Religion and Deep Multiculturalism: Toward a Cosmopolitical Ethics of Engagement

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Cosmopolitanism, Religion and the Public Sphere

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Toward a cosmopolitical ethics of engagement

Catarina Kinnvall and Paul Neshit-Larking

As scholars in the broad tradition of critical theory, we have been engaged in the analysis of the political identities of Muslims in the West over the past few years. (Kinnvall and Neshit-Larking 2009, 2010a, 2010b, 2011a, 2011b, 2013; Neshit-Larking 2007, 2008a, 2008b). Our political psychological exploration of various Muslim minorities has had the overarching goal of attempting to understand patterns of emerging political identity among Muslims within the context of global, national, and regional forces. In particular, we have theorized and conducted empirical research into how global forces, notably those associated with violence and terror, have affected the political identities and projects of both Muslim minorities and non-Muslim populations in the West. Our work on the ideal-typical identity strategies adopted by both majority and minority populations has contributed to an elaboration of the politics of engagement and the critical importance of such an orientation to equity within and between political societies as well as the efficacy of political institutions and regimes. As further discussed below, the three identity strategies of retreatism, essentialism, and engagement are ideal-typical (heuristic) models based upon how people characterizeistically conceptualize, communicate, and perform their chosen identities to serve various political purposes.

This chapter builds upon our knowledge and understanding of Canadian and Swedish political societies as well as the principal findings of our empirical research among Muslim and other minorities. We make the case for a cosmopolitical politics of engagement and in so doing demonstrate how the most successful models for political integration are those that have been least governed by the boundaries of nation states. We argue that both Canada and Sweden have in certain respects been successful in the debordering of political belonging and in so doing have facilitated an emergent cosmopolitical perspective that forms the basis for a viable politics of engagement in the contemporary world. Speaking in terms of national contexts does not endorse any notion of ‘basal nationalism’, however (Bell 1995; Condror 2008). Rather, our position is that those discursive spaces opened up by a politics of engagement facilitate a public sphere in which cosmopolitics is more viable. Cosmopolitics envisages a global political commmunity of states and the mutuality of peace and broad common purpose in the context of openness and the possibility of change (Archibugi 2003). The cosmopolitical world is one of geographical, virtual, and social mobility; global economic and cultural consumption; awareness of global interdependence with attendant risks and opportunities; the erosion and constant remaking of cognitive, affective, and perceptual maps; and growing semantic and linguistic sophistication (Szczesny and Urry 2006: 115).

While the term ‘cosmopolitan’ and ‘cosmopolitical’ are both contested, and the terms have been used interchangeably, we draw a distinction between them and prefer the use of the term ‘cosmopolitical’ to characterize our approach. The epistemological origins of ‘cosmopolitanism’ are in the era of the Westphalian nation-state and the Enlightenment. The goal of world community in much cosmopolitan theory is both state-centric and Eurocentric. Compared to old ideas of Kantian cosmopolitanism that envisioned a theory of world government and citizenship grounded in existing nation states, a cosmopolitan vision is ultimately one of hybridized engagement in which people can reflexively work upon the actual conditions of their lives. The ambition of cosmopolitical democracy is more global and less internationalist. Cosmopolitical democracy is grounded in the need for global forms of democracy to address the challenges of violence, inequality, inequity, environmental degradation, planetary migration, and oppression that are increasingly transnational in scope as well as complex and diffuse. A cosmopolitical orientation empowers people within communities and traditions without automatically accepting traditional definitions of the group. Struggle within the group and the disintegration of hegemonic tradition from within are thus important features of a cosmopolitical orientation. Calhoun (2005: 93) argues that a cosmopolitical orientation must reject ‘the unity of simple commonness and the tyranny of the majority’ - [and] must demand attention to differences – of values, perceptions, interests, and understandings.

The next section of the chapter, offers a brief summary of our research on multiculturalism and political identities in Canada and Sweden. We establish that, while limited and incomplete, multiculturalism in those political societies creates conditions for a politics of engagement. In the second section, we elaborate a politics of engagement through contrasting it with its alternatives: the politics of retreatism and the politics of essentialism. Following this, the third section on the public sphere sets out our case that liberal Protestant modernist regimes are unable to create entirely neutral arenas for discursive exchange. As such, civil society has no neutral standpoint above religious or other value systems. In the final section, we outline our cosmopolitical approach to critical multiculturalism. Even on matters as seemingly taken-for-granted as universal human rights, communities need to engage in dialogue. The logic of this position sets us against religious and other fundamentalisms, which we elaborate. The politics of engagement is grounded in a perspective on politics as the art of the possible in communities that talk to each other, even when core values are held unquestionably. As demonstrated in our empirical analyses, this is a process that cannot be undertaken by minorities alone, but requires the active involvement of majority communities as well. In Sweden for instance, anti-immigrant parties have been relatively marginalized from mainstream politics as a multicultural
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Beyond banal nationalism

