

# The Injustice of Multiculturalism

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## Abstract

In the context of rapidly advancing globalization, multiculturalism today faces a turning point. As market principles become dominant, and profit and national interest are seen to be identical and given priority—in the guise of the acceptance of social inequality and the promotion of individual self-responsibility, of the cutting of welfare budgets and rising disparities—typical neo-liberalism is evident in Japan too, especially post-September 11, under the Koizumi and Abe governments. This may at first glance seem to conflict with the pioneering multiculturalisms seen in Canada, Australia, and elsewhere, with multiculturalism being pressured to change by neo-liberalism, as under the Howard government in Australia. However, it is necessary to keep in mind that multiculturalism has been an adaptive response to globalization. In this paper, by focusing on the colonialism contained within both globalization and multiculturalism, and by clarifying the complicated relationships and ambiguities of globalization and multiculturalism, I lay the groundwork for seeking out multiculturalism's futures and possibilities.

## 1.

This is our third international symposium on multiculturalism. The first was on 'Multiculturalism and nationalism in Asia', the second on 'Diverse multiculturalisms', and this time, our theme is 'Multiculturalism and social justice'. Some of you may feel it strange that the first presentation of a symposium on 'social justice' should be titled 'The injustice of multiculturalism'. It may be that when I was given the theme of 'social justice and multiculturalism', and asked to provide a title for my presentation, I responded under the influence of a fixed idea of 'justice'.

I think this fixed idea was like a feeling that came from various experiences through my life, that 'nothing much good eventuates from talking about justice'. From the Second World War to the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, and the Iraq War, wars of invasion have all been conducted in the name of justice. In the Socialist Bloc too, oppression and cruel action unfolded in the name of justice. That 'justice is but rhetoric deployed by the strong in the pursuit of their own interests' is a clear lesson for those who lived through the ages of war and socialism. To discuss injustice rather than justice would be to discuss actuality, and would also allow us to avoid the hypocrisy and self-delusions that arise when we discuss justice... But on the other hand, I must

also recognize that when I am impelled to act, or when I am moved to write, in most cases, it is by anger towards injustice. I am thus affected by some concept of justice. This is something of a dilemma, but whatever may be the case, can it not be expected that a discourse on justice will lead us into confusion? It seems that justice is always destined to be a point of contention.

I have no intention here of setting out a theory of justice. I would be pleased if you could firstly take this title, 'The injustice of multiculturalism', as being indicative of my position on multiculturalism, following on my first presentation on 'Multiculturalism and "neo"-colonialism', and my second presentation on 'Multiculturalism and globalization' in this series of symposia. Secondly, it is expressive of my ambition to advance debate even just a step forwards. My position on multiculturalism is spelled out in, for example, 'Examining multilingualism and multiculturalism from Asia' (Nishikawa Nagao, Kang Sang-Jung and Nishi Masahiko (eds.), *How to overcome the twentieth century—with reference to multilingualism and multiculturalism*, Heibonsha, 2000). The 'Asia' in that paper is not something that exists in reality. But by setting up the fictional perspective of Asia, it firstly becomes possible to look at things from the side of indigenous peoples and migrants and residents of former colonies, people who were not granted appropriate positions within the discourse of multiculturalism. Secondly, by questioning why Asia, which presents overwhelming cultural diversity, is ignored in the debate on multiculturalism, the ideological nature of the multicultural discourse produced in the USA, Canada, Australia, or former colonies of the British Empire becomes apparent. Thirdly, the historical reality of the multicultural exchanges practiced in Asia from long before the terms culture or multiculturalism were created allows us to glimpse another possibility for multiculturalism. The perspective of Asia also should turn our attention towards the question of multiculturalism in former colonies in Africa, Central and South America, and elsewhere. Fourthly, I think the perspective of Asia makes us consider how multiculturalism signifies a turning away from a Eurocentric view of history (the in-itself ideological term 'Asianization' used in Australia's multicultural policies has an unanticipated range, for example).

