Paul Scheffer

[New Challenges For an Open Society]

Abstract: The movement of peoples over the past few decades had a considerable impact. Immigration today is profoundly different from the displacement of populations in the past centuries: it really is the most visible aspect of globalization, which gives many people a sense that their familiar world is vanishing. The subject of immigration and integration – and therefore of citizenship – creates uncertainty because it affects so many areas of life: education systems, welfare provision, constitutional rights such as freedom of expression. Natives and newcomers often seem far apart, and there is a diffuse inability of receiving societies to find ways of dealing with immigrants. In the latter end of the article, the author examines how the conflicts surrounding migration can bring about a renewal of society as a whole, leading the way for an open society.

Keywords: Immigration, Integration, Citizenship, Conflict, Islam, Open Society.

Avoidance, conflict and accommodation

How often do we hear the unanswerable "immigration has always been with us", the notion that people are always on the move and our own time is no exception? The Amsterdam municipality writes, matter-of-factly: «Almost half of all Amsterdammers were born outside the Netherlands. This is nothing new. For centuries Amsterdam, as a city of immigrants, has been open to people of different origins and faiths. Think of the Portuguese Jews, French Huguenots and seasonal workers from Germany».

Even if we accept that from a historical perspective there's nothing new under the sun, no one can doubt we are witnessing a profound change to the composition of Western populations. People certainly moved around a great deal in the seventeenth century, but that surely does nothing to mitigate the upheaval that cities are going through now. The guest workers from Morocco and Turkey who are changing Dutch neighborhoods aren't simply counterparts to the seasonal workers from Germany who spent time in the Low Countries in centuries past. The fact that Jews from Portugal fled to the Netherlands to escape the Catholic Church's Inquisition doesn't make it a matter of course that refugees from Islamist despotism in Iran and Afghanistan should come to live here.

Receiving societies are hesitant in their dealings with newcomers; established populations are becoming noticeably more rigid and tending to turn away from the outside world. It has even proven possible to find majority support for measures to limit immigrants' civil rights. Nevertheless, many migrants could have done more to create a place for themselves in their new countries. They ought to have rid themselves sooner of the «myth of return», the belief that their stay was only temporary. As someone remarked in a debate: «The price of staying is that you take the trouble to learn. Learning and spurning are two quite different things».

It's not difficult to point to shortcomings on all sides but there's a good deal more to be said. This book examines how the conflicts surrounding migration can bring about a renewal of society as a whole, taking us closer to our aim of creating an open society. There's a need for a more candid approach to the frictions and clashes that always result from the arrival of sizeable migrant groups. Earlier generations of historians and sociologists have left us a remarkable body of work to draw upon. Oscar Handlin, the best known historian of immigration in America, is one source of inspiration. In *The Uprooted* (Handlin 1952) he describes the causes and effects of migration from Europe to America. They can be summed up in one sentence: «the history of immigration is

a history of alienation and its consequences» (Handlin 1952: 4).

Alienation and loss are key features of any description of the arrival of migrants in a strange environment. Handlin is thinking primarily of those who came, «for the effect of the transfer was harsher upon the people than upon the society they entered» (Handlin 1952: 5). He tells the story of the millions who were set adrift by industrialization and by the astonishing population growth of the second half of the nineteenth century. The dislocation and poverty that resulted, especially in rural areas, led to mass emigration from countries including Ireland, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Norway and Poland. Huge economic and social forces were at work, and people were torn loose from environments they had occupied for centuries. Hardly anyone welcomed this liberation, Handlin says, since above all it meant separation. He describes with great empathy the often atrocious journey they made across the Atlantic and their arrival in a new land where they had to make their way as immigrants, often utterly destitute and with no idea what the future might bring.

In unfamiliar surroundings many sought refuge in the certainties of their religion. «In that sense all immigrants were conservatives…All would seek to set their ideas within a fortification of religious and cultural institutions that would keep them sound against the strange New World» (Handlin 1952: 116). This hankering after old structures and customs served as an aid to survival in an urban environment. It's easy to see why many migrants tried to perpetuate village life in foreign cities, which makes it all the harder to understand why immigrants are so often described as great innovators.

In their new country, so confusing and full of dangers, people felt a need for the support of their religion, but maintaining religious faith was a challenge: «The same environment, in its very strangeness and looseness and freedom, made it difficult to preserve what could be taken for granted at home» (Handlin 1952: 141). The end result was all too often a sense of not belonging anywhere any longer. «They had thus completed their alienation from the culture to which they had come, as from that which they had left» (Handlin 1952: 285). This is an experience shared by many contemporary migrants as they try to connect with a new society.

It was not only the migrants themselves who were afflicted by insecurity. Those already living in the new country, which after all was not a blank canvas but had customs and traditions of its own, were thrown off balance. Handlin acknowledges their side of the story: «Everything in the neighborhood was so nice, they would later say, until the others came. The others brought outlandish ways and unintelligible speech, foreign dress and curious foods, were poor, worked hard, and paid higher rents for inferior quarters» (Handlin 1952: 189).

In an earlier study Handlin had examined the reaction of nineteenth-century Bostonians to the arrival of Irish immigrants, who came in huge numbers. After the two groups clashed it took at least half a century for the city to regain its balance.

«Group conflict left a permanent scar that disfigured the complexion of Boston social life» (Handlin 1941: 206). Yet Handlin's approach was subtle and he avoided laying the blame on one side or the other. He used cautious terms like «latent distrusts» and «social uneasiness» to describe the attitudes of longstanding residents (Handlin 1941: 184).

It's not hard to understand reactions like these. People saw their world changed by immigrants and instinctively harked back to a shared notion of the community as it had been before. It serves little purpose to impress upon people who no longer feel at home in their neighborhoods that we all have to move with the times. In the often hostile expression «stranger in your own country» lies a recognition that migration has brought people from all over the world to settle in today's major cities. We need to face up to the feeling among established populations that a tried and tested society is being lost, just as we need to acknowledge the feeling of uprootedness among many newcomers.