As scholars situated in the political societies of Canada and Sweden, and as investigators into the political psychology of Muslim identities across western political systems, we have become aware of the importance of recognition, openness, context, and communication in the building of viable political cultures and institutions. Such recognition necessitates the negotiation of complex encounters and accommodations between a broad diversity of religious and other ideals. In this section, we offer a brief explanation of Canada and Sweden through the status of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is a contested concept and has increasingly in recent years come to be regarded as controversial and even dysfunctional (Hasan 2010; Hewitt 2005; Kelly 2002; Leonard and Tilley 2011; Okin 1999; Scharf 2011; Verovsek and Wessendorf 2010). In the light of such critiques, it is important to assess why multiculturalism—both as lived reality and as policy option—has been relatively successful in Sweden and Canada. When it comes to the politics of multiculturalism, one can only speak relatively. Relatively speaking, the Canadian experience of multiculturalism has been a success. Balancing core individual rights grounded in the liberal tradition with a communitarian commitment to those communities and groups that claim certain rights associated with cultural distinctiveness, Canadian multiculturalism affirms collective aspirations to the extent that substantial groups of citizens continue to demand them, but also to the limit that the realization of such aspirations does not inhibit the full and free expression of individual citizenship rights among those elected as members of designated communities. The foundation of an adequate multiculturalism is premised on the egalitarian claim that all Canadians are refugees and immigrants. Such a bland statement of equality, however, glosses over the critical point that Canada's modern history is that of a European white-settler colony, with all the consequences and reverberations of that mode of historical emergence. Any claims regarding Canadian multiculturalism must be made within the context of the historical realities of empire, race, language, and ethnicity within New France, British North America, and modern Canada. In a certain historically-grounded and constitutionally limited sense, the two founding European nations of the French and the English can be said to have established the ground rules for the cultural, socio-economic, and political character of contemporary Canada. Acknowledging these historical facts alerts us to the profound and yet taken-for-granted characteristics of western liberal individualism that pervade the political spaces of Canada today. The so-called 'difference-blind' and neutral cultures and institutions that underpin majority cultures in all western countries are in fact biased and therefore discriminatory in their impact on minorities. Benignly and knowingly or not, they force minorities into generic patterns that are not true to them. We develop this argument below. Canada's history as a white-settler colony is profoundly overwritten with practices of racist exclusions, ethnic discrimination, attempts at forced assimilation, and social closure. In this context, the contemporary possibilities for multiculturalism seem restricted and perhaps doomed. The fact that they have not been is dependent upon two important countervailing historical realities. The first is that as an outgrowth of European empires, Canada practised forms of internal colonialism that while oppressive, did not constitute Canada itself as an imperial power. It remained on the peripheries, a rich and privileged dependency. An important by-product of this lack of an imperial past is that once Canada abandoned its overtly ethnocentric and racist immigration policies in the 1960s and 1970s, it implemented a universalist and highly selective model of legislated immigration control, grounded in a points system. The second historical reality is that through a complex series of accords and accommodations, no dominant way of life came to achieve cultural hegemony. Thus, a sense of openness and balance has been rendered possible in Canada by the characteristics of its evolving political cultures. Recognition of these important and distinct historical characteristics should not be read as evidence of our 'banal nationalism' (Billig 1999; Conder 2008). While it is important to recognize the positive aspects of Canadian multiculturalism, our orientation remains cosmopolitical and we recognize the limitations of narrowly conceived rights of citizenship. Our own qualitative research among Canadian Muslim interviewees has demonstrated that few have misgivings about multiculturalism and that most affirm the importance of locating Muslim values in the broader context of liberal constitutionalism, even when this is a challenge. Educated Canadian Muslims demonstrate a deep and knowledgeable appreciation for the balance of Canadian multiculturalism and compare the Canadian experience favourably to that elsewhere in the world. In articulating their commitment toward Canadian multiculturalism, they stress the importance of a broad commonality of citizenship that incorporates Muslims and non-Muslims; the imperative of all Canadians to make a contribution to the political society; and the constant need to communicate openly and honestly (Kimwall and Nesbitt-Larking 2010b, 2011a, 2011b, 2013; Nesbitt-Larking 2007, 2008a,b). In their support for multiculturalism, Muslims join other Canadians in an enthusiastic endorsement of what has become a uniformly high degree of popular affirmation.
possibilities of a more fully developed civic nationalism. Related to an imagined idea of a common Swedish history and language, therefore, the national ideal in Sweden is different from Canada, where loyalty towards the country as a broad political society is more prevalent (Friedman and Friedman 2006). In comparison with Canada, Sweden has never been a settler colony which is not to say that Sweden has been exempt from practices of racist exclusion, ethnic discrimination or attempts at forced assimilation. As with Canada, in the Swedish context colonized ideas about ‘Others’ as barbarian and uncivilized have been prevalent.

