

## Feature 2: Creation of a Global Civilization— Transcending Multiculturalism

From the Symposium in conjunction with the 31st Annual  
Conference of the IOP

*On March 19 and 20, 2016, the Institute of Oriental Philosophy (IOP) held its 31st annual conference at Soka University and the IOP respectively.*

*The IOP invited Professor Fathali M. Moghaddam from the U.S. as a distinguished guest to the symposium, “Creation of a Global Civilization—Transcending Multiculturalism” held on March 19. Prof. Moghaddam is a professor of psychology and director of the Interdisciplinary Program in Cognitive Science at Georgetown University.*

*In his speech entitled, “Omniculturalism and Our Human Path,” he introduced the idea of omniculturalism as a constructive and practical policy for managing diversity. He pointed out that the globalization is having spread “a life-and-death struggle between forces for and against the open society.” Furthermore, it increased contact between different groups that can lead to enormous psychological threats. He emphasized that traditional policies based on assimilation and multiculturalism have led many groups to feel threatened and are creating problems. As an alternative policy, he proposed omniculturalism, and stressed that it gives priority to human commonality, and is only concerned with inter-group differences as a secondary matter.*

*At the symposium, Professor Yutaka Ishigami, Senior Research Fellow, and Ms. Fumiko Tsutaki, Commissioned Research Fellow of the IOP, delivered their speeches. This issue includes three papers presented at the symposium.*



Prof. Moghaddam giving a speech. From right, Ms. Tsutaki, Prof. Ishigami, and IOP Director, Dr. Kawada

## Omniculturalism and Our Human Path

Fathali M. Moghaddam

**I**N what is arguably Shakespeare's greatest play, Hamlet describes humans in the same speech as "the beauty of the world", but also as "quintessence of dust" (Shakespeare, Hamlet, II. ii. 293–310). This contradiction jumps to life when we critically review the human condition in the 21st century. On the one hand, we have established and propagated universal standards for human rights (Finkel & Moghaddam, 2005), brought fatalities from direct violence more under control (Pinker, 2011), and taken some steps to make universal health care a reality, to take advantage of impressive advances in medical science (Rodin & de Ferranti, 2012). Global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has increased more than three-fold since 1950. These improvements reflect an image of humans as "the beauty of the world".

On the other hand, human rights violations continue in many parts of the world, sometimes perpetrated by the United States and other Western powers (Zimbardo, 2008), but the International Criminal Court has only targeted African leaders for rights violations (Villa-Vicencio, 2009). Second, the real level of physical violence is camouflaged by improved medical care, which often helps to keep even the seriously wounded alive, while structural and cultural violence have in many ways increased in recent decades. Third, broader measures of economic welfare, such as Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI) have shown a decline since the late 1970s (Kubiszewski, Costanza, Franco, Lawn, Talberth, Jackson, & Aylmer, 2013). In addition, environmental degradation continues at an alarming rate (Ehrlich & Ehrlich, 2008), as does the concentration of wealth in fewer and fewer hands (Atkinson, 2015; Dorling, 2014; Picketty, 2014) with dire health consequences for the poor (Marmot, 2004). These trends are more in line with the view of humans as "quintessence of dust".

### **The 'Global' Turning Point**

My point of departure in this discussion is the assertion by scientists (Corlett, 2015) that we have reached a 'global' turning point in the

evolution of human societies, the start of what has been termed the *Anthropocene* ('new human') time period. This new time period emphasizes the central role of humankind in shaping geology and ecology.

The build up to the start of this new period arguably began about 12,000 years ago, when we established human settlements, and used domesticated animals and better farming techniques, as well as more effective social organizations, to produce a substantial and dependable surplus. On the basis of this surplus, we developed stratified and well organized societies, with specialized branches of governance. The industrial revolution significantly increased our productivity from the 18th century, and the computer revolution of recent decades has once again enabled significant rises in productivity and resulted in larger surpluses. But this rise in human material productivity has not been accompanied by comparable growth in the quality of social relationships and morality. Various forms of direct, structural, and cultural violence, together with massive environmental degradation, raise serious challenges for our continued survival; the Anthropocene period is a 'global' turning point, because we must all succeed or fail together.

In order to increase the probability that we will move toward becoming "the beauty of the world", we need to make foundational changes in how we organize relationships between human groups. We have been brought to this potentially destructive turning point by accelerating globalization, which is resulting in an unprecedented level of contact between human groups with little prior history of large-scale intergroup contact (Moghaddam, 2008b; 2010). In this emerging new world, where we are forced to interact directly and indirectly with massive numbers of outgroup members, without adequate time for adaptation, we must develop and adopt new ways of managing diversity. The traditional policies for managing diversity are proving to be inadequate to meet the demands of the 21st century. The traditional paths will end with humans being much closer to "quintessence of dust" than "the beauty of the world".

As a way to stimulate more critical re-thinking of our current direction, my modest proposal is that we consider the alternative path of *omniculturalism* as our future policy for managing diversity: this new policy involves first teaching people to give priority to human commonalities, and only secondly giving attention to group-based differences. This is in contrast to the currently popular path of *multiculturalism*, which gives priority to and celebrates group-based differences, and the historically important path of *assimilation*, which typically involves giving priority to majority group characteristics. My use of the term

omniculturalism is new (Moghaddam, 2012), but the main idea it reflects is ancient and shared in many different cultural traditions. For example, the unity of, and commonalities in, humankind is a major theme in Buddhist tradition (Ikeda, 2010), as well as some other major human traditions (Moghaddam, 2016).