My title, 'The injustice of multiculturalism', presupposes the existence, which needs verification, of 'multiculturalism's injustice'. And once 'the injustice of multiculturalism' is presupposed, 'multiculturalism's justice' would then need to be discussed in relation to its injustice. Keeping these perspectives in mind, in this presentation, I would like to consider the question of multiculturalism's changes in the age of globalization. Almost a half-century has passed since the term multiculturalism appeared in 1965. That its meaning and function could but change in the current restructuring of the world was the main thrust of my previous presentation.

## 2.

It can be said that Canadian and Australian national multicultural policies were begun in the name of justice. The first declaration of multiculturalism in 1971, a parliamentary statement by Canadian

Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, was made in the political context of the normalization of relations between Canada's two founding peoples (English and French) (multiculturalism in the context of bilingualism). Thus as a declaration of multiculturalism, it was ambiguous and not entirely comprehensive. But even so, it began by confirming Canada's cultural and ethnic complexity, and adequately expressed the conviction that stabilization of individual ethnic identity through multiculturalism promoted 'national integration', and could therefore provide a basis for an equal and just society. Over a decade later, the multicultural policies indicated in Trudeau's statement were further clarified and concretized in the 1988 Multiculturalism Act. Based on a reading of the principles and practical measures listed in that Act, by that point in time, the main emphasis of Canadian multiculturalism had shifted from cultural freedom and diversity to concrete issues such as social justice and equality, and the integration of ethnic minorities.

I think that today, we will be able to listen to specialists, including Paul Dumouchel, speak about the recent situation of Canadian multiculturalism. My impression is that there was a high period, between the establishment of the Multiculturalism Act (which even so required over ten years to be realized) and the formal 1998 apology to the Canadian indigenous peoples (First Nations) over past discriminatory policies against them. Thereafter there came a kind of reactionary period, as in Europe and Australia, with frequent harassment of and violence against indigenous peoples and Asian immigrants. Now we are in a period not of new policies and principles, but rather when overall adjustment and revisions (like the renewal under the Chrétien government) are taking place. It is my view that in the course of this overall adjustment and revision, contradictions that were inherent in Canada's multiculturalism, which arose as a kind of political compromise, are again becoming an issue. Let me point out two things. Firstly, there is the question of ethnic conflict. This was always explicit in Quebec province's orientation towards separation or independence, but the question's severity is magnified by the fact that Quebec's policies are not at all welcomed by indigenous people (shown, for example, by opposition to the James Bay project, which would construct a massive dam in indigenous areas). Secondly, there is the problem that the relationship between the freedom of ethnic groups and individual freedom of choice has not been made clear. This was already apparent in Trudeau's declaration, but it remains one of the aporias of multiculturalism, and today, at the same time that it is still a theoretical issue, it also threatens multicultural policies in the context of rapid globalization.

In the case of Australia, which adopted multicultural policies somewhat later than Canada in 1973, just as the transition from the White Australia policy to multiculturalism was dramatic, the changes in multiculturalism are also striking. Australia's *National agenda for a multicultural Australia* (1989), which corresponds to Canada's Multiculturalism Act of 1988, refers to three dimensions of multiculturalism. Alongside 'cultural autonomy' and 'economic efficiency', 'social justice' is clearly stated. Let me cite that section below.

"The Commonwealth Government has identified three dimensions of multicultural policy:

1. Cultural identity: the right of all Australians, within carefully defined limits, to express and share their individual cultural heritage, including their language and religion;
2. Social justice: the right of all Australians to equality of treatment and opportunity, and the removal of barriers of race, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, gender or place of birth; and
3. Economic efficiency: the need to maintain, develop and utilize effectively the skills and talents of all Australians, regardless of background.”

The three dimensions mutually support each other. But at the same time, they are also mutually limiting. Setting aside the question of whether we call this Australian-like or not, it indicates a kind of liberalism. In the section on cultural identity, caution is clear in the reference to ‘carefully defined limits’, and while the reference to ‘social justice’ is phrased in striking fashion, what is referred to here is ‘equality of treatment and opportunity’, and ‘the removal of barriers’. These are not directly connected to social assistance or social welfare, and further, both of these dimensions are restricted by ‘economic efficiency’. The three dimensions referred to in the *National agenda* are further concretized as ‘eight goals’, the first of which is that ‘All Australians should have a commitment to Australia and share responsibility for furthering our national interests’. This stresses a kind of nationalism. Just as in the case of Canada, multicultural policies aim for a re-organization of the nation-state suited to our age; multiculturalism obviously has clearly drawn national frontiers.

