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The USA was always supposed to be a “melting pot.” Canada, by contrast, calls itself a “mosaic”, which may explain why Canadians seem to suffer a kind of long-drawn-out and perpetual identity crisis. What does it mean to be “Canadian” as opposed to (or as well as) Quebecois, Celt, or Native?

In the 1950s the USA was supposed to be immune to such headaches. All cultures would “melt” and fuse into the American character, the main stream. In truth, however, this “consensus” culture was simply English colonial culture with amnesia, and a faded patina of frontier bluster.

Immigrant cultures which resisted meltdown were considered simply abnormal; the Irish, for example, were viewed as savage recalcitrants until quite recently. Of course it was hard to tell if certain cultures remained “outside” because they wanted to or because they were excluded. In the 1960s blacks were identified as an unfairly excluded culture, and steps were taken to absorb them into the mainstream (through school integration for example). Native Americans were still excluded by law, which defines them by blood rather than by culture, and maintains “segregation” by the reservation system. Jews,

Hispanics, Asians, each followed their own trajectory toward assimilation or resistance.

By the late 1970s or early 1980s it became obvious that the Melting Pot had somehow failed. Black culture, the test case, now appeared impossible to absorb. The "consensus" was in danger. The Right, with its schizophrenic attitudes toward race and culture, had faltered. A new "liberal" consensus was proposed. It was called *multiculturalism.*

Let there be no mistake: multiculturalism is a strategy designed to save "America" as an idea, and as a system of social control. Each of the many cultures that make up the nation are now to be allowed a little measure of self-identity and a few simulacra of autonomy. School textbooks now reflect this strategy, with 1950s illustrations of happy historical whites retouched to include a few blacks, Asians and even Natives. A dozen or so departments of multiculturalism spring up at university level. Each minority must now be treated with "dignity" in the curriculum. Conservatives raise a stink: the Canonical Shibboleths of Western Civilization are in danger! Our children will be forced to study … black history! This babble on the Right lends multiculturalism an aura of "radical" righteousness and political correctitude, and the Left leaps forward to defend the new paradigm. In the middle according to theory — balance will be restored, and the consensus will function again. The trouble is that the theory itself emanates neither from the Right nor Left nor Center. It emanates from the top. It's a theory of *control.*

The old textbooks depicted all ethnic/cultural particularity as a taint which could only be overcome in the great pot of conformity to the Norm. Yet the Norm was itself so clearly and simply a form of hegemonic particularism that the textbooks wore thin and eventually grew transparent. They had to go — I agree. Now we have a few texts which admit, for example, that Columbus was a mixed blessing and that Africans were not morally responsible for being slaves. This is a step forward

— I agree. However, I remain interested in knowing precisely *who* has given us permission to hold such opinions — and *why*?

In the first place, it seems obvious that each of the "many" particular cultures is being measured against or assimilated to a mainstream "universal" culture. The only difference is that the mainstream now, apparently, values a bit of "diversity," and feels a bit of permissible nostalgia for colorful ethnic customs. At the heart of the discourse however, the very discourse which now defines itself as "multicultural", there remains a "solid core curriculum" made up of the same old Euro-rationalist axiomata, scientistic triumphalism, and ruling-class teleology.

This mainstream constitutes Civilization, and only on the periphery of this centrality can the *cultures* find a place. Whatever the cultures may possess which might be of use to Civilization will of course be accepted with gratitude. Each quaint little local culture has something to offer, something to be "proud" of. A museological passion inspirits the Center; everyone collects little ethnic particularities; everyone's a tourist; everyone *appropriates.*

The multicultural conversation as totalist monologue might go something like this: Yes, your little handicrafts will look good in my living room, where they'll help disguise the fact that my house was designed by — and perhaps for — a machine. Yes, your sweat-lodge ceremony will provide us with a pleasant week-end "experience". Gosh, aren't we the Masters of the Universe? Why should we put up with this bland old Anglo-American furniture when we can take *yours instead?* Aren't you grateful? And no more Imperial Colonialism either: we pay for what we take — and even what we break! Pay, pay, pay. After all, it's *only money.*

Thus multiculturalism is seen in the first place to propose both universalism and particularism at once — in effect, a totality. Every totality implies a totalitarianism, but in this case, the Whole appears in friendly face, a great theme park where every "special case" can be endlessly reproduced. Multicultur-

alism is the "Spectacle" of communicativeness — conviviality which it renders into *commodity form* and sells back to those who have dreamed it. In this sense multiculturalism appears as the necessary ideological reflection of the Global Market or "New World Order," the "one" world of too-Late Capitalism and the "end of History."

