

Quebec Bill 21:

A modest but historic step forward for secularism

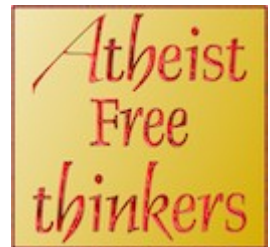
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***Rassemblement pour la laïcité
(RPL)***



Webinar

2020-02-09

for

Humanist Canada

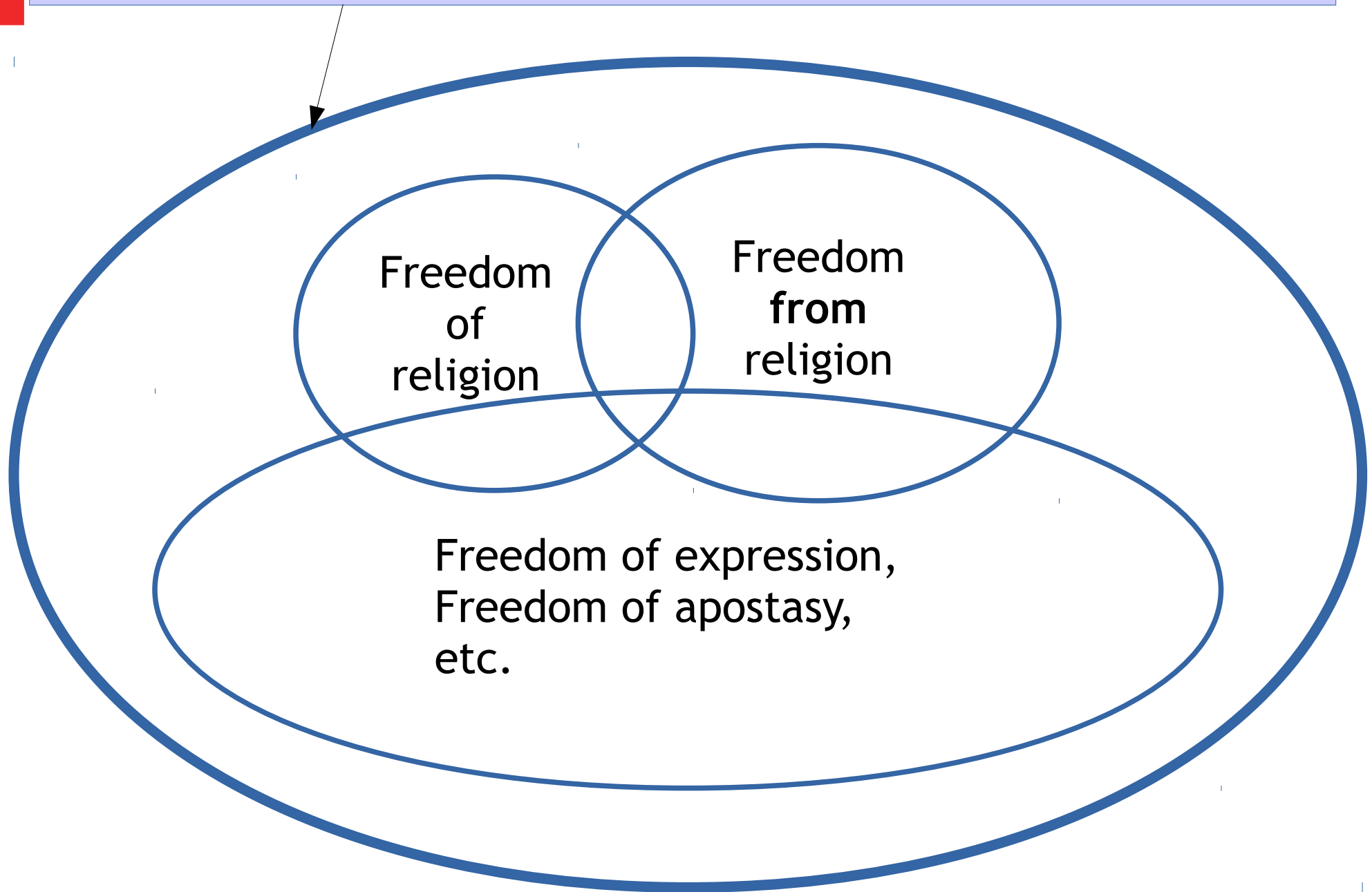


What is Secularism?