It is also in this context that Swedish multiculturalism must be understood, described, and analysed—especially as it relates to a European context. Sweden, along with other European countries, has experienced a dramatic shift from predominantly economic migration to the contemporary migration of refugees. Through the 1980s and the 1990s, Sweden sustained a very open migration policy, which resulted in a high level of immigrants in relation to the total population. This policy, which took shape in the 1970s, was grounded in an official multiculturalism whose ideology set the parameters for subsequent public activities. Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, immigrants were conceived of as national minorities in which cultural equality was as important as social equality. This became manifest through social measures focused on home language, cultural development, and the promotion of ties to the home society (Government bill 1975:6: 26). From an ideological perspective, Swedish multiculturalism was largely set within a framework of cultural rights which, at times, tended to reinforce cultural boundaries around the migrant groups by providing them with cultural rights, but little access to political, social, and economic institutions. These positive rights were framed within the context of the welfare and corporatist state of the 1970s, and were focused on state interventions as a means for immigrants and immigrant communities to obtain resources to preserve and develop a cultural life of their own (SFS 1974: 152). This policy, however, stood in sharp contrast to the reluctance to provide cultural and/or religious exemptions from Swedish laws and was re-evaluated in the 1980s as Sweden was experiencing an increased influx of refugees. Rather than putting immigrants on equal footing with national minorities, the government proposal from 1985-6 brought it with an emphasis on civic rather than cultural integration as manifest in a 1997/8 government bill (Boiret 2002). Canadian immigration patterns over the same decades has seen relatively few refugees and a large proportion of highly skilled and affluent immigrants, whose capacity to integrate has therefore been accentuated through higher levels of social, cultural, and economic capital than that of Swedish counterparts. Just as in Canada and other European societies, there are in Sweden increased tendencies toward anti-Muslim sentiments, Islamophobia, moral panics regarding terrorism, and racism among parts of the majority population.

In comparison to other Scandinavian societies, such as Denmark however, where discourses on migrants and Muslims have been significantly more polarized and harsh, Swedish multiculturalism has continued to be viewed as less of a threat among both politicians and the general public. Despite the policy changes made in the late 1990s, many policy measures directed at immigrants and immigrant communities have remained intact, such as the right to home language and the allocation of resources for community development (Dahlström 2004). Also compared to most other European countries, Sweden has kept a focus on rights-based incentives for integration, rather than duty-based incentives (sometimes referred to as negative rights). Hence, compared to its Scandinavian neighbours, residence permits and the attainment of citizenship are not tied to individual participation in integration courses or tests. This can be contrasted to the Danish position in which both participation and the passing of a language test are required for citizenship and to Norway’s demand for 250 hours of Norwegian language classes and 50 hours of civic education (Hägeland and Brochmann 2010). The extension of rights hence remains a primary means to enhance integration in Sweden. It should be noted, however, that the last few years have seen an emergent discourse of tying financial benefits to education and work training as part of an economic sanction and incentives approach (Scuazzerelli 2010). This has occurred at the same time as exemptions from standardized dress codes and similar cultural practices have gained ground through the legal use of anti-discrimination laws and a number of court challenges.

Compared to its Scandinavian neighbours, there is also a tendency in Swedish discourse to have a less polarized debate and protests against xenophobia and racism are more common. This became evident in the Swedish equivalent to the Danish cartoon crisis, the so-called Mohammed as a dog debate (Kanavall and Nesheim-Larcking 2011). In July 2007, the Swedish artist Lars Vilks drew a picture of the Prophet Mohammed as a so-called ‘roundabout’ dog (a rather peculiar phenomenon of mostly wooden dogs starting to appear in the middle of roundabouts in 2007 all over Sweden). Compared with the Danish Mohammed cartoon controversy, reactions came a lot faster from both diplomats and representatives of Islamist networks and tensions were soon de-escalated, mostly by looking at the Danish experience and then doing the opposite. Hence Prime Minister Reinfeldt decided to visit the main mosque in Stockholm to discuss the situation. He also reelected ambassadors from Arabic and Muslim countries and confronted Swedish embassies in these countries to spread the message that ‘Sweden is a country where Christians and Muslims live side by side’ and that ’our constitution does not decide what the newspapers should print’ (Gomenska Dagbladet 7 October 2007). Muslim organizations in Sweden also immediately tried to avoid an escalation of the crisis, declaring that this was a local Swedish issue that should be handled peacefully. Hence it appears that despite considerable tension and structural marginalization of migrants in general and Muslims in particular, Swedish multiculturalism has (so far) been able to diffuse stark polarization between majority and minority populations. If this will continue to be the case is, however, not self-evident and significant differences remain between the Swedish and the Canadian case.

