the beauty of their own political agency, and Castells (1997, 351) sees signs of vibrancy in the recreation of local states, the proliferation of democratic and political uses of the micromedia and the worldwide web, as well as among the ranks of the nongovernmental organizations and the social movements.

CONCLUSIONS

The condition of *terror* induces sensations of risk, insecurity, anxiety, and vulnerability. The broadest and most abstract global shifts are mediated into the daily practices of our lives, concretely and bodily. We experience a deeply personal responsibility and guilt over our incapacity to cope. The

global economy renders us increasingly vulnerable to layoffs, plant closures, under-employment, and unemployment, as well as to the harsh disciplines of a declining and contingent welfare state. Existing state apparatuses of legitimization and coercion have atrophied to some extent, replaced with the raw market discipline of the dread of failure.

Underpinning the economic horror is a late-modern cultural implosion of the self, increasingly experienced as a shattered, fragmented, and partial entity. We have lost our theoretical, ethical, and aesthetic moorings. Identities are no longer given at birth; they must be constructed, and the task of identity constitution is always precarious and contingent, and often painful. Our private executive branches face daunting challenges in fixing the locus of authority and the constant strains of having to construct and reconstruct self and other. It is little wonder that we have become scared loners, resorting to whatever appear to be simple panaceas. Such psychic orientations fit well with the upsurge in religious and nationalistic fundamentalisms and the retrenchment of patriarchal orders. These worldviews also help explain the political psychology of gated communities, simplistic law-and-order measures, and the evacuation of large sections of the middle class from the public domain through restrictive balanced-budget legislation. Even for those who do not resort to the extremism of the comforting panaceas of "havens in a heartless world," loose and shifting identity possibilities induce in us a sense of paralysis. We do not know the answers to the huge and seemingly intractable challenges of the era. We limit ourselves through the insidious onset of waves of surplus powerlessness and through our willingness to permit others to define us through their recognition or through the withholding of their recognition.

The traditional nation-state form is in decline, along with many modern political organizations and institutions. In the words of Beck, they have become "zombie" organizations and institutions. The real life of politics has been drained from them into the less obviously political domains of private enterprise, the media, civil society, the community, the family, and lifestyle politics. The areas of most active political growth in the current era are the community movements, the nongovernmental organizations, the social movements, and the minor political parties. The most important locus of governmentality is, according to Rose (1990) following Foucault, the soul. Self-government exhibits our capacity to regulate ourselves through our developed volitions.

Corresponding to the terror of late-modern global conditions is an awakening of *beauty*. This is premised on the understanding that for every danger there is an opportunity; for every fear an act of defiance; and for every attempt at oppressive closure a liberating overture. In order to grasp

opportunity and freedom, it is essential to resist reification (attributing human attributes to mechanisms) and its corollary, hypostatization (attributing mechanistic drives to our human agency). Our agency creates and then destroys all social structures, including states and markets. The nation-state has not become impotent, and it still controls the principal movements of the global economy to the extent that those who come to exert power within it so choose. The capacity of citizens to control and regulate the national state is, therefore, critical and worth the struggle. Even those at the bottom of the socioeconomic order never entirely lack power. The infrapolitics of the powerless is played out in everyday acts of resistance. More organized manifestations of such articulations are evident as forms of protest evolve from the heart and mind to the living room, the shop, the street, the community, and the movement.

To speak of the cultural beauty of resistance is to stress the slow, spiritual, and local power of time against the high-speed, technical, and imperial power of space, and to pay heed to the polyphonous force of the semiotic against the arbitrary rigidities of the symbolic. Our capacities to think and to speak are in themselves subversive activities. Reflexivity leads to choice, deliberation, articulation, and the construction of preferences. Sustained and autonomous doubt is a potent tool in the drive for autonomy. Doubt reflects a refusal to be driven by the closed discourses of agenda and ideology and leaves open the broadest possible engagement with the political needs and preferences of others. Such cultural strengths are grounded in interpretations of the self as a work in progress and as a creative and open potential. Such an orientation is compatible with a confident and demanding citizenship at the core of renewed forms of civil society.

There may seem little hope for an ethics and a politics of doubt in the mindsets of those whose essentialisms and fundamentalisms obdurately refuse politics *qua* dialogical engagement, and of those who cannot see the possibility of a fusion of horizons (Gadamer, 1975). Despair, alienation, retreat, and rage are clear barriers to meaningful participation in the *agora*. What hope is there, then, in an era of the "clash of fundamentalisms"? There are clearly no easy responses to such challenges beyond the continued determination of committed academics, activists, and citizens to promote the advantages of dialogue and engagement and to model the beauty of doubt. It has to be conceded that there are those whose worldviews are unlikely to be open to any overtures from beyond their particular prejudices. Our energies are better directed toward those who retain at least some sense of living in global community. The transformative and healing powers of open encounter with the other are apparent in a range of models and practical experiences, from the applied hermeneutics of Gadamer (1975) to

the range of "truth and reconciliation" commissions around the world. Each of us needs deep tolerance and a willingness to suspend judgment in order to glimpse—and to some extent grasp—the worlds of others. Those who adhere to their own fundamental religious "truths" must at the least accept the legitimacy of those who regard all truths as partial or—even more challengingly—regard them as hopelessly ideological or essentialist. For their part, scientific humanists and agnostic skeptics benefit to the extent that they take the transcendental and the mystical seriously and accept religious and other creeds in their fullness for others.