Four principles

- **Equality**, i.e. equality of treatment for all.
- **Freedom of conscience**, including freedom of religion and freedom from religion, as well as other freedoms.
- **Religious neutrality**, i.e. State neutrality towards religions.
- **Separation**, i.e. separation between religions and State.

Freedom of Conscience





Religious Neutrality

Two interpretations:

→ **Weak:**

- Neutrality among religions
- **Excluding** non-religion or non-belief.

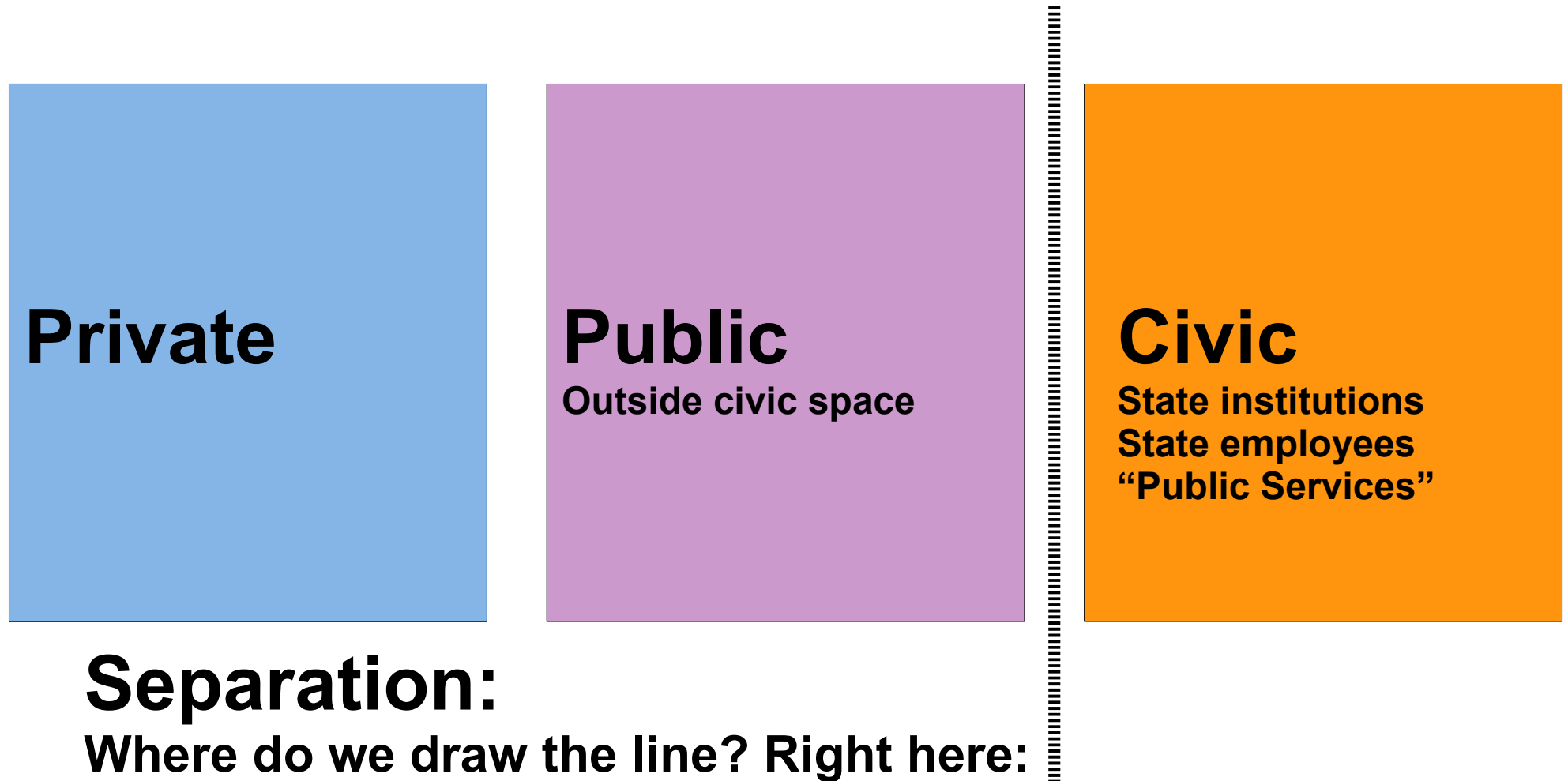
→ **Strong:**

- Neutrality among all convictions, whether religious or non-religious, belief or non-belief.
- Atheists included.

Without separation, religious neutrality degenerates into its weak variant.

The Three Spaces

Secularism applies mainly in Civic space, where civil servants work.





Consequences of Separation

- Religious beliefs and practices are ***not*** sacred.
- State does ***not*** respect religious beliefs and practices. It respects the right to ***have*** religious beliefs and to practice them **outside** civic space.
- **Universalism**: State is blind to religious affiliation.
- **Religious believers are responsible** for their beliefs and practices, ***not*** the State.
- **Religious accommodations** by the State are **religious privileges** and thus never acceptable.

First Amendment of US Constitution

A case study in non-separation

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

“The establishment clause is not an endorsement of secularism but of nonsectarianism.”

-- Shadia B. Drury, *Free Inquiry*, vol 32, #3.

- It stipulate religious neutrality only, not secularism, because separation is **not** mentioned.
- It grants unlimited scope to freedom of religion.
- The Canadian Constitution is worse: “supremacy of God”