For far too long, those who didn't live in the neighborhoods where migrants settled were the warmest advocates of the multicultural society, while those who did live in them steadily moved out. Their opinions were ignored, or they were belittled for suddenly giving voice to their own latent xenophobia. Now that the middle classes can no longer escape the changes migration brings – in part because they can no longer fail to notice migrants' children in the classroom – the argument has broken out in earnest and there is a need to think seriously about both the life stories of immigrants and the experiences of indigenous residents. It is indeed true to say that the history of immigration is a history of alienation and its consequences.

Yet that alienation does not last forever, quite the reverse in fact. Back in the 1920s American sociologist Robert E. Park described what was then generally referred to as the race relations cycle as beginning with isolation and avoidance and moving on via contact, competition and conflict to accommodation and assimilation (Park: 1950: 150). There is an underlying logic here: on arrival migrants tend to keep to themselves, partly as a result of the attitude of avoidance they detect in the society around them. In the years that follow, migrants and their children struggle to claim a place for themselves in the new country, and this leads to rivalry and strife. The question of how everyone can live together becomes unavoidable. If a satisfactory answer is found, the descendants of the original migrants will be absorbed more or less smoothly into society. This is a hopeful view and it suggests the familiar model of three generations.

Of course the process can't really be divided into phases or generations as neatly as this, but the important point is that every story of migration involves conflict. That was and is the case in America and the pattern is being repeated in contemporary Europe. It's difficult to say how long or how severe the period of conflict will be, but the phase of avoidance is gradually coming to an end. We should see today's frictions as part of a search for ways for newcomers and the established population to live together. Conflict has in many ways a socializing effect.

Emancipation will not be achieved without pioneers. In the pressure cooker of the past few years there has been an unmistakable quickening of developments. Conflict is ultimately a sign of integration, so we should make a clear-eyed assessment of the anger and frustration of many migrants' children. Far more often than we may realize, behind what they say lies a burning ambition to be part of society. In 1918 sociologist Georg Simmel wrote about the significance of conflict. His verdict on indifference is wholly negative, whereas he believes conflict has something positive at its core: «Our opposition makes us feel that we are not completely victims of circumstances. It allows us to prove our strength consciously and only thus gives vitality and reciprocity to conditions from which, without such corrective, we would withdraw at any cost» (Simmel 1971: 75).

Immigration is the most visible aspect of globalization, which gives many people a sense that their familiar world is vanishing. This is not yet felt to be an improvement. In European countries many people are convinced that a period of stagnation or even decline lies ahead. Few still believe their children will have a better future, whereas the post-war generation enjoyed the prospect that their offspring would live freer and more prosperous lives. It doesn't really help to say that future generations will see these as the good old days. Right now all that counts is that a sense of loss has taken hold and people are looking for ways of reaching beyond that experience.

Literary critic Svetlana Boym discerns a pattern: «Nostalgia inevitably appears as a defense mechanism in a time of accelerated rhythms of life and historical upheavals» (Boym 2002: XIV). Newcomers and natives react in similar ways – and no wonder, since the cause of their unrest is the same. Migrants personify a world set adrift, and those they come to live amongst are swept along by changes to their everyday environments, but shared experience does not bring the two sides together, Boym concludes. «The moment we try to repair longing with belonging, the apprehension of loss with a rediscovery of identity, we often part ways and put an end to mutual understanding» (Boym 2002: xv). That is exactly what's happening now: the desire for a firm footing in a turbulent world is driving old and new citizens apart.

In the history of immigration the pendulum swings back and forth between openness and withdrawal. Later we'll examine the American experience at some length, but we should note at this point that after forty years of mass immigration between 1880 and 1920, new legislation was introduced that kept the numbers to a minimum until 1965. The similarity with present-day Europe is striking; here too, after decades of mass immigration, there's a widespread desire for tighter controls.

In other words, the call for the influx to be curbed is not an exclusively European phenomenon, nor does it represent an inability to get along with migrants, a failing that could perhaps be ascribed to Europe's relatively short history of immigration. A more restrictive policy as a means of restoring the social balance is an option that ought to be taken seriously. History shows that spontaneous rapprochement between indigenous populations and newcomers is rare. The risk that each side will keep raising the stakes with opposing declarations of loyalty – both in effect openly saying 'my own people first' – means we must take the trouble to explore what lies behind this hostility.

Integration Requires Self-Examination

The movement of peoples over the past few decades has had a considerable impact. Natives and newcomers often seem far apart, and beneath a veneer of harmony countless stories can be heard – by those willing to listen – about daily cultural clashes. A conflict successfully avoided for years has erupted all the more fiercely. Where silence reigned for so long, too much is now being said and too stridently. Multicultural diplomacy alone will not be enough to build mutual trust, but for a long time few awkward questions were asked, both because no one was particularly interested in the answers and because it was felt too much would be stirred up if they were. Noiriel remarks that crises surrounding migration «are moments in which the social rules for the whole of the receiving society are ruptured and redefined» (Noiriel 1988: 274).

This process is now well underway. In migrant communities, one generation after another puzzles over the nature of its relationship not just with the society it finds itself in but with its countries of origin. In an autobiographical account Ziauddin Sardar writes: «As we, the Asian community, became more British, more rooted in time and place, here and now in Britain, we also needed to build more barricades against losing touch with where our parents came from. We needed barricades to protect us from the increasing sense of being rejected by British society» (Sardar 2008: 88).

