

Islam versus (Liberal) Pluralism? A Response to Ahmad Yousif

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Abstract

The aims of liberalism—which is often confused with value pluralism—are routinely challenged by persons whose primary commitments lie elsewhere. In his weighing the pros and cons of liberal democratic states versus an Islamic state, Ahmad Yousif has offered an impressive challenge to liberals, but in doing so has confused the aims of liberalism with the pre-liberal nation-state ideal. In this article, I will challenge his conclusions by demonstrating the competing aims of liberals without conflating them with the liberal state. Yousif is right to draw attention to the inequities of Western liberal democracies, but I will contend that (a) wherever actually existing liberal democracies fail to show tolerance towards religious minorities, it is not the fault of liberalism, and that (b) Yousif's counter ideal of an Islamic state is less than ideal.

We do not seek to respect pluralism or diversity as such but reasonable pluralism.
(Stephen Macedo)

Introduction

It has been said that the greatest challenge facing the Muslims of Europe and North America 'is to preserve and further articulate their Islamic identity without being marginalized and acculturated by the dominant ethos of modern Western culture'.¹ Indeed, one hears repeatedly that Muslims desire to 'integrate' into Western culture but with the caveat that one be able to retain his or her distinctive identity. In Belgium, this is the claim of the Arab European League. One of their spokespersons writes:

Arabic and Islamic components are important for us and we wish to hold onto them (...) We [merely] ask for fair rules, but also to retain our identity. Everyone may experience his or her culture and fill it in as he or she pleases.²

This seems a reasonable and modest request. But some claim that the values of 'Western liberal theory'—not to mention pluralism, integration, and economic advancement—exact too high a price for the Muslim whose belief system is not worth the trade off. Ahmad Yousif is a representative of such a voice and has articulated a challenge shared by many Islamists. He compares two systems—democratic liberalism vs. Islamism—asking which system better accommodates religious minorities. From his discussion, he clearly favors an Islamic state. Therefore, we must ask: have the liberal democracies of Europe failed to show tolerance toward Muslims, and if they have, is liberalism—construed by Yousif as a 'doctrine' of pluralism³—to blame? I shall argue not only that Yousif fails to appreciate the dissensus within liberalism, but also that he conflates liberalism with the pre-liberal nation-state. As I shall show, there are those

who are quite amenable to ‘deep diversity’ within liberal democracies while others, though amenable, see no reason to argue for it. Therefore, I suggest that on the one hand a more substantive account of liberalism’s internal dissonance needs to be given, and on the other a more honest appraisal of freedom, equality and fairness for religious minorities in Islamic countries needs to be offered before the alternative, namely, an Islamic state, can be taken seriously. In what follows, I shall not defend all decisions made by the liberal democratic state; Yousif is correct in much of what he alleges against actually existing liberal democracies. Even so, I shall argue that the underlying principles of a liberal democracy—however imperfectly they may be implemented—bode better for Muslims and non-Muslims alike in Western societies.

The European Masquerade

In an article previously published in the pages of this journal, Yousif protests against what he believes is a discriminatory socio-political context, i.e. Europe, masquerading as egalitarian and impartial, though tolerance and freedom are seldom extended to Muslim minorities. Yousif asks, ‘To what extent are religious minorities able to profess their beliefs and practice their religion within the liberal democratic state?’⁴ He adumbrates four ways in which Muslim minorities are acutely disadvantaged in Western liberal democracies:

- (1) Religion in the West, based on the liberal notion of freedom, is individualistic and must be reduced to a personal, private affair, separate from more ‘rational’ aspects of public life
- (2) The rhetoric of equality is not even-handed, i.e. some religions are ‘more equal than others’
- (3) There is inadequate fiscal support for religious minorities, and particularly inadequate for Muslims
- (4) Finally, the credo that ‘all religions are equally valid’, made implicit if not explicit in public discourse, clashes with the notion that one religion (in this instance, Islam) is uniquely true.⁵

What are we to make of these objections? To what extent does Yousif correctly diagnose the problem, and are liberal democracies culpable for maintaining double standards? Before I answer these questions, I will briefly sketch the main tenets of liberalism.

Liberalism Defined

Liberalism famously seeks to safeguard the freedom, autonomy and well-being of persons. Above all liberals hope to create the space where the capacity for a perception of the good and for a sense of justice might be fostered. It must be clear from the outset, however, that where liberalism and religion clash it is not about allegiance to dogmas or traditional ways of life, but, as Brian Barry has argued, about coercion against those within these selfsame communities who do not share its central objectives.⁶ Thus it is not enmity towards religion or difference that frequently invites the rub between liberals and defenders of traditional belief systems. Rather the criticisms are directed against mechanisms—be they personal or political—that dissuade its members, to paraphrase John Rawls,⁷ from forming, revising, and rationally pursuing their conception of the good. At root, says Barry, liberalism has a deep commitment in

protecting that basic right. Hence a liberal ‘holds that there are certain rights against oppression, exploitation and injury to which every single human being is entitled to lay claim, and that appeals to “cultural diversity” and pluralism under no circumstances trump the value of basic liberal rights’.⁸

Liberalism has prized above all else the liberties of the individual and the right to live autonomously without undue constraints on the rational choices one makes insofar as they do not encroach upon the rights, liberties and rational choices of others. As a basic structure of political thought, liberalism has sought to arrive at principles that are reasonable and allow for the willing consent of the governed. Liberalism has historically asserted certain truths that are meant to be taken as universal in their application; thus liberalism cannot tolerate certain kinds of moral or cultural relativism.⁹

Liberalism shies away from claims concerning comprehensive truths about which there is much disagreement. Rather, arguments for basic political rights are based on philosophical—and not religious—grounds that can be shared by reasonable persons. Deciding on religious grounds is an implausible foundation, as most people in a liberal democracy do not typically share ultimate commitments. Finding the common ground upon which agreements can be made and values pursued is a necessary goal in order to sidestep the divisions that are likely to generate exclusive claims to comprehensive religious truths. Stephen Macedo puts it this way:

People who disagree about their highest ideals and their conceptions of the whole truth, might nevertheless agree that public aims such as peace, prosperity and equal liberty are very important. That is political liberalism’s virtue: it focuses our attention on shared political values without requiring or expecting agreement on ultimate ends or a comprehensive set of moral values governing all of our lives. The basic motive behind political liberalism, it should be emphasized, is not fear of conflict or a desire to exclude religious speech from the public realm but the desire to respect reasonable people.¹⁰

Liberals value pluralism but do not deny that certain values, including religious values, have universal significance and application. They merely ask that justifications for liberal principles and the institutions they support not be grounded in comprehensive claims but on non-coercive public reasons that everyone can share. Therein lies legitimacy, the backbone of the liberal project.