- The US Constitution reflects 18th century pre-secularism, not secularism.

Bill 21, What It Does

Bill 21 in English

- 1) Bans religious symbols worn by public servants in positions of authority, including teachers. (section 6)**
- 2) Bans face-coverings for employees providing civic services and users receiving them. (section 8)**
- 3) Simple, clear definition of secularism (as above). (section 2)**
- 4) Simple, clear definition of “religious symbol.” (section 6)**
- 5) Bans religious accommodations. (section 14)**
- 6) “Grandfather” clause for existing employees. (section 31)**
- 7) Measures to monitor the application of the law and noncompliance if any. (section 13)**
- 8) Principle of State secularism added to Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms. (sections 18, 19)**
- 9) Guarantees secular civil services and secular parliamentary, governmental and judicial institutions. (section 4)**

Bill 21, What It Does *Not* Do

- 1) Does not ban religious symbols for *all* public servants.
- 2) Does not ban religious symbols for teachers in private schools and for workers child-care centres.
- 3) Does not ban religious symbols worn by MNAs.
- 4) Does not ban all religious symbols displayed as part of State buildings. But that infamous crucifix in the N.A. is now gone.
- 5) Does not remove monarchist symbols from the N.A.
- 6) Does not deal with the significant fiscal privileges which religious institutions enjoy.
- 7) Neither cancels nor reforms notorious ERC program in Quebec schools. However, recent announcement of major reform!
- 8) Does not impose secularism in the health care sector.

Greatest Weaknesses of Bill 21:

- Failure to ban religious symbols for *all* civil servants
- Failure to address fiscal privileges. (Quebec accepts the federal definition of a charity which includes the advancement of religion.)



