Multiculturalism and the
European Cultural Diversity

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Abstract:

Multiculturalism is a normative theory focused on the managing of cultural diversity in a democratic framework. The concept of collective rights lies in the centre of theory, demanding policies of recognition for minority groups, in societies reshaped for accepting 'multicultural citizenship'. Multiculturalism asks for widening of liberal democracies, ready to face new demands of cultural groups. For multiculturalists, in the absence of recognition, a person may experience losses or distortions, or may be the victim of a form of repression. Multiculturalism demands an equal status for the different cultures. The critics consider that multiculturalism will undermine the basic principles of liberal democracy, based on individual rights and liberties and instead of promoting intercultural dialogue, will end up in policies of isolation.

Keywords: multiculturalism, cultural diversity, liberal democracy, interethnic conflict, intercultural communications, human rights, minorities

Ever since the twentieth century – a century of extremes and nationalism – humankind has continued its search for solutions to the problem of ethnic and cultural diversity. Globalization is far from having imposed unitary political standards worldwide. Quite the contrary actually: there has been a rebirth of old regional and local identities which threaten the national states' demands for unity. If the interethnic conflicts in the Balkans after 1990 were regarded as an accident at the edge of Europe, numerous other events show that there is still potential for interethnic conflicts, and not only at the edge of Europe, where Ukraine's efforts of European integration have generated armed conflicts between Ukrainians and the Russian population. Western Europe itself is put in difficulty by the issue of the wave of immigrants from the Syrian area to such an extent that the European Union's existence is threatened. The European political leaders still look for solutions to the refugees' crisis under the pressure of the adverse wave of public opinion and under the threat of an increasing wave of

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Euro-scepticalpopulist political movements. In this context, we question the way in which one can manage the problem of ethnical and cultural diversity in a democratic framework. One of the solutions proposed is multiculturalism.

The term of 'multiculturalism' was used in Canada in a 1965 report of the Canadian Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism and as of 1970, it has featured the federal policy in the field. Interculturalism was francophone Canada's reaction to federal multiculturalism.

Levente Salat (Salat, 2001) has shown that the theoreticians of multiculturalism do not consider the common democratic mechanisms as sufficient to properly solve the problem of multicultural societies. Thus, a new paradigm is needed. The concept of collective rights lies in the centre of this model, but not opposed to individual freedom, but as a prerequisite for it. Authors like Charles Taylor or Will Kimlicka have proposed thinking frameworks and institutional arrangements which can permit policies of recognition for minority groups, as well as articulating theories of 'multicultural citizenship'. These theoreticians consider that multiculturalism is an adaptation and a widening of liberal democracies, ready to face new demands. Critics of these theories, on the other hand, are afraid that multiculturalism will eventually undermine the basic principles of liberal democracy, based on individual rights and liberties (at best it should stop at the borderline of these rights) or that it promotes policies of isolation.

The philosopher Charles Taylor is one of those who have offered a theoretical and moral basis to multiculturalism, generating an exciting and fruitful debate[1]. Charles Taylor noticed that within the political life one has sometimes stringently felt the need of recognition. The need lies behind the nationalist movements and behind other forms of gaining the right to representation by what is regarded as 'subordinate' groups.

The theoreticians of multiculturalism base their demand for equal recognition for all cultural groups on the connection between recognition and identity. Through identity, Taylor defines the way in which a person understands him/herself, the defining fundamental features that a human being possesses. Taylor states that identity is partly made up of its recognition and its absence, and oftentimes by the lack of recognition or the distorted recognition of others. In the absence of recognition, a person may experience losses or distortions, or may be

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[1]The volume edited by Amy Guttman, Examining the Politics of Recognition, Princeton University Press, New Jersey 1994, which brings together the central article of Charles Taylor, The Politics of Recognition and comments upon it by philosophers such as JurgenHabermas, Michael Waltzer, Steven Rockefeller or Susan Wolf.

the victim of a form of repression which could restrict a person within a false or distorted experience (Taylor, 1994: 25).

Charles Taylor considers that people are defined by the notion of dignity, which has replaced the older medieval concept of honour in the social relationships which lead to the formation of a person's identity. Democracy is built on the idea of mutual recognition, which has various shapes. Starting from this principle, multiculturalism demands an equal status for the different cultures. The characteristic of human life, says Taylor, is fundamentally dialogic. The accomplishment and the definition of identity rely on forms of expression, largely speaking, and include all forms of communication and artistic manifestation. Identity is negotiated through dialogue, partly through introspection, and partly through the process of communicating with others. This leads to the fact that identity is not recognized a priori; it must be earned. Since identity is formed by means of dialogue with others, equal recognition becomes important.