This discussion is organized in four main parts. In part one, I establish the context of our discussion by explaining the nature of 21st century globalization, what I term ‘the new globalization’ and the ways in which it is unique. Second, I highlight two of the most important consequences of the ‘new globalization’: wide-scale and rapidly increasing intergroup contact and, second, the inevitable clash between forces for and against open societies and open minds. In part three, I critically examine the major policies for managing diversity, with particular focus on multiculturalism. I argue that multiculturalism policy has both resulted in minority groups underperforming in the education system of Western societies, and in the exaggeration of inter-group differences and conflicts, creating room for radicalization movements to grow. Fourth, I discuss omniculturalism as a constructive and practical alternative policy, one we should embrace globally for the 21st century.

## **1. The ‘New Globalization’**

It could be argued that globalization has existed in different forms for thousands of years. For example, two thousand years ago the Roman Empire spanned from North Africa to England, and in the nineteenth century the ‘the sun never set’ on the British Empire, because it was so expansive. However, what I call the ‘new globalization’ is in key ways different and new.

First, globalization is now ‘fractured’ because it involves two diametrically opposed forces, captured by the phrase ‘global economy, local identity’ (Moghaddam, 2008a). Economic and technological forces are moving the world toward greater integration, involving larger and larger units, such as the European Union, NAFTA, and the like. These forces are encouraging people to act economically as part of ‘one world’. On the other hand, local identities continue to have a powerful pull, motivated by basic psychological identity needs (Moghaddam, 2008a). People continue to feel strong links to local identities, particularly based on ethnicity and the idea of homeland. Just as Europe expands and becomes more integrated, Scottish and Basque and other ‘separatist’ movements continue to be strong, and at times grow even stronger. ‘Brexit’ reflects this same trend. Just as NAFTA strengthens economic integration,

Quebec separatism remains an active movement threatening Canadian unity. Numerous separatist movements thrive in different parts of the world (for example, Kurdish, Bosnian, Croatian, Kosova-Albanian, Basque, as well as dozens of separatist movements in Latin American and African countries). Thus, the new globalization is fractured, with economic and technological forces moving people to become part of larger units, but ethnic, religious, language, and other group identity bases pulling people to the local.

Second, globalization today is different and new because it is driven by technological and economic factors that are unpredictable, influenced by small non-state actors, outside the control of even the most powerful governments. At this moment, there are small groups of young innovators working in basements and garages, with very little capital and resources, who are creating the next Google, Facebook, or Twitter, or even creating an alternative to the World Wide Web. We are unable to predict exactly how these innovations will change us over the next three decades, just as it was impossible to predict three decades ago how the internet, Google, Facebook and Twitter would evolve and change us and create what we have become today.

Electronic integration of the world has facilitated and speeded up economic integration. Despite the continuation of various barriers to trade across nations and regions, the world is now integrated economically to an unprecedented extent, as reflected in the global 2008–2009 financial crisis. The economic plight of Greece and other small economies has to be of concern to economic giants such as the United States, China, and Germany; to echo John Dunne (1572–1631), everyone is now economically and technologically part of the whole.

Similarly, security has now become global, with even remote parts of the world being part of the interdependent whole. In the 19th century, the political leaders of the British Empire did concern themselves with distant places such as Afghanistan, Sudan, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia, but nobody sitting in Westminster felt threatened because of the possibility that London would be attacked by people from Afghanistan, Sudan, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and other such 'remote' places. But in the 21st century, the leaders of the most powerful nation are forced to treat seriously threats from even the most distant places; the perpetrators of the 9/11 terrorist attacks mostly originated from Saudi Arabia, and terrorist attacks against Western targets in general continue to be perpetrated by people with strong links to the Near and Middle East.

## 2. Consequences of Fractured Globalization

Fractured globalization is having widespread consequences for all of humanity. In this discussion, I only focus on two consequences that have particularly important implications for peace and democracy. The first consequence concerns intergroup contact that is unprecedented in scope and speed, resulting in intergroup tensions and violence, sometimes direct. The second consequence involves rising threats to democracies around the world.

### Increased Intergroup Contact and Catastrophic Evolution

It is useful to think of ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors responsible for the dramatic increase in the movement of vast numbers of people around the world. ‘Push’ factors are events that cause people to want to escape their homeland. These include violent revolutions, wars, invasions, lack of rule of law, and repression of human rights, as has taken place, for example, in Syria, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Egypt, Libya, Lebanon, and various other countries of the Near and Middle East since the 1970s. ‘Pull’ factors include all those features of a society that make it attractive to outsiders. These include rule of law, employment and educational opportunities, higher standards of safety and health, and particularly opportunities for the young to live in peace and enjoy basic freedoms.

Push and Pull factors include the impact of widely differing birth rates of countries and regions around the world. In some parts of the world, including the European Union, the birth rate among the indigenous population is well below the 2.1% needed to maintain a stable population. Japan and Russia are also in this category. These countries are experiencing a decline in their populations, and a lack of young workers. There are many different ways of trying to deal with this challenge, including using robots to do more of the basic work, raising worker productivity, increasing the retirement age, and so on. But one of the main solutions is to import labor, as has been done throughout the history of the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. More recently, the European Union has been importing labor on a large scale.