Bill 21, Modest but Historic

- Bill 21 is moderate, timid and incomplete.
- Helps to protect freedom of conscience of users of civil services and students in public schools.
- Small but important measure against religious fundamentalism and fanaticism.
- Comparable to the *Public Services Act* which imposes political neutrality on civil servants.
- A question of professional ethics, like the *Public Services Act*.
- Disciplinary, not discriminatory. Targets behaviour, not people.
- Comparable to anti-tobacco legislation which also targets behaviour, not people.

Julie Latour

Lawyer & Legal Expert, Former bâtonnière (2006-2007) of the Montreal Bar Association, Prix Concordet-Dessaulles 2019 (MLQ)



“Bill 21 is first and foremost a generator of rights. All Quebec citizens benefit henceforth from a fundamental right to secular parliamentary, governmental and judicial services as well as secular public services. A major step forward, which benefits everyone, without dividing lines.”

-- in *Le Devoir*, 2020-01-21

Bill 21: Who Will Benefit?

- **Everyone** will benefit from a civil service with fewer religious symbols, especially in schools.
- Greatest benefit will be to **daughters of piously religious parents**, especially Muslim parents.

This is what public education is for, to allow children to transcend the limited experience of their immediate surroundings.

- Help *reduce* (***not*** increase) probability of violence against religious minorities.

Andréa Richard

Ex-Nun & author of “Femme après le cloître” (Woman After the Cloister)

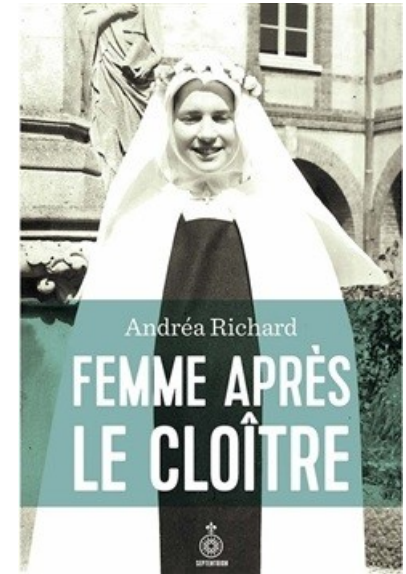
Prix Concordet-Dessaulles 2018 (with Nadia El Mabrouk)

“In a hospital, patients who, more often than not, are vulnerable, should not have to suffer discomfort caused by the very caregivers whose purpose is to care for them. [...] Imagine a dying man who, in his youth, was raped by a pedophile priest and who is confronted by the sight of a priest, wearing a Roman collar and crucifix, who arrives at his bedside to ask if he would like the last sacraments. The patient would certainly be ill at ease, or worse... Imagine a Muslim woman, hospitalized because she was beaten by her father for refusing to wear the veil, who sees a veiled female nurse or doctor arrive at her bedside to care for her. What do you think her reaction would be?”

“To claim that an employee of the State who refuses to remove her ostentatious religious symbol is being denied employment is totally incongruous, because it is she who excludes herself by choosing her religion over her profession.”

“Tolerance is an admirable quality, but to tolerate the intolerable can easily become an abdication of responsibility.”

-- From her brief, addressed to the National Assembly.



Udo Schuklenk & Medical Ethics

Journal List > J Med Ethics > v.32(1); 2006 Jan > PMC2563267

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Medical professionalism and ideological
symbols in doctors' rooms

[Udo Schuklenk](#)

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Short abstract

Go to: ☒

Is it time to leave the non-professional aspects of personal life at
the door and face patients as medical professionals and no more?