Mixed as it is, support for multiculturalism in Sweden and Canada emerges from the agorae of public spaces in which the agency of civil society actors and the leadership of formal organizations and institutions interact dialogically in the
promote strategies for successful integration. In this regard, multiculturalism refracts communication and co-operation among diverse minorities and thus supports a politics of engagement that manifests itself both culturally and institutionally. The cultural and institutional fees for multiculturalism in Sweden and Canada have the potential to develop in a deeper and more critical direction. In order to do so, however, discourses and practices of multiculturalism must address structural historical oppressions and injustices and the need to dismantle and transform them in the daily renewal of civil societies. Such processes require politicization and mobilization for change in order to challenge dominant discourses and structures (Henty 2002: 238). We make the case for a more critical and deeper multiculturalism. That a deep multiculturalism is dialogical is well expressed in the recent Quebec Report on Reasonable Accommodation, co-authored by Charles Taylor and Gerard Bouchard. They say:

Muslims and, in particular, Arab Muslims, are, with Blacks, the group most affected by various forms of discrimination. We believe that vigorous soul-searching must be undertaken ... to avoid the very thing that a number of Quebecers fear, i.e. the marginalization and radicalization of numerous Muslims as a result of the humiliations to which they have unjustly been subjected, above all since the September 11, 2001 attacks. The way to overcome Islamophobia is to draw closer to Muslims, not to flee them. (Bouchard and Taylor 2008: 84)

In her critique of the work of one of us (Nesbit-Larking 2008a), Corder (2008) correctly claims that our promotion of deep multiculturalism includes an affirmation of minimalist procedural norms. Our bottom line is that those who employ violence or knowingly trick, deceive or oppress others by denying them access to information and insight by definition rule themselves out – at least temporarily – from the realm of political dialogue. Without such norms, we suggest, any dialogue would be seriously compromised, if not impossible. Unlike Corder, however, such procedural adherence should not count as evidence that we might be drifting toward ‘unreflective ethnocentrism’. On the contrary, we have been concerned to elaborate and confront our own ethnocentrism, but remain mindful of Lukes’ point that:

All cultures ... are, apart from everything else that they are, settings within which their members, individually and collectively, engage in the cognitive enterprise of reasoning and face the common human predicament of getting the world right: of understanding, predicting and controlling their environment, natural and social. (Lukes 2003: 59)

While some form of dialogue is necessary, we do not close ourselves to the pluralization of those ‘cognitive enterprises of reasoning’ that Lukes identifies and do not necessarily subscribe to a narrowly-conceived conception of what constitutes acceptable dialogue. As explained below in our analysis of the public sphere, we seek to go beyond the limits of western liberalism in the opening up of dialogue.

The politics of engagement

In our research on Muslims in the West, we have discovered that for both majority and minority populations three ideal typologies of engagement have emerged, those of resistance, essentialism, and engagement. Faced with the fears, dangers, complexities, challenges, and the opportunities of cultural – specifically ethnoreligious – existence in the contemporary West, one can assertively bring one’s perspectives and values to bear in the mainstream public sphere (engagement); one can aggressively attempt to assert those perspectives and values through strategies of opposition, rigidity, dogma, and separatism (essentialism); or one can get by with the evasive tactics of superficial compliance and/or grudging disconnection (retraitism). Simply put, when confronted with a hegemonic structure or discourse, three fundamental options are in play: accept the dominant order, accommodate/evade it in some way, or stand against it. Agents can of course exhibit more than one tendency.

Everything depends upon the apprehension of the public sphere. Preparatory

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The very intellectual flaw of constructing the essentialized Other is in itself a potentially essentialist categorization, for it easily frames the Other in a totalizing discourse that pays little attention toward either the openness, nuance, change, and complexity that is to be found in the Other. It also readily grounds itself in the concepts of the hegemonic, the taken-for-granted, or the culturally biased that undermine one’s own ostensibly neutral and open standpoint.

The public sphere

While regarding the concept of essentialism as hierarchically useful and intellectually defensible, we are concerned to qualify, nuance, and contextualize our understanding of the concept. As stated previously, we confront the paradox of promoting an open and dialogical space for politics that nonetheless finds itself labelling and isolating the Other in an ‘us versus them’ dualism. Nowhere is this more so than when it comes to the liberal-individualistic and Protestant foundations of modernity that set in place a set of religious-cultural discourses that are so pervasive and so deep-rooted that they bias the public sphere in the contemporary West against the possibility of full and open engagement.

The hidden assumption of radical humanist perspectives and pure falsity is that the state and public space is bereft of any religious content, consequently no religious perspective is privileged. Any attempts to make arguments about the common good grounded in religious claims are thereby illegitimate. Religion has been socially constructed as an entirely private and largely irrational belief system, whose opaqueness renders it radically apart from the more rational public realm. There are at least two logical flaws with this set of assumptions.

First, the Reformation and the Enlightenment are grounded historically in the ascendency of one denominational perspective over another. The very construction of religion itself — as an individual matter of personal confession, faith, questions of the existence of God, and the inner struggle of belief — is a specifically Protestant product of early modernity. Reformation understandings of predestination and justification by faith alone (JFBA) do not merely inform the religious-evolution of the Protestant ethic, but are also inherent in the very constitution of modern forms of liberal individualism that structure contemporary western political cultures and consciousness (Williams 2008). The early modern political expressions of predestination and JFBA are the ideologies of competitive, possessive, and abstracted individualism, and their institutional practices. Such are the ideological assumptions that pervade discourses in Canada and Sweden as much as in other western political societies.