Beyond this there is much disagreement, including the interpretation of the very principles set forth in the preceding sentences. For example, Martha Nussbaum¹¹ has been critical of liberalism’s tendency towards unfettered individualism, the separateness of persons, and even unseemly hostilities toward ‘traditional’ (read: non-rational) ways of life. Here I shall evince some of the corrective tendencies within liberalism by referring to two liberals who, though they sharply disagree, seek to avoid the tendencies described by Nussbaum. To the charge that liberalism has propensities towards individualism, Harry Brighouse has said that liberalism is ‘individualistic’ only in the sense that it makes individuals the primary objects of moral concern. He elaborates:

It is true that liberals typically think that some degree of self-interest is a normal and healthy component of individual motivation. But they also typically believe that human beings are and should be concerned about others in a wide range of ways. In fact one of the central problems in liberal theory is to work out the balance between one’s duties to all other citizens and one’s inclinations to help and be generous to those who are close.¹²

Brighthouse is chiefly interested in the autonomous judgments and choices of individuals. Individuals should be able to be rationally self-governing, he says, in the sense that they should be regarded ‘as the ultimate arbiters of what reasons they choose to act on and what evidence and reasoning they take to be compelling with respect to what they believe’.¹³ This includes possessing the right to exit one’s community should one be so inclined.

In Defense of Liberalism

To the charge that liberalism—inadvertently or not—has been unfriendly towards religious communities that do not share its core values, William Galston has attempted to rectify this by stressing two things: diversity of character and opinion as ‘the key to both individual flourishing and social progress’,¹⁴ and tolerance, a virtue he maintains is necessary to uphold ‘the social practices and political institutions that make expressive liberty possible’.¹⁵ Galston acknowledges the ‘deep diversity’ of liberal democracies and seeks a principled basis for ‘respectful mutual co-existence’ without giving pride of place to either Enlightenment rationalism or post-Reformation proclivities for fostering diversity.¹⁶ According to Galston, political liberalism is the ideal system for preventing unwarranted interference by the state into discretionary religious beliefs and at the same time refuses to allow religious discourse to swallow up proceedings in the public domain.

A certain degree of detachment from one’s beliefs, too, is of paramount importance for liberals. Pluralism, contrary to Yousif’s idea of being hostile to those who espouse religious commitments, is a welcomed feature of a liberal society inasmuch as a less than uniform culture is believed to foster tolerance towards others whose views differ. Here Eamonn Callan offers an extremely helpful definition of pluralism:

Pluralism means that the free exercise of reason will yield a permanent plurality of reasonable comprehensive doctrines, and that oppression will ensue if constitutional essentials are defined and interpreted so as to give privileged public status to those who subscribe to some particular reasonable doctrine over those who adhere to others.¹⁷

Pluralism versus Liberalism

Accommodating pluralism is a cardinal tenet of liberalism, but, says Martha Nussbaum, we should not accept any solution to the liberal dilemma of human rights recognition that unduly marginalizes religious speech or asks people to cut themselves off from humanitarian motivations that may motivate them in a specifically religious form.¹⁸ What we can do, then, is encourage democratic learning that recognizes the deep plurality of religious traditions and in particular promotes the liberal strands within those traditions. In this way, adherents of religious faiths may be intelligent members of their religious and ethnic communities, but also informed and responsible citizens. This will encourage an ownership of one’s faith and ethnic identity that is reflective, active, and not merely submissive.

One must also be cautious concerning the propensity to embrace diversity for diversity’s sake. This kind of sentimental multiculturalism not only leads to an insidious kind of moral relativism, of a kind that undermines universal human rights, but even finds itself endorsing ‘culturally enshrined inequalities’. Stephen Thornton asks,

How can a cultural grouping which discriminates against its own members, in the sense of denying them firm entitlements such as equality of opportunity or freedom of movement, consistently claim equality of respect for itself from the broader society of which it is a part?¹⁹

How to confront pluralism, then, is a matter of grave dispute among liberals. Therefore, some liberals (e.g. Brian Barry) disagree with others (e.g. Amy Gutmann) over whether respect for traditions other than one's own ought to be taught. Harry Brighouse cautions us against doing so. Compelling respect, he says, is not only illiberal but it may go entirely against some of the most fundamental convictions devout religious people have. But neither is the compelling of the questioning of one's faith—let alone the revision of one's faith—a goal of liberalism. Making it a possibility is.²⁰

These are, with the utmost brevity, the basic lines of argument advanced by philosophical liberals who wish to promote equality and fairness, *albeit* on grounds acceptable to reasonable people. Liberalism does not promote pluralism for pluralism's sake. It does not, for example, seek to recognize *every* expression of 'culture'²¹ and belief. Liberals do not seek to be fair to both reasonable and unreasonable views alike. So, for example, one even finds Chandran Kukathas, one of the most multicultural-friendly liberals, opposed to coercion and violence towards others, including a group's own members.²² Hence liberalism does not claim to be neutral, because liberals are interested, for example, to disallow 'the use of political power to promote directly anyone's contestable comprehensive ideals'.²³ In other words, it seeks to find a consensus among those who might otherwise remain implacably opposed. As such, these liberal axioms are ideals and, strictly speaking, remain outside of politics. Concerning this disjuncture, I will comment later, but now I want to turn my attention to Yousif's central claims.

Some More Equal than Others?

For the time being, I will postpone my discussion of Yousif's first point, as it warrants the most attention. To take up Yousif's second and third points, namely, that some religions—including minority religions—enjoy better treatment than others, little can be said to refute this claim. He registers his grievance more explicitly in this way:

In many Western liberal democracies Christianity and Judaism are offered certain privileges, in terms of status, maintenance of schools, public holidays, etc., not offered to other religious minorities, especially Muslims, thereby reducing their eloquently written constitutions to nothing more than 'paper tigers'.²⁴