Ever wondered about the appropriateness of Christian doctors

**“Is it time to leave the non-professional
aspects of personal life at the door and
face patients as medical professionals
and no more?”**

**“professionalism [...] requires the
professional to act in an impartial,
unbiased manner. [...] health care
professionals should refrain from
displaying symbols in their offices
advising patients of the professionals'
private lives' religious, party political,
sexual, or other affiliations.”**

-- Journal of Medical Ethics, 2006

Balancing Conflicting Rights

Countless examples of conflicting rights which must be balanced:

- **Abortion:** foetus vs. pregnant woman
- **Mandatory Schooling:** parents' rights vs. child's rights
- **Age of Consent:** sexual freedom vs. protection from predators
- **Political Opinions:** Civil servants vs. users
- **Traffic Regulation:** Free movement vs. safety
- **Gun Control:** Self-defence vs. gun safety
- **Tobacco Control:** Right to smoke vs. right to clean air
- **Freedom of Speech:** Excludes defamation & calls for violence

Your rights end where mine begin, and vice versa.

Bill 21: just another example of this very common situation.

Misconceptions About Bill 21

- No, Bill 21 does not discriminate against any religion.
- No, Bill 21 of course does not discriminate against women.
- No, Bill 21 does not tell anyone what to wear.
- No, Bill 21 does not diminish human rights. On the contrary, it extends them.
- Accusations of “racism” are particularly dishonest, slanderous and ridiculous.

False accusations are made by persons who:

- 1) are lying, or**
- 2) hold the State responsible for everyone’s religious beliefs and practices.**

**Leave your politics at the door
when you go to work in the
civil service.**



When religious symbols are worn
by a State employee on duty,
they become political,
if they were not already so.



Betraying the Enlightenment

- Degeneration of the political left in 21st century
- Anti-Enlightenment pseudo-left objectively allied with political Islam.

Principal ingredients/ideologies:

- Intersectionality = the death of feminism (and anti-racism and other movements)
- Islamoleftism = the death of the secular left
- Multiculturalism = the death of universalism
- Postmodernism = the death of objectivity

Intersectionality

- Theory of social power concentrating on the **intersections** of several forms of oppression.
- Superficially plausible but extremely **simplistic**.
- **Oppression** (merit) points and **privilege** (demerit) points.
- **Politics of guilt and division**. More moralizing than solutions.
- **Blind to in-group disparities and tensions**.
- **Blind to some privileges**: e.g. religious, Anglo.
- Intersectionality **fails completely to model the situation of Muslims and Islam**.

The Great Canadian Euphemism

“Multiculturalism” implies:

- cultural relativism
- communitarianism (as opposed to universalism)
- religious determinism

Some consequences:

- Endorsing child abuse (veiling children, noise-cancelling headgear for religious reasons).
- Allowing religion group to hold prayers in Parliament building
- Niqab in citizenship ceremonies. Defamation of critics.
- Electoral clientelism.
- J. Trudeau slanders secularists as Trumpers.
- J. Trudeau equates homophobia with “Islamophobia.”

MARCH 25, 2016

“MULTICULTURALISM ROTS BRAINS”: AN INTERVIEW WITH MARYAM NAMAZIE



The Iranian dissident communist gets
scathing about Islamism and the Left...

by CURRENT AFFAIRS

Multiculturalism in Britain

“Islamism is a fascist movement, we have to be able to oppose it. Islam is a religion, we have to be able to criticize it, whilst defending universal values, secularism, and equality between men and women. Not placing collective blame, and seeing dissent amongst those deemed ‘other’ as well.”

“Unfortunately, with decades of multiculturalism and cultural relativism, the brains of many people on the left have completely rotted; cultural relativism is in the DNA of much of the left now.”

“I think multiculturalism as a lived experience is a very positive thing. But that’s not what “multiculturalism” is today; it’s a social policy. So, in Britain today, multiculturalism as a social policy segregates and divides people into ethnic and religious communities.”

<https://www.currentaffairs.org/2016/03/multiculturalism-rots-brains-an-interview-with-maryam-namazie>

Secularist Muslims

Maryam Namazie wrote,

“seeing dissent amongst those deemed ‘other’...”