The novelty in the modern period is not given by the need for recognition, states Taylor, but by the conditions in which recognition can fail. Today, the importance of recognition is universally acknowledged, but the differential policies which operate in practice rely precisely on the principle of universally recognized dignity (Taylor, 1994: 39). This principle does not have any interest in the notion of cultural differences but focuses on what is identical and human in every individual. The liberal philosophical tradition has considered individual rights to be above collective ones. The democrats rely on what Ronald Dworkin and others call 'procedural democracy', an agreement upon the framework in which the purposes defined as individual are pursued. From this perspective, human dignity is perceived as an autonomy, while a liberal society states that it remains neutral regarding the concept of 'a good life'.

For Charles Taylor, a society which has collective purposes may be liberal, capable of respecting diversity and defending fundamental human rights. In his opinion, the reconciliation between collective purposes and individual ones is difficult, but not impossible. He believes that, although the classical liberal conception does not involve the suppression of cultural differences, it is in a certain way derogatory to the keeping and acceptance of differences, to the extent in which it cannot adapt to the ambition of survival of the members of a distinct society (Taylor, 1994: 60–62). Thus, he contests the demand of neutrality stated by classical liberalism. Liberalism, he believes, is not a meeting ground for all cultures, but the expression of cultures which are

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incompatible with others. Liberalism can therefore not assure and demand total cultural neutrality.

In her discussion of Charles Taylor's ideas, Susan Wolf appreciates that the lack of recognition is actually the denial of a minority's cultural identity, which has a distinct set of traditions and practices, as well as the denial of the fact that cultural identity is a value. The members of the group which lacks recognition will feel uprooted, without resources for feelings such as those of belonging to a community or self-esteem; they will face the risk of cultural assimilation. The most obvious remedy is the promotion of culture and the explicit presentation of cultural traditions and of the accomplishments of these groups (Wolf, 1994: 75–76).

Susan Wolf agrees that the issue of recognizing a value which is equal to all colours is delicate and impossible to satisfy because it does not permit the application of evaluation standards. However, she believes that it is not important whether a certain culture has something to say to humankind as a whole. The need of recognition does not depend on the value of a culture for the people outside it. We need the recognition of our cultural diversity, which is a rightful need. The policies of recognition, says Susan Wolf, impose not only the obligation of recognizing other cultures but also of analysing them more closely and getting to know them (Wolf, 1994: 85).

In his analysis of a theme approached by Taylor, Steven Rockefeller appreciates that the liberal democratic tradition relies on the ideal of universal liberty and equality, only partially accomplished and for which a full accomplishment cannot be foreseen in the future. The policies and the ethical conception regarding the respect of human dignity must be deepened and extended. The respect for individuals should involve not only the respect for the general human potential of every person but also respect for the cultural values and forms by which people express their unique personality (Rockefeller, 1994: 87).

However, Steven Rockefeller considers that the recognition of cultural rights cannot prevail over individual rights. In multicultural democratic societies, ethnic identity is neither the base of equal recognition nor connected to the idea of rights. All people, as bearers of certain universal values, are equal from the democratic perspective. They all deserve respect and equal opportunities of attaining their ambitions. For Rockefeller, our identity as human beings is a primary identity, more important than any other form of identity – based on citizenship, gender, race or ethnic origin. "To elevate ethnic identity, which is secondary, to a position equal in significance to, or above, a person's universal identity is to weaken the foundations of liberalism and to open the door to intolerance", he states (Rockefeller, 1994: 88).

The objective of the democratic liberal culture is to respect and not to repress ethnic identities, to encourage different cultural traditions. Rockefeller is worried by the danger of the erosion of the human rights which may appear as a cause of separatist mentalities, which lift the ethnic identity above the universal human identity. Regarding the multiculturalist critiques, which contest the fact that liberalism may be culturally neutral regarding a conception of "good life" and towards the fact that it may actually impose the Anglo-American model, Rockefeller states that by means of liberal political culture one promotes tolerance, the protection of the liberty of conscience, religion and expression in a way untypical of other cultures. Just as Charles Taylor states as well, it is a fighting creed, it cannot demand full cultural neutrality (Rockefeller, 1994: 90).