Ambiguity is rife in countries of immigration and it can easily lead to distrust on all sides. When relations between people are coloured by suspicion, anything anyone does can be interpreted as malicious: on closer examination an offer of help is mere meddling, a question can easily sound like an order, apparent uncertainty is taken as some kind of subterfuge and before you know it all attempts at sincerity have run into the sand. The conclusion drawn by German writer Hans Magnus Enzensberger seems justified: «Today the preparedness and ability to integrate cannot be taken for granted in any country or on any side. The multicultural society remains an empty slogan as long as the difficulties the concept raises are declared taboo but not resolved» (Enzensberger 1992: 59).

There has been too much avoidance on the part of receiving societies, and it goes some way to explain the current impasse. The twentieth century was marked by attempts to reduce social inequality and bridge cultural divides; no issue has disturbed European public life so much as the effort to elevate a whole range of population groups so that full citizenship would be available to everyone. This determination to achieve equality of opportunity arose out of a fear of social unrest, but it was also inspired by moral convictions.

Generally speaking past efforts to integrate all social groups could be described as successful. Rank and class lost their edge; people became less and less bound by their origins. This makes the resigned response to the rise of a new, perhaps more pernicious divide seem all the more troubling. Newcomers and their families often lag behind, and at the same time institutions are not sufficiently open to new talent. The absence of urgency was the product of a consensus that prevailed for decades, the idea that integration is purely a matter of time, a natural outcome of socio-economic progress. What's lacking now is a clear notion of citizenship that goes beyond a plea for improvements to the position of migrants in the jobs market and in education.

Timidity on the subject points to a more general failing. The call for integration prompts the response: 'Integration, fine, but into what?' A society that has little or nothing to say for itself will quickly be exposed as flawed. This has not escaped the attention of migrants, who respond with a combination of «What do you actually want from us»? and «For heaven's sake leave us alone». As one student remarked: «You never know where you stand here. What is integration, in fact? What are Dutch or French or British norms and values? I have a feeling politicians are deliberately vague about them, so that they can always say: no, that's not what we meant».

Such reactions are all too often expressed in aggrieved tones, but anyone aiming to close the chasm nevertheless needs to come up with a convincing response. «Diversity» is a commonly deployed concept, but it does little to clarify matters. It ought to go without saying that an open society is characterized by divergent outlooks, lifestyles and beliefs, but even in a liberal democracy there are limits: not everything that's different is valuable. Embracing diversity indiscriminately is tantamount to protecting traditional habits and customs from critical scrutiny. There's a tendency to address migrant families as members of the groups to which they're presumed to belong. This applies not only to the first generation, which is to some extent preserving the traditions of its countries of

origin, but to the children and grandchildren of migrants as well. They are regarded as perpetuating a particular culture, whereas it may well be that many 'Turkish' children prefer listening to American rapper 50 Cent than to Turkish pop star Sezen Aksu – quite apart from the fact that many different influences can be found in Aksu's work.

There's another reason why the prevailing view of diversity doesn't necessarily represent progress. If minorities continue to see themselves primarily as ethnic groups, there's a real danger that majority populations too will increasingly conceive of themselves in ethnic terms, especially when in many cities they find themselves outnumbered. American sociologist Charles Gallagher has observed that like it or not, middle-class and lower middle-class whites see themselves as a minority and have adopted a posture of being the victims. This is the risk we run by emphasizing ethnicity. Why should one group be allowed to appeal to its own ethnic identity if another group is not?

It's important always to keep in mind the aim of creating a society in which people are asked how they see their futures, not one in which they're judged according to their pasts. Getting there will be a process of trial and error, and all citizens will need to look beyond ethnic dividing lines.

It's often argued that integration should engage both newcomers and natives, but what does this actually mean? Instead of emphasizing the differences between minorities and the majority, we should concentrate on shared citizenship as an ideal to which everyone can aspire. Migrants can be invited and challenged by a society only if it has a strong culture of citizenship. Problems surrounding migrants and their children are general social issues writ large. They concern not only important institutions such as education but constitutional rights like freedom of expression. This is the reason migration cuts so deep: it goes to the heart of institutions and liberties.

The basic principle is simple: native populations cannot ask of newcomers any more than they are themselves prepared to contribute. Those who encourage others to see themselves as fellow citizens must have at least some notion of what it means to be a citizen and, as far as possible, turn that notion into practical reality. Hence the embarrassment that typifies debates about integration. An established population that asks people to integrate will sooner or later find itself facing similar demands. This is all part of an ongoing quest, a process of social renewal.

Take linguistic skills. There can be no doubt that the command of a country's official language is a prerequisite for all those trying to hold their own as citizens. The Dutch have therefore talked a great deal over the past few years about language deficits in migrant families, a problem currently referred to as 'low literacy'. It was only a matter of time before people started asking: How good are the reading and writing skills of the indigenous Dutch population? It quickly became clear that hundreds of thousands are struggling, and initiatives are now being implemented that are aimed at raising levels of literacy across the board.

This is just one example of how debates about integration can make hidden social problems visible, introducing issues that go far beyond the emancipation of migrants. The growing divide between low-skilled and educated people demands attention; Flemish writer David van Reybrouck regards this as the most important cause of current dissatisfaction with democracy. Many people with little more than a basic education no longer feel represented: «As in the Netherlands, a parallel society has grown up in Belgium. The low-skilled are in the majority, but they genuinely feel themselves to be a minority that is subjected to discrimination»(van Reybrouck: 2008).

Integration conceived as a reciprocal process confronts society with profound questions about what is means to be a citizen. What accomplishments are essential? What kind of knowledge is required? Those who think migrants should know more about the development of their adoptive country's constitution, for example, cannot avoid the question: What exactly do you know about it yourself? This has revealed another weakness of Western societies. Doubts about the historical awareness of the average citizen matter, because citizenship involves a realization that something came before us and something will come after us. It's hard for any sense of responsibility to develop unless people see themselves as part of a continuing history.

