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## Immigration

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### Empathy's Flickering Flames?

#### **The Coming: Before Global Immigration**

“Our ancestors . . . never had to deal with all of humanity as a factor in their daily lives,” write Burke and Ornstein (1995), “because for most of history they only knew a small number of individuals going about their particular activities in a very small world” (p. 280). Burke and Ornstein also remind us that our primeval ancestors had no need to consider the entire planet because it was “too big to have any meaningful impact” (p. 280).

Today, however, individuals in remote areas of the savannah are influenced by events in mega-cities around the globe. “Meanings, messages, and people” are circulating worldwide at unprecedented levels. Human beings are leaving indigenous places and spaces, searching for economic security, fleeing persecution, and being dispersed by ethnic conflict and war. Alkman Granitsas (2006) reports that “there are almost 200 million international immigrants, more than double the 84 million of 30 years ago” (p. 2). This great encounter with diversity contributed to the attack on September 11, 2001; the assassination of Theo van Gogh; the killing of Afghanistan’s Northern Alliance leader, Ahmad Shah Massood; and terrorism in general. Four hundred years ago, the human species had not spread as rapidly, and conflict between what Freidman (1999) refers to as “lexus and olive tree worlds” was held in abeyance primarily because a multiethnic, multiracial society had not become a reality. But what happened?

To understand the interplay among immigrant loyalties, traditions, and empathy, let us examine, however briefly, the Treaty of Westphalia (1648) and other events that contributed to the present situation. I argue that the Treaty of Westphalia was a foundational event that sheds light on the ongoing frictions occurring between immigrants and nonimmigrants today. This perspective suggests that the transition from one historical moment to another should be understood as a continuum rather than as one marked event in time. The perspective suggests, furthermore, that even though the Westphalia system is not the only reason, it nevertheless sowed seeds for cross-border fragmentation in the 21st century, as we shall see.

### **The Treaty of Westphalia**

The Treaty of Westphalia or the Congress of Westphalia is, as Jennifer Jackson Preece (1997) notes, “conventionally taken as the dividing line between the medieval and modern periods in the conduct of international affairs” (p. 75). Scholars maintain that the treaty was responsible for the creation of nation-states and that it provided a transition from the old world to the new. If we look especially at Europe prior to 1648, we find a world of sovereigns who are in turmoil and constant strife and embroiled in a Thirty Years War with the Holy Roman Empire. Prior to 1648, the Holy Roman Emperor reigned supreme, bounded by the Catholic Church. Westphalia marked the end of the Holy Roman Empire and the rise of such countries as France, the Netherlands, and Sweden, the latter more briefly than the former.

Although some of the politics involved in the establishment of nation-states was evident in England, Spain, France, and Sweden earlier, the creation of sovereign states diminished the influence and reach of the Catholic Church. Prior to 1648, all roads literally led to Rome, and the papacy held sway over many peoples, who, at that time, did not distinguish in theory and practice between church and state.

The tightly knit Catholic Church grounded identity in a structure that both favored and manipulated kings, potentates, and empires, thus ensuring that a great deal of empathy would be attached to the Church and those who were a part of it. The Church, in conjunction with Saint Augustine, who firmly believed that people were divided into those who were favored and those who were not, “defined the attitude that would direct Western society through the centuries of confusion that lay ahead” (Burke & Ornstein, 1995, p. 96).

As we know, a vexing issue in the 17th century was a competing doctrine between Catholicism and Protestantism. Prior to the 1517 epoch-making Protestant Reformation, the Catholic Church’s ideology functioned as a tool for manipulating and controlling the secular rulers of Western Europe

and, by extension, their subjects (Burke & Ornstein, 1995, p. 97). This tool helped to ensure that empathy's blessings would accrue to those who could read and write, most notably the clergy. Thus, there was a symbiotic relationship between church and state—between the clergy who could read and write and the kings and princes who relied on the former to assist them with executive matters. As Burke and Ornstein (1995) argue, “It was easy for the church, primarily through its monastic communities and bishops, to control an illiterate world” (p. 98).

The Westphalian system undermined the Catholic Church, “weakened papal authority,” and “solidified national sovereignty” (Farr, 2005, p. 1). A huge consequence of the Westphalian system is that it altered the power dimensions of human relationships invested in Catholicism and encouraged cooperation between aristocrats and monarchs, fostering “mutual cooperation” (Farr, 2005, p. 2). Although financial incentives clearly played a role in generating synergy between the latter two wealthy groups, this transfer of loyalty away from the Catholic Church facilitated a human empathetic mission because after Westphalia, people were free to be French, English, Austro-Hungarian, and the like. Furthermore, the transference subverted some of the loyalty that had been imposed by the Pope, especially in the domains of language and nation-states.

But most significant is the patriotic-producing aspect of this newly formed system, especially its coupling of empathy and passion. Particularly revealing is how words, slogans, flags, and other symbols that became a part of nation-states were used to galvanize publics around national symbols. The symbols, in turn, held many cultures together and broke others apart. As I noted in the introductory chapter, in the 1990s, when Yugoslavia disintegrated over ethnicity and culture, Milosevic appealed to ancestry, myths, and memory to sustain Serbians during their conflict with other cultural groups. Later, in the 20th and 21st centuries, the universal human propensity to turn symbols into intense modes of loyalty would jeopardize one's fellow-feeling, one to another. As recently as October 23, 2007, Ambassador James Bissett (2007) claimed that the origins of the global framework for dealing with ethnic turmoil in Kosovo date “back to the peace of Westphalia in 1648 which ended the horrors of the religious wars that devastated Germany and other parts of Europe for more almost half a century.”

### **Westphalia: Revolutions, Politics, and Immigration**

The changes that occurred as a result of Westphalia should concern us for two other significant reasons. First, it paved the way for both the American and the French Revolutions that aligned the rights of the state with the rights

of man. Locke's 1689 *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and his essay "On Liberty," with their compelling support of human toleration, set in motion cataclysmic revolutionary human events and gave to the world concepts of natural rights as opposed to the rights of princes. Locke sensibly maintained that since God was the creator and maker of us all, no human being had a right to govern the will of another based on ancestry. Of course, Locke left open a door for governing based on collective political rights. However, by decoupling state rights from human rights, Locke ushered in a notion of the "consent of the governed" that animated Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, and the band of revolutionary men who fomented a successful rebellion in North America in 1776 against the tyrannical rule of Great Britain—a rule based on natural rights and not rights peculiar to kings, queens, and potentates.

As I will note later in this chapter, the same rights that inhered in the French Revolution of 1789, with its rallying cry of "liberty," "equality," and "fraternity," would haunt France in the 21st century when Muslim youths rioted in the suburbs of Paris in 2005.

The Treaty of Westphalia concerns us for another reason: how more mature nation-states, once organized and formed into more stable "imagined communities," dealt with the presence of the other in their midst, that is, with immigrants. Following divisions into nation-states, the issue of what to do with and how to manage minorities and immigrants came to the foreground, that is, how to welcome strangers. After World War I, nation-states had to grapple with nationalities that emerged out of the "defeated Ottoman, Habsburg and Hohenzoleln Empires in the East-Central Europe after 1919" (Preece, 1997, p. 81).

The political impact of these population changes was significant. Political leaders charged with rearranging geopolitical borders populated by complex and various humans soon discovered that the job of homogenously reconstructing the post-1919 boundaries of East-Central Europe was "virtually impossible" for many reasons. A major reason is the fact that the former ruling elites—Hungarians and Germans—remained in their original places sowing seeds of resentment and hostility over their loss of power and influence.

This paralyzing attitudinal frame of mind, in turn, bred ethnic tensions among people in Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia, and other places dependent on newly constructed nationalistic discourses. Again, the Treaty of Westphalia is implicated because in 1919, issues of what constituted nationhood reemerged and tampered with empathy's powers. Questions also arose, such as should a nation-state be defined on the basis of language, ethnicity, culture, or all of these factors, and how could the task of empathizing with others along such lines be maintained.