Second, whatever else religious humanism might be said to be, it is a coherent belief system that paradoxically shapes its own theology the more deterministically secular it attempts to become. From postmodern and postcolonial theory, it is clear that the constitution of the Other as different is an attempt to impose a symbolic order that delineates characteristics of the subject in its elusive search for a coherent identity more than it articulates any reality concerning the object. The orientalized Other is depicted as irrational, mystical, unpredictable, exotic, and dangerous. These are the very repressions of the anxious western subject in search of stability and order. Paradoxically, the more intense the imposition of the symbolic, the more the repressed returns in the shape of imperialism and other forms of misogynist secularism in the establishment of redemptive regimes of ‘freedom and democracy’, benevolently bestowed upon a benighted world — whether it wants it or not. With respect to radical humanism, when John Milbank refers to the ‘faith of humanism’ he is making the claim that any metanarrative necessarily accepts a religious or ‘mythic-rational’ character (Milbank 2006: 2). As he says scientific social theories ‘are themselves theologies or anti-theologies in disguise’ (Milbank 2006: 3). William Connolly states that: ‘the secularism emerging from the Enlightenment is today too unalert to the role that enactment and ritual play in its own mode of being and too self-confident in projecting a separation between reason and faith’ (Connolly 1999: 288).

The sanctified and canonical norms of constructionist states and secular political societies are all the stronger for remaining covert. Foucault’s archaeology of power and governmentality explains how dominant discourses shape the modern soul and therefore how we have in Rousseauan terms been ‘forced to be free’ through the repression, displacement, and sublimation of our mythic-rational agency (Foucault 1984). Any pragmatic attempt to articulate a dignified and mutually acceptable social order bereft of these metaphysical or foundational assumptions that inform the sacred is futile (Habermas 2006). There can be no pure deconstructionist construction of the ‘good society’ and any attempt to construct such a scientifically sterile Utopia is a contradiction in terms. The disenchanting character of late modernity threatens to entrench modes of secularism that conceal their own metaphysics, while ignoring or stigmatizing the transcendental truths of those who are declared to be ideologues.

The matter of religion runs deeper than the manner in which the Protestant ethic shapes both capitalism and the liberal state, and pervades the taken-for-granted ideological and cultural practices of hard work, deferred gratification, and the separation of state, society, and the personal. For others in the world, religion is far less privatized, and far less individualized. It is rather religious and communitarian. To be compelled toward religion in the Protestant sense is to be in some ways limited in one’s religious expressivity. In this respect, the separation of church and state in the American context is best understood in the Toquevillean sense, that not only is it often not an option but the choice of a confessional faith beyond the Christian range is also suspect, if not unacceptable.

Deep multiculturalism, dialogue, and the cosmopolitical

The search for a perfect balance and universally acceptable equity in the construction of a multicultural polity is elusive. If not chimeraic, it is abundantly clear that, despite their partial success in the politics of ethno-racial and religious integration, Sweden and Canada can only gesture at a good-enough politics of citizenship. As we have seen, the strains of western liberalism and Protestant
modernism set parameters to the breadth of dialogue. In this concluding section, we set out elements of our claims toward openness, equality, and inclusiveness in our ideal typical construction of deep or critical multiculturalism. In so doing, we attempt to address a range of criticisms that characterize our position itself as an essentialist one.

There is, of course, always and everywhere a tension between the individualistic proprieties of liberalism and the claims of communities and groups. Such tensions have occupied many critical scholars of liberalism in recent decades and we do not attempt to further these philosophical debates. Our attention is more pragmatic and limited. It is grounded in such documents as the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights or the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which despite controversies surrounding their creation and limitations, represent the broadest and most fundamental statements of core human values and rights. Such adherence is, however, a provisional and necessarily tentative orientation for us. To reify or render absolute such documents is to fall into the error of supposing that the meaning of the words is both intrinsically neutral and neutral in context. Neither claim is defensible. The context for rights discourses is what linguists refer to as delictic and pragmatic. Words and other symbols are located in time and space, and in the context of evolving social structures and relations, and need to be understood in a contextualized manner. In order to make a claim regarding right discourse, there is a need to unearth the structural and the agentic, the explicit and implicit meanings behind the utterances. Only to the extent that this can be done is it possible to adequately elaborate a perspective or position. Neither discourses themselves nor the social relations in which they emerge stand still and so any claim to sustain unambiguously a certain ideologue or culture over and against all others is unsustainable.

When it comes to the question of religious rights and liberalism, the Protestant foundations of the liberal Enlightenment are frequently glossed over or ignored. In this manner, modern states have been able to construct themselves as secular and devoid of religious content. In fact, as we have stated, the liberal state is always already Protestant and for there to be a genuine and open dialogue among religious in the public sphere, such valences must be acknowledged.