In the end, we return to the inspiring politics of the oppressed, the dispossessed, and those at the margins. Their power in the face of ascribed powerlessness is eloquent testimony to the constructive possibilities of politics, even under the most difficult of circumstances. An ethics of beauty is shared among activists whose principal task is to articulate and promote discourses of human possibility and community power and those whose daily lives engage them, often with little more than applied good sense or common intelligence, in tactics of resistance, evasion, and refusal against the strategic moves of those regimes under which they live. The courage to grasp such power is enhanced to the extent that consciousnesses and cultures of beauty interact through networks of communication, operating at every level from the global to the intimate and personal. To recognize beauty is to stare hard into the eyes of terror and to see behind the reflective steel glare the soft flutterings of insecurity, fear, vulnerability, and possibility.

REFERENCES

- Allison, J. (ed.), 1996. *Yeats's political identities: Selected essays*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Archard, D., 2000. Nationalism. In N. O'Sullivan (ed.), *Political theory in transition* (pp. 151–171). London: Routledge.
- Bauman, Z., 1999. *In search of politics*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Beck, U., 1999. *The reinvention of politics: Rethinking modernity in the global social order*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Castells, M., 1997. *The power of identity. Volume II. The information age: Economy, society and culture*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Forrester, V., 1999. *The economic horror*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Gadamer, H.-G., 1975. *Truth and method*. New York: Seabury Press.
- Giddens, A., 1992. *Modernity and self-identity: Self and society in the late-modern age*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Hirst, P., 2000. Globalization, the nation state and political theory. In N. O'Sullivan (ed.), *Political theory in transition* (pp. 172–189). London: Routledge.

- Ho, P. S. Y., and Tsang, A. K. T., 2000. Beyond being gay: The proliferation of political identities in colonial Hong Kong. In D. Howarth, A. J. Norval, and Y. Stavrakakis (eds.), *Discourse theory and political analysis: Identities, hegemonies and social change* (pp. 134–150). Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Howarth, D., and Stavrakakis, Y., 2000. Introducing discourse theory and political analysis. In D. Howarth, A. J. Norval, and Y. Stavrakakis (eds.), *Discourse theory and political analysis: Identities, hegemonies and social change* (pp. 1–23). Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Innis, H. A., 1971. *The bias of communication*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Kermode, F., 1967. *The sense of ending: Studies in the theory of fiction*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kristeva, J., 1986. *The Kristeva reader*. (Ed.), T. Moi. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Lerner, M., 1986. *Surplus powerlessness: The psychodynamics of everyday life . . . and the psychology of individual and social transformation*. Oakland, Calif.: The Institute for Labor and Mental Health.
- Lerner, M., 1997. *The politics of meaning: Restoring hope and possibility in an age of cynicism*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley.
- Lupton, D., 1999. *Risk*. London: Routledge.
- Maclure, J., 2003. The politics of recognition at an impasse? Identity politics and democratic citizenship. *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 36:3–21.
- Monroe, K. R., 1997. Human nature, identity, and the search for a general theory of politics. In K. R. Monroe (Ed), *Contemporary Empirical Political Theory* (pp. 279–306). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Monroe, K. R. (ed.), 2002. *Political psychology*. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Patrick, M., 2000. Identity, diversity, and the politics of recognition. In N. O'Sullivan (ed.), *Political theory in transition* (pp. 33–46). London: Routledge.
- Rose, N., 1990. *Governing the soul: The shaping of the private self*. London: Routledge.
- Rose, N., 1999. *Powers of freedom: Reframing political thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rosenberg, S., 2002. Reconstructing political psychology: Current obstacles and new directions. In K.R. Monroe (ed.), *Political Psychology* (pp. 329–365). Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Scott, J. C., 1990. *Domination and the arts of resistance: Hidden transcripts*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Sennett, R., 1998. *The corrosion of character: The personal consequences of work in the new capitalism*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Smith, D. E., 1999. *Writing the social: Critique, theory, and investigation*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

CHAPTER 2

“Together but Apart, Equal but Different”—On the Claims for Toleration in Multicultural Societies

Christian Fernández

TOLERATION IN QUESTION

We live in a globalized world where cultures continuously cross paths, bump into one another and occasionally clash. As a result, the demands for toleration seem more pressing and omnipresent today than ever before. Everywhere toleration is needed, everywhere it is called for, yet rarely is it really achieved. Just like with human rights and democracy, we are all for it; we only wish we knew how to get more of it. Yet, to the historian, the political philosopher, or anyone familiar with the history of Europe, there is little new about these demands. They have for the last five centuries and with varying degrees of success played a prominent role in the formation of modern societies throughout the West. The modern idea of toleration as we have come to know it first appeared in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries through well-known thinkers such as Erasmus of Rotterdam, Michel de Montaigne, John Locke, and Pierre Bayle, as a more or less direct response to the religious and political turmoil that swept over Europe during the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. From then on, toleration has been invoked by liberals as a necessary requisite for achieving peaceful coexistence and equal freedom for all citizens, not just the ones who happen to belong to the “right” creed. In this sense, today’s claims for toleration of cultural diversity form part of a very familiar project; namely, that of creating liberal states and societies (cf. Barry, 2001).

Yet there is also something unfamiliar about today’s claims for toleration. This unfamiliar element first reveals itself in the talk of toleration, which has a new and different ring to it. “Toleration” used to be a matter of granting every citizen a certain amount of freedom through the equal provision of rights. Through these provisions all citizens were to be attached to, and protected from, society in the same way; attached as citizens of the state