Many Muslims or from Muslim background support secularism. Two examples:

- Quebec: **AQNAL** = *Association québécoise des Nord-Africains pour la laïcité*, part of the RPL coalition
- France: **IFOP Poll**, 2019, French Muslims (75%) strongly support the 1905 secularism law (compared to 87% for the general population)

<https://www.atheology.ca/statistics/ifop-2019-03-22-french-secularism/>



RPL Coalition

Rassemblement pour la laïcité (RPL) or Alliance for Secularism

A coalition of several groups in Quebec which support secularism.

Founded in 2013 to support the Charter of Secularism of the government at that time. Supports Bill 21 of course.

Current participants:

- Association québécoise des Nord-Africains pour la laïcité (AQNAL)
- Collectif citoyen pour l'égalité et la citoyenneté (CCIEL)
- Intellectuels pour la laïcité
- Laïcité capitale nationale (LCN)
- Libres penseurs athées (LPA-AFT)
- Mouvement laïque québécois (MLQ)
- Mouvement national des Québécoises et des Québécois (MNQ)
- Pour les droits des femmes du Québec (PDF Québec)
- Syndicalistes et progressistes pour un Québec libre (SPQ libre)

Riss, Charlie Hebdo, 2020-01-07

7 JANVIER 2020 / N°1433 CHARLIE HEBDO 3

Édito



LES NOUVEAUX VISAGES DE LA CENSURE

RISS

« Les nouveaux visages de la censure ». Le titre est ronflant et inquiétant. Nous serions donc de nouveau menacés par des forces inédites hostiles à notre liberté d'expression.

En 2015, *Charlie Hebdo* était victime d'un attentat qui avait pour but de le faire taire à jamais. Cinq ans après, *Charlie Hebdo* est toujours vivant. Au grand regret de ceux qui espéraient le voir disparaître, au grand regret aussi de ceux qui l'avaient toujours détesté.

Après cinq années d'efforts épuisants pour toute l'équipe, le journal est

... ..

Les pères la pudeur de jadis ont été chassés par les dialogueurs la pudeur d'aujourd'hui. Les flammes de l'enfer d'autrefois ont laissé la place aux tweets délateurs de maintenant.

Il y a trente ou quarante ans, on appelait ça le « politiquement correct », et cela consistait à combattre le racisme, la misogynie ou l'homophobie, ce qui en soi était plutôt logique et évident. Aujourd'hui, le politiquement correct nous impose des orthographe genrées, nous déconseille d'employer des mots supposés dérangeants, nous demande de ne plus manger ceci ou de ne plus fumer cela. Dans notre intérêt, bien évidemment.

La gauche anglo-saxonne a inventé le politiquement correct pour faire oublier son renoncement à lutter contre les injustices sociales. La lutte des classes, trop marxiste à ses yeux, a été remplacée par la lutte des genres, des races, des minorités, des sous-minorités et des micro-minorités. La division de la société n'est plus horizontale, entre des classes sociales privilégiées qui dominent les plus faibles, elle est désormais verticale, entre des catégories de genres et d'identités. La gauche qui se croit progressiste est alors devenue obsédée par les races, les couleurs de peau, les cheveux lisses ou crépus. Qui l'eût cru ?

Les partis de gauche qui ont accédé au pouvoir en Europe, en Amérique

The New Faces of Censorship

Thirty or forty years ago, it was called “politically correct” and it involved fighting against racism, misogyny or homophobia, which makes obvious sense. Today politically correct imposes gendered spellings, advises against the use of supposedly offensive words, and asks us not to eat this or smoke that. For our own good, of course.

The Anglo-Saxon left invented the politically correct to make us forget how it has abandoned the fight against social injustices. Class struggle, too Marxist in its opinion, has been replaced by the struggle of genders, races, minorities, sub-minorities and micro-minorities. The division in society is no longer horizontal, between privileged social classes and the weaker ones they dominate. The division is henceforth vertical, between categories of gender and identity. The left which we thought was progressive has become obsessed with races, skin-colours and whether hair is smooth or kinky. Who could have predicted this?