Thus, in many European countries handsome subsidies are available for Jewish, Eastern Orthodox, Protestant and Catholic communities and institutions, while subsidies to the Muslim communities have principally been limited to 'cultural' activities and preservation. In several countries, there is also no official recognition of Islam by the state. Yousif is also correct to criticize the social exclusion that hundreds of thousands of Muslims are subjected to in Western societies, and whose freedoms are impeded by the cultural and political proscriptions of the host culture. It is undeniably true that even in post-Christian Europe 'church state relations still discriminate against non-Christian minorities'. It is equally true that applications to establish Islamic places of worship and schools have met with considerable resistance, even in countries that openly support the freedom to establish denominational schooling.²⁵ Social and economic unrest contribute to irrational fears in the host culture that not infrequently manifest themselves in

xenophobic behavior and racism and thwart effective 'integration'. To this point I will say the following: first, Yousif is right that Muslim communities have been treated with discrimination in ways that are indefensible. That Muslim communities must, in many instances, prove that their activities are aimed more at 'cultural preservation' (as has often been the case in many European countries) and not at explicitly religious objectives, seems an untenable double standard. Similarly, despite provisions made in some countries for official recognition, actions taken to make good on promises made decades before have been slow and unenthusiastic.²⁶

But there are difficulties with Yousif's second and third objections, for the intolerances shown toward Islam must not be laid at the doorstep of liberalism. Much of the bigotry towards Islam results from what some have called 'pre-liberal hangovers'. Let me explain. The dominant Christian ethos, however it may presently languish, is partial in its recognition of chiefly Christian holidays, as well as insensitive dress codes in businesses and schools, and has seen to it that dissenting views and other religious celebrations (even in profoundly secular states, like France) are seen askance through the eyes of policy-makers and the general public. The same is true of the secular nation-state ideal. Many elements of present-day liberal democracies are stubborn vestiges of pre-liberal nation building. Michael Walzer elucidates this point:

Among histories and culture, the nation-state is not neutral; its political apparatus is an engine for national reproduction. National groups seek statehood precisely in order to control the means of reproduction [...] The nation-state is itself a kind of cultural corporation and claims a monopoly on such arrangements within its borders [...] Minority religion, culture, and history are matters for what might be called the private collective—about which the public collective, the nation-state, is always suspicious.²⁷

What Walzer describes is the pre-liberal nation-state ideal that privileges the dominant group and is at loggerheads with liberal cosmopolitanism, a much later incarnation that argues for the permeability of the barriers between cultures and calls upon liberals to jettison those features of the nation-state model that militate against freedom and equality. Furthermore, as Will Kymlicka points out, the lingering nation-state ideal often includes a social climate that tolerates hate speech, media ethnic stereotyping and general indifference among many professionals to the 'distinctive cultural needs and practices of the people in their care'.²⁸ What is important to note here, therefore, is that many of the residual nation-state ideals that linger in Western societies are patently *illiberal*; to conflate liberalism with its precursor—as Yousif frequently does—is to make an unfortunate error. Indeed, the pervasiveness of human prejudice and the systematic discrimination against and marginalization of certain groups constantly threaten to undermine the salutary aims of liberalism. Hence, the fault cannot be attached to the principles of liberalism.

The Challenge of Pluralism

Yousif takes considerable pains to elaborate his fourth point, that pluralism in liberal democracies necessarily 'generates a general skepticism' in folks who might otherwise experience 'a sense of the sacred' or who might believe in the truthful distinctiveness of one's faith. He writes,

Ironically, the more choices the individual is offered, the more his or her thirst remains unfulfilled, since marketplace style pluralism does little more than

create confusion about the rational basis of the various beliefs and traditions, and ultimately generates a general skepticism about the possibility of any specific belief system being uniquely true.²⁹

Yousif is correct to recognize this outcome for some Muslims living in liberal societies, but it seems a *non sequitur* to posit that pluralism promotes skepticism. To be sure, most liberals hope that persons can acquire a healthy amount of skepticism, if for no other reason than that they be able to practice tolerance towards views differing from their own. But no liberal that I am aware of seems interested to encourage the ‘agnosticism’ and ‘disbelief’ that Yousif claims. By seeking to protect freedom of choice and well-being, liberals are admittedly unconcerned with fostering a sense of the sacred; their concern lies with fostering *autonomy*.

Being the secular states that they are, Western liberal democracies, says Yousif, have largely succeeded in ‘monopolizing power for [themselves] and destroying all opposition, except one—Islam’. Ameer Ali elucidates what this challenge may entail on a global scale:

The world order which has learnt to accommodate and harness to its advantage all types of recalcitrance finds Islamism uniquely rebellious and unpromising. It is in this sense Islamism poses a threat to the hegemonic aspirations of the ‘masters’.³⁰

This indictment against the democratic model is intended to impugn the manner in which ‘tolerance’ is in fact practiced. Yousif is correct to say that Muslims are often the excluded member among cultures and religions owing to prejudices against a monolithic—and often militant—reading of Islam. But curiously this monolithic Islam that Western observers unjustly criticize and exclude is one that Yousif is intensely interested to defend. As if unaware of the import of his own comment, the following quotation serves to demonstrate the double-edged sword that is Yousif’s ideological platform:

Generally, the Western liberal state has shown greater tolerance and sympathy for Hinduisim, Sikhism, and Buddhism than it has for Islam. This is hardly surprising since the former have never attempted to become world religions or world powers and have remained essentially regional in character [...] and it is Islam which remains the only threatening power at present.³¹

Thus with this stroke of his pen, Yousif has done two things: first, he has argued that Islam is a monolithic force to be reckoned with, thereby playing into the popular and widespread misconception about Islam found in liberal democracies. Second, he has effectively argued that Islam does indeed pose a palpable threat to those values that liberal democracies champion. This is oddly congruent with the rhetoric of conservative politics in Europe.³²

The Pitfalls of Pluralism

On the question of pluralism engendering a kind of skepticism about there being one distinctive truth, one can sympathize with the fears Yousif may have concerning the ‘contamination’ of one’s culture. However, this assumes a static view of culture, one that most anthropologists have long been interested to condemn.³³ Furthermore, the necessity of working with other people of different backgrounds requires one, says Mustafa Malik, to ‘look at [her] own customs, values and beliefs through those others’

eyes and realize everything they believe may not sound plausible'.³⁴ For some, this will lead to an inflexible absolutism, conjured to combat a perceived moral relativism. For others, the acquisition of tolerance need not undermine their sense of self-worth or induce moral panic. Malik reports that 'Muslims in Western Europe generally are excited by the thought of pluralism' for the same reason that other conservative groups tend to be excited about it, namely:

It would allow Muslims to build Islamic institutions and preserve the Islamic lifestyle, which would be denied under an assimilationist social model. Like Christian conservatives, they hope pluralism will prevent the contamination of their culture.³⁵

Yet this is contrary to the line of argument Yousif advances, one that announces an unbridgeable divide between the interests of Muslims and those of liberals.