Where would labor be imported from? The answer is, from countries that are experiencing population increases and have excess labor. Most African, Latin American, and Asian societies fall into this category (excluding China, where until recently the ‘one child’ policy was in place). Improvements in health care have resulted in many African, Latin American, and Asian countries having population growth rates above 2.1%, in some cases substantially so.

Globalization has facilitated the movement of tens of millions of people from African, Latin American, and Asian countries to North America, Western Europe, and some other parts of the world where labor is in high demand (such as the Arab Gulf States). This movement has resulted in dramatically increased contact between human groups with little prior history of intergroup contact. Some such movements have been rapid and unplanned. For example, in the summer of 2015, the pace of refugee exodus from Syria, Iraq, and some other countries of the Near and Middle East increased. Millions of refugees poured westward, making their way into the European Union through Greece and various Eastern European countries. The intended destination of these refugees has been Western European countries, particularly Germany, which has the largest and strongest economy in Europe. Most of these refugees are Muslim, and many of them are traditional in their dress, attitudes, and cognitive style in general. The close proximity of European Union borders to the Near and Middle East means that, according to the distance traveled hypothesis (Moghaddam, 2008b), they need less resources to reach the European Union relative to North America, which is much further away and needs greater resources to reach. As a consequence, refugees reaching North America from the Near and Middle East tend to have greater resources. In contrast, illegal immigrants from Mexico, who only need to cross a border, need a lower level of resources to enter the United States.

#### The 'Life and Death' Struggle to Save and Expand the Open Society

A second consequence of fractured globalization is that in the 21st century we are experiencing a life-and-death struggle between forces for and against the open society. Of course there was already competition between these forces in the 20th century, particularly during the Second World War and the Cold War era. What is new in the 21st century is that globalization will not allow pro- and anti-open society forces to live in isolation and 'peaceful coexistence', they are forced into contact and into battle against one other.

Globalization in the 21st century has put a great deal of pressure on the more closed societies, from the giants, China and Russia, to the smaller countries, such as North Korea and Iran. Despite keeping up strong barriers against the outside world, a great deal of Western (and particularly American) cultural phenomena penetrates the barriers and reaches the populations of these dictatorships. The young are widely influenced by American popular culture, including music, films, and clothing fashion. Most importantly, the young around the world are



influenced by ideas of freedom and individuality expressed in popular culture produced by more democratic societies. These ideas seep through national borders, using electronic highways when other highways are blocked. In this way, dictatorships feel threatened by globalization and the expansion of pro-democracy values.

The reaction of dictatorships to these ‘threats’ has been retrenchment, using nationalistic and various traditional ideologies. The Chinese rulers have fallen back to Confucius and other traditional thinkers, while Putin has relied heavily on traditional Russian mythologies and institutions, such as the Russian Orthodox Church. In some other dictatorships, such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, regimes have relied on religious traditions as a defense against ‘imported’ ideas of freedom and democracy. Common to all these ‘defenses’ is the idea that ‘we have to keep to our own authentic traditions, which are superior to imported ideas of democracy’. As an added layer of defense, Russia and Iran hold regular elections, so they make a show of including the people in decision making. Of course, the vetting of candidates and other measures ensures that the regime controls the outcome (Moghaddam, 2013).

Dictatorial regimes have routinely defended their actions to keep their societies closed through reference to their right to govern according to local traditions and customs, as opposed to ‘international’ criteria. The basic argument they make is that ‘Western democracy’ and so-called ‘universal human rights’ are not applicable everywhere; moreover, ‘democracy’ and ‘rights’ are excuses used by Western powers, particularly the United States, to interfere in the affairs of other nations—often with negative consequences for those other nations. In this regard, the catastrophic invasion of Iraq in 2003 by American-led forces provides ready ammunition for dictatorial governments. This is very unfortunate, because it distracts from the basic point that all human beings have common needs in terms of freedom and personal development. Local customs and traditions must not be used as an excuse to prevent improvements in the individual and collective lives of humans.

Clearly, we do not as yet have any actualized democracies, societies in which all citizens enjoy “full, informed, equal participation in wide aspects of political, economic, and cultural decision making independent of financial investment and resources” (Moghaddam, 2016, p. 4). But it is also clear that some societies have made greater progress toward becoming an actualized democracy, whereas some other societies are far closer to absolute dictatorship.

The support of dictatorships for ‘doing things our way’ and each nation maintaining its different way of governing, has corresponded with a



trend in Western societies to ‘celebrate and maintain inter-group differences’ as a policy for managing diversity. This is a striking coincidence: at the same time that dictatorships such as Iran are justifying their mistreatment of minorities through reference to local ‘culture’ and their right to ‘govern their way’ on the basis of their particular interpretations of Islam, in Western societies since the 1960s there has been an emphasis on ‘celebrating diversity’ and each group having the right to maintain their own distinct culture. In both of these trends, there is a rejection of universal human needs, values, and rights.

### 3. Policies for Managing Diversity

Given the context created for us by fractured globalization, what is the best policy for managing diversity in our 21st century world? In this context, there is rapid and vast movement of people and information and resources around the world. Contact between groups is at an unprecedented level, and increasing. Should we follow the path of *assimilation*, and assume that all cultures will melt into the dominant culture or into one another? Or, should we give priority to group differences through *multiculturalism* policy? I argue that both of these traditional paths are in major ways flawed; we must explore alternative policies for managing diversity. My proposal is that we give serious consideration to a new policy, *omniculturalism*, which gives priority to human commonalities, and only secondarily attends to inter-group differences.