The "end of History" is of course code for the "end of the Social". Multiculturalism is the *decor* of the end of the Social, the metaphorical imagery of the complete atomization of the "consumer". And what will the consumer consume? *Images of culture.*

In the second place, multiculturalism is not just a false totality or unification, but also a false *separation.* The "minorities" are told in effect that no common goals or values could unite them, except of course the goals and values of the consensus. Blacks have Black Culture, for example, and are no longer required to assimilate. So long as Black Culture tacitly recognizes the centrality of the consensus — and its own peripherality — it will be allowed and even encouraged to thrive. Genuine autonomy, however, is out of the question, and so is any "class consciousness" which might cut across ethnic or "lifestyle" lines to suggest revolutionary coalitions. Each minority contributes to the Center, but nothing is allowed to circulate on the periphery, and certainly not the power of *collectivity.*

Unlike a flower, which opens its borders to bees and breezes and flows out into life, the "consensus" draws all energy inward and absorbs it into a closed system of rigid control a death-like process which must eventually end in sterility and *hysteresis.*

Living as we do in the era of total Global order and the physical and cultural environment it secretes, it should be obvious that particularise can represent a form of resistance. The Totality has therefore undertaken to appropriate the energy of the resistance by offering a false form of particularism, empty of all creative power, as a commodified simulacrum of insurrectionary desire. In this sense multiculturalism is simply the

can effect change on the level of "experienced life" without imposing categories of control. A New-age Nietzsche might have called it "the will to self-empowerment".

The poet Nathaniel Mackay calls it *cross-culturalism.* The image expresses a non-hierarchic, de-centered web of cultures, each one singular, but not alienated from other cultures. Exchange takes place as reciprocity across the permeable boundaries of this complex of autonomous, but loosely defined, *differences.* I would add a further refinement. This reciprocity will produce more than the mere sum of exchanges within the system, and this *more* will constitute a universal value in circulation among free collectivities and individuals. Hence the term *cross-cultural synergetics* might describe the precise term (or slogan) proposed as a replacement for "multiculturalism".

Conclusion

The multicultural paradigm presupposes a false totality within which are subsumed a set of false particularities. These differences are represented and packaged as "lifestyle choices" and "ethnicities", commodities to appease the genuine passion for genuine difference with mere "traces" and *images* of "dignity" and even of "rebellion". Against this, cross-cultural synergism proposes actual autonomy, whether for individuals or cohesions of individuals, based on radical consciousness and organic identity. In this sense, cross-culturalism can only oppose itself to "multiculturalism", either through a strategy of subversion, or through open assault. Either way, "multiculturalism" must be destroyed.

recto of that page whose verso is "ethnic cleansing". Both sides spell disappearance for any authentic particular culture of resistance.

At the same time the Consensus secretly encourages race and even class hatred. In the mysterious absence of that "Evil Empire" which once provided an excuse for every act of violent repression and corruption carried out in "defense of Western Civilization", the Consensus must now seek out or even create its "enemies" *within itself.* Intelligence orgs fall in love with violent nationalists, separatists, and chauvinists of all kinds. In such circles, multiculturalism means: "let them tear out each others' throats, and save us the trouble". Thus every act of rebellion and violent hatred simply increases the power of the "Security State". Already we see that the Discourse of Power is running out of patience with these "darned minorities and all their P.C. blather. We offered them multiculturalism and look! Still they rebel. Criminals!"