Pluralism Denied

To return to Yousif's first point, it is undeniably true that European democracies—and some more than others, e.g. France—have imposed a quite restrictive *modus vivendi* on their Muslim minorities. Yousif argues that Muslims cannot conceive of religion as a compartmentalized, private affair, divorced from one's wider sphere of influence. Indeed, Islam for Yousif is an all-encompassing worldview.

So, for example, Yousif takes umbrage concerning the political sanctions imposed in many European countries against ritual slaughter, the dress code in business and schools, polygamy, extra-judicial divorce, property arrangements, not to mention the far broader array of garden-variety prejudices that many Muslims are confronted with in daily life. He pungently summarizes the problem in the following way:

In the name of equality and unity, government leaders are often encouraged to devise policies aimed at assimilating ethnic and/or religious minorities in order to achieve national integration. Consequently, ethno-religious minorities [that] have social religious practices perceived as being incompatible with that of the majority are forced to give up their ethno-religious identity or face social ostracism and discrimination.³⁶

Yet Yousif manages to describe only the French tradition of assimilation, giving no account of the many European countries (the Netherlands, England, Belgium, etc.) that seek to acknowledge—in policy as well as practice—a diverse, pluralistic society.³⁷ It is true that even in these countries there are assimilationist tendencies (as in Wallonia, Belgium), but it is not at all clear that the 'majority' of Muslims are forced to 'give up' their ethno-religious identities.³⁸ Again, this assumes a uniformity of experience by most Muslims that Yousif does not corroborate.

Discrimination towards religious minorities is not unprecedented nor has it been limited to Muslim populations. In Europe, the same discrimination was perpetrated against Jewish and Eastern Orthodox communities (and in the United States, against Catholics) for a very long time. Changes have come, *albeit* slowly, and they are beginning to come for Islam in Europe, too. For example, Islamic schools—not without fierce debate—are being increasingly recognized and subsidized in European countries, particularly in Britain, the Netherlands and Denmark. More changes are afoot.

In some countries (e.g. Belgium) not only is Islam an officially recognized religion but Islamic religious classes are also widely available and non-Christian religious holidays may be recognized as long as the student is registered for the appropriate

religious classes.³⁹ In physical education classes, school officials frequently turn a blind eye to the segregating requests of the parents, even when school policies require, say, swimming classes for all students.⁴⁰ Oaths may be taken on Islamic scriptures (Britain); religious television and radio programming is on the rise and in some countries (the Netherlands) is state supported; outside of francophone Belgium and France, dress code requirements have relaxed, particularly with respect to the *hijab* (though discrimination toward veiled Muslim women and bearded Muslim men in the workforce is still very real and has intensified since 9/11). Ritual slaughter laws have been relaxed in several countries (e.g. England, France); land is increasingly being allocated for proper Muslim burial; the chaplaincy in prisons and hospitals is being expanded to include *imams*; finally, *halal* food is increasingly made available in schools with sizable populations of Muslim children. In the United States Islamic insignia have been included in federal government symbols; an *Eid* stamp has been issued by the United States Post Office, and *iftar* dinners have taken place at the White House.⁴¹ Yousif acknowledges some of these. But these examples are not only evidence of a dramatic shift in the right direction, they also evince a manifestly public expression of religion countenanced by liberal democracies, something Yousif at times appears to vociferously deny.

Nevertheless, Yousif comes straight to the point concerning the ineradicable tension that exists for those for whom religion is an integral part of public—as well as private—life. For liberals there is comparably little at stake on this question of the public versus the private. Some (e.g. Kymlicka) have attempted to assert ‘group rights’ while others (e.g. Galston) have more strenuously attempted to expand liberalism’s conception of itself to include the ‘deep diversity’ I have already mentioned. Even so, it is extremely doubtful whether Yousif’s depiction of the concept of the sacred being neatly separated from the profane is, as he alleges, ‘completely non-existent in Islam’. In another place he claims that ‘Muslims [...] have never felt the need to separate religion from the state ...’⁴² Yet this needlessly simplistic reading of Islam fails to appreciate mutations within Islam as elucidated by many of its own scholars.⁴³ Yousif is among those who promote the idea that in order for Muslim minorities to be fully respected, there needs to be an Islamic state, one that prioritizes the Islamic faith and ensures that ‘the dictates of the *shari’ah* [Islamic law] are duly implemented’. Indeed, Islamic law is an essential part of the religion.

Yet this position raises several questions. If one’s primary aim is to preserve the religion (*deen*) and to ‘build a God-conscious society’, what unforeseen liberties are diminished in an attempt to preserve the favored religion? (The question is equally germane *vis-à-vis* the so-called secular state.) Whose interpretation of *shari’ah* should be adhered to? Will *shari’ah* be incorporated into the respective legal systems of existing Western democracies or operate as a free-chosen option outside of the positive laws of democratic countries? Does a unified Islamic administration exist that could execute judgments satisfactory to different Muslim groups?⁴⁴ Moreover, if Islam rejects the notion that ‘all religions are equal’, then what is to become of those who do not submit to the decrees of the *mullahs*? Indeed, Yousif brands the liberal notion of the right to exit one’s community ‘a major sin and a capital crime’ for Muslims.⁴⁵

Other questions go unanswered. For starters, what is even to become of Muslims who hold to a different (e.g. Maleki, Hanafi, Shafi, Hanbali, etc.) version of Islam? Yousif duly acknowledges that it is the ‘duty of the Islamic state to be tolerant’, but in pining for an Islamic state—a goal to which he believes all Muslims should aspire—Yousif seems painfully unaware of the concrete political failings of such states, whether

it is his nostalgic interpretation of the Ottoman Empire⁴⁶ or a glossing over present-day instances of oppression of minority groups in many Islamic states where ethnic and religious minorities enjoy little more than *de jure* second-class status. Yousif is correct in saying that the *millet* system ‘served the Ottoman Empire well’, but does not pause to consider whether the ethnic and religious minorities equally benefited.⁴⁷ Yousif’s argument takes the form of a thinly-veiled nationalism when he declares that religious minorities, upon the demise of the Ottoman Empire, ‘received a great deal less freedom and autonomy than they had under the Ottoman rule’. In the Americas, this was a commonly heard—and religiously justified—argument used by those who endorsed the enslavement of African Americans. The upshot of this argument is that minorities are better off being ruled than governing their own affairs.