The *National agenda* does not fail to refer to indigenous issues. However, it reveals the arrogance and self-righteousness of the colonial governors. This report, which calls Australia a ‘young country’, passes over the history of the oppression and massacres of indigenous peoples, euphemistically referring to how colonizers and indigenous people ‘interacted with each other’, and narrates the decline in the indigenous population as though it was a natural phenomenon. Just as in the Canadian case, indigenous peoples are narrated as entities to be ‘protected’. Subsequently, the indigenous rights movements bore fruit in the form of the Australian High Court’s Mabo (1992) and Wik (1996) decisions that recognized indigenous claims to land. However, that rejection of the doctrine of *terra nullius*, one of the foundations of colonial rule, and that recognition of indigenous land title, were greatly influenced by indigenous-centered activism and changes in global opinion; they cannot be considered a theoretical consequence of multiculturalism.

Changes in Australian multiculturalism subsequent to the establishment of the [conservative] Liberal Party government under John Howard are well known, I think, due to the Japanese media frequently reporting on the flamboyant actions of Pauline Hanson, the One Nation Party’s leader in the 1990s, as well as through the interventions of Tessa Morris-Suzuki, the translation of Ghassan Hage’s *White nation—fantasies of white supremacy in a multicultural society* (2003), and more recently, the publication of Shiobara Yoshikazu’s *Multiculturalism in the age of neo-liberalism—Changes in Australian multiculturalism*. The interpreter for this symposium, Noah McCormack, is a specialist in this area, and expecting that he will go beyond his role and intervene, I will dispense

with further explanation. But to just add two or three points of my own, this rapid change in multiculturalism is not limited to Australia, but is an expression of world-wide changes accompanying globalization. Secondly, the fundamental causes of this shift are not to be sought in the transition from a Labour Party government to a Liberal Party government, but more in the very concept of multiculturalism of the time (as seen in, for example, the *National agenda*). To return to the issue of indigenous peoples, while on the one hand there is an evident phenomenon reminiscent of the White Australia policy, there is also a sort of indigenous boom shown by heightened interest in indigenous lifestyles and art. Indigenous people are not just commoditized as a resource for tourism purposes, but are also nationalized as a unifying symbol of multicultural society. Whether one considers this to constitute reconciliation, or the completion of colonial appropriation, is where opinions diverge.

### 3.

Today, in conditions of rapid developments in globalization and changes in multiculturalism, what kind of validity can the theories and discourses related to multiculturalism, which either gave rise to multicultural policies or were the fruit of multicultural policies, have? How can they respond to these evolving conditions? Further, post-September 11, when cultural, political and economic conditions increase the strain, what sorts of thinking and position-taking are available to us?

To answer these questions, firstly it would be necessary to outline a viewpoint on and a judgment of the world-wide phenomenon that is today called globalization. However, each respondent would no doubt differ, providing diverse viewpoints and judgments. To summarize somewhat violently the hypothesis that I presented in my first and second presentations at this series of symposia, 1. Globalization is a second colonialism (colonialism without colonies), and 2. Multiculturalism is a response to globalization, and in this sense is a part of globalization. Further, understanding the phenomena that became increasingly evident post-September 11 as polarization in all domains, I adopted the method of observing the concrete manifestations of this polarization in both the global city and internal colonies in peripheral zones of states. (See my *Discourse on 'neo'-colonialism and colonialism* (Heibonsha, 2006), as well as the lecture series held in November and December 2006 under the title 'Globalization and colonialism', and the report based thereon.) Finding out how this polarization, which is unfolding as an increase in so-called disparities in globalization and anti-globalization movements, in Bush-style 'just' wars and terrorism, in the cores and peripheries, in disparities of wealth world-wide and inside countries, relates to multiculturalism will become one of our main concerns.