Which brings us to another series of questions: What image of the past do established residents want to present to newcomers? Might there not be a need to discuss this image with everyone, irrespective of background and origin? Are schoolchildren taught in any meaningful sense about colonial history? Is any attention paid in schools to migration into and within Europe over the centuries? Gestures are of little use. It's essential to hand down as

truthful and self-critical an account of the past as possible. The issue of integration has forced many countries to take a fresh look at school curricula.

Self-examination is going on outside schools as well. New museums are being established, such as the French museum for the history of immigration and the Dutch National History museum, while those already in existence are reassessing the stories they tell. The aim is not so much to win people over as to use migration as the starting point for a re-examination of commonly-held assumptions.

There's an even more fundamental sense in which the principle of reciprocity prompts societies to question themselves. It concerns the rights and duties attached to citizenship. Citizens are now well aware of their rights but far less likely to have been given a clear understanding of their duties. This is a crucial problem, since freedoms unaccompanied by a sense of responsibility will start to erode. The issue of religious freedom illustrates the point. Muslims invoke the right to practice their religion and that right is non-negotiable, as long as it's exercised within the bounds of the constitution, but it also confers upon all believers a responsibility to defend the rights of people of other faiths or none.

There's a need for shared norms to which both the majority and minorities feel bound, and they include the right to freedom of conscience. The question that needs to be addressed is: What do the difficulties surrounding integration tell us about the strengths and weaknesses of society as a whole? The search for ways to live together demands self-examination on all sides. That's the deeper significance of the reciprocity we seek: those who ask migrants to take a critical look at their traditions must be prepared to hold their own cherished assumptions up to the light.

Citizens, whether newcomers or otherwise, should not be required to absorb themselves into society as it is now but rather to identify with society as it has the potential to be. Everyone should feel invited to help society move closer to its ideal of equal treatment. Reciprocity as a basic principle of citizenship means that anyone trying to combat discrimination against migrants and their children must be prepared to oppose forms of discrimination within migrant families, against unbelievers, for example, or homosexuals. We can't pick and choose when it comes to equality.

This became clear on a visit to a school in Antwerp where a large majority of pupils are from Muslim families. One commented, as a joke: «I've counted the Belgians at our school. There are twenty-three». The school has a long tradition and many of the children do well, but the teachers say it's become difficult to talk about evolution in biology lessons, about the Holocaust during history lessons and about 'perverts' like Oscar Wilde in literature lessons. A choice has to be made. Should teachers give in to the religious prejudices many children bring from home or oppose them, with all the patience and dedication that requires?

The reverse is also true, of course. A society that cherishes the principle of equality must be willing to listen to those who claim they've been discriminated against at work or in pubs and clubs. Sometimes legal action is necessary, but in many situations the key to success is persuasion, not compulsion. Campaigns and rules may help to combat discrimination, but we all need to confront prejudices publicly, challenging them as a step towards developing mutual trust.

Not everyone favors such reciprocity, as is clear from comments like 'they came to us, we didn't go to their country'? This amounts to saying that the majority has the power and the right to force minorities to adapt. Such an imbalance of power can never produce a truly integrated society, if only because the protection of the rights of minorities is a defining element of democracy. The opposite view is equally unproductive. It often takes the form of claims that there can be no reciprocity while the imbalance between the established and newcomers is as great as it is now. In other words: 'You can't ask the same of those at the bottom as you do of those at the top.' This attitude leads nowhere, except to the paternalistic notion that people in migrant communities are not responsible for their fate. Shared citizenship means, by definition, that we are all invited to enter the public arena as equals.

We started by identifying a sense of alienation and loss among both immigrant and indigenous populations. If the shock of the new can inspire self-criticism and change, real progress will have been made. Efforts to ensure that people from all regions of the world can be part of today's urban society should prompt a reassessment of prevailing notions. This is not a matter of being disloyal to everything Europe and America have contributed to the ideal of an open society but of becoming more faithful to that ideal.

In other words, the arrival of migrants is not only irreversible, it offers a unique opportunity for introspection. American sociologist Henry Pratt Fairchild was aware of this almost a century ago. Much of what he wrote is now outdated, but surely he was right in saying that the degree to which migrants were able to feel part of a new country was not down to them alone: «Before laying tardy assimilation too readily at the door of the immigrant we should thoughtfully consider whether our own house does not need to be set in order» (Pratt Fairchild 1913: 426). In short it makes sense to talk about integration only if it's seen as part of an effort to improve society as a whole. As Fairchild puts it: «If the immigrant is to love America he must first have the opportunity to experience America, and having experienced it he must find it lovable. No amount of lecturing, legislating, and threatening can make the alien love America if he does not find it lovable, and no amount of original strangeness and unfamiliarity can keep him from loving it if in the final event he finds it worthy of his love» (Pratt Fairchild 1913: 425).

The subject of immigration and integration – and therefore of citizenship – creates uncertainty because it affects so many areas of life: education systems, welfare provision, constitutional rights such as freedom of expression. The public debate now underway sparks conflict time and again. A society without clear ideas about citizenship will be unable to inspire migrants to see themselves as citizens. It's time for some thorough renovation. An open society cannot survive without self- criticism. We must aspire to become what we say we are.

Believers in an Open Society

Having looked at integration in a general sense we must now turn our attention to the inability of receiving societies to find ways of dealing with Islam. A number of clear choices have to be made, but they will be acceptable only if based on the principle of equal treatment. Nothing feeds suspicion so much as a sense that double standards are being applied.

What would relations with Islam on the basis of equal treatment look like? The separation of church and state, on which freedom of religion is founded, is the first priority. Not only must the state be safeguarded against improper pressure from the church; to an equal or even greater extent the church must be protected against meddling by the state. Certainly where Islam is concerned, as a matter of principle nothing must be laid in the way of Muslims who want to practice their faith openly. Mosques belong here, even though many people will be shocked to learn that the Essalaam mosque in Rotterdam, with its fifty-metre-high minarets, is expressly intended as a major feature of the city's skyline.