History further records that World War II also played a vital role in ushering in discourses and feelings surrounding immigration and immigrants. Although the sociocultural factors following the defeat of Germany and other Axis powers in 1945 are nuanced, a push for a fresh start among peoples in Europe has affected empathy and immigration. Poverty; deflation; price supports; a power struggle in Russia following Joseph Stalin's death in 1953; the granting of independence to India, Pakistan, and Burma in 1947; oil interests in the Middle East; and the exodus of Jews from Europe to Israel all figured prominently in the spatial and cultural rearrangement of Europe between 1945 and 1948.

Although it is important not to overstate the importance of such factors and events, they contributed to empathy's flickering flames. As immigrants from Palestine, Pakistan, Africa, and other places rushed into Europe in search of work, and as Europeans "opened wide freedom's gates," the socio-cultural outcomes proved to be daunting. But not in all cases, however. The single market of the European Union encouraged a movement of people across borders, encouraging individuals to immigrate from poorer to wealthy regions. A major consequence of this migration, as Judt (2005, p. 732) notes, has been a transfer of resources to poorer countries, which helped to eliminate the "aggregate gap" between rich and poor. Not surprisingly, other intercultural benefits of such global flows include travel, exchange of ideas, and increased study at universities throughout Europe.

### **Immigration: The Changing Environment**

If we detour to the United States in 1789, the year that witnessed the ratification of the Constitution following vehement debates over the principal arguments for and against its adoption by Patrick Henry, James Madison, Benjamin Franklin, and other "founding brothers," one can understand how American leaders skillfully managed newly arriving individuals. In 1789, the young country was eager to define its core cultural and political self, and for this reason, but not exclusively, American leaders insisted that the beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, values, religion, and ethnic makeup of immigrants entering the country most resemble the people who were already there. One reason for this insistence, as Huntington (2004) observes, is that leaders had to "define America ideologically to justify their independence from their home countrymen," that is, from Britain (p. 38).

This helps to explain why the ethnic makeup of America stayed so close to the European model from 1789 to 1960 and why Americans more easily welcomed individuals from Ireland and Scandinavian countries but were not as eager to welcome people from Eastern Europe (Buchanan, 2006, p. 91).

One should not, of course, overlook America's generosity of feelings toward Indians at the beginning of the Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay settlements in the 1620s. Boyer et al. (1996) remind us that in the spring of 1621, Pilgrims and English-speaking Indians, including Squanto, a Pawtuxet Indian, were friendly and civil toward one another. This was indeed a memorable moment in the history of North American empathy. But the era of good feeling was short-lived because "the colonists became the dominant partner, forcing the Indians to acknowledge English sovereignty" (Boyer et al., 1996, p. 48). This occurred despite the fact that Indians "taught the newcomers how to grow corn" (Boyer et al., 1996, p. 48).

Boyer et al. (1996) question whether Indians were as keenly interested in acts of kindness or had come up with a technique to prevent Plymouth settlers from stealing corn from Indians. Although these human impulses might have been present and partly expressed through practical motives, moral sentiments were in the right place and at the right moment. Later, however, the settlers drew even sharper land boundaries between themselves and Indians, "hasten[ing] the colony's militarization under the leadership of a professional soldier, Miles Standish, who threatened Plymouth's Indian 'allies' with its monopoly of fire power" (Boyer et al., 1996, p. 48). In the final analysis, Indians were given a choice of a public policy based on expulsion or one based on extermination, and President Andrew Jackson worked vigorously on behalf of extermination and Indian removal (Takaki, 1990).

Of course, Indians were not immigrants because they were in America long before the first settlers arrived. The confrontation between the two groups is mentioned here because of the curious connections and treatment of a group already occupying a spot of ground and the group's demise as a result of the coming of another clan, whether that group (Pilgrims) is viewed as "settlers" or as immigrants. Notwithstanding the "metaphysics of civilization" and "the red race on our (United States') borders" (Takaki, 1990, p. 80), the implications of the era of cooperation between Indians and Plymouth settlers are apparent: "the possibility of a multicultural society in America," even though that possibility "was not to be revived for three hundred years" (Huntington, 2004, p. 53).

Confidence in American empathy also manifested itself again in 1900, with immigration reaching a peak in 1914. But at the time, the wave of immigration was met with more restrictions and limitations from Congress in the form of literacy tests and an ideology of "Anglo-Saxonism" that found uncompromising expression in the writings of such scientists as Josiah Strong and Lothrop Stoddard. Fearing that the United States was in great peril from "hordes" of immigrants coming from Southern Europe with their "strange" habits, ignorance, immorality, and Roman Catholicism, Strong

elevated the clash between “the dangerously poor” and the “dangerously rich” (Takaki, 1990, p. 260). Strong’s high-intensity, empathy-undermining discourse highlighted the blight and bruises that were occurring among immigrants, including their residence in congested cities. Strong believed that the wretched conditions under which such immigrants lived fueled the ambers of socialism and “threatened the republican society of individual liberty” (Takaki, 1990, p. 260).

It did not take long for Strong’s discourse to reflect virulent prejudices and for the discourse to reach back to John Winthrop’s “city upon a hill” shipboard sermon in which the latter proclaimed that America “shall be as a city upon a hill, the eyes of all people are upon us” (Bercovitch, 1978; Takaki, 1990). Winthrop’s shipboard sermon meshed well with Strong’s announcement that “we (Americans) deem ourselves a chosen people” and “incline to the belief that the Almighty stands pledged to our prosperity. Probably not one in a hundred of our population has ever questioned the security of our future. Such optimism is as senseless as pessimism is faithless” (qtd. in Takaki, 1990, p. 261). Thus, aspects of immigration discourse during the 1900s continued to reflect exclusionary ones and sentiments of Anglo-Saxon culture and society. And if the United States followed a line of reasoning based on Strong and Stoddard, it was clear that American culture should adhere to narratives and ideology rooted in legal and normative principles that privileged English civilization with its exclusionary tenets.

### **Social and Legal Impact on Immigration**

An aftermath of Strong’s and Stoddard’s ideology is also reflected in the course of action that Congress took to limit immigration from Eastern Europe in 1921. According to Huntington (2004), as a result of “a permanent ceiling of 150,000 immigrants a year and country quotas based on the national origins of the U.S. population in 1920,” “82 percent of the slots were assigned to northern and western European countries and 16 percent to southern and eastern Europe” (p. 57). As a result of a deliberate policy, the United States effectively shut off a huge flow of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe, raising serious questions about America’s ability to “cross over and experience, in the most profound way, the very being of another—especially the other’s struggle to endure and prevail in his or her own life journey,” to use a quote from Jeremy Rifkin (2004, p. 271).

By 1924, North American attitudes regarding who should come to its shores began to change somewhat, despite the fact that many Americans did not hold favorable views of immigrants. U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt is credited with inaugurating a symbolic change in attitudes

toward American immigrants when he declared in 1938, “Remember, remember always, that all of us, and you and I especially, are descended from immigrants and revolutionists” (Huntington, 2004, p. 38). Thirty years later, President John F. Kennedy repeated the memorable line in his book, *A Nation of Immigrants*, published posthumously (Huntington, 2004, pp. 38–39). Even today we hear echoes of Roosevelt’s comments in the hard-edged debate over immigration issues. The most constant refrain given for the opening of the U.S. borders to Mexicans and other immigrants is that “America is a nation of immigrants,” an inclusive and humanity-affirming statement that fosters goodwill among humans.

A beautiful feature of Roosevelt’s provocative discourse is its signaling of empathetic potential. Endowed with a favorable attitude toward immigrants, many Americans were given new reasons to pay attention to strangers in their midst, despite the “Charter group” emphasis on “the effective possessor” of the land having “the most to say” about societal values and structure and despite Huntington’s (2004) argument that “in its origins America was not a nation of immigrants” and that it “was a society, or societies, of settlers who came to the New World in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries” (p. 39). Notwithstanding Huntington’s strict interpretation of historical events, President Roosevelt’s rhetoric effectively contributed to a turning away from the “settler” mind-set to an embracing and a more spacious orientation toward immigrants, as manifested in President Kennedy’s comment.

It is the case, however, that from 1820 to 2000, about 66 million immigrants found their way to America, creating a highly heterogeneous society in terms of religion, ethnicity, and ancestry, as Peter D. Salins (1997) notes in his work, *Assimilation, American Style*. The early decades of the 19th century witnessed a decline in immigration to the United States to about 8% of the country’s population in 1800. The year 1870 marked a spurt in the number of immigrants coming to the United States and was accompanied by a shift from immigrants coming largely from Western Europe to immigrants originating in Southern and Eastern Europe (Starr, 2004, p. 233).