Yousif would doubtless object to these examples, pointing out that corrupt governments are no more representative of Islam than corrupt Western democracies embody the principles of liberalism. He would be right. Yet in addition to his romantic readings of an Islamic state, Yousif asserts that ‘Islam harmonizes individual and state interests [and] does not encroach upon the rights of their fellow man’. Selectively quoting passages from the Qur’an⁴⁸ and maintaining that ‘Muslim jurists unanimously agree’ on his objectives by quoting very conservative sources,⁴⁹ Yousif tries to convince his reader that while the interests of the Islamic society take precedence over individual interests, individual freedom, as long as it does not ‘deliberately violate the Law of God, or transgress the rights of others’, is preserved. This includes the right of non-Muslims (*dhimmi*)⁵⁰ to flourish according to their own customs and beliefs. Though given a religious justification, these civic aims, inasmuch as they seek out the ‘common good’, seem strangely reminiscent of those liberals attribute to a democracy. (I shall return to this shortly.)

Thus difficulties abound. For the ‘Law of God’ is far from unequivocal on many points, particularly when it concerns the rights of a Muslim over a non-Muslim. The rights of non-Muslims are more typically a matter of circumstance and an unsparing disposition—or its absence—in the leadership. In other words, the application of *shari’ah* varies widely, according to context. Who shall decide whether a ‘divine law’ has been contravened or another individual’s freedom transgressed? Who shall decide whether a ‘mockery’ of God has been witnessed? The task of interpretation and application, in many countries and among many immigrant communities, continues to be singularly in the hands of the ‘purists’ or the *ulama*, the religious authorities. Yet in a liberal democracy, as Andrew Mason has argued,

When there is a range of interpretations of a principle that are reasonable, it does not follow that they are equally good, for there may still be a best interpretation which the balance of reasoning supports. Given the importance of communal self-determination, liberals should allow minorities to govern themselves according to the interpretations (from amongst those which are reasonable) which they prefer [...] In practice, judgments about which interpretations of a right are reasonable are best left to an inclusive political process.⁵¹

Islamic State and Liberal Democracy

Yousif’s claims cast the issue rather sharply as to whether an Islamic state is even remotely a feasible goal in liberal democracies. His objectives, namely, to assess

whether a liberal democracy or an Islamic state is more tolerant toward minorities, either stand or fall depending on the role that religion is supposed to play in society.⁵² It is Yousif's contention that a pluralist society is odious to the freedoms and well-being of (particularly Muslim) minorities owing to its continuous stress on individualism and privacy. In order to remedy the intolerance shown to Muslim minorities, one would need to implement an Islamic state that more intimately incorporates (mandates?) religion into daily affairs and provides guidance for 'all aspects of life'.

From what I have covered thus far, liberal democratic principles of tolerance seem irreconcilably at odds with an Islamic state. This belief is buttressed by John Rawls, who writes,

Suppose that a particular religion, and the conception of the good belonging to it, can survive only if it controls the machinery of state and is able to practice effective intolerance. This religion will cease to exist in the well-ordered society of political liberalism.⁵³

I would add three other things. First, that Yousif's idea of an Islamic state is an idea favored by most Muslims is far from obvious. As Malik contends, the majority of Muslim minorities in the West seem most interested to integrate successfully into the host culture, though many publicly are committed to their culture as a way of affirming their distinct cultural and religious identity (and among first generation minorities one's distinctive identity is often accentuated outside of one's homeland). This will not, however, preclude social rejection by one's hosts, which often results in separateness and alienation. Second, if we merely consider the constraints citizens are put under on Yousif's interpretation of Islam and the application of the *shari'ah*, we are led to conclude that an Islamic state is also uncongenial to the freedoms of Muslims, let alone non-Muslims. This is so because Muslims, like any religious people, are diverse and adhere to different interpretations of Islam. It is true that the Qur'an admits to a seemingly God-willed plurality of beliefs,⁵⁴ but from a liberal point of view Yousif's reading on Islam is deeply problematic as no license is given to Muslims to exit their community should they desire to. This is not merely a 'limitation on freedom', as Yousif calls it, but an unsettlingly coercive element in the blueprint of an Islamic state.

The irony here is that throughout Yousif depicts Islam—once again, understood monolithically—as the very exemplification of tolerance. Yousif's depiction of Islam is admittedly one-sided and his views do not square easily with those, like Mehmet Aydin, who argue that Islam must cultivate an understanding of what one may call a 'communitarian liberalism'. But communitarianism, in the main, has not been adequately fleshed out⁵⁵ and thus it is more likely that one will find an apologetic version of Islam similar to that of Yousif. Third, and perhaps most importantly, most liberals are clearly unwilling to accept a legitimating process that stands on religious dogma on the grounds that such legitimating claims are controversial and unacceptable to all 'reasonable persons'. While Galston *inter alia* will make room for views such as Yousif's, allowing for the peaceful co-existence of 'deep diversity', others (e.g. Macedo) will ask that we remain in dialogue with religious persons and their convictions, but not liberal principles of human rights on comprehensive truths.

The Selectivity of Pluralism

Though I have argued that liberal democracies play host to the more salutary expressions of pluralist tolerance and freedom, Yousif has raised some extremely important

objections to the selectivity of this pluralism. Where there is inconsistency and suppression of equal liberties for Muslim minorities, we must ask why and on what basis (if any) these abuses persist. Consonant with Yousif's complaint against Western liberal democracies, I have agreed with him in arguing that many unjust practices remain in place which obstruct the equal participation of Muslim minorities. It is not enough to offer tokenism to minority groups in the form of 'multicultural awareness'.⁵⁶ As Will Kymlicka has argued, 'Multiculturalism without the offer of citizenship is almost invariably a recipe for, and rationalization of, exclusion'.⁵⁷ I have also argued that liberals are committed to pluralism but that its concrete political implementation often falls short of its own ideals. This is partly because liberals do not embrace every kind of diversity but it is also because liberals are rather divided on the importance of civic engagement versus fostering individual autonomy.