For JurgenHabermas, rights derive from the need of protecting the subjects which are always the individuals. The question is whether a theory of rights built so individualistic in liberal democracies can manage the fight for recognition formulated in terms of collective identities. On the political stage, says Habermas, collective actors are confronted, who have collective purposes and who distribute collective goods. These are only expressed and based on individual rights in judicial terms.

According to Habermas, the liberal state is not disinterested concerning cultural differences. In rule of law, the individuals get along as authors of the law which they all comply with as private persons. Thus, the system of the rule of law is not disinterested regarding social and cultural inequalities. A correct understanding of the theory of rights involves policies of recognition which protect the integrity of individuals in the context of the life in which their identity is shaped. There is no need, in his opinion, for an alternative model which can correct the model based on human rights (Habermas, 1994: 113).

For Habermas, any legal system is the expression of a particular way of regarding life, and not only the reflection of the universal rights of man. The citizens are part of a process which update legislature, are part of legislature and can express their views of society or the traditions which they wish to perpetuate or abandon. The shape of a state is the result of historic circumstances and it involves the implicit agreement of successive generations in order to keep a constitutional framework. By means of socializing, the people who make up a state embody certain forms of cultural life in which they have developed their identities.

The perspective of a state which permits the reproduction of forms of community is possible, but the state cannot offer guarantees in this regard. According to Habermans, the guarantee of cultural survivor

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means, stealing the members' freedom of saying yes or no, which are essential for the preservation of their cultural inheritance.

In multicultural societies, the coexistence of different forms of life means ensuring the citizens' opportunity of growing up in a world of cultural inheritance, of raising their children in such a world, of modifying and transforming it. JurgenHabermas shows that in multicultural societies the constitutional framework can tolerate only non-fundamentalist forms of life because the coexistence of certain communities with equal rights needs mutual recognition: all people are recognized as members of an ethnic community, with different conceptions of what good represents.

Habermas proposes a constitutional patriotism, which should promote an increased sensibility regarding diversity and the integration of different forms of life of a multicultural society. In a society, the citizens can no longer find a consensus upon values, but they can identify a consensus upon the procedures of constituting the legal framework. For JurgenHabermas, unrestricted communication within the political environment, the democratic procedures of solving problems, and the channelling of the political power within the constitutional framework will supply a solid basis for monitoring political power, and will offer assurance that the administrative power is used for everyone. The universalism of legal principles is reflected in the consensus upon procedures, which can be framed in the context of political power by means of a form of constitutional patriotism. The ethos of the state as a nation cannot enter into conflict with civil rights as long as the legislature is oriented towards constitutional principles (Habermas, 1994: 137). The ethical substance of political integration which unites all citizens must remain neutral and it must respect the differences between the cultural and ethical communities within a nation.

As for the immigrants, Habermas appreciates that they must prove their willingness to enter the political culture of the new nations, without turning their backs on the cultural forms of life of the communities they come from. The democratic right to self-determination includes the right of the citizens from a host community to insist upon the character of their political culture, thus avoiding the danger of segregation. Fundamentalist cultures must, therefore, be excluded and this aspect should not justify forced assimilation.

Another important theoretician of multiculturalism is Will Kymlicka. He considers that one of the most pressing problems faced by liberal democracies is the politicization of ethnical and cultural differences. Social minorities demand more public recognition of their

distinct identities, as well as more freedom and opportunities of keeping and developing their specific cultural practices. In response to these solicitations, new mechanisms have been adopted. Liberal democracies have hoped that the protection of individual rights will be sufficient in order to manage the problems of ethnical and cultural minorities. It is now widely accepted that these common rights of the citizens are not sufficient. Certain differentiated group rights are needed and there is a tendency within liberal democracies to recognize such rights (Kymlicka, Cohen-Almagor, 2000: 89–90).

Kymlicka and Cohen-Almagor make a distinction between national states and multi-ethnic states. Modern states are described as nation-states, but most of them are actually multinational. By nation, the authors understand historic communities more or less institutionally accomplished, which occupy a territory or a country and which share a culture or a language. The nation is described in a sociological regard close to the idea of people or culture. If the country of a nation is incorporated within a larger state it becomes a national minority. At the same time, the authors make a distinction between formal citizenship and full citizenship. The notion of citizenship is perceived as an institutional status, but in practice there are differences and discriminations and the citizenship is thus formal (Kymlicka, Cohen-Almagor, 2000: 90–91).