Strategies of Political Islam

Islamism = Political Islam = promotion of Islam politically

- **Promotion of the veil.**
- **Legal jihad, e.g. Zunera Ishaq, Hak (against Bill 21) versus Quebec Attorney-General.**
- **Rhetoric of inversion, i.e. victim-playing.**
- **Accusations of “Islamophobia” = the blasphemy of the 21st century.**
- **Conflating race and religion = denial of believers’ freedom of conscience ~ taboo against apostasy.**

The convergence between the last two strategies is especially effective and dangerous.

Islamist Veil: Its Significance

- an **advertisement** for political Islam
- imposed by **fanatics**, not worn by Muslim women in general (but spreading, thanks to Islamist influence)
- worn usually because of **severe pressure** from family, community, fundamentalists and sometimes the law
- when worn willingly, expresses objective **complicity** with political Islam
- a marker of religious and sexual **segregation**
- a purity symbol, a form of **slut-shaming**, an expression of rape culture
- not just an article of clothing, rather a **tool for proselytism and propaganda**
- a tool to **control women's bodies**.

Islamist Veil: It's About "Purity"



The purpose of the veil is to communicate the message that women (especially Muslim women) who do not wear it are impure, i.e. dirty sluts.

Islamist Veil: A Rational Response

- **Discourage its use.** Certainly do not celebrate it.
- **Ban it** (and all religious symbols) where appropriate, i.e. **on the job in civil service positions.**
- **Condemn harassment** of anyone who wears religious symbols where they are not banned.
- **Ban long-term veiling of children** in schools (at least) because it is a form of **child abuse.**
- **Ban face-covering veils** (niqab and burqa) for civil service **users** as well. These veils are **barbaric.** Consider a ban everywhere in public.

The Insanity of Islamolatry

Several examples



**Endorsing Child Abuse
by veiling children:**

- Canadian Human Rights Commission
- Paediatrics & Child Health



**LGBT Community Day,
Montreal, 2016**

Our banner "**HOMOPHOBIA,
VIRUS PROPAGATED BY
RELIGIONS**" was criticized
as offensive to Muslim gays!

Similar banner (denouncing
religious homophobia,
misogyny and atheophobia) in
the **LGBT March, Montreal,
2018** was criticized because
"That's what the fascists say."



March against "racism"

in Montreal was a march
against secularism.

~~~~~

**Black Lives Matter Toronto Demands:**

"End Islamophobia and White  
Supremacy"

**Unacceptable conflation of  
race with religion.**

# Attitudes towards religious symbols & accommodation in Quebec

## Two recent studies

Bilodeau, A. et al,  
Strange Bedfellows? Attitudes toward Minority and Majority Religious Symbols in the Public Sphere

*“Drawing on a survey conducted in the province of Quebec (Canada), we find that **while holding liberal values and low religiosity are key characteristics of those who would ban all religious symbols, feelings of cultural threat and generalized prejudice are central characteristics of those who would only restrict minority religious symbols...**”*

2018-03-08, *Politics and Religion*

Dufresne, Y. et al,  
Religiosity or racism? The bases of opposition to religious accommodation in Quebec: Religiosity or racism?

The findings show that **while opposition to religious accommodation is higher in Quebec, and higher among francophones, it is rooted more in the low level of religiosity of the francophone population than in racial animus.**

2018-08, *Nations and Nationalism, Journal of the Association for the Study of Ethnicity and Nationalism*



# Summing Up



- **Léger Poll: 44% of Canadians (38% outside Quebec) support Bill 21, while 43% oppose.**
- **What if “multiculturalism” really were interpreted by ostensible secularists literally, as meaning openness to other cultures, such as, say, the French maybe?**
- **But in reality, multiculturalism is a monoculture.**

## **YOUR CHOICE:**

- 1) Continue to conform, continue to throw Quebec secularists under the bus, OR**
- 2) Do the right thing: support secularism & Bill 21.**