#### Assimilation and Globalization

On the surface, assimilation and globalization seem to go hand in hand. As globalization proceeds, there is increased contact between groups from different parts of the world, as well as greater cultural, technological, and economic integration. This would seem to be in line with greater and greater assimilation. However, as we discussed under the topic of ‘fractured globalization’, the movement toward global integration is countered by a movement in the opposite direction, driven by a need for local identities. Thus, at a deeper level assimilation and globalization are only in some respects moving in the same direction.

It is also useful to distinguish between two types of assimilation (Moghaddam, 2008a). *Minority assimilation* involves minority groups assimilating into the culture of the majority group. This is exactly the kind of assimilation being forced on the world by Western powers, according to fundamentalists and traditionalists of various kinds, including nationalists and religious groups. These critics argue that globalization

is really Americanization and the spread of Western secular values; all other groups are being pressured to assimilate into this dominant way of life through the powerful and pervasive influence of ‘Hollywood culture’ and ‘McDonaldization’ (Ritzer, 2014). In reaction, fundamentalists and traditionalists are retrenching and defending what they see to be their embattled ways of life.

But there is a second kind of assimilation that we must also consider, *melting-pot assimilation*, involving the melting of all groups into one another to create a new global culture. One could argue that in areas such as popular music, entertainment, as well as food, different types of fusions are underway, with contributions from many different cultures, leading to outcomes that are novel for everyone. But this seemingly egalitarian process, with all cultures contributing to a new global culture, is dismissed by those critics who see the global dominance of Western and particularly American culture as both overwhelming and reinforced by military power. These critics see it necessary to put up defensive walls against the influx of Western and particularly American culture—the kinds of electronic and other walls set up by the governments of Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, North Korea, China, to name just a few countries.

Ultimately, the most important reaction against assimilation has been based on identity needs. Groups of all kinds, particularly religious and nationalist, have insisted that they need to retain their own distinct identities and ways of life. They do not want to assimilate into a global culture—particularly not one dominated by the United States. This identity-based reaction has coincided with the rise of a new and apparently more democratic policy for managing diversity, which I turn to next.

## **Multiculturalism**

“National unity, if it is to mean anything in the deeply personal sense, must be founded on confidence in one’s own individual identity; out of this can grow respect for that of others and a willingness to share ideas, attitudes and assumptions. A vigorous policy of multiculturalism will help create this initial confidence. It can form the basis of a society which is based on fair play for all”.

This is part of a statement made by the Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau (1919–2000) in the Canadian House of Commons on October 8, 1971 (Trudeau 1971, 1992). In the same statement, Trudeau asserted that there is no official culture in Canada, and individuals should not be locked into a culture by their birth. Trudeau’s statement was part of a multiculturalism movement that swept across much

of the world from the 1960s, as the concern with ‘identity’ took center stage in the lives of individuals and groups. Associated with this movement was greater concern with indigenous identities; minority group members in particular returning to their roots, re-constructing their identities, and celebrating their ‘differentness’. Canada became the first country to adopt multiculturalism as official national policy, and in many other countries multiculturalism became *de facto* national policy (Novoa & Moghaddam, 2014).

The multiculturalism movement has been associated with minority rights, what is seen to be owed to minorities. In his 1971 House of Commons statement on multiculturalism, Prime Minister Trudeau (quoted above) asserted that multiculturalism can form “...the basis of a society which is based on fair play for all”. Minority groups would be given the rights they were owed, and treated fairly. In line with this, from the 1960s various movements emerged concerned with minority rights—marching under the banner of ‘Women’s rights’, ‘Black rights’, ‘Hispanic rights’, ‘Aboriginal rights’, ‘Gay rights’, and so on. The assertion has been that ethnic minorities in particular would be helped by multiculturalism policy. However, as I argue below, with respect to ethnic minorities there is a fatal flaw in this argument; multiculturalism has not resulted in fair play for all.

#### Multiculturalism and Minority Performance: The Case of Education

From its beginning, the impact of multiculturalism on ethnic minorities was problematic, and sometimes even detrimental. Unlike women, who in the 20th century entered the education system determined to compete with men on the assumption that women and men should be treated the same, multiculturalism resulted in the highlighting of how ‘ethnic minorities are different’ and should be treated differently. The priority given to group-based differences has had unintended consequences. Schools and universities now celebrate and exaggerate how ethnic minorities are different, formalizing ‘African-American month’, ‘Hispanic month’, and programs on ‘African-American culture’, and the like. Ethnic minority students are now encouraged to see themselves as different, and to celebrate and act on ‘their differentness’. The not surprising result has been that many ethnic minority students have perceived a different set of paths for their own educational development, paths away from traditional ‘white’ middle-class professions. In contrast, in the education sector women have emphasized how they are *not* different from men and can compete successfully with men.

The outcome of the different paths taken by women and ethnic mi-

norities has been markedly different in education. Women are now successfully competing with men, and in many domains outperforming men, in higher education. The question in education has changed from ‘How can women catch up?’ to, ‘Why are men falling behind?’ (Conger & Long, 2010) and ‘What does the rise of women mean for education?’ (DiPrete & Buchmann, 2013). About 60% of undergraduates in higher education are female. Universities in the United States have been investing in larger American football programs as a way to attract more males. In medicine, law, and science graduate programs, women are now at least level with men. Women have also made up a lot of ground in business and government related graduate programs. The contrast is dramatic in comparison with the relatively poor performance of ethnic minorities in American education (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006; Kena, Musu-Gillette, Robinson, Wang, Rathbun, et al., 2015). In his excellent book *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis*, Robert Putnam (2015) clarifies the situation in this way, “Inequality in the United States increasingly operates through education...women are now more likely to graduate from college than men...Progress on racial difference has been less encouraging...racial gaps in schooling and involvement with the criminal justice system remain immense...black children experience less upward mobility and more downward mobility than their white counterparts who started at the same income level” (pp. 18–19).

