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TROUBLE WITH MULTICULTURALISM
IN THE EYES OF A PHILOSOPHER OF CULTURE

When a Pole leaves a ferry in Dover, he/she knows that they will continue their journey on the left side of the road. For many arriving, this is not a comfortable situation. But it does not occur to them to claim their rights, human rights, the rights of every human being, to live in harmony with their own culture. They found themselves in a country with left-hand traffic. British quirkiness? Almost the whole world drives the right side. Well, but not the British. And they are the hosts there.

Two different traffic cultures collide there, two different ways of doing the same thing, both possible and equally effective, but – mutually exclusive. Here the compromise is impossible; this cultural contradiction cannot be solved by finding some form of indirect solution or allowing both ways of driving (i.e. both cultures) on equal rights to operate side by side in the same area, in the same society. This kind of cultural contradiction is a disjunctive alternative – one or the other, and probably also *tertium non datur.* None of the two possible ways of moving on the road is better than the other, both equally effectively leading to the goal, but one of them must be chosen. And which is decided by something accidental from the point of view of the technique of movement, cultural trajectory, not necessarily blind, because it has some historical track of events, blind from the point of view of the effectiveness of public driving techniques, because each of both choices would be equally good. It seems to me that in the United Kingdom there has been such a choice in the past and its opposite in the continent. I no longer want to say that Great Britain insists on its culture, and for example Sweden has given up this difference and has adapted to most European countries.

Not always a cultural contradiction is so drastic, but this particular is. You cannot get over it and sort it out somehow. To live it is necessary to abolish it, and it requires a complete concession of one of the parties, total resignation, surrendering. The winner takes everything. Theoretically, there is a certain form of concession to be considered, practically not used anywhere, but the separateness of the alternative remains. That is, if the Poles in a certain district of the English city constituted the vast majority (possibly with visitors from other countries of the world, in which also the right-hand traffic applies), one could assume that in this district or a clearly

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marked housing estate *their* traffic system would apply, and besides that this area the one which is valid throughout the country – throughout the whole country, but still excluding the territory in which the cultural minority constitutes the majority. Although in road traffic, no such compromise has been used anywhere, but in the case of many other cultural contradictions, such a situation is not only conceivable but it has a place. Of course, if the cultural difference leads to contradiction at all, because in many cases it does not. Not always two different cultures dictate behaviors remaining in relation to each other in a relationship of contradictions, so that one of them impedes the performance of another and in extreme (as above) case it prevents them. Sometimes culturally different behaviors do not make any sense at all and can be realized in parallel side by side, sometimes even interwoven in time and in the same territory. And sometimes – what's even more interesting – supporting each other and improving the implementation of the other party's goals.

Take for example the differences in clothing. In every society there are rules for a certain way of dressing, but depending on the type of culture, they tend to be stricter, narrowly determined, or looser. If freedom is significant, the emergence of outfits dictated by another culture may not cause any confusion, especially where fashion is already varied and makes permanent changes. When, therefore, women appear in the streets of London and those who are shrouded from head to foot in tight wrapping robes sometimes covering their faces, nothing special happens. Just one more option has been realized here. You can dress to reveal something; you can also dress to cover different areas and parts of the body. On cold days, not only Muslims wrap themselves up to the tip of their noses. And when it's hot? Their problem. One can see clothes fulfill other, supposedly religious function. We can only be sorry for them, but if they want to suffer from overheating, it's their business. They do not make it difficult for anyone else. If they want, let them cover their faces.

Although in the latter case it is not quite so. When women hide their faces (let us emphasize: in contrast to covering all other parts of the body), it can in certain situations give rise to tensions, because it interferes someone in the course of performing activities assigned to a specific function by the prevailing culture (this is another example of cultural behavioral contradiction, similarly as discussed at the beginning). There, where the identification of the other person belongs to the official duties – in the bank, at the border crossing, and more broadly – in general at the offices, the official in his/her behavior encounters an obstacle resulting from the behavior of another person dictated by another culture. The examiner with a veiled student has a similar problem. There is a cultural contradiction in the sphere of behavioral patterns that changes into conflict, when either side or both insists on their rights; the conflict solved differently in various countries. In the future, in this case, another method of identification may come with help, e.g. through voice analysis?