If we are going to emphasize the principle of equal treatment, then we need to ask ourselves whether Europeans are complying with it. Many countries have regulations that are at odds with the separation of church and state, such as the obligation to pay church taxes in Germany and Denmark. The secularization of institutions needs to go further, and those who ask Muslims to respect religious freedom should feel obliged to summon up a comparable willingness themselves. The recent decision by the European Court that the requirement to display crucifixes in Italian state schools is incompatible with the principle of equality is therefore a move in the right direction.

This certainly does not mean religion must be banished from the public sphere. Behind the unwillingness to accept a highly visible Islam lies the notion that religion is purely a private matter, but the separation of church and state is not the same as the separation of church and society. Religions are an essential part of a pluralist society, which is why Muslims, especially given the differences that exist between them, must venture into the public arena of the countries in which they now live. This is a paradoxical invitation, since as someone remarked: «You only really want to accept a passive Islam». Indeed, up to now there's been little willingness in the West to see Islam as part of social life.

First of all, then, a clear commitment to the equal treatment of religions is needed. Political Islam can be combated effectively only if the principle of freedom of religion is defended unambiguously. A leading question can then be posed: Doesn't the exercise of the right to religious freedom inevitably bring with it a duty to defend

that same freedom for other believers and for non-believers? This is of course exactly what political Islam contests, not only in words but with threats and violence.

The political ambitions of Islam do not exist in a vacuum, rather they are based on a fairly common habit of dividing the world into Muslims and non-Muslims. Far too often, Muslims withdraw into a believing 'us' that strives to keep its distance from an unbelieving 'them'. When freedom of religion is exploited as a means of spreading contempt towards non-Muslims, the right to that freedom is eroded and sooner or later a time will come when Muslims start to undermine their own ability to live in a democracy characterized by religious diversity. The right of one is after all the duty of another. This holds true for everybody, including members of the Muslim community. If a significant majority cannot summon respect for this rule, Muslims will stigmatize themselves.

Interreligious dialogue, which is underway everywhere, requires a number of principles to be held in common. At the very least such a dialogue has to be based on the acceptance of religious freedom. Experience shows that quite a few religious leaders reject this: «Yes, it is laid down in the law of European countries, but elsewhere it may be different; higher authorities will have to decide». We can simply take note of such reactions, but that is to follow the path of least resistance. When it comes to equal treatment a more principled stance would be appropriate from those who lay claim to equality as a matter of principle. The integration of Islam into democracy therefore requires it to make profound adjustments.

Finally, the principle of equal treatment has another inevitable consequence. Anyone claiming freedom of religion for a group must be able to summon a willingness to grant the same freedom to members of that group. Alternative movements are now quite often excommunicated, as Tariq Ramadan is forced to acknowledge. He's extremely critical of the absence of a culture of dialogue within the Muslim community, where denunciation is rife (Ramadan 2002: 350). We need only think of how some of the more wayward groups within Islam, such as the Alevis and the Ahmaddiya movement, have been excluded. Ramadan believes there's a lack of willingness to enter into dialogue with those who hold different beliefs.

The ways in which disputes within Islam are handled are most problematic of all when it comes to the loss of faith. Most Muslims have exceptional difficulty on this point. But again, anyone who demands the right to practice his religion freely has no choice but to grant that same right to other members of the same religious community. Faith must either be practiced in freedom or abandoned. This too is a long way from the situation as it stands, since for Muslims openly saying you no longer believe means social exclusion or worse. Young Salafists leave no room for doubt about this: «An intruder inside the house is certainly more dangerous than one outside,' said Mohammed Bouyeri» (Bouyeri 2006: 45).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is perfectly clear on the issue of apostasy: 'Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief.' (article 18). Like many other articles of the Declaration, this has remained a dead letter in many countries, where freedom is restricted in the name of a state religion. In the Western world too, the freedom to abandon the Muslim faith is disputed and ex-Muslims have formed groups in order to stand up for their choice publicly in the face of serious threats. Muslims will have to learn to accept the decisions of those who want openly to bid farewell to their faith.

Freedom of religion does not exclude criticism of religion. On the contrary, part of the price of an open society is that religious traditions can be the subject of public debate. Some sensitivity on the part of critics is only right, since speaking freely about things some people regard as holy can be deeply hurtful. Nevertheless, if Muslims intend to live in liberal democracies while retaining the idea that the Koran or the prophet are above all criticism and must never be the object of ridicule, then they condemn themselves to the role of eternal outsiders. Freedom for Muslims can be defended only if Muslims are willing to defend the freedom of their critics.

Statements made by the British and Dutch governments as they consider making blasphemy punishable under law once again have not always been sensible either. Why should insulting the gods be any worse than insulting people? Anyone who supports the principle of equal treatment is obliged to regard religious and secular worldviews as equal before the law. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is clear about this: religion is

on a par with other convictions. There are certainly limits to freedom of speech, but we can't draw the line at criticizing or ridiculing a faith, otherwise we'd have to start by tossing onto the pyres *The Praise of Folly* by Erasmus, with its passages about «folly in the Bible».

Conflict avoidance is the wrong response when freedom of expression is at stake, not only for reasons of principle but because it does nothing to calm the situation when feelings run high. One evasion leads to another. If a decision is made not to publish any more cartoons, then what about the commotion surrounding an opera on the subject of Aisha, one of the prophet's wives? The performance was abandoned in response to threats. If objections are met in the case of opera, what should be the reaction when a newspaper discovers that even an image of the Koran on the front of its monthly magazine section is reason enough for some delivery boys to refuse to distribute it? The ban on images embraced by part of the Muslim world can never be a guideline for journalistic or artistic expression, if only because it's a short step from banning images to banning spoken statements, and from there to banning comments made in writing. By that point openness has been abandoned altogether.