My contention is that one of the factors leading to enormous success for women in American education, and relatively poor performance by African-Americans and Hispanics, is that women have competed head-on with white men, whereas many African-Americans and Hispanics have been influenced by the rhetoric of multiculturalism to see themselves as ‘different’ and as needing to go down non-mainstream paths. These are the two largest ethnic minority groups and now make up about 110 million (one-third of the total United States population). Their poor educational performance is problematic, because the 21st century economy needs a far more skilled and better educated workforce.

### Multiculturalism, Radicalization, and Fractured Globalization

On the world stage, the multiculturalism movement is in line with that aspect of fractured globalization that celebrates and even manufactures differences across different groups, including nations, ethnicities, and religions. In particular, the relativism underlying multiculturalism encourages the rejection of universal principles of rights and duties, common human values, and shared human characteristics. The result is a world in which humans with manufactured identities perceive a right

to pursue their ‘different cultural paths’, with every path being as valuable as any other. There is a hint of this in Pierre Trudeau’s 1971 Canadian House of Commons statement, when he claims there is no official culture in Canada. By implication, no culture should be given priority over any other culture.

Ironically, the relativism underlying multiculturalism has opened the door to extremist religious groups that reject the very openness that is supposed to be at the heart of multicultural societies (Moghaddam, 2006, 2008a, 2010); they take advantage of the freedoms and human rights available in democracies to fight against these same freedoms and human rights. These groups include violent Islamic Jihadi movements of various kinds, responsible for numerous terrorist attacks in major Western cities, including New York, London, Madrid, Paris, as well as more remote places, such as St. Bernardino, California. Of course, these terrorists are not relativists, but relativism and the focus on group-based differences has given them room to grow. They reject our common humanity and the fact that human beings are in so many important respects very similar.

In conclusion, the priority given to group-based differences and the underlying relativism of multiculturalism has not helped, and probably has hindered, the performance of African-Americans and Hispanics in the U.S. education system. Multiculturalism ideology has probably had a similar role in shaping the poor educational performance of ethnic minorities in the European Union. Of course, this is not to diminish the role of socioeconomic status (SES), which has a powerful and independent role in educational performance (Agirdag, Van Houtte & Van Avermaet, 2012).

#### **4. Omniculturalism**

*“The omnicultural imperative: During interactions with others, under all conditions, first give priority to the characteristics you share with other people as members of the human group”*

(Moghaddam, 2012, p. 318)

I propose that children should be socialized in families and taught in schools to act according to the ‘omnicultural imperative’. The objective should be to give highest priority to what all human beings have in common, and of thinking of oneself first and foremost as a member of humanity. This is opposite to the current multiculturalism ethos of teaching children to give priority to group-based differences, and of thinking of

oneself first and foremost as a member of ethnic group X, religion Y, and so on.

Omniculturalism involves both *rights*, what are owed to us, and duties, what we owe others (Moghaddam, 2000; Moghaddam, Slocum, Finkel, & Harré, 2000). On the one hand, every one of us is owed the right to be included in the human category and treated as a person who has all of the many important common characteristics of humans. On the other hand, we all share the duty to treat others in this same ‘inclusive’ way, giving priority to our common humanity and our important shared characteristics. These rights and duties are inter-dependent and inter-locking.

The fairness of omniculturalism as a policy becomes clearer when we consider John Rawls’s (1971) famous thought experiment: imagine a world in which all roles are re-assigned, but none of us are certain what our future roles will be. Because of this ‘veil of ignorance’, we cannot be sure of our group memberships; for example, we are uncertain as to whether we will be male or female, Black or White, or rich or poor. Rawls’s thought experiment forces us to construct a world in which all humans are treated fairly because of their common humanity, disregarding their particular roles and group memberships. The question changes from, ‘How should a poor Black person be treated?’ or ‘How should a rich White woman be treated?’ to, ‘How should a human being be treated?’

The inclusive nature of omniculturalism makes it more compatible with democracy, in contrast with the detrimental impact of multiculturalism on democracy. Multiculturalism ideology has resulted in the balkanization of politics in North America and the European Union. Voting blocs emerge in elections, so that who one votes for is related to one’s religious, ethnic, and other group affiliations. The particular group memberships that influence voting vary to some degree across nations, but balkanization tends to be present in most North American and EU societies. For example, studies show that religion plays a particularly important role in the United States (see Wald & Calhoun-Brown, 2014) and ethnicity tends to be more important than religion in the EU context (e.g., Hajnal & Trounstine, 2014). But the net result of this trend is clear: voting in such multicultural blocs diminishes the quality of democracy. In contrast, omniculturalism rejects voting on the basis of religion, ethnicity, and the like, and gives priority to voting for candidates on the basis of their qualifications, irrespective of their group memberships.