In general, the religious or ethno-cultural order to cover the face – but the face, and not the other parts of the body – is somehow conflicting, if it is carried out in the public sphere. It weakens the feeling of security among other participants in social

life. That is why more and more Western countries no longer tolerate it. However, covering women's faces in private, in their own home, seems to be a cultural difference that does not make life difficult for the public. Just like the custom of the Discalced Carmelite nuns – if they do not leave the monastery grounds in their uniform.

In any case, the cultural diversity of the Muslim women's attire, except for covering the face in certain specific public situations, does not lead to behavioral contradictions in society. This does not mean that it does not lead to other cultural contradictions. For example, state law may be violated, even though this violation does not make life difficult for anyone. In secular states like France, where public demonstration of religious affiliation is forbidden by law, Muslim women's attire is seen as such a demonstration of a religious symbol and may be forbidden (not for security reasons). There are also environments in some countries where women's clothing in Islam is believed to violate the human dignity of these women, in other words, it hurts them somehow. And even if they themselves voluntarily, sometimes quite willingly wear these outfits, certain feminist groups are demanding a ban on wearing them anywhere. Feminism of a milder variety requires only that women shouldn't be forced to do so. However, if the state does not see any reasons to engage in a dispute, it only leads to inter-group conflicts, not on the scale of the whole society, to conflicts that could be called behavioral-mental conflicts, because someone's behavior does not get in the way of other behaviors, consistent with a different culture, but only causes a negative mental reaction in the followers of another culture, it is morally stigmatized. For the majority of members of society it remains an indifferent matter, on the basis of "it doesn't harm anyone." The greater the freedom of choice of forms of behavior and demonstrating beliefs in a given country/society, the fewer problems are created by the type of cultural differences under consideration, whether in the field of dressing or in terms of feeding, playing, etc.

For now, in the example above, we are talking about one side of cultural contradiction, and there is another one. The Muslim costume may not disturb the hosts. But the Muslims may be disturbed by the outfit of the hosts, or the types of drinks drunk by them, or something else, which in itself does not make it hard for Muslims to pursue their own cultural patterns. There is a certain dramaturgy of growing demands and tensions (especially publicized in the nationalist media narrative).

We have previously presented Muslims only as a party who after arriving and settling in a Western state would like to live in their own way in a way dictated by their religious culture (which in Islam with its prohibitions and orders fills the space of life, incomparably more tightly than in Western cultures). And when they try to do it, they encounter obstacles. And this – in their opinion – hurts them. They do not see at all what their lives, normal human lives, would bring any damage to the host society. The dress of "their" women is an important element of their way of life. The feeling of discomfort grows when their number grows and away from their homeland, on foreign land they recreate their own cultural, mainly religious, community. Why should they give way? They become full citizens – this is especially

the case in the second and subsequent generations. They are a minority, it is true. But at least where they live together and form a majority, *their* territory is created and their cultural norms should apply there. Not only are they allowed to live their lives fully in their own way, but others entering their territory should also adapt to them. At least the more radical of them are beginning to speak out like that. Because it is them Muslims who already live here *at home*, who for example, are offended by the way Western women dress are hurt by their improper behavior. They are hurt by gay people tolerated by this country, hurt by others drinking alcohol. All this is something bad and therefore forbidden in their culture. The fact that the existing natives, indigenous inhabitants, i.e. the current hosts, do not interfere with Islamic customs is not the reason why Islamists should not interfere with the behavior of the so-called native hosts. And not only in Islamic settlements. Everywhere where there are Muslims, e.g. at universities, where they study. They find it disturbing that male and female students sit in the same benches in the lecture hall, mixed up. They have the right to expect that their beliefs will be respected, and the Muslim women students will be able to sit in benches where they will not be exposed to the men's neighborhood. They find disturbing drinking alcohol in student clubs and canteens. Of course, no one forces them to drink, and they do not drink, but they are offended by the view of other drinkers. And, of course, they must have halal meat canteens. And they do not even want to see pork etc. on their friends' plates, etc.