On balance, freedom of speech contributes to peaceful conflict resolution. Precisely because people are able to convert their anger into words or images, the road that leads from resentment to aggression becomes longer. It's no accident that the cartoons affair eventually led to violence in Middle Eastern countries, where freedom of speech is much more limited and people are therefore more likely to resort to violence as the last available means of expressing their discontent. The idea that limitations on freedom of speech could help to calm feelings within the Muslim community is therefore based on a misconception.

The impasse over Islam shows there's still no generally accepted basis for a discussion about its place in a liberal democracy. Diplomatic avoidance doesn't help, whereas honesty about the principle of religious freedom does. Most liberal societies do not yet live up to the ideal of equal treatment. There's every reason for a critical reconsideration of the majority culture and at the same time a need for self- examination on the part of the Muslim minority. Muslims could be far more open about what is happening in the mosques and take a more active stance against expressions of intolerance in their own circles.

Shaping public opinion in this way remains difficult for many Muslims. Solidarity with your own community is often understood as a promise to say nothing about the things that give offence within that community. Often people think: we're not going to hang out our dirty washing, we're vulnerable enough as it is. But room for newcomers in a society actually increases when differences of opinion are made more plainly visible. What Islam needs are whistle blowers, people who're willing to let go of their spurious loyalty to the community and break out of that deadly encirclement by friend and enemy to speak freely about wrongdoing within the divided world of Islam – like the parents who revealed financial mismanagement at an Islamic school, for instance, or the writer who brought to light the way mosques were orchestrating claims for welfare payments, or women who draw attention to tyranny and violence behind the closed doors of the home, or leaders of mosques who inform the security services about extremism they come upon there.

Such whistle blowers will ease relations, counteracting the crude caricatures on both sides that result from distrust. Something that is by no means cohesive – whether it be the culture of the majority or of a minority – is too often seen as monolithic. To put it another way, peaceful co-existence is an extremely limited interpretation of what integration means. Compare the Europe of before and after 1989. Where there was cold peace and distance there is now space for interaction and rapprochement. The same applies to the multicultural society. We are still too much caught up in the era of diplomacy and non-interference, but society demands more than that. The future of Islam affects everyone, not just Muslims. Trust is another word for integration, and it will develop far more readily if pluralism becomes visible on all sides.

The Cosmopolitan Code

We need to set off in search of a contemporary cosmopolitanism. Relativism must be given a place, but it should never be allowed the final say. Universalism is essential, since it holds open the possibility of reaching a

critical verdict on norms that are generally accepted within a specific community. We have to resist the temptation to embrace traditions uncritically, but at the same time we must reject any concept of world citizenship that fails to relate to a community for which a person can feel responsible. It's proving increasingly difficult to reconcile a cultural heritage with openness to the world, two things that seem to be drifting apart in the richer nations.

Our world is becoming both larger and smaller, bringing people closer together and pushing them further apart. The astonishing mobility of capital, information, goods and people is making societies not only more involved with each other but more permeated by each other. At the same time the aversion to integration and cultural mixing is increasing and people are withdrawing into their shells. World citizenship is a remote prospect for most. The central question here is what a contemporary cosmopolitanism ought to look like.

Polish-Canadian writer Eva Hoffman emphasizes the fact that the conditions for world citizenship have changed: «Whereas cosmopolitanism used to defend itself against the narrow-mindedness of provincialism and nationalism, nowadays we are trying to use it as an antidote to the superficiality of globalism and life as social nomads» (Hoffman 2000: 32). She sees a 'new betrayal' by intellectuals in «the denial of the desire for meaningful attachment» (Hoffman 2000: 33). Which returns us to the question: What form should an open society take in a borderless world?

There's a great deal to be said for the attempts that have been made in our own time to expand the community with which a given individual can identify – just as long as it's a matter of deepening responsibility, rather than a flight from obligation of the kind that's all too much in evidence everywhere. The current blurring of borders presents more opportunities for self-interest than for serving the needs of communities. The notion of world citizenship may help to expedite enlightened ways of living together, but it has its dark side. French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau knew this: «Distrust those cosmopolitans who go to great lengths in their books to discover duties that at home they regard as beneath them. Such philosophers love the Tartars to avoid having to love their neighbors» (Rousseau 1997: 49).

A useful observation, particularly now. Many people are trying out a comfortable identity as citizens of a global village in the making without asking themselves whether the pursuit of a world without borders is not all too often a way of ignoring those close to them. The festive embrace of the global village is offset by urgent questions about the conditions for citizenship of a city and a state. In defiance of a readily professed openness towards the world, our heritage retains its significance.

In his autobiography, Austrian writer Stefan Zweig presents a wry exploration of the illusions surrounding the concept of the world citizen. He tells of how he was exiled. After a long wait on the petitioners' bench it dawns on him exactly what the difference is between having the right to a passport and being granted a residence permit. «Often in my cosmopolitan reveries I had imagined how beautiful it would be, how truly in accord with my innermost thoughts, to be stateless, obligated to no one country and for that reason undifferentiatedly attached to all» (Zweig 1982: 462-463). Now he knows better and speaks of «that terrible state of homelessness» (Zweig 1982: 442). Elsewhere he writes that emigration «disturbs the equilibrium». His book could be read as an account of the disenchantment of a world citizen as he slowly discovers the unspoken conditions of his mobility at a time when being uprooted is no longer the result of a free choice but is brought about by force of circumstance. His life story invites a study into the often misunderstood notion of world citizenship.

We come upon a similar grappling with cosmopolitanism in the work of French philosopher Alain Finkielkraut. At first the targets of his indictment were those who glorify what is theirs at the expense of the things we hold in common. He clearly opted for a form of universalism. In his recent books, however, he explains the risks of exactly that option: faith in humanity turns out to be as easily abused as the cherishing of a birthplace. He now refuses to choose between the resulting alternatives: «Detachment or attachment. Openness or heritage. Tolerance or loyalty» (Finkielkraut 1992: 58).