A second step in omniculturalism policy is to acknowledge and pay

attention to group differences. However, this must be done appropriately, so that the priority always remains on human commonalities. Children must be socialized to understand that relative to what human beings share and the similarities they have, differences across ethnic, religious, national, and other groups are small and should not be highlighted and exaggerated. Such socialization is against the traditional trends found in most cultures, where ethnocentrism results in groups giving priority to group-based differences, and in general seeing themselves as both distinct and superior (LeVine and Campbell, 1972; Moghaddam, 2008a). This suggests that the implementation of omniculturalism (like Rawls's thought experiment) requires citizens with certain special styles of cognition and action that need to be nurtured—a topic I turn to next.

### **The Democratic Citizen and Omniculturalism**

The development and implementation of omniculturalism policy requires changes in how people think and act, particularly towards giving priority to human commonalities and the unity of humanity. But how feasible is it to bring about such changes, and how much time will be needed to achieve enough change? To examine these questions, researchers must explore the psychology of change, a path that has received very little attention so far (de la Sabblonnière, Taylor, Perozzo & Sadykova, 2009; Moghaddam, 2002). However, 'malleability' and 'plasticity' have been studied extensively by one group of researchers, neuroscientists, and we can borrow some ideas from them.

#### **Political Plasticity: How Much and How Fast Can People Change Styles of Political Thinking and Action?**

The term 'plasticity' is commonly used in neuroscience research to refer to change in the human brain (Huttenlocher, 2002). Research has shown that brain plasticity is higher in the early stages of life, relative to adulthood after the age of about 25. Research also suggests there are certain 'critical' (sometimes referred to as 'sensitive') periods in development. For example, language learning probably has to take place by around 8-10 years of age—after that a child who has not learned any language will find it extremely difficult to do so, and will probably grow into adulthood mentally impaired. The research on neuroplasticity and critical periods raises fascinating questions about plasticity in the political domain, but available research on related topics such as 'social plasticity' (Collin, 2016; Rodriguez, Rebar & Fowler-Fin, 2013) and 'cultural plasticity' (Takagi, Silverstein & Crimmins, 2007) provide little guidance for us, in part because they have been applied mostly to



animals. Based on my personal experiences of life in a society following a revolution, as well my studies of experimental evidence and historical case studies, I offer some observations regarding *political plasticity*, the extent to which change is feasible in political behavior in a given time period.

Experimental evidence on conformity and obedience (see Moghaddam, 2005, chapters 15 & 16) suggests that extreme conditions can lead ordinary people to change behavior in specific areas and even carry out extreme acts that were not predicted. For example, in Milgram's (1974) famous series of studies, which are still valid today (Burger, 2009), individuals with normal personality profiles obeyed an authority figure to do (what they thought to be) serious and even fatal harm to a stranger. Historical case studies of extreme conditions, such as those created by Nazi Germany and other dictatorships, demonstrate that ordinary people can be changed to become highly destructive against fellow humans—others with whom they were previously living peacefully. Anthropological case studies demonstrate the same possibilities, an example being Turnbull's (1972) study of the *Ik*, a traditionally nomadic tribe who were forcibly settled in unsuitable territory and within three generations degenerated into a self-destructive collection of individuals intent on personal survival, even at the expense of their own children and parents.

Although these examples demonstrate how humans can change to become destructive and to take on the worst aspects of dictatorial life, there are fewer examples available of people changing rapidly from destructive, dictatorial conditions to constructive, democratic forms of life. This may be because we developed our psychological characteristics and social skills in the context of dictatorships over thousands of years, and even in the 21st century it is still far easier to establish dictatorships than democracies (Moghaddam, 2013, 2016). One after another, revolutions against dictatorships have resulted in the ousting of one dictator, to be replaced by other dictators, such as in Iran, Russia, and Egypt. Post World War II Japan represents the one successful example of fairly rapid change from dictatorship to democracy in a major society, but this was a 'top down' change imposed through foreign occupation, involving a highly literate, industrialized local population.

Rapid change was the dominant feature of Japan following World War II (Haddad, 2012; Tsurumi, 1970). Japan is probably the most dramatic demonstration of how movement toward more open, democratic governance can be achieved in a relatively short time. However, the conditions in which this change took place were extreme. In his highly insightful book about post-war Japan, John Dower (1999) argues that

“Because the defeat was so shattering, the surrender so unconditional, the disgrace of the militarists so complete, the misery the “holy war” had brought so personal, starting over involved not merely reconstructing buildings, but also rethinking what it meant to speak of a good life and good society...” (p. 25). General MacArthur and his command had a very high level of control over just about every aspect of post-war Japan and could introduce democratization changes at a rapid speed that in the American context at that time would have been considered extremist (Dower, 1999). The fact that change did take place so rapidly gives hope for the future, “The ease with which the great majority of Japanese were able to throw off...intense militaristic indoctrination...offers lessons on the limits of socialization and the fragility of ideology, that we have seen elsewhere...in the collapse of totalitarian regimes” (Dower, 1999, p. 29). As I have argued elsewhere (Moghaddam, 2013), it is brute force rather than ideology that keeps the masses obedient in totalitarian regimes. Once the regime loses the ability to use extreme violence to keep control, the masses enjoy a brief period of opportunity to learn new ways of thinking and acting in order to move in democratic directions. But they can only take advantage of this ‘opportunity bubble’ if the leadership and powerful institutions dominating society support such a move.

Japan after World War II experienced a rare moment in history, when the most powerful leaders and institutions worked to move the country toward greater openness and democracy. Of course, this move was facilitated by the high level of education among the Japanese population, as well as the advanced level of science, efficiency in management and organizations in Japanese society generally. The transformation of Japan as an advanced democratic society was so rapid that in just over three decades after experiencing utter defeat, Japan had become the envy of industrial and organizational managers in the West. Vogel (1979) wrote a well-received book entitled *Japan As Number One: Lessons for America*. By the 1980s, American and European management teams were visiting Japan to learn lessons from the ‘Japanese miracle’.