The Left has believed so long in the "International" that it has — so far — failed to adjust to the post-1989 situation with a clear response to the "New Globalism." When the Berlin Wall fell, in the moment of freedom which opened there, a new form of internationalism rushed to fill the breach. As United States politicians crowed about how "the Cold War is over and *we won*" international Capital declared the end of all ideology. This means not only that Communism is "dead" but also that "democratic republicanism" has served its purpose and transformed itself into an empty idol. Henceforth only one force will "rule" — the rationality of money. Abstracted from all real valuation, representing nothing but itself, money is etherealized, and finally divinized. Money has "gone to Heaven" and left mere life behind.

In this situation both Right and Left will rebel — and in some cases it will be hard to tell the difference. A myriad forms *of particularism* will arise, consciously or unconsciously, to oppose the false totality and pitiful booby-prizes of multicultural-

ism's "New World Order". The Social has not ended, of course, no more than everyday life itself. But the Social will now involve itself with the insurrectionary potential of *difference.* In its most unconscious and deeply deluded form, this passion for *difference* will simply repeat the old and empty rhetoric of classical nationalism or racism. Hence, "ethnic cleansing" from Bosnia to California.

Against this hegemonic particularism, we might propose a more conscious and socially just form of *anti-hegemonic particularism.* It's difficult to envision the precise shape such a force might assume, but it grows easier to identify as it actually emerges. A miraculous revival of Native-American culture steals the fire of the Columbus celebrations in 1992, and sharpens the debate over cultural appropriation. In Mexico the Zapatista uprising, according to the *New York Times,* the first "postmodern rebellion", constitutes the first armed actionagainst the New Globalism — in the particularise but antihegemonic cause of the Mayans and peasants of Chiapas. I regard this as a struggle for "empirical freedoms" rather than "ideology." In a positive sense one might say that all cultural and/or social forms of particularism deserve support as long as

they remain anti-hegemonic, and precisely to the extent that they remain so.

In this context we might even discover uses for "multiculturalism", since it may serve as a medium for the propagation of subversive memes, and the insurrectionary desire for radical difference. Such a subversive "entry into the media," however, can serve only one ultimate purpose: the utter destruction of multiculturalist neo-imperialism and its transformation into *something else.* If the secret agenda of multiculturalism demands universal separation under the aegis of a false totality, then the radical response to multiculturalism must attack not only its ersatz universality but also its invidious alienation, its false separatism. If we support true anti-hegemonic particularism, we must also support the other half of the dialectic by

developing a force to penetrate all false boundaries, to restore communicativeness and conviviality across a horizontal and random web of connectivities and solidarities. This would constitute the true force of which multiculturalism is merely the empty simulacrum. It would complement anti-hegemonic particularism with a genuine reciprocity among peoples and cultures. The "economy of the Gift" would replace the economy of exchange and commodification. The Social would resume circulation on the level of experienced life" through the exercise of imagination and generosity.

In this sense the answer to the problem of "appropriation" would arise from the concept of a "universal potlach" of giving and sharing. As a test case, examine the issue of cultural appropriation of Native-American values. The original identity of tribal peoples in the "New" World was tribal, not racial. Anyone could be adopted into a tribe, as were many drop-out whites and run-away blacks. The twentieth-century renaissance of Native Culture has discovered certain spiritual universals which it wants to give and share with everyone, and it has discovered an anti-hegemonic particularism which it desires for itself. The Elders charge that too many Americans want to appropriate or commodity the latter (sweat-lodges, sun-dances, etc.) but ignore or despise the former (reverence for Nature, love of place as topocosm, etc.) . The Native tradition is not *closed,* despite the just anger and bitterness of the tribes, but demands reciprocity rather than appropriation. Let us Euro's first evolve a serious revolutionary attitude toward the restoration of wild (er) ness; then it will be appropriate for us to make the fine Alexandrian gesture of "worshipping local spirits".

The Situationists already envisioned this strategy when they coined that much-abused slogan: "think globally, act locally". Our true interests include global realities, such as "environment", but effective power can never be global without being oppressive. Top-down solutions reproduce hierarchy and alienation. Only local action for "empirical freedoms"