And this is not the end. The culture of existing hosts is so tolerant that it creates a free place for the culture of minorities. But from the point of view of consistently conceived Islam – especially in radical leaders or pretenders to leadership – tolerance towards other cultures is not at all good. There should be no place for other ways of life except for one proper – Islamic. Islam is not, should not and cannot be tolerant, because it would mean that it closes its eyes to evil and to the wrongdoings unintentionally caused by other people. As soon as God gives strength, one will have to put everything in order. For the good of all. Because Westerners do not know the Truth, and they do not know what Good is. Tolerating the way of life of the current hosts, when the community of newly arrived and their children will already constitute a strong political force to fight, would be harmful for the hosts. No wonder that lately the critics of the custom of arranging marriages (sometimes even under-age partners, sometimes against their will) one of the British Muslim leaders answered in a rhetorical fashion: And in which marriage system is the higher divorce rate, ours or maybe yours? Which marriages are lasting? By implication: and are therefore better. Follow our example and do not criticize our culture.

Of course, one should not draw far-reaching conclusions. Presumably, the average Muslim would gladly remain opportunistically tolerant: Live as you want, allow us to live our lives. Anyway, this applies to the contradictions in general – as the basis for conflicting statements and actions appearing in the mouths of spiritual leaders or perhaps even more in radical fighting for such leadership, average believers of immigrant cultures would probably be completely satisfied if they were simply left behind

in peace and were not interfered with their way of life. Unfortunately, even this approach, and on the part of all culturally diverse communities living in one common society, must sometimes lead to purely behavioral contradictions and conflicts.

The clash of Islamic cultures with Western culture abounds in particularly expressive (often but exaggerated) examples and is most often cited in discussions on multiculturalism as an exemplification of what multiculturalism leads and can lead. It means the emergence in one leading systemic culture in the society – of others who are dangerous especially in the case of non-European or non-Western cultures that bring competitive norms of behavior in the same social situations. The encounter of two cultures discussed here goes far beyond the simple clash of two interfering ways of behavior in one area, as it was mentioned at the beginning of the meeting of two different road traffic systems. In addition, it shows the frequent lack of symmetry in these clashes. The tolerance of one culture to the other does not have to meet a symmetrical answer. And contradictions in the sphere of beliefs, in the mental sphere, are not necessarily exhausting in this sphere, they often turn into behavioral contradictions or contradictions in the distribution of goods and resources (for the time being omitted in this introduction), and necessarily lead to conflict behavior and struggle, the ending of which can be varied.

Multiculturalism can be troublesome. It has, of course, its good points, especially visible at the beginning, when the immigrants arrived, they are grateful to the heavens and everyone around them that they could get away from somewhere where they felt bad or in any case worse than in their new place of residence. They usually take jobs that the locals do not get into, and they do it much cheaper and sometimes better. Some hosts residents (rather richer or from the intelligentsia) are beginning to enjoy – often unexpectedly – coloration of their previous lives. Culinary, aesthetic, moral... Often, it also gives them tangible economic benefits (although from the point of view of the poorer classes it can be a threat). But then the trouble begins – for the host inhabitants, and for the recently arrived ones, guest inhabitants. Guests who, however, are more and more evasive, the announced return to their homeland – if it was assumed at all – postponed, settle down for good, change into tenants, then residents, and their children, sometimes even they themselves, eventually become fellow citizens and co-hosts in the new – initially treated only as "substitute" or temporary – homeland. Often still not treated as a real homeland, and in any case not as the only new, because relationships with the country that was left, sometimes far away, are not broken or even markedly weakened. One can just drop in and refresh all your ties, today cheap airlines allow for it. And without this, the satellite TV and the Internet cause that after crossing the threshold of your own apartment you return to your homeland, leaving behind the door of the foreign host country. Not only everyone here speaks in your native language, but you can hear your favorite, well--known music, you can see distant and familiar landscapes on the screen, and hear the latest news, thanks to what the native hosts of this country live, sometimes living just behind the wall but more often encountered at work and during further trips

