

DARING TO SUGGEST THAT ALL CULTURES AREN'T EQUAL

The Acting Provost of DePaul University issues a formal censure against me.

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It is a common canard among the educated cognoscenti that all cultures are equal. Indeed, a few weeks after writing an article in which I declared that not all cultures were equal, the Acting Provost of DePaul University—where I am a full tenured professor of philosophy—issued what I and many others considered to be a formal censure against me. She declared that at her university it is considered an accepted truism that all **individuals are valued equally**, and that she was truly disheartened that a member of the academic community would assert that “not all cultures are indeed equal.”

I had stated that some cultures are abysmally inferior and regressive based on their comprehensive philosophy and fundamental principles, or, lack thereof—that guide or fail to protect the inalienable rights of their citizens.

Therein lay the category mistake that an educated academic along with countless others commit conflating the individual with the cultural. A culture may be described as a multiplicity of complex systems that include the arts, laws, customs, practices, norms, mores, beliefs, knowledge, and human capabilities acquired by human-beings in society. Culture also includes language, ethical systems, and religious institutions. One can indeed say that all persons are endowed with equal and intrinsic moral worth as human beings which they may corrupt by committing morally egregious acts; but as human beings, they are possessed of inviolable moral worth and dignity.

It is, however, a category mistake to transfer this innate respect and reverence for the individual on to the landscape of culture which is not an indivisible whole, and which possesses none of the requisite attributes of individuals that make them deserving of such unassailable respect. Persons' identities are not reducible to the practices of their cultures. Some cultural practices are downright horrific and evil; some are better than others. Persons in their respective cultures are free to identify themselves with those cultural practices that align themselves with their moral identities, and distances themselves from those they find repulsive.

The United States of America is not a perfect civilization; however, as a rights bearing culture in which the inalienability of rights are observed, a country in which civil liberties such as freedom of speech (for now) is still upheld, freedom of conscience, and freedom of religious association or lack thereof respected, it is vastly superior to barbaric and primitive cultures that have yet to discover the individual and his or her inviolate dignity. The United States is a republic devoted to the inalienability of those rights that are conducive to human survival and flourishing. The United States, through its Constitution and Bill of Rights, is the first political system to discover the direct correlation between the rational nature of man qua man, and the exact political milieu in which that nature has to properly live and function *if* it is to live rather than perish.

Sudan, Nigeria, Mauritania, Libya and Algeria—all countries which still practice and/or tolerate chattel slavery by Arab and black Muslims against other Muslims and Christians—are not the moral, political or cultural equals of the United States, Israel, Great Britain and, say, France. Those countries are vastly superior to Saudi Arabia or Iran, or North Korea and Gaza, which do not permit religious reciprocity. Its political leaders permit the beheading of homosexuals in the streets, legalize torture, and have some of the most egregious records of gender inequality in the world. In the cases of Iran, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, we witness them as sponsors of world-wide terrorism, and of placing restrictions on civil liberties and a free press.

Cannibalistic Aztec culture could never and will never be the cultural equal of any civilized and free culture existing anywhere in the world today. Cultures that permit freedom of association, respect equality for all citizens and legal residents before the law, that uphold gender equality as an unsalable moral axiom, that allow individuals to cultivate their unique life plans—generally speaking—cultures that have discovered the fact that that an environment in which freedom and liberty are *the* milieu in which the individual needs to cultivate his or her rational nature qua human being and live an optimal existence, are undoubtedly, superior cultures, morally, spiritually and politically speaking.

It is a mark of sheer cognitive malarkey to claim that all cultures are equal. Just as some cultures are technologically more advanced than others, so some are politically more distinguished in their record on individual rights and the protection of private property and personal liberties than others. Rape cultures, that is, cultures in which rape is sanctioned by law such as in several parts of Pakistan and Afghanistan, are not moral equivalents of any western democratic countries in which rape, though committed by moral deviants, is illegal and punishable by objective law.

Brunei practices a Sharia penal code under Islamic law that allows death or stoning for adultery, homosexuality and even apostasy. Hamas continues to pose an existential threat to Israel by pounding the latter, (unprovoked), with a barrage of deadly rockets so often that one can barely keep track of the war attacks. Hamas routinely arrests and tortures peaceful critics of its totalitarian government with impunity. It is a blatant advocate and practitioner of Jihadism. There is no culture, so to speak, inside Gaza. It is defined, incidentally, by its absence of any significant life and culture. Nevertheless, even countries that lack a significant culture can wreak havoc on the lives of others. A rich culture is potent because it creates life. One that is an ecological sociopolitical ballast, or worse, evil, can destroy life.

The question remains, too, of not only how to think about cultures that are unequal to others but: what to do about those that are evil; cultures that exist as moral rogue states that betray the civilizational maturity expected by an international order that protects the well-being of the global commons? We are talking here of morally inverted states that pose a serious threat to the international order; evil cultures that are political sinkholes that lie outside the process of history, and that are reverting to pre-modern ages. The goals of such cultures —among other things—are to eradicate the individual, and practices of freedom and liberty from the earth.

Evil cultures are drainage systems that tax the existential, spiritual and psychological resources of their citizens who must expend a disproportionate amount of energy just to stay alive—let alone flourish.

So, what is the antidote? In a forthcoming article on moral rogue states that pose existential threats to the global commons, countries that violate the conditions of their own sovereignty which is secured by objective constraints of justice, I will outline and philosophically defend a process of what I call: ***global incarceration***. This involves an ethical defense of placing intolerable, incorrigible and politically inverted countries into a state of political receivership by any free and civilized country willing and able to do so based on criteria of political expediency, and military and technological capability.

Until such time, let us rid ourselves of the simplistic egalitarian idea that all cultures are equal. That some are moral and political sinkholes from which millions seek to flee is obvious. That such escapees or freedom seekers aspire to self-actualize in other cultures that, in their judgments, are better suited to their aspirations, hopes and dreams constitutes enough proof that some cultures are inimical to human well-being, and others better suited for the development and practice of human agency.

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