A significant change occurred in America as a consequence of “the effective shutting off of significant immigration from eastern and southern Europe,” and it “paradoxically contributed to the virtual elimination of ethnicity as a defining component of American identity” (Huntington, 2004, p. 57). Although Huntington’s (2004) language suggests that there is something less than desirable about “the virtual elimination of ethnicity as a defining component of American identity,” the rupture underlines a crucial point: “In the long sweep of human history, what becomes clear is that the human journey is, at its core, about the extension of empathy to broader and



more inclusive domains" (Rifkin, 2004, p. 271). But a significant question arises from the apparent death knell of "ethnicity as a defining component of American identity": Did emphasis on Anglo-Saxon ethnicity have to die so that the march of empathy could continue?

### **Public Space and New Immigrants**

I am uncertain as to whether many scholars and laypersons alike would answer the question in the affirmative, but it is clear that mainstream Anglo-Protestant culture has created public space for other cultures and groups, including Indians, Asians, African Americans, and a host of other ethnic people from the 220 nations that comprise the global community, if we accept Harold "Bud" Hodginson's statistical rendition. In a lecture at Walden University, Hodginson argued that America has a representative from each of the 220 nations living within its borders. Using such numbers, one can argue that this movement represents a new form—at least a new level—of empathy in the United States. The crucible of the issue is, of course, another matter all together because the alchemy of ethnicity and race is still being melded in the 21st century. The reality of immigration is here, however, and it is changing the political and cultural environment in America and elsewhere.

No set of numbers better exemplify the shift in empathy's cultural direction than in the wave of immigrants coming to the United States from south of the border. And some North Americans are pretty exercised by the coming, including author and journalist Patrick Buchanan (2006). To make his oppositional case against illegal immigrants, Buchanan offers the following stunning statistics: "In 1960, America was a nation of 180 millions, 89 percent of whom were of European ancestry, 10 percent blacks, with a few million Hispanics and Asians sprinkled among us. Ninety-seven percent of us spoke English" (p. 36). Lamenting the numerical and ethnic shifts occurring in the United States, Buchanan worries about movement away from America's Anglo-Saxon-dominant culture. He writes, "Though of two races, we were of one nationality. We worshipped the same God, studied the same literature and history, honored the same heroes, celebrated the same holidays, went to the same movies, read the same newspapers and magazines" (p. 36).

But Buchanan (2006) leaves out of his cultural weeping the fact that during the 1960s, many Blacks were also marginalized—pushed to the corners of culture and voiceless. His constant refrain of the "same God," "same heroes," "same holidays," and "same newspapers and magazines," effectively works against inclusion because by definition and implicitly, diversity sanctions inclusion writ large. Is Buchanan surrounded by echoes of his own voice?

## **Immigration in Europe**

On the contrary, Buchanan (2006) is not alone in his outcry against immigration. Across the pond in Europe, the cultural environment is also changing in favor of inclusion and consideration of the other, although there clearly are some bumpy roads ahead. Such writers as Rifkin (2004) embrace the change, while journalists Claire Berlinski (2006) and Mark Steyn (2006) are very concerned about immigrants and immigration. “Menace in Europe,” cries Berlinski, and “America Alone, The End of the World as We Know It,” thunders Mark Steyn (2006). Berlinski finds Europe in the “grip of . . . [a] strange passivity” that finds expression in

the new ordering principle of European society—a form of weak rationality, a kind of utilitarianism. Europeans now obey their authorities not because they rule by divine right, nor because those authorities promise a utopian future, but because law and order are preferable to chaos and anarchy. . . . Social and moral structures in Europe are now, essentially, bureaucratic structures. (p. 31)

Steyn (2006), in calling attention to the shrinking fertility rates in Europe and other places such as in Canada and Russia, which are “running out of babies” (p. xvi) as a result of fertile immigrants coming from North Africa, the Caribbean, and the Middle East, warns that

by 2050, 60 percent of Italians will have no brothers, no sisters, no cousins, no aunts, no uncles. The big Italian family, with papa pouring the vino and mama spooning out the pasta down an endless table of grandparents and nieces and nephews, will be gone, no more, dead as the dinosaurs. (p. xvii)

Such statistics undoubtedly give new meaning to and test the West’s tolerance, as the end of this chapter makes clear. Why the dire predictions? And why has immigration led to this state of affairs? To give a fair answer to this question, let us consider the empathy of elites and the road that they have traveled in the long narrative of global immigration. The story here is one of preaching openness and inclusion, and it demonstrates that well-intentioned motives can have opposite and sometimes unintended consequences.

## **Empathy of Elites and Global Immigration**

“White guilt—the need to win enough moral authority around race to prove that one is not a racist—is the price whites today pay for this history. Political correctness is a language that enables whites to show by wildly exaggerated

courtesy that they are not racist,” Shelby Steele (2003) writes in *The Wall Street Journal*. Implicit in Steele’s comment is the idea that Westerners are indeed atoning for their many years of sinful ethnic oppression in such former colonial places as Algeria, Nigeria, Congo, and Zimbabwe and that this atonement has put Europeans, as well as North Americans, in a cultural cage, which makes it exceedingly difficult for them to escape culturally, economically, psychologically, linguistically, and socially.

Steele’s (2003) comment also speaks piercingly to the dilemma that Westerners confront as a result of their postcolonial, post-civil rights sensitivity and period of openness and inclusion—all generously advocated by elites. On one hand, Westerners want and have extended a measure of sympathy to their former colonists, many of whom have left their former countries to settle in Europe. On the other hand, Westerners’ fellow-feeling for immigrants escaping oppression, poverty, and disease from such places as Morocco, Algeria, Sudan, and other environs has put them in a terrible bind, one worthy of Prometheus unbound, thus complicating nets of empathy worldwide.

Claims of equal recognition by ethnic groups to the public square have their ideological and intellectual roots in the politics of universal dignity spawned by “the rapid growth of nationalist sentiment among a coming generation of activists throughout the empires except perhaps but in India, but even there citizens underestimated its scale and determination” (Judt, 2005, p. 279).

Judt (2005) also argues that “neither the British, nor any of the other remaining European colonial powers, anticipated the imminent collapse of their holdings or influence overseas” (p. 79). “Other remaining European colonial powers” include France, Germany, and Belgium. By the early 1960s, French colonies of Tunisia and Morocco; English colonies of Kenya, Nigeria, and Gambia; and Belgian colonies of Congo and Rwanda had secured their freedom. The newly freed countries added fresh meaning to principles of justice and equality. Former colonial people “changed the understanding of second-class citizenship” (Taylor, 1992, p. 39) such that by 1955, African Americans had taken some inspiration from their kindred spirits in Ghana and Kenya and had begun the civil rights movement of the 1960s in a push for human dignity and equality. Grassroots movements in Europe and the United States shared one central thing in common: a gargantuan need for equal respect and human dignity.

### **Elites on College Campuses**

Although the nation-states in Europe and the United States felt a bit uneasy “with the idea of accommodating distinct cultures” (Rifkin, 2004, p. 247),

elites entered the fray and began a sustained campaign to both recognize and include the dispossessed. Much of the activity occurred in the form of opposition to Western intellectual canons on university campuses. Writer and critic Roger Kimball (1990) dubbed this movement toward canonical inclusion “the assault on the canon” (p. 1). The term *canon*, as Kimball (1990) observes, “comes to us from the Roman Catholic Church, where it refers to an official rule or decree, a particular section of the Mass, or the list of canonized saints” (p. 1). Canonical application today refers to “the unofficial, shifting, yet generally recognized body of great works that have stood the test of time and are acknowledged to be central to a complete liberal arts education” (Kimball, 1990, p. 1).