Yousif is right to challenge liberals to live up to the lofty ideals of their own constitutions that proclaim the freedom of religion for all. Yet contrary to Yousif I have argued that religious beliefs, i.e. comprehensive truths, cannot be used to formulate laws concerning basic political rights. The history of political religion is replete with examples pointing to the difficulty of using religion, to borrow Yousif's words, as 'a mechanism for unifying, transforming or morally uplifting society'. There are, however, those who are calling for Muslims to embrace European citizenship and recognize that the legal system and the constitutional axioms of Western democracies protect Islamic identity and freedom of conscience. Though Europeans frequently evince intolerance towards Islam, Muslims in Europe, says Tariq Ramadan, 'must engage a truly "European Islamic culture"' disengaged from the countries of origin.⁵⁸

In the West, the idea that Islam is here to stay has only begun to sink in. Until fairly recently, most Europeans believed that Muslims in the West would 'return home' whence they came, this despite many of them having been lured to the West to perform jobs that white Europeans no longer wanted to do. The emergence of xenophobic political parties in most European countries only articulates what many Europeans have long assumed: that somehow Islam is different and not deserving of an equal place in society. Economic unrest and high unemployment are fuel on the fire of anti-Muslim sentiment. This is changing, however, thanks in large part to the second and third generation of Muslims who have been born and raised in the West and seek new ways to affirm their identities.⁵⁹ It is also changing thanks to a few powerfully committed non-Muslim individuals, such as John Esposito in the US, Monique Renaerts in Belgium, and Mark Halstead in the UK, who seek to affirm the equality of Muslims with non-Muslims in the West.

Common Grounds and Divergent Paths

Liberals and committed Muslims like Yousif share important concerns, such as equal rights, freedom and social justice. Some liberals, e.g. Galston,⁶⁰ are even willing to accommodate most types of 'diversity' short of insurrectionist or violent activities that threaten the unity of the liberal state. Both Islamists and many liberals are concerned with 'the common good' though one has manifestly religious aims while the other does not. But even liberals should be cautious about asserting a common good, for in doing so they are asking others to conform to a particular social order with little thought given to the public's willing consent or to the Kantian notion⁶¹ that each person must be taken not as a means to another's end, but as an end-in-oneself.

Yet even where liberals and Islamists agree, there remains blunt disagreement over the means of attaining their goals. Neither one will be foolproof. If an Islamic state is proposed, one ought to carefully consider whether its implementation is a feasible option within—or imposed upon—another political model. The difficulty here, moreover, is determining which so-called ‘Islamic society’ is fit to model the ideal. Should European Union candidate Turkey, a 99% Muslim country with a secular constitution, exemplify what a Muslim state ought to be like, or should it be a country like Iran, with its cultural and political norms strongly shaped by conservative clerics? Admittedly, these two examples run to the extremes, but will it be any easier to choose between Bosnia, Pakistan and Malaysia? Inasmuch as Islamists (and *not* Islam, as Yousif contends) cannot accept that ‘all religions are equal’ in the sense that (a) no religious affiliation shall be given preferential treatment save for Islam, and (b) those who give no place to ‘the supremacy of God’ have a marginal place in an Islamic society, there will be an unyielding chasm that divides liberal societies from the depiction of an Islamic state rendered by Yousif, with little hope of a rapprochement.

Islamist Haifa Jamal al-Lail, echoing Yousif, does not suppose there to be a compatible relationship between a Western, secularized society and an Islamic society.⁶² I tend to agree; in the West, liberal democracies are the *de facto* reality for Muslims and non-Muslims alike. It will remain a disputable claim, though, whether liberalism in its present political application is adequate to the task of mutual respect, individual autonomy, and disinterested pluralism. Accommodations must be made; indeed, in many instances they already are. Moreover, those who disagree with the manner in which liberal democracies treat their ethnic and religious minorities must have room to speak and be heard. Again a comment from Stephen Macedo:

When faced with dissenters who refuse to recognize the weight or authority of those grounds, [liberals] must not cast aside our public standards. We may sometimes accommodate or exempt dissenters when their claims do not challenge core liberal values, but we cannot, at the exception stage, discover or construct some new or higher grounds that promises necessarily to reconcile religious dissenters to the political order. We must listen to dissenters, engage them in political conversation, and indeed encourage them to state their objections publicly. We cannot guarantee that we will do more. We must, in the end, be prepared to acknowledge and defend core liberal and democratic values.⁶³

Where Yousif delineates generous ideals of an idealized Islamic state, they must be weighed against the realities of history and the lived experiences of religious minorities. Furthermore, the actualization of an Islamic state brings with it a host of complicated questions that Yousif does not begin to address, including whether *shari’ah* ought to govern criminal law (including the affairs of non-Muslims) or be confined to personal matters (e.g. marital disputes). Likewise, one must also concede that liberalism—in its political implementation—has often failed to live up to its own ideals. Reflecting on the history of the United States, Meira Levinson has trenchantly commented on how democratic structures do not guarantee democratic outcomes if some segments of the population ‘are routinely marginalized, or if many citizens are simply disaffected and uninvolved’.⁶⁴ In Europe, apart from certain *jus soli* laws that make naturalization possible for children of minorities in certain countries, there are obvious obstacles that non-EU Muslim minorities face owing to ethnic, religious and cultural differences, some of which are blatant and racist. There is also the fact that in most European countries non-EU minorities do not presently possess the right to vote, thus rendering

one's civic participation at best a deferred possibility. Both liberalism and Islam invite participants to engage in mutual recognition, understanding, tolerance and co-existence. The interpretation⁶⁵ and implementation of either system have yet to be realized in any perfect sense, but Yousif's challenges to liberals are welcomed and must be pondered.

Conclusion

Yousif has exposed the failings of Western liberal democracies in plain English. He set out to compare liberal theory, with its pluralistic characteristics, to an Islamic state with the goal in mind to see which system better accommodates the needs of religious minorities. I have challenged Yousif's idealized Islamic state and his conflation of liberalism with the nation-state, but I have agreed with him concerning the political failings of liberal democracies. Notwithstanding its current imperfections, liberalism cannot be blamed for the failings of liberal democratic states any more than Islam can directly be blamed for the historical imperfections of Islamic states. It is not my place to speak to Islamic states; I do not inhabit one. But seeing as several million Muslims presently make their dwelling in the West, with sizable portions of the population in Europe, the burden on Western democracies to rise to the level of their liberal ideals is urgent indeed.

Acknowledgement

Thanks to Harry Brighouse for comments and suggestions.