Religious variants of essentialism include those discourses that have been labelled fundamentalist. Throughout our work, we attempt to distance ourselves from fundamentalism. But in order to do so, we take efforts to explain what we mean by the term and what we do not mean. The term fundamentalist has indeed come to take on a series of negative connotations that render our use of the term fraught with challenges. There are at least three inter-related challenges in the use of the term fundamentalism. First, the pejorative pejorative use of the term renders it a challenge for dispassionate analysis. Second, Islam has been incorrectly singled out as the only fundamentalist religion. Clearly, any religion is open to fundamentalist appropriation. Third, one of the terms often conflated that who seek to essentialize readings and interpretations through authoritarian closure (our version) with those who are attempting to become more devout of pioues in their faith traditions.

According to Israel 'fundamentalism is an attempt at redeeming a fragmented identity and an escape from the post-modern condition of anxiety' (2004: 623).

The abstract character of modern society, with its implicit anonymity and alienation, has made the lives of more individuals migratory, ever changing and mobile as they are up-rooted from their original social milieu. The result has been increasing attempts to 'de-modernize' in order to seek 'reversal of the modern tendency' that have left the individual 'alienated' and beset with the threats of 'meaninglessness' (Borg in Patth, 1990: 32). Giving back to an imagined past by using re-constructed symbols and cultural reference points is, in other words, a response to the destabilizing effects of changing patterns of global mobility and migration. It is an attempt to recreate a lost sense of security. Our research develops models of political psychology that express typical attempts to overcome such alienation and meaninglessness (Kimurwi 2004; 2006; Kimurwi and Neshit-Latching 2010a, 2010b, 2011a, 2011b, 2013).

To assert a (fundamentalist) position is to make an argument and engage in a rhetorical struggle to appropriate meaning in the establishment of a pristine and privileged interpretation of certain texts, closing the door on any further exegesis. As Iris Martin Young (2000: 63) has argued, rhetorical speech is seldom used to reach understanding with others, but mainly to manipulate their thoughts and feelings in the direction of the speaker. To be a fundamentalist is to shackle the history of interpretation and the complex interweavings of text and context. At its extreme, it is ultimately to refuse to talk or to listen, insisting that all true believers commit themselves to lockstep to the same beliefs and practices. It therefore matters a great deal who or what is able to make the claim to interpretative closure. The oppressive character of monotheology, to use Bakhtin's terminology, hence refers to the capacity of a single authority to monopolize meaning, to rule out all competing voices (Bakhtina 1994).

The term fundamentalist, especially religious fundamentalist, refers to those who defend and conserve religious traditions but do so by 'crafting new methods, formulating new ideologies, and adopting the latest processes and organizational structures' (Laurens and Waver 2003: 161). Fundamentalists therefore differ conceptually from traditionalists in that they deliberately invoke and make use of the tools and the discourses of globalization and modernity. A classical Muslim 'Middleman' model—not goes back to the Prophet and the teachings of the Restoration movement—is arguably 'fundamentalist' in that it returns to the basics of Islam. However, such a reading of Islam is also compatible with adherents to a democratic and diverse polity (Milton-Edwards 2004: 39). The entire corpus of work of Tariq Ramadon, which definitely promotes a hybridized engagement, is profoundly concerned with the fundamentalists of Islam, even if his interpretations are not those of Muslim traditionalists or literalists, such as the politically literalist Salafists (Ramadon 2004: 27). Fundamentalists are ideologues in the sense that only those engaged in the post-French enlightenment western world can be. In order to appeal to their interpretations of sacred texts and practices, and to privilege certain readings and responses, they necessarily engage in a meta-practice that is grounded in rationalism, individualism, and ethics. They employ such practices
in order to effect closure and to actively proselytize for an essentialist reading of texts and traditions.

Contrary to essentialism, engagement is grounded in trust and a mutual sense of citizenship. This implies either a willingness to navigate toward cultural compromism and mutually acceptable political cultural choices, or the agonistic tension of agreement to disagree. For Muslims and non-Muslims, serious engagement with others becomes a possible solution in which fears and uncertainties are overcome through forms of self-conscious dialogue, openness, and deep multi-culturalism.

Having established through our research and empirical findings that a politics of engagement is preferential, we nonetheless confront the challenge that our orientation positions those who for legitimate reasons 'refuse to talk' as reprehensible. We are sympathetic with this perspective and acknowledge that there are those who are not ready to speak, or who lack access to the dominant discourses in which talk occurs. Some discourses are more equal than others. There are also those who have become so accustomed to being heard — or not being heard — that they no longer wish to engage. We further confront deeper challenges that our very discourses may be mutually incomprehensible, that our rationalities are different, and that there may be no adequate way to assess the moral or rational status of competing claims, the familiar problems of relativism. We can also accept that there are occasions when the inchoate cry of anger and indeed rage must be accepted. Moreover, silences must be respected and appreciated as eloquence and plenitude. Silences do not always signify absent.