A shift toward canonical inclusion simultaneously paved the way for academics, politicians, policy makers, and other elites to see real value in examining the robust relationship between canon and empire. Thus, students at such prestigious institutions as Brown, Berkeley, Harvard, Yale, Columbia, Princeton, and Stanford took notice; students at the latter school echoed the sentiments of their cohorts on other campuses across the United States as they chanted “Hey, hey, ho, ho, Western culture got to go” (Kimball, 1990, p. 28). Students at Stanford, for example, insisted that some Western courses be replaced by a series of courses called “Culture, Ideas, Values (CIV).” The action effectively eliminated the teaching of exclusive core courses with major excerpts from Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, and other accomplished Western writers.

Professor Robert Scholes echoed the pregnant and historical role that hegemony had played previously when he said, “Where the Empire went, the canon and the Canon went too” (qtd. in Kimball, 1990, p. 5). Where Scholes saw in tandem a symbiotic relationship between empire and canon, even earlier, Allan Bloom (1987), using French Enlightenment and Catholic thought as streams of intellectual argument, saw chaos and destruction in the path that inclusive-thinking, empathy-promoting intellectual elites were taking. “The unity, grandeur and attendant folklore of the founding heritage was attacked from so many directions in the last half-century that it gradually disappeared from daily life and from textbooks,” Bloom (1987) claims. “Openness to closedness is what we teach,” according to Bloom (1987), creating “cultural relativism” that “succeeds in destroying the West’s universal or intellectually imperialistic claims, leaving it to be just another culture” (p. 39). By implication, I am arguing that a substantive focus on canonical openness and interrogation of Westerners’ hegemonic role in subjugating darker and black-skinned peoples coupled with public policy worldwide

spilled over into issues of immigration and encouraged the United States, France, England, Belgium, Germany, and the Netherlands to become more attentive to the downtrodden and dispossessed among us.

## **Hegemony and Immigration**

Speaking and writing in the rubric of postmodernism, with its emphasis on “grand meta-narratives, nation-state hegemony, and monolithic ideologies,” scholars and public intellectuals began to argue that the “emphasis on single-perspective and unified visions only supports a colonial agenda that breeds intolerance of other views and spawns repression and violence against minorities at home and subject peoples abroad” (Rifkin, 2004, pp. 247–248). In light of such postmodern reasoning, Western countries began to change their behavior and social attitudes toward immigrants, but the change was not to be long-lived, given the appearance of terrorism in 2001, Al-Qaeda, Hezbollah, and train and subway bombings in Madrid in Spain and in England.

At the historical juncture of the 1980s and 1990s, however, elites played a crucial role in extending empathy into new domains of meaning and experience. Terry Eagleton (2003) implicitly pays tribute to that august group of academics and intellectuals when he opines that they aimed to “create space in which the dumped and disregarded can find a tongue” (p. 13). In 2000, according to Huntington (2004), “The British government’s Immigration and Nationality Directorate estimated that about 30 million people were smuggled into countries worldwide each year” (p. 179). As Huntington observes, “Both poverty and economic development promote immigration, and the plethora and relative cheapness of transportation modes make it feasible for more and more people both to migrate and to maintain ties with their country of origin” (p. 170).

One should not, however, miss the complicating variables surrounding the issue of immigration; it is sanguine to point out that even though immigrants flowed into Western countries for a variety of reasons, the story here is that Westerners were more welcoming in contradistinction to what is occurring today. This is a meaningful distinction to make because in 2000, empathy’s flame was burning more brightly, and immigration numbers attest to the fact: “In 1998, foreign-born people were 19 percent of the population in Switzerland, 9 percent in Germany, 10 percent in France, 4 percent in Britain, 17 percent in Canada, 23 percent in Australia, and 10 percent in the United States” (Huntington, 2004, p. 179).

### **Three Troubling Incidents**

Liberal policies toward immigrants and emigration would, of course, come to trouble Westerners in a post-9/11 world, as I will demonstrate later. But for now, it is important to stress that countries in Europe were open and welcoming to immigrants. In commenting on the rise and death of conservative Dutch politician Pim Fortuyn in 2002, Harm de Blij (2005) records that “the Netherlands had by some measures been the most liberal and accommodating among those countries receiving Muslim (and other) immigrants, its social policies, including those relating to drugs that are illegal elsewhere, creating an atmosphere of freedom and comfort” (p. 172). By 2004, about 1 million immigrants had arrived in the Netherlands in an overall population of 16 million (de Blij, 2005, p. 172). Dutch openness is but one remarkable manifestation of elites’ warmest regards for the sufferings of others.

Historical impetus of this phase of empathy was begun after World War II when Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, and other countries lost so many young boys to war. To help promote labor shortages, the countries began to import labor from Southern Europe in the late 1950s and 1960s. Although cheap labor came from Turkey and North Africa, and this change was propelled along by economic interests, a level of ethnic and cultural tolerance was also evident.

According to the European Commission, by 1999, fully 19 million people, about 5.1% of the total population of European Union (EU) countries, came from non-European countries (Rifkin, 2004, p. 251). By 1994, however, tolerance of immigrants in Europe had begun to show signs of diminishing. “Only 21 percent of Europeans polled in 2000 considered themselves to be ‘actively tolerant’ of immigrants” (Rifkin, 2004, p. 250). Great Britain, which had long been tolerant of outsiders, had also become somewhat less tolerant of immigrants.

One event in particular cast a troubling shadow over the prospects for a sustained era of good feeling in parts of Europe—the murder of Theo van Gogh.

#### **Amsterdam: Murder of Theo van Gogh**

“Theo and I never actually met again, but we used to call each other from time to time. He ignored my pleas that he get protection, and even joked about it. He told me, ‘Ayaan, you have no idea. I’ve been threatened for fifteen years. Everyone has threatened me: the Jews, the Christians, the Social Democrats, the Muslims—they’ve done it the most—and nothing has ever happened to me. Nothing is going to happen’” (Ali, 2007, p. 317).

So commented Theo van Gogh to Ayaan Hirsi Ali, the controversial Dutch politician who, with van Gogh, made the movie *Submission*, which disturbed the very fiber of radical Islamic values. But something terrible, almost unimaginable, happened to Theo van Gogh, the great-great-grandnephew of artist Vincent van Gogh, on Tuesday, November 2, 2004. van Gogh was “shot, stabbed and slashed across the throat by a suspected Islamic radical” (Higgins, 2004, p. A1; see also Ali, 2007). A note “tacked onto Mr. van Gogh’s chest with a knife included citations from the Quran in Arabic, but was written mostly in Dutch. It fulminated against ‘infidels,’ vowing death to Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a Somali-born Dutch legislator” (Higgins, 2004, p. A11).

When Ali (2007) learned that van Gogh had been murdered, she “started to cry . . . ran back to Iris’s room, closed the door and tried to breathe.” She “felt so helpless and shocked, so horrified” (pp. 318–319). Ali barely had time to collect her thoughts because she was also in grave danger. Her security detail appeared and warned her, “We have to leave, now” (Ali, 2007, p. 319). In many places, political, economic, and cultural leaders on both sides of the Atlantic have put the issue of immigration on the front burner in a serious way, especially in light of post-9/11 fears of radical Islam and terrorism.

Empathy was being tested. Would newly arriving immigrants to the Netherlands and other parts of Europe also “have to leave now”? Did van Gogh’s death weaken empathy’s already fragile and flickering flame? Clearly, the murder of Dutch filmmaker van Gogh by a 26-year-old Dutch Moroccan, Mohammed Bouyeri, who found the film *Submission* offensive, exacerbated issues over immigration and caused some citizens to see the plight of the dispossessed in a different light. Steyn (2006) writes that “radicalized Islamic compatriots” were “expert at exploiting the ‘tolerance’ of pluralist societies” and that the murder of van Gogh and the bombings in Madrid and London “were the opening shots of . . . a European civil war” (p. 38).

### *Reactions to van Gogh’s Murder*

Stef Blok, a member of parliament and chairman of a committee that reviewed policies toward immigrants in the Netherlands, called the brutal killing of van Gogh “a rude awakening” (*The Wall Street Journal*, 2004, p. 1), and Berlinski (2006) warned that Dutch response to the killing was faithful to their tradition of “bargaining with depravity,” “perversions of the noble Dutch tradition of accommodation and tolerance, one that dates from the Dutch Golden Age of the seventeenth century—the age of Erasmus and the birth of humanism—when Dutch art, trade, and science were among the world’s most acclaimed” (p. 21). Implicitly, Berlinski blames Netherlands’ elites for part of the “permissive” climate that gave birth to Bouyeri, who was

born and educated in Holland but who often “in writings and speeches” made “crude jokes about Jews and riled Muslims with scatological insults” (*The Wall Street Journal*, November 22, 2004).