NOTES

1. Ibrahim Kalin, 'Islam and the West: Deconstructing Monolithic Perceptions—A Conversation with Professor John Esposito', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol. 21, No. 1, April 2001, p. 156.
2. 'De Arabische en islamitische elementen zijn belangrijk voor ons en wij willen die behouden [...] Wij vragen gelijke rechten, maar met behoud van de identiteit. Iedereen mag voor ons de cultuur beleven en invullen zoals hij dat zelf wil' (translation in text my own). D. Abou Jahjah and Z. Othman, *Resist! Veel Meer dan een Cultuurshock (Resist! Much More than Cultural Shock)*, Berchem, Belgium: Epo, 2003, pp. 29–30.
3. There is no 'doctrine' of pluralism. Rather, pluralism is a characteristic of both liberal and non-liberal societies.
4. Ahmad Yousif, 'Islam, Minorities and Religious Freedom: A Challenge to Modern Theory of Pluralism', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol. 20, No. 1, April 2000, p. 29.
5. See the Qur'an, *sura 3:16*: 'The true religion with God is Islam'.
6. Brian Barry, *Culture and Equality: An Egalitarian Critique of Multiculturalism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 66.
7. John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp. 30–31, 313–314.
8. Brian Barry, *Culture and Equality*, *op. cit.*, pp. 132–133.
9. Susan Moller Okin posits that an inordinate fear of being perceived as 'culturally imperialist' has led, for some, to 'a paralyzing degree of cultural relativism'. Susan Moller Okin, 'Feminism and Multiculturalism: Some Tensions', *Ethics*, Vol. 108, 1998, p. 665. Liberals have often been at pains, Andrew Mason adds, to demonstrate that the principles of justice that they favor cannot be reasonably rejected at the very least 'by those who start from ideas which are common currency in the public culture of Western democratic regimes'. Andrew Mason, *Community, Solidarity and Belonging: Levels of Community and Their Normative Significance*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 73.

10. Stephen Macedo, 'Liberal Civic Education and Religious Fundamentalism: The Case of God v. John Rawls?' *Ethics*, Vol. 105, 1995, p. 474.
11. See Martha Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, and *id.*, *Sex and Social Justice*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
12. Harry Brighouse, *School Choice and Social Justice*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 6.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
14. William Galston, *Liberal Pluralism: The Implications of Value Pluralism for Political Theory and Practice*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 98.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 119.
16. William Galston, 'Who's a Liberal?' *The Public Interest*, Summer 2001, p. 106.
17. Eamonn Callan, 'Liberal Legitimacy, Justice, and Civic Education', *Ethics*, Vol. 111, 2000, p. 149.
18. Martha Nussbaum, *Sex and Social Justice*, *op. cit.*, pp. 115–116.
19. Stephen Thornton, 'Cultural Rights, Multiculturalism and Cultural Relativism', in eds Audrey Osler *et al.*, *Teaching for Citizenship in Europe*, London: D. Fulton, 1995, p. 27. Elsewhere, Thornton goes on to say, '[To] accept cultural relativism is to adopt the view that no human rights are universal—that all rights and values are not only culturally variable, they are in all cases cultural products of particular communities. And if the latter is true then cultural rights are themselves relative, and there can be no reason for believing them to have a universal significance [...] In short, even if it could be established that multiculturalist policies and strategies are effective mechanisms for achieving the ideals to which they are directed, they could provide no justification for considering such ideals intrinsically meritorious. Multiculturalism must be deeply rooted in a universalist interpretation of human rights to possess universal significance'. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
20. See the discussion in Harry Brighouse, 'Civic Education and Liberal Legitimacy', *Ethics*, Vol. 108, 1998, pp. 719–745.
21. See Unni Wikan, *Generous Betrayal: Politics of Culture in the New Europe*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002, for an incisive treatment of the abuses of 'culture' and identity politics.
22. Kukathas mentions slavery, physical coercion, and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment. Cited in Rob Reich, *Bridging Liberalism and Multiculturalism in American Education*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002, p. 66.
23. Stephen Macedo, 'Liberal Civic Education', *op. cit.*, p. 482.
24. Ahmad Yousif, 'Islam, Minorities and Religious Freedom', *op. cit.*, p. 34.
25. Geert Driessen, 'Wetenschap voor Beleid en Samenleving' ('Scientific Study of Policy and Society'), Universiteit Nijmegen, the Netherlands, personal communication.
26. To take the Belgian case, one can follow the developments that only in 1998 led to the establishment of a 'head of the Islamic faith' (*chef de culte*) in Belgium so that its public recognition might eventually lead to fiscal allocations needed to support Islamic communities. See Monique Renaerts and Ural Manço, 'Lente Institutionnalisation de L'Islam et Persistence d'inégalités face aux autres Cultes Reconnus' ('Slow Institutionalisation of Islam and the Persistence of Inequality Compared to Other Recognized Religions'), in ed. Ural Manço, *Voix et Voies Musulmanes de Belgique (Voices and Paths of Belgian Muslims)*, Bruxelles: Publications des Facultés Universitaires Saint-Louis, 2000, pp. 83–106; Meryem Kanmaz, 'The Recognition and Institutionalization of Islam in Belgium', *Muslim World*, Vol. 92, Nos 1, 2, 2002, pp. 99–114.
27. Michael Walzer, *On Toleration*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997, pp. 25–26.
28. Will Kymlicka, *Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Citizenship*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 164–165.
29. Ahmad Yousif, 'Islam, Minorities and Religious Freedom', *op. cit.*, p. 33.
30. Ameer Ali, 'Islamism, Emancipation, Protest and Identity', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 2000, p. 23.
31. Ahmad Yousif, 'Islam, Minorities and Religious Freedom', *op. cit.*, pp. 34–35.
32. Right-wing parties in many European countries are infamous for their reductionist rendering of Islam and some, by a logical—*albeit* xenophobic—extension, have sought to expel Muslim minorities, arguing that the two cultures are not compatible. See *Racism, Xenophobia and the Academic Response: European Perspectives*, ed. Charles Westin, Proceedings from the Unica Conference on Racism and Xenophobia, Stockholm, 29–31 August 1999.
33. See Tariq Modood and Pnina Werbner, eds, *The Politics of Multiculturalism in the New Europe: Racism, Identity and Community*, London: Zed Books, 1997, p. 10.