Kymlicka and Cohen-Almagor appreciate that no matter how they were incorporated, national minorities wish to obtain, keep and enhance their political autonomy by means of secession or other forms of regional autonomy. Minorities mobilize their members by making an appeal to the idea of nation. If national minorities see indifference as normal, the geographical, economic and political conditions will make it difficult to understand. They appreciate that the historic ideal of fully sovereign states is increasingly out-dated in a globalized world. There is an increased interest to explore certain forms of self-government or federalist formula.

The polyethnic states originate in a totally different diversity: immigration. Starting with the 1970s, one has noticed the increased acceptance of the idea that the assimilation of immigrants is unrealistic and unjust. Most of the countries have assimilated more tolerant and multicultural approaches, which have encouraged immigrants to keep their ethnical and cultural inheritance. These groups have neither separate institutions, not a country, so they are not perceived as 'nations' and do not demand the right to self-government. For the immigrants, multiculturalism is not understood as a denial of institutional and linguistic integration, but as a change in terms of integration. The

immigrants wish to learn the language of the state, but they do not wish this acquisition to be accompanied by cultural assimilation.

Both the immigrants and the national minorities look for different ways of legal recognition of their distinct ethno-cultural practices and identities. Those who support these rights of the groups regard them as complementary and as a supplement to individual rights. They enrich and extend the traditional liberal principles in response to the new challenges. Critics say that the rights of the groups tend to involve a limitation of individual rights, which threatens the principles of liberal democracy (Kymlicka, Cohen-Almagor, 2000: 98–99).

Kymlicka and Cohen-Almagor have identified two types of rights of these groups: the rights to protect themselves from the questioning of their values from within and the second category of rights which involve the rights of protecting themselves from external threats. A distinction between "internal restrictions" and "external protection" thus emerges. In the opinion of the authors, the internal restrictions are almost always unjust. Groups are free to impose conditions of belonging to their members, but it is unjust for them to use governmental power or the allocation of resources to limit the liberty of their members. The exercise of power within a democratic community must respect the civil and political rights of the members. Moreover, the members of a cultural group have the right to leave the group and its traditions if they no longer wish to be part of it. "Democracy cannot endure norms that deny respect to people and that are designed to harm others, although they might be dictated by some cultures" (Kymlicka, Cohen-Almagor, 2000: 99).

The second type of collective rights, the external protection, is compatible with democracy when the group seeks to protect its identity from the wider society. The guarantee of the rights of political representation and the adoption of solutions based on devolution are compatible with liberal democracy and may be considered necessary for an equitable society. As a rule, the minority tries to make sure, in a legitimate way, that the majority will not use the numeric criterion to deprive it of the resources and the institutions which are necessary for its survival (Kymlicka, Cohen-Almagor, 2000: 100). The more dangerous cases are those when a minority with non-liberal practices tries to impose internal restrictions on its members. The insistence on imposing rules may be a new form of ethno-centrism. In the case of the immigrants, the situation is simpler: they are familiar with the conditions of the country which adopts them and these may be considered conditions of acceptance. The situation is more complicated when a national minority is involuntarily incorporated within a state and it has political institutions and mechanisms which adjust their

differences. In such situations, the intervention is equal to the establishment of democracy in a foreign state. According to Kymlicka and Cohen-Almagor, the liberal institutions will function efficiently only where the liberal values are internalized, not imposed. This does not mean that there is nothing to be done: there is need of an attitude in favour of respecting democratic rights and of support given to the liberalization of the given community. The coercive intervention is however justified when massive and systematic violations of people's rights take place (Kymlicka, Cohen-Almagor, 2000: 107–108).