to the city, loses any meaning compared to what is happening in *your* own country. And when around, often in all the apartments of the block of flats, in the whole communal estate, in the shops downstairs and at a nearby marketplace, everywhere live the same countrymen, the rebellion against restrictions dictated by the followers of local culture is born, which initially, after arrival was accepted without murmur, being grateful for the hospitality.

And it is certain that the troubles start. For sure – for at least a large part of the hosts, mostly not those to whom multiculturalism was mainly associated with joy or intellectual satisfaction. The obvious and inevitable until now, because objectively occurring cultural contradictions turn into subjectively experienced obstacles and difficulties in leading a normal, familiar, indigenous life. They are transformed into conflicts. Especially when these *differently* behaving newcomers take their jobs, social and communal flats, take care of the attention of social assistance centers, consume a large part of the funds allocated for this aid. Yes, someone might think that these problems are not so difficult to remedy – all you need to do is get the natives to go a little bit and give way to a bit of space at work, at home, in public life. And they will limit the universal validity of certain prohibitions and orders to themselves, freeing the newcomers applying them. But the newcomers want more and more! And they stop asking, they start to demand. Now they know about their equal rights – because they have learned from their hosts – human rights, including the right to live in harmony with their own culture. They already felt "at home," and not without grounds. Unfortunately, such a simple solution for new fellow citizens means for the old, now also only fellow citizens, often difficulties and obstacles in running life in the way that they used to. And the conflict does not disappear so easily because everyone wants to live "normal life" in other words, as their culture defines. Cultural contradiction remains unresolved for some time, new ones join it, and tensions on both sides accumulate. And it was supposed to be so beautiful. It was supposed to be colorful, enriching and "multicultural."

I mainly came up with an example of contradictions and cultural tensions in Western society, in which there appears and develops, among others significant Islamic minority, with varying state provenance and a different versions of Islam. The common denominator of religion – Islam in a simplified sense treated as something homogeneous, which deviates far from the truth – is a strongly imposed by media *iunctim*, omitting diversity and thickly exaggerating cultural conflicts as a "clash of Islam with the West." (Anyway, similar primitivism threatens to connect everything on the other side as "culture or civilization of the West"). This media practice, especially the particularly appealing call to the apocalyptic vision of Huntington's "clash of civilizations," encounters a very fertile ground from those who feel somehow socially lost and gladly link this loss to newcomers with a different religion, where Islam draws the most attention, because it is itself proselytized and used by many terrorists as the supposed premise of their aggression. I took over this narrative on the level of facts, not evaluation, because despite the exaggeration and dislocation

of proportions, it nicely captures the negative side of processes launched for half a century by the constantly growing influx of culturally different migrants. Other cultures are less often picturesque and unambiguous for depicting the alarming "conflict of cultures."

There is no doubt that the transformation of a society from a monocultural to a multicultural is always connected, though with various intensities, difficulties, sometimes even torments, in the life of its current members and, as it turns out, also newcomers. Perhaps the worst contradictions are not generated at all by the cultural diversity of new fellow citizens, but simply by the mere fact of the increase in the number of people interested in accessing the same shortage of goods. But because the cultural diversity of the new competitors is striking as their quality, it is blamed for everything. And that the phenomenon of multiculturalism of societies in the present time, in the era of globalization, has taken on and continues to take on the intensity, it is even better to look at it both descriptively and, intentionally, with a pragmatic intention. Will problems related to multiculturalism disappear and resolve themselves? Is it necessary and possible to implement special steps, so far not used, to give this process a more human-friendly character, maybe even somehow change its direction? In a word, the situation requires a special, new form of political practice, maybe even at the level of governance (if it can be affected), and certainly at the level of management – governance of processes leading to the formation of multiculturalism and influencing its character and management already existing and still expanding and intensifying multiculturalism.