By combining the two rather than opting for one or the other we can avoid an impasse. We should value the crossing of frontiers in the knowledge that borders are an inalienable part of our lived reality. We need to contemplate cultural differences instead of denying they exist. People are not prisoners of their origins, but each individual existence has to be embedded in something. It's a matter of seeing a heritage not as prescriptive but as a prerequisite for independent action. Freedom, after all, needs a context.

A true cosmopolitan tries to embrace that tension between the local and the universal. This is surely rather different from believing in a worldwide market of ideas, each of which can be appropriated or rejected at will. How can we envision and revise our own cultures in the light of those of others? When we try to make comparisons we find ourselves forced to lower our sights. It's not easy to find a way into a foreign culture, even that of a neighboring country. Anyone who tries to fathom the often implicit references in a novel originally written in another language immediately runs into difficulties. The reader is required to transpose himself or herself, and that requires effort. As TS Eliot rightly observed: «Though it is only too easy for a writer to be local without being universal, I doubt whether a poet or novelist can be universal without being local too» (Appiah 2005: 12).

Surely the attitude that many adopt is a strange one. They claim to be greatly interested in other cultures and regard the rejection or brushing aside of their own culture as a gesture that underlines that interest. But only those who are conversant with their own cultural traditions can move beyond them; only those who understand that boundaries exist can overstep them. In the end we learn by comparison. We get to know ourselves better by examining that which is foreign. Detachment and attachment, heritage and openness, loyalty and tolerance: these attitudes belong together and if they're decoupled a precarious balance is upset.

Finkielkraut describes his own stance: «The cosmopolitan is distinguished by the fact that he does not regard it as dreadful but as salutary to be put to the test by the other, the stranger: the other, that which he is not, over whom he has no hold.» (Finkielkraut 2000: 43). Were all borders truly dissolved, there would be no outside world any longer. He therefore passes stern judgment on self-declared citizens of the world: «They couple the tribal practices of introverted groups with the moral condemnation of their own hearth and home…A person without a navel is a person who advocates unbounded human rights, but an abominable citizen» (Finkielkraut 2000: 116-117).

The weakness of cosmopolitanism lies in the fact that the ambitious 'everyone is in principle «responsible for everything» can easily degenerate in practice into «nobody is any longer responsible for anything». This was tragically illustrated by the peacekeeping operations in Yugoslavia and Rwanda. Where no direct security interests are involved, it's easy to look the other way. Even the aim of making the international community live up to a collective responsibility to prevent genocide – surely a moral minimum – seems extraordinarily difficult to realize.

We are looking for words that bridge the gap between the local and the universal, for a world citizenship that connects with its own lived environment. Philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah tells of a life lesson he received from his father, who was born in Ghana: «Remember that you are citizens of the world. He told us that wherever we chose to live we should endeavor to leave that place «better than you found it» (Appiah 2005: 213). His father thereby made clear that even those who settle somewhere temporarily can leave something permanent behind, or rather, ought to want to leave something permanent behind. He describes this idea as «rooted cosmopolitanism».

The concept of the world citizen is in the first instance a European legacy, but the source of humanist ideals need not discredit them in the eyes of non-Europeans. When the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was drawn up it was deliberately not given a philosophical basis. It may have been conceived according to the European tradition of individual rights, but no cultural grouping can repudiate its norms. They are applicable to all countries, including those in which they were originally formulated. One example here is of course decolonization. The revolt against the colonial powers was led by elites educated in the West, who used the modern vocabulary of self-determination and human rights. There is no escaping the paradox: resistance to European colonizers took place in the name of ideals that originated in Europe.

We must learn to distinguish between the origin and the spread of ideas. Just as the classics in music, architecture and literature are appreciated far from their countries of origin, so the democratic revolutions of America and France can be seen as a universal heritage that has broken free of its sources. Singaporean diplomat and scholar Kishore Mahbubani writes: «For 500 years the West has been the only civilization carrying the burden of advancing human knowledge and wealth. Today, it can share this responsibility». And he adds «It should also celebrate the clear spread of Western values in the rise of Asia» (Mahbubani 2008: 112). The applicability of human rights is not limited by their European background. Whatever we may say about Asian values – with

their emphasis on collective duties rather than individual entitlements – there is no real alternative to the code of human rights.

British author Timothy Garton Ash advocates a transition from the idea of the West as the embodiment of *the* free world to that of *a* free world that covers far more regions of the globe. He sees it as an historical opportunity: «Isn't it better to accept that the West, in going so far beyond its historic self, also ceases in some important sense to be the West?» (Garton Ash 2004: 192) This is an important question now that democracy has spread so far across the globe. We can join Garton Ash in talking of the «post-West», just as long as we realize that there are as yet few institutions that can give any real substance to this commonality of interests among the world's democracies.

The rights of man are essential to any society, but they do not encompass culture in a general sense. For that reason we should never speak of a hierarchy of cultures. What is the point in comparing Spanish and Turkish literature in such a way, or Western and Asian architecture? Within Western culture too, questions of this type are nonsensical: Is Schopenhauer a better philosopher than Socrates? Should we see Stravinsky as superior to Schubert? What could statements of this kind mean? There are many domains of social life where questions about progress or hierarchy are meaningless. It therefore means little to say that Islamic culture is backward.

There is only one way to prevent criticism of ethnocentrism – which elevates specific traditions to the status of universal truths – from degenerating into a cultural relativism that rejects universality in the name of particular preferences. Anyone choosing to defend a civilizing mission is himself part of that mission; norms held up as an example to the world will inevitably backfire at some point on those who disseminate them. The civilizer must become civilized – that duty is unavoidable if we want to continue to defend universalism. It's unhelpful to speak of the superiority of Western civilization, since an open society relies on a capacity for critical self- assessment.

