

# Next time it won't be a guy with a funny moustache screaming in German

**H**appy New-ish Year! First off, an apology. We're over a month late this time around. It's partly due to the particulars of a change in layout personnel, but it's mostly due to me. There aren't enough hours in a day, and my day job keeps getting in the way. On the bright side, I was able to pull some strings and get some original pictures of actor Christian Bale and director Terry George that you won't see anywhere else.

Ok, let's jump right into it. Although it certainly won't look like it at first, the next bit is going to turn into a psalm on Canadian values. Here goes.

Hitler's legacy: not only did he single-handedly turn a style of quadrilateral moustache into a form of hate speech, but he has made it next to impossible for a western country to feel national pride. One of the lessons of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is that a warm glow of healthy nationalism can too easily be stoked into a raging inferno of *nazialisme*. So now our collective instinct is to err on the side of caution. We don't want any more infernos, so we douse even

the warm glows. No bigger dousing happened in Canada in 2016 than that received by Conservative party leadership hopeful Kellie Leitch when she suggested a conversation on Canadian values in the context of immigration policy. Political pundits lined up for the bucket brigade:

some commentators labeled her a racist; others accused her of perpetrating a cynical sham. *Just talking* about what might constitute a Canadian value is enough to get one shouted down these days.

Still, one might say, isn't it better to throw a wet blanket on anything that might become nationalistic fervor rather than be surprised by the sudden appearance of brown-shirted men prowling the streets? That's a false dichotomy. An awareness of, and pride in, Canadian values (and Enlightenment values in general) might be just the thing to help protect a good way of life from a flood of corrosively bad ideas.

A casual reading of the newspaper reminds us that much of the globe is drowning in bad ideas, e.g. buying and selling sex slaves, murdering homosexuals, stoning women, marrying little girls, crucifying

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apostates, shooting or whipping bloggers, slicing off clitorises (those three words are disturbing even to type), etc. These are profoundly bad ideas, regardless of any cultural, religious or ethnic considerations.

That might sound obvious. I wish it were, but horrible things are happening, even in the west. *The Guardian* reports that although female genital mutilation (FGM) has been illegal in the UK since 1985, it is very much in practice: “families pool resources to bring in a ‘cutter’ from abroad to mutilate girls in groups,” but “the issue has been neglected by successive governments scared of confronting so-called cultural practices.” After 30 years, there has not been a single conviction.

If the UK hasn’t the stomach to draw a line on so clear an issue, then what else will happen (or is already happening) under the cover of “cultural/religious practices”? And what makes Canadians think that *our* government will find greater intestinal fortitude when similar issues arise in North America, as they inevitably will?

Tolerance is certainly a Canadian value. We live and let live. But how much tolerance is too much tolerance? Is it possible to be so tolerant that we tolerate the intolerant who actually want

to destroy our tolerant way of life? Can these questions even be answered except in hindsight?

Not long ago, I thought it was a certainty that progress in human rights all over the world *just happened* and was as guaranteed as the slow and steady sweep of an hour hand on a clock, pushed onward by an invisible, inexorable benign force. But now it is increasingly clear that hard won gains in rights can be pushed back centuries almost overnight. Women’s rights, gay rights, minority rights, freedom of speech, of thought and of religion are the new kids on the block; their antitheses have been around for many hundreds, if not thousands – or even tens of thousands – of years. Yet, a person who was born and raised in an enlightened place in an enlightened time could easily take for granted the human rights they effortlessly inherited. I wish we could (safely) inoculate ourselves against this debilitating complacency. Until such a vaccine is invented, maybe the best we can do is to closely watch what is happening to that canary in the coal mine, Sweden, while making a mantra out of Jefferson’s timeless insight: *The price of liberty is eternal vigilance.*

—Richard Young

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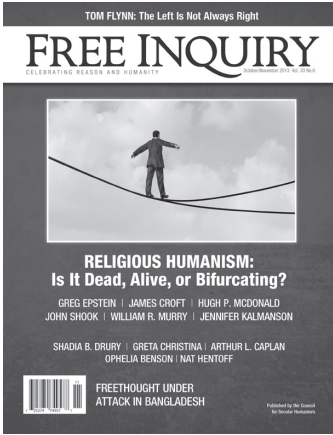
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