The strictly cultural contradictions can sometimes be removed with purely tech-nical methods before they can even become social conflicts. It is worse with those that are not cultural at all and only represent the next phase of tensions and social conflicts known for a long time in monocultural societies, only now that competing or opposing groups of rivals wear t-shirts of different cultural clubs. However, these are the same contradictions that occur in every more complex society in the context of competition for the best satisfaction of their own needs. The division according to different cultures joins the commonly known other divisions: class, gender, age, professional, territorial etc. Also here, as in other cases, social contradiction can be transformed into an intensifying social conflict. This is the case when the already ad-opted solutions stop after time – for example in the next generation – to be accepted by one or both parties, moreover, there are often more parties in this conflict. Or when a minority – and sometimes majority – begins to make demands that nobody would have thought of before.

It is worth recalling that contradictions and social conflicts are nothing new in the life of societies. Sometimes images of the idyll of old life "at home, among themselves in their own country," where foreigners were rare and only as guests or employees of embassies, is a fairy tale that can be easily believed by indigenous people tormented by clashes with culturally different communities. You do not need to import people from new cultures to make conflicts appear. Often, social conflicts "among our folks"

are much more dramatic and lead to a revolution. Cultural conflicts can overlap – and then cultural differences are in fact their source. They can also directly result from colliding cultural patterns of behavior, cultural hierarchies of values and beliefs or cultural ideas about how to meet needs. Only then can one speak of specifically cultural conflicts.

Depending on the real nature of the so-called contradictions and possible cultural conflicts – which means in the broad sense associated with the cultural diversity of the parties involved in them – the ways and possibilities of solving them will look differently. In the history of contemporary multiculturalism, various policies of governance and multiculturalism emerged, ranging from the forced or spontaneous elimination of multiculturalism through assimilation to the latest program school, ideologically embedded in human rights, called multiculturalism. For a decade, it has been said, not without grounds, about the crisis or even the defeat of multiculturalism. An interesting but burning problem arises: What then? The migration of peoples continues polyculturization involves still new societies; problems do not always disappear with the appearance of subsequent generations in cultural minorities. An interesting theoretical problem also turns out to be a very important practical problem. Also in Poland. No, we will not be protected from it by banning immigrants. Different cultures already exist in Polish society. And in the eyes of one of these cultures the other is considered to be a kind of minority immigrant culture, the effect of immigration from the West ideas, views, behavioral patterns of "not ours," as it is often emphasized. Immigrations of cultures can also take place without the followers bringing them, and the cultures themselves can also immigrate.

From this point of view, considerations in this prologue cease to be something exotic to the Polish situation.

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IN THE EYES OF A PHILOSOPHER OF CULTURE

Keyword: multiculturalism

Abstract: The paper should become an introduction to a non-existing yet book *Multiculturalism – and what after?* (The book is in a process of writing). Lots of cases of multicultural tensions, contradictions and conflicts taken from the London life are analyzed from the point of view of possible solutions.

KŁOPOTY Z WIELOKULTUROWOŚCIĄ
OKIEM FILOZOFA KULTURY

Słowo kluczowe: multikulturalizm

Streszczenie: Tekst stanowi wprowadzenie do przygotowywanej przez autora książki *Multikulturalizm – i co dalej?*. Na wielu konkretnych przykładach wziętych z obserwacji życia wielokulturowej społeczności Londynu omawia się w nim problemy stwarzane w życiu społecznym przez narastającą wielokulturowość, zwłaszcza pochodzenia imigranckiego.