Most critically, the killing of van Gogh opened “Dutch eyes to threat of terror” (*The Wall Street Journal*, 2004, p. 1). It was an intercultural moment that the Netherlands had not quite counted on. As *The Wall Street Journal* notes,

Like other former colonial powers in Europe, the Netherlands first drew immigrants mostly from former possessions. As the demand for cheap labor grew, a new wave of immigrants arrived from Turkey and North Africa. Initially, governments assumed they would one day leave. They didn't, and starting in the 1980s, the country switched towards a policy of assimilation. (Higgins, 2004, p. A11)

After the killing of van Gogh, a diminution in empathy occurred, and human consciousness took a different route. Western countries were forced to grapple keenly with their application of universal principles of brotherhood and sisterhood to unassimilated immigrants from North Africa, Turkey, and other places.

The Dutch government took some pretty drastic measures in response to the murder of van Gogh, including “deporting terrorist suspects, closing extremist mosques, and shutting down Islamist websites” (Berlinski, 2006, p. 29). Berlinski (2006) claims that despite police intervention and a few arrests, “Dutch politicians and civic officials displayed a public and almost parodic inability to recognize the significance of the murder or respond to it appropriately” (p. 29). By “respond to it appropriately,” Berlinski is referring to the belief that a harder line should have been taken against Bouyeri. Berlinski is very clear regarding her stance on immigrants, symbolism, culture, and empathy: “In the aftermath of the murder, the stories of perverted tolerance multiplied,” Berlinski regrets. To prove her case regarding an over-sympathetic Dutch response, Berlinski offers the following “now famous incident” as proof (p. 30).

Apparently, a Rotterdam artist, moved by anguish of the moment, created a mural inscribed with the following words: “Thou shalt not kill.” Outraged by the words, according to Berlinski (2006), Moroccan youths “gathered around the mural and spat on it” (p. 30). When a local leader of a mosque complained to the police that the words on the mural were “offensive and racist,” the mayor of Rotterdam “ordered the mural, not the Moroccan youths, removed by the police” (p. 30). Berlinski is most concerned about what she considers to be injuries to free speech in the land of Spinoza. According to her reckoning, this is proof positive of the damaging



effects of an overwrought empathy surrounding issues of immigration and culture. Thus, the notion of tolerance in Europe is changing conceptual frontiers in significant ways. And the murder of van Gogh is symptomatic of what can be construed as a trend away from immigration and deep empathy for immigrants.

De Blij (2005), also in most discouraging antiempathetic tones, writes that van Gogh's murder "had a major impact on Dutch opinion and was a reminder of the consequences a single act of terrorism can have on the dynamics of society—a point undoubtedly not lost on those returning to Europe with the experience gained in Iraq and elsewhere" (p. 172).

One critical thing stands out considerably in de Blij's (2005) comments: the fact that van Gogh's murder was defined and treated not as a crime but as an act of terror. In this regard, the murder of van Gogh not only underlined issues of free expression and individual liberties inside Western borders but also contributed to the shaping of cultural discourse about difference and empathy. The discourse, in turn, placed upon Western cultures an enormous immigration dilemma. This would not be the last time within a period of 3 years that something like the murder of van Gogh would galvanize Europeans and cause them to reassess their empathetic stances. And the connections would, once again, be linked to immigrants and immigration, especially to Muslims. Thus, another incident contributed to the redistribution of empathy—one borne of Paris burning. Would the consequences be too grave for empathy?

### **Paris Burning: Rioting by Muslim Youths**

In 2005, France was struggling to live up to its democratic principles and fully integrate its Muslims into all sections of national life. At least that was an ideological view prior to a wave of rioting that occurred in France in November 2005 following an October 27, 2005, incident involving teenagers Zyed Benna and Bouna Traore, who were electrocuted after climbing into an electrical substation in the Paris suburb of Clichy-sous-Bois. The youths were allegedly trying to hide from police, who were engaged in racial profiling, although policemen deny that that was the case. Following the incident, a wave of disturbances swept across France for about 3 months, challenging the social, political, cultural, and empathetic landscape of the country. By November 8, 2007, youths had burned more than 1,400 cars, authorities had brought into custody nearly 400 people, and at least 36 police officers had been wounded in Paris and other French cities, according to Edward M. Gomez (*World Views*, an international news and culture virtual magazine

[<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/blogs/worldviews/author?blogid=15&auth=48>]). Two days before the electrocution of Benna and Traore, French Interior Prime Minister and later president of France, Nicolas Sarkozy, visited the Paris suburb of Argenteuil to determine how measures were working against urban violence.

In assessing the social situation, Sarkozy said that “crime-ridden” neighborhoods (suburban areas typically referred to as *banlieues*) should be “cleaned with a power hose” and then described violent elements in Argenteuil as “gangrene” and “rabble.” Straight away, Sarkozy employed disease metaphors to characterize the demonstrators, and his language manifested a fissure in French attitudes toward Muslim youths. His language also shed light on a serious problem in France and called into question the limits of empathy. As I noted in Chapter 1, during much of human history, human beings have identified most with those who are near and close. As a consequence, sometimes self-interest and threats to the well-being of others can strain the limits of moral resources. Such was the case with some French men and women following the riots of 2005.

The French newspaper *Le Figaro* reported asymmetry between the escalation of violence and the limits of tolerance for French youths, as evidenced by the discourse of conservative politicians who called for the French Republic to “unite” in the face of unrest by Muslim youths. *The Wall Street Journal* (“French Sissies,” 2005) summed up the collective concern: “The riots have shaken France . . . and the unrest was of such magnitude that it has become a moment of illumination for French and Americans equally” (p. A10).

Included in the linguistic nets were immigrant youths of African, Arab, and/or Muslim background—all singled out because they not only looked the same but also were perceived as a threat to the civic and political order. The work of linguistic compression suggests that the sensibilities of the French were being sorely tested. Undoubtedly, the French were more than embarrassed because the unrest had called into question the distance between creed and deed regarding their attitudes toward immigrants and immigration.

*The Wall Street Journal* (“French Sissies,” 2005) read into the rioting “some longstanding conceits about the superiority of the French social model” that had “gone up in flames” (p. A10). Alec G. Hargreaves (2007) claims that “the long and tortuous route through which anti-discrimination policy (in France) has gradually developed illustrates all too clearly weaknesses of French discourse of integration. For years, many politicians on both the left and the right denied that discrimination was a serious problem in French society” (p. 3).

Although the French Revolution of 1789 “improved the lives of the peasants,” and soon after the revolution, “real freedom had begun to look

illusory” (Horne, 2005, p. 202), over the centuries, employing such symbolically potent and emotionally laded words as *liberté*, *égalité*, and *fraternité*, France profited greatly from this compelling empathetic symbolism. Some politicians “blamed the French ‘integration’ policies on the alleged unwillingness of minority ethnic groups to be integrated into French society” (Hargreaves, 2007, p. 1). This causal bifurcation of the failure of French integration and rioting by youths also carries an equally potent message about immigrants and immigration—“a landscape littered with . . . failed policy initiatives and social models,” according to Patrice de Beer (2005, p. 1).

“Failed policies” promoted a view of the world as rosier than statistics and facts attest. At the time of the rioting, for example, unemployment among immigrant youths in some areas was as high as 50%. This is a significant statistic when one considers the fact that the Muslim population in France in 2005 was “five million out of a total of about 60 million” (“French Sissies,” 2005, p. A10). When the rioting occurred, I could hear strong and resonant echoes of a friend’s voice enveloping the event. Whenever a French friend and I talked about race matters in the United States, she would quickly and forcefully say in her beautiful accent, “We don’t think in terms of race, we don’t talk about race. We are all French.” My friend’s fidelity to the ideology of France is testament to how well the ideology of France worked until November 2005, when the veneer began to smudge. In fairness to the French, one should bear in mind that France, in some ways, had tried, however, abstractly, to adopt universal principles that could give support for empathetic practices. The question was whether other events in Europe added more fuel to the flames of empathy. The historical dimension of discourse surrounding depictions of Prophet Mohammad brought other troubles and placed them on empathy’s shoulders.