The post-war experience of Japan suggests that under certain conditions societal and individual change can take place rapidly; people can learn to think and act to support a more open, inclusive society. By implication, change toward omniculturalism is also possible, and may even be achieved rapidly (in a matter of decades, rather than centuries or millennia) under certain conditions. One such condition is the development among the general population of democratic citizens: individuals capable of participating in and supporting an actualized democracy (Moghaddam, 2016). In discussing the characteristics of the democratic

citizen, I further clarify the harmony between omniculturalism and democracy.

The Democratic Citizen

The development of actualized democracy requires citizens who have developed certain styles of thinking and acting. Just as we do not yet have a developed actualized society in the world, there are no societies in which the majority of citizens are capable of fully participating in and sustaining an actualized democracy. We still need to work toward the full development of such citizenry. For example, citizens should vote for the best candidates for political office, irrespective of their group memberships. More broadly, citizens must have certain key foundational characteristics in order support and participating in an actualized democracy; in this section I examine the 10 most important characteristics (see Figure 1). These ten characteristics are psychological, in the sense that they involve how citizens think and act.

The characteristics and their relationships are represented in a circle, starting with ‘I could be wrong’ and coming full circle to ‘Not all experiences are of equal value’. The starting point of ‘I could be wrong’ requires critical self-reflection; this is not a step that can be taken by



Figure 1. The psychological characteristics of the democratic citizen

individuals who think categorically and lack tolerance for ambiguity. In short, fundamentalists of various kinds, including religious fundamentalists, could not even get past the first step of critically considering, 'I could be wrong'. Next, the individual must go beyond personal doubt, by questioning even the sacred beliefs of their own society. Of course, this is difficult to do, because it means withstanding social pressure to conform with the norms and rules of one's own society. Following this questioning at both personal and societal levels, individuals must be ready to revise their opinions based on new evidence.

The next three steps involve the belief that one must seek to better understand others who are different from oneself, one can learn from these different others, and one must seek information and opinions from as many sources as possible. Coupled with this are two steps concerning new experiences: being open to new experiences, and creating new experiences for others. However, this 'openness' should not be interpreted as an endorsement of relativism; the final two steps are based on the idea that there are principles of right and wrong, and some experiences are of greater value than others. This anti-relativist position brings us back to universals, shared values, and our common humanity.

### **Concluding Statement**

Accelerating globalization and the start of the Anthropocene time period (Corlett, 2015) confronts us with enormous new challenges. We are forced to interact with out-group members who are often very different from us, with little time for adaptation. The result can be disastrous, for example as reflected by radicalization and terrorism. We need better policies to manage diversity on the global stage; policies that will enhance democracy. The traditional policy of assimilation and the new policy of multiculturalism have failed. In particular, multiculturalism policy has exaggerated group-based differences and has had detrimental consequences for minorities. We must give priority to human commonalities and adopt a shared vision of our future together (Ikeda, 2010). Omniculturalism is put forward as one part of a solution, toward achieving actualized democracy.

## References

- Agirdag, O., Van Houtte, M., & Van Avermaet, P. (2012). Why does the Ethnic and Socio-economic Composition of Schools Influence Math Achievement? The Role of Sense of Futility and Futility Culture. *European Sociological Review*, 28 (3), 366–378.
- Atkinson, A. B. (2015). *Inequality: What can be done?* Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press.
- Burger, J. M. (2009). Replicating Milgram: Would People Still Obey Today? *American Psychologist*, 64 (1), 1–11.
- Collin, J. (2016). On social plasticity: The transformative power of pharmaceuticals on health, nature and identity. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 38 (1), 73–89.
- Conger, D., & Long, M. C. (2010). Why Are Men Falling Behind? Gender Gaps in College Performance and Persistence. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 627 (1), 184–214.
- Corlett, R. T. (2015). The Anthropocene concept in ecology and conservation. *Trends in Ecology & Evolution*, 30 (1), 36–41.
- de la Sablonnière, R. Taylor, D. M. Perozzo, C. & Sadykova, N. (2009). Reconceptualizing relative deprivation in the context of dramatic social change: the challenge confronting the people of Kyrgyzstan. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 39 (3), 325–345.
- DiPrete, T. A., & Buchmann, C. (2013). *The Rise of Women: The Growing Gender Gap in Education and What It Means for American Schools*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Dixson, A. D., & Rousseau, C. K. (Eds.) (2006). *Critical Race Theory in Education: All God's Children Got a Song*. New York: Routledge.
- Dorling, D. (2014). *Inequality and the 1%*. London: Verso.
- Dower, J. W. (1999). *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Ehrlich, P. R., & Ehrlich, A. H. (2008). *The Dominant Animal: Human Evolution and the Environment*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press.
- Finkel, N., & Moghaddam, F. M. (Eds.) (2005). *The Psychology of Rights and Duties: Empirical Contributions and Normative Commentaries*. Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association Press.
- Haddad, M. A. (2012). *Building Democracy in Japan*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hajnal, Z., & Trounstein, J. (2014). What Underlies Urban Politics? Race, Class, Ideology, Partisanship, and the Urban Vote. *Urban Affairs Review*, 50 (1), 63–99.
- Huttenlocher, P. R. (2002). *Neural Plasticity*. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press.
- Ikeda, D. (2010). *A New Humanism*. New York: I. B. Tauris.
- Kena, G., Musu-Gillette, L., Robinson, J., Wang, X., Rathbun, A., et al (2015). *The Condition of Education 2015*. National Center for Education Statistics, <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED556901> retrieved Jan 1, 2016.
- Kubiszewski, I., Costanza, R., Franco, C., Lawn, P., Talberth, J., Jackson, T. & Aylmer, C. (2013). Beyond GDP: Measuring and Achieving Global Genuine Progress. *Ecological Economics*, 93, 57–68.
- LeVine, R. A., & Campbell, D. T. (1972). *Ethnocentrism: Theories of Conflict, Ethnic Attitudes, and Group Behavior*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