Despite these powerful cautions, we do in the end need the engagement of dialogue and without it, there is little hope of building the open, free, and mutual political society of diversity within unity to which we aspire. Zaidi (2006, 2007) appreciates the need for dialogue in his articulation of the possibility of re-enchantment of modernity. In stressing the importance of dialogue, neither Zaidi nor we are positing a thin conception of the 'good' Muslim in the sense of the compliant citizen, who is in some way 'just like us', nor are we fulfiling victims to a romanticized view of the 'oriental' Other as exotic. Dialogical engagement may well be fraught, confrontational, agonistic, difficult to sustain, or just plain confusing. We do not regard the liberal Enlightenment as a completed project or claim that the current blend of cultural and ideological values in the West is unchallengeable. Engagement implies passion and commitment and a determination to find and express one's voice. This is the kind of charged forum of ideas and visions that characterizes the cosmopolitan world at its best. The existing multicultural order is probled and interrogated; agents are empowered, politicized, and mobilized to think of criticism, transformation, and if necessary the dismantling of obsolete practices and institutions.

For cosmopolitics to become effective, historically vulnerable group members must acquire the tools, knowledge, and resources needed to exercise greater leverage within the group as well as within the greater community. Only if equal access to resources and power is provided to the group members can they be expected to become less preoccupied with the search for security through essentialism or retreat (Shacht 2001). Both internal and external exclusion need to be addressed, where the former refers to those who are patrimonially or insidiously left out due to social and economic domination by powerful actors and structures, while internal exclusion addresses inabilities to speak or even in circumstances where structural obstacles are not evidently in play. Hegemonic norms or narratives of dominant communities are relevant examples of such internalization (Young 2000). Cosmopolitics combines communitarianism with cosmopolitics. While communitarianism exaggerates the differences among identity-based groups, cosmopolitization shares with traditional liberalism an incomplete and thin conception of social life, commitment, and belonging, and lacks an adequate sociological and psychological foundation (Callon 2003). If cosmopolitisation relies on a discourse of individual rights, communitarianism is based on a discourse of social rights that is often expressed in exclusive and racist terms. Both run the absolute risk of substituting ethics for politics.

By way of contrast, cosmopolitics entails a reconstruction by westerners of their own historical development - of the West as a meta-narrative - while at the same time aiming to reconstruct narratives framed by essentialism in the West and elsewhere. In this sense cosmopolitics consists of self-reflexive culturalism combined with equal access to resources and power, globally and locally. As an approach, cosmopolitics thus promotes marginalized groups and members of those groups in their bids for structural power, but it also accentuates distinctions within these groups to support particular members in search of relative power. The hybridity and contingent nature of emerging identities in the contemporary global order is not necessarily something to celebrate. There is of course always potential - and therefore power - in the fragility of dominant discourses and the absurdity of grand narratives, with all the anti-authoritarian implications of such openness and the possibility of transformation through creativity. However, as we have argued, the disenchantment character of late modernity threatens to entrench modes of secularism that concur their own metaphysics. Atheists can be essentialists, fundamentalists, and true believers too. In the politics of engagement in the cosmopolitical setting that we envisage, neither adherence to a specific religion nor an ideology is ruled out of court. Subjects can deliberate around the deep religious convictions to which they adhere, and like Drygeese (2006: 4) we do not regard the existence of irreconcilable a priori differences as pre-emptive of the possibility of finding neutral ground. Adherence to the deepest of convictions does not inhibit us from seeking commonality, contributing to a broad common purpose and continuing to communicate.

In order to move toward good-enough dialogical practices, we need to promote an ethics of reciprocal — if critical — generosity and care (Robinson 1998; Scottenella et al. 2009) and what Connolly (1999) refers to as the politics of engagement. A strong illustration of the mechanics of political engagement is Connolly’s analysis of the vexed ethics of ‘the right to die’ debate (1999: 146–8). Calling for ‘the selective desacralisation of elements in your own identity’ (146), Connolly says:
A generous ethos of engagement between parliaments honoring different moral sources expands room for diversity to be, even as it engenders its own limits, sacrifices, and exclusions. It limits the prerequisites, for instance, of religious, gender, sexual, ethnic, and national constituencies who feel aggrieved unless the culture in which they participate sanctifies as imperative for everyone the particular organization of being they embody (or purport to embody). It does not stop such constituencies from living within the orbit of such assumptions; it does stop them from placing such assumptions at the authoritative center of political culture.

(Connolly 1999: 154)

To continue with Connolly’s metaphor, there is ultimately no way in which to pull actions from the gravitational fields of their own orbits or to struggle provisionally and contingently toward the centres that we can build together without working toward full, frank, critical, respectful, and mutual dialogue in an environment of generosity and care.