### **Cartoons, Prophet Mohammad, and Empathy**

In Chapter 1, I argued that myths—religious and otherwise—can be used to justify our communicative behaviors. These may be Westerners’ employment of Christ’s injunction to “Go ye therefore into all the world” and preach the gospel in such far-flung places as Nigeria and the Philippines, or it may be a Hindu’s belief in a caste system that “has come to be the symbol of India’s own brand of human injustice, victims of a system that kept people alive in squalor” (Gannon, 2003, p. 73).

Regardless of our fidelity to religious systems, however different, religion has a strong pull on human beings worldwide, primarily because a lot of our identity is stored in religious symbols. And when fidelity to the expectations and tenets of a culture’s religion is broken, and when dignity or

“standing in community” is broken or perceived to be broken, there can be damage to reputation, a diminution of harmony, an intensification of emotions, and a general feeling of not being understood.

On September 17, 2005, such emotions surfaced as a result of the publication of inflammatory cartoons depicting Prophet Mohammad in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten*. And it was the beginning of one of the most unpalatable and disturbing episodes between Islam and the West. Muslims generally expressed horror and outrage over the cartoons while Westerners saw violations of freedom of speech in the row over the cartoons.

Things did not bode well for empathy. However, before discussing some of the scorching rhetoric that surfaced after the publication of the cartoons, it is important to explain how and why the events unfolded as they did. In marked contrast to the Paris riots that were spontaneous for the most part, the cartoons were accompanied by willfulness and by implication, a “clash of civilizations.” First, animating reasons for the event occurred innocently enough on September 17, 2005, when a writer could not find an illustrator for a book about the Prophet Muhammad. Taking up the perceptual cause of what was, to some Westerners’ way of thinking, an utter disregard for freedom of speech—a principle of Western culture that dates back to the time of Socrates, who drank hemlock in defense of his right to freedom of speech—in response, *Jyllands-Posten* published 12 cartoon drawings of Prophet Muhammad (Fattah, 2006, p. A13).

### *Reactions to Cartoons*

*Jyllands-Posten*’s rhetorical act galvanized the Muslim community. Once communities across the Middle East learned of the “satirizing” of the Prophet, meetings took place among the world’s 57 Muslim nations. In Mecca, the holiest of places in Islamic culture, leaders of the Organization of the Islamic Conference met and issued a joint communiqué that spoke to the abuse Muslims felt over the publication of the cartoons. Muslim leaders expressed “concern at rising hatred against Islam and Muslims and condemned the recent incident of desecration of the image of the Holy Prophet Muhammad in the media of certain countries” (p. 1).

In moral and cultural terms, it is important to note how Muslim leaders interpreted the incident as well as how they framed the language used to articulate their injury. Although the cartoons were most in contention, leaders employed spacious rhetorical framing that might have provided Muslims in the Middle East with just the reason they needed to present the case of the cartoons to the larger public. However, had Danish political leaders met

earlier with representatives of Muslim groups, the outrage might have been confined to Denmark. Lebanese-born Ahmed Akkari, of Denmark, invited the Danish government to take action, but such action was not forthcoming (Fattah, 2006). In fact, for more than 2 months, Akkari and other Muslims worked to secure an audience with Danish officials; in the process, they collected 17,000 signatures and delivered them to the office of the prime minister. But still Danish political leaders did not grant Muslims a hearing.

Changing venue, in early December 2005, Akkari and others “decided then that to be heard, it must come from influential people in the Muslim world” (*The New York Times*, February 2, 2006, p. A13). At that stage, the group flew to Egypt and met with grand mufti Muhammad Sayid Tantawy; Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit; and Amr Moussa, the head of the Arab League. Encounters with this heady group finally got the attention of the Danish ambassador, who was summoned to Cairo in Egypt for a discussion of the cartoons. Thus, for 2 months, grassroots Muslims worldwide remained unaware of the molten lava that was about to spread, and that would bring the “intolerableness of things” to the foreground and challenge empathy’s heated impulse. To make matters worse, on January 10, 2006, *Magazinet*, a Christian newspaper in Norway, published the cartoons, using freedom of press as an ideological reason for doing so, causing Saudi Arabia to withdraw its ambassador from Denmark and initiate a boycott of Danish goods.

By late January to early February 2006, Western journalists and newspapers vied for the opportunity to demonstrate the primacy of freedom of the press. *The New York Times* (Fattah, 2006) reports that by early 2006, at least 14 countries had reprinted the cartoons, creating a smoky road for empathy. Here is where matters became very complicated. It was difficult for Westerners to accept the proposition that one could not, at a time when reason reigned, reprint cartoons in the interest of freedom of the press. Many Westerners believed that not doing so was an assault on reason itself. *The Wall Street Journal* (February 11–12, 2006) wrote that *Jyllands-Posten* and other Western dailies published the cartoons as “a way of addressing the Islamist threat to civil liberties in Europe” even though this was “hardly ideal” (p. A8).

Despite *The Wall Street Journal*’s seemingly empathetic portrayal of the events surrounding the publication of the cartoons in the *Journal*, the newspaper soon raised an argument of immense importance: the radicalization of two seemingly antagonistic cultural stances on the presentation of information: when, where, and under what circumstances. I am referring to the language of empathetic struggle borne of ideology that threw the event into sharper relief. That is, a stance on the role of church and state in furthering political ends and civic discourse and behavior. This is a second serious

outcome of the publishing of the cartoons, coupled with a clash between premodern and postmodern cultural and political tenets and beliefs.

Bernard Lewis (2002) queries whether “Islam is an obstacle to freedom, to science, to economic development?” (p. 156). Furthermore, Lewis argues that the “inflexibility and ubiquity of the Islamic clergy” has a deleterious effect on not only postmodern progress but also on cultural perceptions of Muslims. In a sense, by implication, the problem with Westerners not empathizing fully with the aftermath of the publishing of the cartoons had a great deal to do with what Lewis terms “the place of religion and of its professional exponents in the political order” (p. 157).

And this is precisely where clerical rights and premodernism versus postmodernism enter the proverbial symbolic warfare between Islam and Western ideology. How could elites in the West empathize with an “obsolete, incompatible, weary and worn system” at odds with progress and everything that the West stands for? Did not a denial of the publishing of the cartoons and Muslims’ resentment over the tampering with Western propositions about the nature of such precious virtues as democracy, equality, approaches to technology and information, and a myriad of other factors invite jeopardy?

Armed with beliefs in Western values of free expression, newspapers throughout Europe led with such headlines as “The Muslim Fury,” “The Rage of Islam Sweeps Europe,” and “The Clash of Civilizations” is coming (*The Wall Street Journal*, February 8, 2006, p. A16). Amir Taheri (2006) noted in *The Wall Street Journal* that the “rage machine” rumbled when the Muslim Brotherhood—a political organization that is virtually outlawed in Egypt—told sympathizers to “take the field”; translation: issue a fatwa against Denmark and Scandinavian consulates and shops.

Within days, Syrian Baathist, the Islamic Liberation Party, the Movement of the Exiles, and other Muslims with and without strict organizational ties made it excruciatingly clear that Prophet Muhammad could not be insulted and disrespected with visual depictions by the Christian West. Thus, notions of brotherhood and sisterhood were sacrificed to make Muslims conform to the commands of moral law. Some writers and scholars questioned the theological basis on which such injunctions were based. Taheri (2006) recited a long list of depictions of the Prophet from “a miniature by Sultan Muhammad-Nur Bokhari, showing Muhammad riding Buraq, a horse with the face of a beautiful woman,” to “a painting showing Archangel Gabriel guiding Muhammad into Medina” (p. A16). Taheri, of course, omitted one important fact from his recitation: the power of geopolitical and cultural events to rearrange the furniture of the mind—creating, elevating, and intensifying issues that had lain dormant for years.