What we are eager to defend must be understood as a history of trial and error. Anyone hoping to impress upon others the importance of equal rights for men and women will do well to realize first of all that these are norms that came into being only after considerable resistance had been overcome. Precisely because they are such recent achievements, they must be protected against the hostility of those who wish to undo them.

No regime can any longer entrench itself behind its own borders. Even the most authoritarian governments feel forced to justify themselves on the basis of generally accepted norms, whether or not they repeatedly violate them. The effects of worldwide openness undoubtedly contribute to this. We live in what has been called an «emotional democracy». The decline of indifference towards injustice wherever it occurs in the world can certainly be seen as moral progress. Aloofness is increasingly difficult to sustain.

Nevertheless, the colonial past casts its shadow across every intervention. In our own day some speak with enthusiasm of democratic imperialism, which they say should be the guiding principle for activist politics around the world. It stands in contrast to the multicultural aloofness that draws a quite different conclusion, namely that because of the abuses of the colonial period, Western values have largely lost their appeal. Whatever we may conclude about European domination, it's clear that the attitude we adopt towards the colonial period is of great significance for the way we act today.

The imperialism that regarded the dissemination of its own civilization as a mission violently broke through the walls of other cultures and brought them into contact with each other without their consent. This combination of power and principle has produced a guilty conscience, which reveals itself in the notion that it's impossible to pass judgment across cultural boundaries. An attitude of this kind means opting for detachment: Who are we to judge, let alone interfere? Samuel Huntington has been wrongly criticized for deriving an American imperialism from the «clash of civilizations». In fact he does the opposite. He rejects the claim that Western countries have a right to intervene outside their own cultural realms. He sees his clashing civilizations in the light of cultural relativism and his analysis amounts to an invitation to stand aloof from interaction between civilizations. Further clashes are exactly what he wishes to avoid.

Universalism and aloofness do not go together. This conclusion is far from innocuous. Many see the new interventionism – in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq for example – as a continuation of the old colonialism by new means. People have quite rightly asked whether such a thing as democratic imperialism is possible, or whether the use of force inevitably corrupts all moral intentions. A heedless rush to defend human rights everywhere can

easily lead to a deepening of the gulf between the West and the Rest.

Even those who advocate greater involvement in human rights issues elsewhere may well question the notion of humanitarian intervention, which ultimately amounts to warfare. Is the militarization of morality sensible, or is it a way of continuing colonial history by other means, with all the profound contradictions that involves? The idea that humanity must be placed above sovereignty – which is to say that third parties can intervene in a country in the name of human rights – has problematic consequences to say the least. Canadian essayist Michael Ignatieff puts it like this: «Human rights is increasingly seen as the language of a moral imperialism just as ruthless and just as self-deceived as the colonial hubris of yesteryear» (Ignatieff 1999: 13).

What remains is the conclusion that universally valid norms must be defended in our own countries and abroad. This will be possible only once universalism has absorbed the experience of colonialism and digested it. All pertinent questions thrown up by cultural relativism should be taken into account, but to relinquish democratic impatience would be to betray the open society as an ideal. It would surely not be credible to swear loyalty to our own democracies and exhibit indifference to democracy elsewhere in the world. This universalism creates obligations. Plainly Western countries cannot withdraw from the modern world order, which they have created, whenever it suits them. There is no longer any way out of the colonial trap.

References

Appiah K. A. (2005), *The Ethics of Identity,* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Boym S. (2002), *The Future of Nostalgia,* New York: Basic Books.

Buijs F. J. et al. (2006), *Strijders van eigen bodem*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Enzensberger H. M. (1992), *Die grosse Wanderung,* Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp; trad. it. *La grande migrazione*, Torino: Einaudi, 1993.

Finkielkraut A. (1992), *Comment peut-on être croate?,* Paris: Gallimard.

Finkielkraut A. (2000), *L'ingratitude. Conversation sur notre temps,* Paris: Gallimard; trad. it. *L'ingratitudine*, Milano: Excelsior 1881, 2010.

Garton Ash T. (2004), *Free world,* Harlow: Penguin Books; trad. it: *Free world. America, Europa e il futuro dell'Occidente*, Milano: Mondadori, 2006.

Handlin O. (1941), *Boston's Immigrants 1790-1880: a study in acculturation,* Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap press of Harvard University Press.

Handlin O. (1952), *The Uprooted, The Epic Story of the Great Migrations That Made the American People,* New York: Little, Brown and Company; trad. it. *Gli sradicati*, Milano: Comunità, 1958.

Hoffman E. (2000), *De ziel van de dialoog*, Tilburg: Nexus.

Huntington S. (2004), *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity,* New York: Simon & Schuster.

Ignatieff M. (1999), *Whose Universal Values? The Crisis in Human Rights,* Amsterdam: Praemium Erasmianum Foundation.

Mahbubani K. (2008), *The New Asian Hemisphere. The Irresistible Shift of Global Power to East,* New York: Public Affairs.

Noiriel G. (1988), *Le creuset francais* Paris: Seuil.

Park R. E. (1950), *Race and Culture,* Glencoe Ill: The Free Press.

Pratt Fairchild H. (1913), *Immigration*, New York: Macmillan.

Ramadan T. (2002), *Les musulmanes d'occident. Construire et contribuer,* Lyon: Tahwid.

Rousseau J. J. (1997), *Emilio o dell'educazione,* Roma: Armando.

Sardar Z. (2008), *Balti Britain. A Journey through the British Asian Experience,* London: Granta Publications.

Simmel G. (1971), *On Individuality and Social Forms,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Van Reybrouck D. (2008), *Pleidooi voor populisme*, Amsterdam: Querido.

Zweig S. (1982), *Die Welt von Gestern*, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer; trad. it. *Il mondo di ieri*, Milano: Mondadori, 1994.