Concerning the theories and discourses of multiculturalism, I outlined my thoughts concerning an intensive reading of works on multiculturalism (from Taylor to Kymlicka, and including Habermas and Sen) in my first presentation, and so I'd like to begin with that. A common tendency apparent in these is, I stated, was that some things become apparent through writing about them, while others

get concealed. To begin, the central issue, or shall we say the main point of contention, that is revealed is the question of how to establish minority cultures or ethnic values in relation to, or to make them compatible with, the concept of democracy centered on 'human rights' that is traditional in the West. The second important question concerns the forming of identities of multicultural diversity in relation to national identities (such as, for example, the integrative principle of French republicanism, of one language, one culture, one people). Approaches to this problem of multicultural identity depend greatly on whether one stresses the particular value of ethnicity and culture (the so-called essentialist orientation), or the possibilities of hybridity (for example creole mixing as opposed to negritude). But in either case, the question is clearly posed, and is one concerning which we can anticipate further and deeper debate.

As for the things that are concealed within the discourse of multiculturalism, or that are in fact hidden as a result of being referred to, I raised two points. 1. The question of colonies and indigenous peoples, and 2. The problems of discrimination against women and of gender. By preemptively pointing to the importance of the problems of indigenous peoples and women, it becomes possible not to touch deeply on these issues. Taylor's 'Politics of recognition' is a classic example of this type of argument, at least with regard to indigenous peoples and women. The reason for this is doubtless related to the fact that Taylor thinks from the perspective of the majority, within the tradition of Western philosophy (Canada's French- Canadians may be a minority in relation to English-Canadians, but they are a majority from the position of other minorities).

Here, let me reiterate my ideas concerning multiculturalism and colonialism. Multiculturalism and multicultural policies do not adequately address the indigenous query: by what right do the invaders remain still on our lands? Depending on one's viewpoint, multiculturalism has been a deceptive means of avoiding such fundamental questions. This inability to adequately respond to this question may indeed be the source of what Ghassan Hage calls Australia's 'Colonial paranoia'. At any rate, people who discuss multiculturalism are apt to forget the historical reality that over 80% of the earth (Edward Said suggested 85%, but numbers are not the main issue), or in other words most of the world excepting the Western core areas, was colonized. The question of multiculturalism begins from within that historical reality, and stands before us as a question of post-colonialism. And if we take one dimension of globalization to be that it is a second colonialism, we must then discuss multiculturalism in the context of dual histories of colonization.

Another point common to liberal discourses on multiculturalism is that there is a boundary at which they suddenly fall silent and beyond which they do not try to go. In my first presentation of this symposium series, I pointed this out with reference to the example of Kymlicka, who refers to the harms associated with the fact that nation-building is always undertaken with the ethnic majority at the centre, and who yet reserves judgment on the nation-state itself, turning back at that point. In general, these liberals preach fairness and social justice, but they tend to clam up at the point when the issue becomes the structures that give rise to minority poverty and to growing

domestic and international disparities. This may be the limit of liberalism.

However, if we are to debate social justice in today's age of globalization, it is necessary to take issue with the structures that give rise to worldwide inequalities across borders. And so, thinking to redress my prejudices against liberalism, and anticipating that it would be mentioned by others at this symposium, I re-read John Rawls' *The law of peoples* (2001). But to be honest, this attempt ended in complete failure. *The law of peoples* makes no reference to colonies or colonialism, nor to multiculturalism (it makes detailed mention of 'background culture', however. There are references to migrants. But Rawls writes that although there are various reasons that people become migrants, if societies of liberal peoples and decent peoples were realized, those reasons would disappear. It seems, unfortunately, that the borders are closed from the side of liberal politics. All the same, I was rescued from my despair by learning the name of Thomas Pogge through this book. In his chapter 'On distributive justice among peoples', what Rawls outlines as 'Thomas Pogge's principle of egalitarianism', connects with the claims that Pogge would later develop in his *World poverty and human rights—cosmopolitan responsibilities and reforms* (2002). I have just started reading Pogge's book and so cannot introduce the contents to you, but I have the feeling that I have at last encountered a theory of justice that meshes with my theory of globalization and my theory of 'neo'-colonialism. If I am granted the opportunity to speak again at the next symposium, I would very much like to report on the results of these dialogic readings, but today, ashamed of my ignorance, I would like to end this presentation, having at least fulfilled my obligation of speaking for a half-hour. I plan now to take pleasure in listening to your presentations with a light heart. Thank you for your attention.