### *A Clash of Civilizations?*

When one adds memory, history, ethnicity, and Muslims' perceptions of Western disdain and attempts to impose values of liberalism and freedom upon the Middle East, it is understandable why the narrative of Muhammad became more sociological and overlain with ecclesiastical and psychic tension. Furthermore, one can understand why empathy could not gingerly be inserted into the cultural climate and made manifest to those who saw ghosts of the Ottoman Empire, Suez Canal, and invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq assaults on Islam at every turn. Depictions of the Prophet Muhammad were rightly or wrongly seen as being of powerful Western instrumentation.

As I noted previously, the discourse of the West clearly reflected Muslims' intolerance of modern ideas of human, civil, and political rights. Muslims' reactions to the cartoons offered the best example of their disdain for Western notions of inclusion, mutual respect, and civility. Despite "Islam's Golden Age" and the fact that "Islam presided over a burst of exuberant scientific and philosophical inquiry" "for a few centuries at the turn of the first millennium," attentiveness to reasoning and such heady intellectual activities as "free-flowing inquiry and debate" had long since disappeared and served as a source of irritation between the West and Islam" (Murray, 2003, p. 400). Murray (2003) adds that "the burst of accomplishment in the golden age was aberrational, not characteristic, of Islamic culture" (p. 401).

Lewis (2002) writes that "in most tests of tolerance, Islam, both in theory and in practice, compares unfavorably with the Western democracies as they have developed during the last two or three centuries" (p. 114). In the eyes of some Westerners, including Murray and Lewis, both implicitly and explicitly, there is not a goodness of fit between an Islamic culture that devalues "free-flowing inquiry and debate" and Western culture that values it. Following this line of reasoning, a first requirement, and perhaps a harsh rule for the West to empathize significantly with Islam, is for the latter to push, however reluctantly, toward the West's and North America's "golden age." According to this line of thought, this is what the march of progress both invites and demands. This argument systematically and urgently pushes the outer limits of moral worth in the area of immigration. But what would this portend?

### **Western Culture and the Immigration Dilemma**

Increasingly, immigration and immigrants are viewed as sounding the death knell for Western civilization. And something is straining empathy, as evidenced by the growing worrying titles of books coming out of the United States and Europe. Immigrants present "challenges to America's national

identity” (Huntington, 2004), are “a menace in Europe” (Berlinski, 2006), are creating a “state of emergency” (Buchanan, 2006) and a “day of reckoning” (Buchanan, 2007), and are signaling “the end of the world as we know it” (Steyn, 2006). As these titles suggest, the intellectual tone of such writings is not especially calming. The rise of immigrants is particularly threatening to North America and Europe.

In his book *Who Are We?* Huntington (2004) argues pointedly that the “subnational, dual-national, and transnational identities” of the 1960s witnessed an erosion of “the preeminence of national identity” (p. xv) that September 11 “dramatically” helped to restore. But September 11 is symptomatic of a larger concern that confronts the United States. In particular, the primacy of “Anglo-Protestant culture, not the importance of Anglo-Protestant people,” gradually is falling from view, and this should be considered dangerous, some argue.

Huntington (2004) laments the fact that a once-proud nation that was ever so faithful to “the Anglo-Protestant culture and the Creed of the founding settlers” (p. xvii) is being whittled away and is becoming marginal to the concerns of a great nation. The presence of immigrants coming from Mexico is changing America “into a culturally bifurcated Anglo-Hispanic society with two national languages” (p. 221) and toward “the demographic *reconquista* of areas that Americans took from Mexico by force in the 1830s and 1840s” (p. 221). In a word, Huntington, like Buchanan (2006), fears the “Hispanization” of American culture (Buchanan, 2007; Berlinski, 2006; Steyn, 2006).

## **Lessons Learned**

Thus, the importance of demography as destiny is brought home in dramatic form in the numbers that both Huntington (2004) and Buchanan (2006) cite. Huntington notes, for example, that “about 640,000 Mexicans legally migrated to the United States in the 1970s, 1,656,000 in the 1980s, and 2,249,000 in the 1990s” (p. 223). The potency of these numbers drives home some crucial considerations and lessons about the relationship that obtains among “geography matters,” culture, identity, and empathy. But what are some inflicted consequences?

The first one is the “not business-as-usual” lesson. During normal, business-as-usual cultural times, empathy can help to absolve differences. However, when numerical balance and such dynamic events as rioting in France, September 11, debate over Prophet Muhammad’s cartoon, and other activities pose a threat to a culture, people hew very close to the center of Hume’s concentric circles, toward the near and away from the intellectually and



culturally distant. We saw such dynamics occur following the breakup of the Soviet Union and the demise of Yugoslavia in 1991. When Marshal Tito ruled Yugoslavia, Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, and Bosnians lived together in relative peace and harmony, not only because Tito ruled with an iron fist but also because matters of identity and memory were suppressed. However, after Tito died, people who had lived together peaceably returned to a fidelity of memory. Issues of nationality, identity, and culture reappeared. When elevated, such events present empathy with perhaps its greatest challenge and raise a bottom-line question about the causes, circumstances, and cultural imprinting of empathy. Does true empathy ever really exist across cultures, or does it merely lie dormant, waiting for an evocative opportune moment to become resonant again and act at will?

I raise this trenchant question because history is strewn with examples of nations and people living harmoniously with one another until issues of threat to the civic order or to cultural identity reemerge, creating havoc and exclusion at best and brutality at worst. The message that culturally the United States and Europe are not what they used to be is repeated with keen new intensity and interest daily by conservative writers and pundits. Identity, myths, and memory matter deeply and are implicated in the consequences that one little act can have on the stability of empathy. Empathy's mission, whether it can accept it or not, is to make people thrive more robustly during moments of heightened threats to the moral side.

The second lesson that immigration, Hispanization, and Islamization teach is that the arrival of new ideas, customs, and traditions in an original venue can undermine traditional ways of thinking, feeling, and being in another. Nowhere is this orientation more sharply felt than in what is going on in Europe and North America today. Once upon a time, in the 1960s, before the migration of peoples from Mexico to the United States and before the migration of peoples from North Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and the Caribbean to Europe, threats to Western ideas were rarely commented upon. One reason for this, of course, was that multiculturalism, the politics of recognition, and a quest for people to simply "be" had not found clear expression in the world because North Americans and Europeans, to a large extent, imposed their culture upon subject peoples—that is, the culture of colonial masters and original "settlers," to use Huntington's (2004) phrase.

The third lesson, demography matters—that is, the effect of birth rates on feelings of empathy—is dramatically exemplified in Berlinski's (2006) dirge at the beginning of her book, *Menace in Europe*, titled "No Past, No Future, No Worries" (p. 129). She paints a vivid and moving description of what it was like for one to grow up proud and Italian in the city of Perugia. While wandering the streets of Perugia, Berlinski recalled prideful moments

of stopping in the “Pasticceria Sandri, a ravishing, high-ceilinged pastry shop built in 1871” (p. 129). As she continued her delectable tour of the sweets shop, she “took in the pyramids of chocolates on filigreed silver platters, wrapped in sparkling blue-and-silver foil,” the trademark of Perugia chocolates worldwide (p. 129). Soon, a sensorium of memories enveloped her, evoking not only gustatory pleasures but also visual, tactile, and auditory ones. She saw “exuberantly frescoed walls” and witnessed dolls, marionettes, music boxes, and other things that evoked in her and other Italians “nostalgic memories of that shop” (p. 129).

As Berlinski (2006) came to the end of her nostalgic journey, she observed, “The place was, clearly, designed to delight children” (p. 129). The problem, of course, was “there were no children in the Pasticceria Sandri. Not one. Nor were there any on the streets of Perugia” (p. 129). Adding a measure of quasi-scientific scrutiny worthy of those who delight in the power of numbers, Berlinski offered that there were no children; she had “looked carefully” (p. 129).