34. Mustafa Malik, 'Islam in Europe: Quest for a Paradigm', *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 2001, p. 112.
35. *Ibid.*
36. Ahmad Yousif, 'Islam, Minorities and Religious Freedom', *op. cit.*, p. 31.
37. See Umberto Melotti, 'International Migration in Europe: Social Projects and Political Cultures', in *The Politics of Multiculturalism*, *op. cit.*, pp. 73–92.
38. Though Yousif is surely cognizant of the fact that anti-Islamic sentiments have replaced the old racism, by arguing that Muslims have been reduced to ethnic identities, Yousif seems unaware that the difficulty of obtaining information on census data of Muslims in many European countries is due to the interests of the state to protect individual, including Muslim, identities.
39. Dirk Jacobs, Department of Sociology, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium, personal communication.
40. Monique Renaerts, Centre pour l'égalité de chances et la lutte contre le racisme (Center for Equality of Opportunity and the Struggle Against Racism), Bruxelles, personal communication.
41. For American examples, see Ali Saeed, 'The American Muslim Paradox', in eds Yvonne Y. Haddad and Jane I. Smith, *Muslim Minorities in the West: Visible and Invisible*, Walton Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2002, pp. 46–47. It should be noted, however, that the hopes many American Muslims had for George W. Bush have almost entirely vanished, as the federal government has singled out many Muslim faith-based organizations since 9/11 and refused to subsidize their efforts with federal dollars. Safaa Zarzour, personal communication.
42. Ahmad Yousif, 'Islam, Minorities and Religious Freedom', *op. cit.*, p. 40.
43. See Ibrahim Kalin, 'Islam and the West', *op. cit.*, pp. 155–163. I also have Sherin Saadallah of the International Institute for Education in Stockholm to thank for her careful delineations in an unpublished paper I was privileged to hear in New Orleans, 14 March 2003 entitled, 'Islam, Religious Orientations and Education'. Saadallah organizes her paper around four models of Islam: traditionalist, modernist, secularist, and fundamentalist. Twenty-five years ago, Edward Said also criticized the West for its simplistic and reductionistic reading of Islam. See Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Knopf, 1978; *id.*, *Covering Islam: How the Media and Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*, London: Pantheon Press, 1981.
44. These and other pertinent questions are addressed in detail in Fikret Karčić, 'Applying the Shari'ah in Modern Societies: Main Developments and Issues', *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 2, 2001, pp. 207–226. For a treatment of other difficulties in establishing an Islamic state according to shari'ah, see I. H. Abdalla, 'The Shari'a State: The Case of the Islamists in the Sudan', in ed. C. S. Toffolo, *Emancipating Cultural Pluralism*, Albany: SUNY Press, 2003, pp. 105–127.
45. Ahmad Yousif, 'Islam, Minorities and Religious Freedom', *op. cit.*, p. 36.
46. The manner in which many Muslims romanticize the Ottoman period echoes the pining for the *symphonia* ideals of Byzantine Christianity among the Greek Orthodox community, this despite the copious abuses and forced conversions of minorities during the Byzantine period, including the polemical demonization of Islam. The following concise statement captures the Ottoman experiment very well: 'The Ottoman millet system worked for centuries only because the imperial form of government ruled out a shared public life and treated non-Muslims as second-class citizens. It had great virtues including a remarkable record of religious toleration that puts Europe to shame, but it also froze religious communities, arrested growth of common bonds, and could not cope with the demands of democracy and common citizenship'. Bhikhu Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000, pp. 205–206.
47. Numerous studies point to fiscal exploitation, muted identity expression, and forced conversion of religious minorities. For selective treatments of Christians living under Muslim rule written in English from non-Muslim perspectives, see John Booramra, 'Christianity in Greater Syria: Surrender and Survival', *Byzantion*, Vol. 67, 1997, pp. 148–178; Robert Haddad, *Syrian Christians in Muslim Society: An Interpretation*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970; B. Braude and B. Lewis, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, New York: Holmes and Meier, 1982; Timothy Ware, *Eustratios Argenti: A Study of the Greek Church under Turkish Rule*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964; A. S. Atiya, *A History of Eastern Christianity*, Southbend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968; Bat Ye'or, *The Decline of Eastern Christianity under Islam: From Jihad to Dhimmitude*, Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson Press, 1996; Michael Gervers and R. J. Bikhazi, eds, *Conversion and Continuity: Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic Lands Eighth to Eighteenth Centuries*, Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1990; Steven Runciman, 'Rum Milleti: the Orthodox Communities under the Ottoman Sultans', in ed. J. J. Yiannias,

- The Byzantine Tradition after the Fall of Constantinople*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1991, pp. 1–15.
48. E.g. *suras* 2:256; 22:39–40. These are the most famous passages cited to corroborate tolerance according to the Qur'an.
 49. *Inter alia* Muhammad Qutb, Muhammad Umar Chapra, Khurshid Ahmad.
 50. *Dhimmi* translates as 'protected people' and applies to the non-Muslim subjects of an Islamic state.
 51. Andrew Mason, *Community, Solidarity and Belonging*, *op. cit.*, p. 90.
 52. Ahmad Yousif, 'Islam, Minorities and Religious Freedom', *op. cit.*, p. 40.
 53. John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 154.
 54. See *sura* 11:120.
 55. See Susan Moller Okin, 'Feminism and Multiculturalism', *op. cit.*, p. 663.
 56. This paper will not concern itself with the huge literature on multiculturalism and its place within the curriculum. This would require a paper unto itself. This theme, together with 'group rights', is taken up in various ways in Kymlicka's work. See Will Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community and Culture*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989; *id.*, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995; *id.*, *Politics in the Vernacular*, *op. cit.* The literature on group rights and their pros and cons is now quite large and strays from the more precise aims of this paper. While folks like Kymlicka have modified their views to respond to criticisms, the difficulties surrounding the rights of groups have not gone away. For an excellent discussion, see Susan Moller Okin *et al.*, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999. Okin is particularly deft at exposing the internal contradictions and tensions in collective identities insofar as the private sphere is concerned.
 57. Will Kymlicka, *Politics in the Vernacular*, *op. cit.*, p. 171.
 58. Tariq Ramadan, 'Islam and Muslims in Europe: A Silent Revolution toward Discovery', in ed. Yvonne Y. Haddad, *Muslims in the West: From Sojourners to Citizens*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 163.
 59. In Belgium, for example, a new dialogue is taking place among (mainly secular) Europeans of Muslim background on the continent. See the discussion in Hassan Boussetta *et al.*, *Rompres le Silence (Break the Silence)*, Bruxelles: Labour Press, 2002.
 60. William Galston, 'Two Concepts of Liberalism', *Ethics*, Vol. 105, No. 3, 1995, pp. 516–534.
 61. See Immanuel Kant, *The Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. T. K. Abbott, Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1959.
 62. See Haifa R. Jamal al-Lail, 'Muslim Women between Tradition and Modernity: The Islamic Perspective', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 1996, pp. 99–110.
 63. Stephen Macedo, 'Liberal Civic Education', *op. cit.*, p. 490.
 64. Meira Levinson, 'Liberalism, Pluralism, and Political Education: Paradox or Paradigm?' *Oxford Review of Education*, Vol. 25, Nos 1, 2, 1999, p. 43.
 65. This will be a particular challenge to Muslims, as the Qur'an is understood as the *ipsissima verba* of God.

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