- Marmot, M. G. (2004). *The Status Syndrome: How Social Standing Affects Our Health and Longevity*. New York: Times Books/Henry Holt.
- Moghaddam, F. M. (2000). Toward a Cultural Theory of Human Rights. *Theory & Psychology*, 10 (3), 291–312.
- Moghaddam, F. M., Slocum, N. R., Finkel, N., Mor, T., & Harré, R. (2000). Toward a Cultural Theory of Duties. *Culture & Psychology*, 6 (3), 275–302.
- Moghaddam, F. M. (2002). *The Individual and Society: A Cultural Integration*. New York: Worth.
- Moghaddam, F. M. (2005). *Great Ideas in Psychology: A Cultural and Historical Introduction*. Oxford England: Oneworld Publications.
- Moghaddam, F. M., Harré, R., & Lee, N. (Eds.) (2008). *Global Conflict Resolution Through Positioning Analysis*. New York: Springer.
- Moghaddam, F. M. (2006). *From the Terrorists' Point of View*. Westport, CT.: Praeger Security International.
- Moghaddam, F. M. (2008a). *Multiculturalism and Intergroup Relations: Psychological Implications for Democracy in Global Context*. Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association Press.
- Moghaddam, F. M. (2008b). *How Globalization Spurs Terrorism: The Lopsided Benefits of "One World" and Why That Fuels Violence*. Westport, CT.: Praeger Security International.
- Moghaddam, F. M. (2010). *The New Global Insecurity: How Terrorism, Environmental Collapse, Economic Inequalities, and Resource Shortages are Changing Our World*. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Security International.
- Moghaddam, F. M. (2012). The omnicultural imperative. *Culture & Psychology*, 18 (3), 304–330.
- Moghaddam, F. M. (2013). *The Psychology of Dictatorship*. Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association Press.
- Moghaddam, F. M. (2016). *The Psychology of Democracy*. Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association Press.
- Novoa, C., & Moghaddam, F. M. (2014). Policies for Managing Cultural Diversity. In V. Benet-Martinez & Y. Y. Hong (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Multicultural Identity* (pp. 462–484). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Piketty, T. (2014). *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. (Translator: A. Goldhammer). Cambridge, MA.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Pinker, S. (2011). *The Better Angels of our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined*. New York: Viking.
- Putnam, R. D. (2015). *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Rawls, J. (1971). *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge, MA.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Ritzer, G. R. (2014). *The McDonaldization of Society*. Sage. 8th ed.
- Rodin, J., & de Ferranti, D. (2012). Universal health coverage: the third global health transition? *The Lancet*, 380, 861–862.
- Rodriguez, R. L., Rebar, D., & Fowler-Fin, K. D. (2013). The evolution and evolutionary consequences of social plasticity in mate preferences. *Animal Behaviour*, 85 (5), 1041–1047.
- Takagi, E., Silverstein, M., & Crimmins, E. (2007). Intergenerational Coresidence of Older Adults in Japan: Conditions for Cultural Plasticity. *The Journal of Gerontology*

- gy: *Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences*, 62 (5), S330–S339.
- Trudeau, P. E. (1992). Statement by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons, October 8, 1971. In A. Fleras & J. L. Elliot (Eds.), *Multiculturalism in Canada: The Challenge of Diversity* (pp. 281–283). Scarborough, Canada: Nelson Canada.
- Tsurumi, K. (1970). *Social Change and the Individual: Japan Before and After Defeat in World War II*. Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press.
- Turnbull, C. M. (1972). *The Mountain People*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Villa-Vicencio, C. (2009). *Walk with Us and Listen: Political Reconciliation in Africa*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
- Vogel, E. (1979). *Japan As Number One: Lessons for America*. New York: Harper Colophon.
- Wald, K. D., & Calhoun-Brown, A. (2014). *Religion and Politics in the United States*. 7th ed. New York: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Zimbardo, P. (2008). *The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil*. New York: Random House.

#### Author Biography

**Fathali M. Moghaddam** is a professor, Department of Psychology, and Director, Interdisciplinary Program in Cognitive Science, Georgetown University. Prof. Moghaddam was born in Iran, educated from an early age in England, and worked for the United Nations and for McGill University before joining Georgetown in 1990. He has researched a broad range of topics, toward developing psychology for and of humankind. His publications include, *Understanding the Self and Others: Explorations in Intersubjectivity and Interobjectivity* (2013), *The New Global Insecurity* (2010), and *Multiculturalism and Intergroup Relations: Implications for Democracy in Global Context* (2008). He has also authored the companion volumes *The Psychology of Dictatorship* (2013) and *The Psychology of Democracy* (2016).