Other scholars and pundits have also drawn similar parallels to demography where they anticipate a new Europe filled with Islam and Muslims that may ultimately end Europe and Europeans as we know it and them. A central reason for this view is that Europe is not reproducing itself. In *State of Emergency*, Buchanan (2006) dubs the continent of Europe “Eurabia” and writes,

Welcome to Eurabia. Twenty million Muslims reside there and are the fastest growing minority on the smallest continent where the native-born are failing to reproduce themselves. Europe is facing the crisis of post-Christian civilization [through] birth control, abortion, and sterilization, the suicide potions of modernity; its population is aging, shrinking, and dying, as its need for workers to sustain its generous health and pensions programs and take care of its retired and elderly forces European governments to bring in millions of Muslims. (p. 206)

### **Tensions, Population, and Assimilation**

While it is the case, again, using Hume’s concentric circles as a model, that Europeans and North Americans should be concerned about dwindling population rates, the most compelling thing about the discourse surrounding the alarm is its bellicosity and its pitting of Muslim and Mexican immigrants against “indigenous” groups. As such, discourse of immigration, by implication, is marked by religiosity and anti-Muslim expressive oppositional framing, centering the problem on immigrants and immigration rather than

on failed public policy. Of course, it must be noted that some oppositional writers tilt in this direction.

Buchanan (2006), for example, writes that “behind the radicalism of these Arabs is a failure to assimilate them” (p. 206). Of course, by “radicalism of these Arabs,” Buchanan is referring to the March 11 Madrid bombers, September 11 attacks, and other incidents that speak to the failure of Western culture to see the coming cultural crisis. In this regard, however, the underlining tenor is this: Had the “radicals” been more like us, such things would not have happened. And empathy’s flames would not be flickering.

These caveats notwithstanding, the enemy is defined sometimes as Muslim, sometimes as Turkish, and sometimes as North African. But the primary attack is on archenemy “radical Islam,” because September 11, bombings in London and Madrid, and the war in Iraq offer striking emotional undergirding for public understanding of the “menace” to Western civilization. Wilson’s (1993) notion that “tolerance and intolerance are two sides of the same coin, each growing out of the attachment we develop to family and kin” (p. 50), has a special importance to the way empathy is framed regarding demographics as a threat to Western culture and identity. Fukuyama asks whether the seriousness of demography and other threats to Western values and identity “may constitute a Rubicon that will be very hard to re-cross” (qtd. in Buchanan, 2006, p. 208). Will the aftermath of population shifts jolt the West beyond recovery?

Whether this occurs or not, it is certainly the case that present-day discourse, with increasing frequency, collides over such issues as immigrant and immigration danger to the West, greatly facilitated by demography that has altered humans’ level of empathy toward one another. Just consider some recent evidence. In Teviso, in the northern part of Italy, a city councilman, clearly exercised over the immigrant situation there, resorted to the discourse of the Third Reich to reveal his level of disdain, disgust, and fear of immigrants. Said Giorgio Bettio, at a public council meeting, “With immigrants, we should use the same system the SS used, punish 10 of them for every slight against one of our citizens” (Pullella, 2007, p. 1).

Although Bettio spoke freely and unlovingly, Pullella (2007) reports that he was “roundly condemned by politicians and editorialists” (p. 1). Rhetorically, it is fascinating to observe how Bettio frames his discourse. Despite the fact that many immigrants to Italy are indeed citizens, it is important to observe that they are framed as being “outsiders” instead of “insiders” and privileged to all that empathy bears. The matter is further exacerbated by rising crime rates against “Italian citizens” by Roma; in fact, as *The Week* (“Italy,” 2007) reports, “Italians have finally lost patience with the half-million migrants from Romania who now live among them” (p. 15).

Italians “don’t like the ragged Romanians who pounce on drivers at traffic lights, wielding buckets and sponges. They’re enraged by statistics showing that Romanians are responsible for two-thirds of all car thefts, burglaries, and muggings” (“Italy,” 2007, p. 15). This passage is instructive. In such places as Germany, England, and France, statistics about crime and immigrants are congruent. However, the thing that really riled the Italians and caused dormant attitudes toward Roma to reach a crisis point centers on the arrest in November 2007 of a young Roma for the murder of a 47-year-old indigenous woman.

The indigenous woman’s murder became emblematic of pent-up frustrations regarding what Buchanan (2006) calls an “invasion.” Clearly, the discourse of the period is filled with the intensity of statements befitting an invasion. For empathy, this issue has existential resonance because when people feel as if they have no way out of a sociocultural situation that they themselves have spun, it is easier to appeal to cultural differences rather than to sameness. In northern Italy, people “are worried by rises in crime rates and unemployment” and have “called for crackdowns on immigrants” (Pullella, 2007, p. 1). The *Economist* (“Demographic Tear,” 2007) notes “that immigration accounts for so much of the predicted rise in Britain’s population that makes discussing the problem of overcrowding politically difficult, for migration frequently tops the list of voters’ concerns these days” (p. 66).

In still another instance, to add fuel to the fire, in November 2007, French suburbs exploded again, although these disturbances did not match the intensity and scale of the 2005 riots (Sciolino, 2007, p. 1). Such incidents did much to accelerate and underscore the distance between Western values and non-Western values, highlighting the fact that Europe and the West are no longer teacher and everyone else pupils. It is sometimes very difficult for Westerners to accept these new habits of mind. This is one unexpected result of the contact between immigrants and nonimmigrant populations in such places as France, Germany, Amsterdam, and London. This new approach to host countries is then a key factor in the relations between former colonialists and former subject peoples from North Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and other places. At the height of Western dominance, before the advent of globalization, a push toward multiculturalism, and a prideful reduction in learning and speaking the colonizer’s language, it was easier for empires to enforce their folkways, norms, and standards of and for behavior upon indigenous people.

David Brooks (2006) put his finger on the whole notion of embracing the worldview of dominant cultures when he wrote in response to events surrounding the Danish cartoons, “We in the West were born into a world that reflects the legacy of Socrates and the agora. In our world, images, statistics and arguments swarm around from all directions. There are movies and blogs,

books and sermons. There's the profound and the vulgar, the high and the low" (p. A27). By implication, it is clear which cultures are designated as high and which cultures are designated as low. But where is space for the incorporation of other cultures' ways of doing and being? Of some semblance of empathy? Must the dominant cultural legacy always remain supreme? Or is there space for negotiation and celebration of difference? Can there be modes of harmonization? Must one culture monopolize others regardless of their advanced technology, intellectual accomplishments, and nobility of purpose?

A lessening of Western cultural identity markers and impact is also a rapier-like reason for conflict between former colonizers and immigrants. Undoubtedly, it is troubling for those who believe in Western triumphalism and for those who perceive of their culture as vibrant and forward looking to be snubbed by a "pernicious and corrupting culture" (Lewis, 2002, p. 135). The Middle East, as Lewis (2002) gleefully points out, in the area of music, "with the exception of some Westernized enclaves—remains a blank on the itinerary of the great international virtuosos as they go on their world tours" (p. 136).

Similarly, in the areas of such expressive creations as the visual arts, painting, clothing, uniforms, shoes and hats, literature, dramatists, and historians—all these were "of no interest" and yet "clearly a cultural rejection" in Middle Easterners' scheme of social and cultural change. Lewis's (2002) point is that Middle Easterners translated things from the West that were useful, such as "primarily medicine, astronomy, chemistry, physics, mathematics, and also philosophy" (p. 139), and rejected cultural artifacts such as drama and literature.

Lewis's (2002) commentary applies to pre-21st-century happenings, but it is interesting and instructive for how we view the confrontation between Westerners and immigrants. Why the rejection of the West given that "modern Western civilization is the first to embrace the whole planet" (p. 150)? "The dominant civilization is Western, and Western standards therefore define modernity" (p. 150). But not necessarily in the eyes of everyone. It is this crucial intersection of culture that is most concerning for empathy's sake. Westerners, seen through the eyes of such scholars as Lewis, have difficulty understanding how "Western freedom . . . freedom of the mind from constraint and indoctrination, to question and inquire and speak; freedom of the economy from corrupt and pervasive mismanagement; freedom of women from male oppression; freedom of citizens from tyranny—that underlies so many of the troubles of the Muslim world" (p. 159) cannot be embraced *by* the Muslim world.

Even Muslims educated in the West have "retreated in disgust from the inconclusiveness and chaos of our [Westerners'] conversation" (Brooks,

2006, p. A27). Immigrants all have “retreated from the agora into an exaggerated version of Muslim purity” (Brooks, 2006, p. A27). Media are also keenly implicated in the heat generated over how the choices we make about others influence how we see them—both behaviorally and symbolically. To what extent does empathy, or its absence, pervade mainstream media? This question will be addressed in the next chapter.