In numerous articles, Will Kymlicka[2] showed interest in the global evaluation of multicultural practices in order to demonstrate that the trenchant statements regarding the failure of multiculturalism[3] are not founded. Obviously, the multicultural practices were not equally applied everywhere. According to Kymlicka, the acceptance of multicultural practices depends on factors such as the desecration of ethnic relationships (multiculturalism functions better when the relations between the state and the minorities are perceived as issues of social policies, not as security issues), human rights (the support of multiculturalism lies in the assumption that there is an attachment to human rights beyond the ethnic and religious lines), border control (multiculturalism is regarded with suspicion when the citizen fear for the safety of the borders), the diversity of the groups of immigrants (multiculturalism functions better when it is truly multicultural, when the immigrants come from numerous countries), economic contributions (the support for multiculturalism depends on the perception of the immigrants' contribution to the existence of a society). When these conditions are met, multiculturalism is seen as an acceptable option (Kymlicka, 2012: 9–10). Kymlicka believes that the multicultural experiments were not properly understood and that there has been an exaggeration of the extent to which they have been abandoned. Between the 1970s and the mid-1990s, Western democracies had an increased tendency to recognize diversity and to apply multicultural policies. These policies were promoted at the level of international institutions and that of the states and they involved the dismissal of the previous ideas regarding the homogeneity of nationalities. However, in the mid-1990s,

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[2]Kymlicka Will, Multiculturalism: Success, Failure, and the Future, Queen's University, February 2012, available at www.migrationpolicy.org.; Will Kymlicka, Wayne Norman, Return of the Citizen: A survey of recent work on citizenship theory, Ethics 104 (January 1994), p. 352–381.
[3] The German chancellor Angela Merkel made this trenchant statement in October 2010, at a meeting of the party she leads, CDU.

the "return to assimilation" has generated the fear that the opening to diversity has gone too far.

Multiculturalism, says Kymlicka, is part of a wider revolution in human rights, which involves ethnic and racial diversity. Before the Second World War, ethno-cultural diversity was dominated by undemocratic hierarchies and relations. What followed was the establishment of an ideology of human equality which replaced these hierarchies: the fight against colonialism; the fight against racial segregation; the fight for multiculturalism and the rights of the minorities (after 1960). The establishment of a single model of citizenship to all individuals was dismissed by multiculturalism. For multiculturalists, the key is not the suppression of differences, but including them within the language of human rights, of civil liberties and of democratic responsibilities. For the national groups, the multicultural models include politics such as federalization, autonomy, recognized linguistic status or guarantees of representation at a political level.

To introduce morerigour into the discussion of the degree of imposing certain multicultural policies, Kymlicka has developed an index of multicultural policies which include criteria such as constitutional recognition, the adoption of multicultural curricula in schools, double citizenship, support for the cultural activities of the minorities, education in the maternal language etc. He thus tried to prove many countries such as Canada have made significant steps in the direction of multicultural policies, as opposed to others such as Germany, which have never applied multicultural policies (and should therefore not pronounce themselves regarding the failure of such policies). He remarked that many politicians have preferred terms like diversity, pluralism, intercultural dialogue or community cohesion. The terms did not however alter the policies and the programs. Thus, he states, the rhetoric against multiculturalism does not also mean renouncing on multicultural policies (Kymlicka, 2012: 15).

Far from having imposed itself as a solution for solving the issue of cultural and ethnic diversity, multiculturalism has generated numerous critiques. The political scientist Giovanni Sartori described it as "a policy ready to promote cultural and ethnic differences" (Sartori, 2007: 53). In his opinion, multiculturalism – which proclaims differences as identities and which ignores the connection of resemblance – leads to atomization, to a ghetto society. From this perspective, he prefers the term of *pluralism*, which focuses on the opening of communities, on the acceptance of differences, on the communication between different communities. For Giovanni Sartori, the principle on which pluralism relies is "*one of many*", while the principle of multiculturalism is "*more*

dismembered". Multiculturalism, as it presents itself, does not permit an open society. In the words of Sartori, "the extent to which multiculturalism today is aggressive, secessionist, intolerant, is the extent to which the given multiculturalism is the negation itself of pluralism" (Sartori, 2007: 54).

Multiculturalism, regarded by its supporters as a widening of democratic rights, has not succeeded in properly demonstrating that it is compatible with the guarantee of individual rights and liberties. The ideas of multiculturalism appear as acceptable and correct, to the extent to which they are grounded on individual rights and liberties and are unacceptable when it tries to subsume them. If the demands regarding the participation of ethno-national communities to the political life by special norms of representation are widely accepted outside nationalistic circles, like the acquisition of special rights of self-governing, the solicitation of certain guarantees regarding the keeping and preservation of the survival of these groups by special measures which may constrain and limit the liberty of its own members is regarded with suspicion.

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