For all their challenges and contradictions, Sweden and Canada constitute political societies in which there remains the possibility of continued dialogical engagement, one that can overcome both the alienated sadness of retreatism and the angry separation of essentialisms and fundamentalisms. At its best, cosmopolitan dialogical remains both procedural and substantive openness. Not only is the possibility that people who hold deep and contradictory convictions can nonetheless locate large areas of common ground through their daily hard work of caring communication in reducing degrees of incommensurability, but there is always the possibility that each may contribute something to the other’s transformation. For a genuine dialogue to take place, both representatives of majority and minority communities must be open to the possibility of transformation. On the part of atheistic or agnostic social researchers, conditioned by often unacknowledged Enlightenment assumptions, this includes an openness to the possibility that deep religious belief has something to say to a technocratic society bereft of moral direction (Zaidi 2006: 73). The positive consequences of dialogue include an honest appraisal of distances and differences; enhanced understanding of the positions of self and Other through articulation; the possibility of finding some common ground, even in the context of broad disagreement; the potential of a ‘fusion of horizons’, a coming together of worldviews; the surprising discovery of how much is already held in common; and the gentle art of persuasion and transformation in both self and Other (Zaidi 2007: 416).

Conclusion

In the end, while there can be no absolute de-essentialization of the Other and others, there are paths to openness, equality, and freedom in the construction of an adequate political society. The core path combines a commitment to a cosmopolitan order with a conviction that a generous, respectful, and caring orientation to all agents in the political grounds the possibility of a commitment to common citizenship (with a resistance toward despoliation) and a contribution to the collective good through sustained dialogue. Such dialogue is grounded in the awareness of not only the logical and the taken-for-granted in oneself and others, but also the metaphysics and transcendental forces that pervade our presence in the world.

A politics of engagement involves recognition of unfair distribution of resources and voices in order to strengthen the concept of an inclusive public sphere as a form of citizenship practice. Providing access to important institutions involves substantialist political changes, while narrative change can occur through the telling of and listening to life stories of external and internal others. Storytelling is often a powerful way to understand the experience of others.

The narrative exchanges give reflective voice to situated experiences and help affinity groupings give an account of their own individual identities in relation to their social positioning and their affinities with others. Once in formation, people in local publics often use narratives as a means of politizing their situation.

(Young 2008: 73)

Resistance is an inseparable part of power relations and storytelling remains an important way to change such relations. Narrative change can thus contribute to what Foucault has named ‘anti-authority struggles’. Rather than constituting rational deliberative argumentation, such struggles are often messy, agonistic, and contain divergent worldviews. However, these are the struggles of deep multiculture in which a cosmopolitical politics of engagement empower, politicize, and mobilize agents and in which obsolete practices and institutions are transformed and if necessary disarmed.

Notes

1 Among the origins of this chapter is a paper we presented at Representing Islam: Comparative Perspectives, 5–6 September 2004, University of Manchester: Our ideas have developed since that time, and we thank those who have commented on our work in progress.

2 The chapter draws on our previous theoretical and empirical work on young Muslims across five European societies (France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Denmark, and Sweden) and Canada (Kimwall and Neshitt-Larking 2010a, 2010b, 2011a). These countries were selected due to their continuous colonial history, processes of immigration and citizenship regimes with respect to multiculture, and because of the growing relevance of Scandinavian countries and Canada to the debates on citizenship and identity strategies in contemporary Europe and North America. In our previous work we have made a systematic comparison among the six countries based on secondary material and over 150 in-depth interviews with young Muslims between 2005 and 2008, as well as a number of focus groups in selected cities.

References

9 Christian and cosmopolitan ethics

Friends or foes?

Etienne de Villiers

In his book *The Cosmopolitan Vision* the German sociologist Ulrich Beck asserts that the concept 'cosmopolitanism' is still today for many a pejorative one (Beck 2000: 3). This is certainly true for many, if not most, contemporary Christians.

One cannot say that cosmopolitanism has befallen a better fate in the academic sphere of Christian theology. 'Cosmopolitanism' belongs to a set of concepts, including 'libertarianism' and 'communism', which are mostly used by theologians in a negative sense. This is also true in the theological discipline of Christian ethics – the theological discipline I am involved with – especially now that the communalist turn introduced by Stanley Hauerwas has become dominant.

In this contribution I would like to engage with the question: 'Should the relationship between Christian and cosmopolitan ethics still today be construed in negative terms, or is a more positive and constructive relationship desirable and possible?' By the term 'cosmopolitan ethics' I refer, in the first instance, to critical reflection on the ethical implications of what in literature is called the 'moral ideal' of cosmopolitanism. To this 'strong' definition is added, later in the contribution, also a 'weaker' definition of 'cosmopolitan ethics' in terms of the cosmopolitan outlook.

I would like to provide an answer to this question in two steps. In the first part of the contribution a case is argued for the desirability of developing a more constructive relationship between Christian and cosmopolitan ethics. In the second part of the chapter, while not denying that certain conceptions of cosmopolitan and Christian ethics surely exclude one another, it is argued that the possibility of a more positive and constructive relationship can be affirmed.

Why a constructive relationship is desirable

My plea for a more constructive relationship between Christian and cosmopolitan ethics should not be misunderstood. I am not arguing that Christian ethics should indiscriminately embrace the different existing versions of cosmopolitan ethics. A positive relationship with some of these versions is precluded by their anti-religious stance. The abstract and idealistic nature of other versions, which