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Multiculturalism as an Antidote to Nationalism: But What
Kind of Multiculturalism to Choose?

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One of the perceived antidotes to nationalism in the contemporary world is multiculturalism, an idea that culturally different groups of people can live peacefully in one state. However, there is a number of theoretical as well as empirical models of a multicultural society that considerably differ between themselves. The contemporary theoretical multiculturalist debate is often presented as a continuum of stronger and weaker multiculturalists positions bracketed by assimilation and separatism (e.g. Grillo, 2005, see also Alexander, 2005). Strong multiculturalism recognises difference in the public sphere and weak multiculturalism that recognises difference only in the private sphere and assumes a uniform “difference-blind” private sphere (Grillo, 2005; Goldberg, 1994). However, recognising difference does not automatically mean according special group-specific particularist provisions, in other words, politics of difference does not always implies policies of difference. Just as those with clear universalist proclivities do not always dump difference into the private sphere. It seems different approaches are better described if we ask two questions: Is membership in the cultural group voluntary or not? Are multiculturalist provisions directed at a group or an individual? Four logical possibilities are possible. In what follows I will discuss these possibilities and claim that the best approach is what is called here Cosmopolitan or Post-ethnic multiculturalism which recognises difference but does not treat it in a deterministic way.

Accommodation of Difference

	Group	Individual
Non-voluntaristic membership	Autonomist Multiculturalism or ‘plural monoculturalism’	Assimilationist Liberal State
Voluntaristic membership	Liberal Multiculturalism	Cosmopolitan (Post-Ethnic) Multiculturalism

Assimilationist Liberal State

The need for justice in the liberal state is strongly qualified by the need for a cohesive and stable polity. It is often argued that a polity is not stable unless its members share a broad set

of values, have a common national culture and bonds of solidarity (cf Waltzer 1994, 'thick and thin' argument). This model assumes an unmediated relationship between the state and the citizen. What follows, the rights are vested in individuals and not groups. The famous words of Clermont-Tonnerre: „We must refuse everything to the Jews as a nation and accord everything to Jews as individuals” (1789) may serve a good illustration of this approach. In his inclusive interpretation of the “Declaration of the rights of men” he embraced also non-Catholics, previously excluded from many political and social rights. Yet, he rejected the idea of any special or separate legal status of Jews in France who were to be seen as citizens and as individuals and not as members of a different ethnic or social group.

Thus, generally this model assumes a “colour-blind” approach to all its citizens, in other words, everyone irrespective of their distinct qualities should be treated equally. As Alexander notes, this approach removes difference by “separating persons from qualities” (2001). In other words, outsider identities must be shed at least in the public sphere. Private differences may be tolerated, but not encouraged by the state.

The primary group comprises the whole national community, the membership of which, in a sense, is not voluntaristic. Belonging to the society implies assimilation on different levels including economic, political and cultural, the incapacity to assimilate locates a person at the margins of the society. As Taylor critically points out, the pressure to conform is usually high and the membership in the new community is gained in a “rigid and uncompromising way” (2001:185).

The advocates of “difference-blind” and assimilationist approach to diversity should not be automatically associated with political and nationalist right. Upholding common values is not incompatible with receiving migrants as long as they subscribe to the core values and adapt to the mainstream culture or with the politics of social redistribution. A number of left leaning intellectuals have articulated this position, including Todd Gitlin and Arthur Schlesinger. Schlesinger believes that this model is way to defend the promise of traditional Western political and intellectual values. Anyone who is ready to uphold these values is welcome to the society. Thus he recognises the reality of diverse ethnic groups but calls for a return to George Washington’s ideal of a “new race” forming “one people” in the New World (1991: 6) and so for ending the assault on the common American identity and respecting the assimilation process that results in “an acceptance of the language, institutions, and the

political ideals that hold the nation together” (1991:71). Invoking the US’s motto “*E pluribus unum*,” Schlesinger argues that the “cult of ethnicity” and “obsession with difference” so characteristic for multiculturalism unsettle the balance between the *pluribus* and the *unum*. If a society is to function peacefully, it needs a common culture.

Schlesinger is also unambiguous about the superiority of the Western political thought and political values that underpin the modern polity and its institutions including democracy, the rule of law and individual freedom, even if he is ready to admit, that the West itself has not always acted according to these values: “Whatever the practical crimes of Europe....There is surely no reason for Western civilization to have guilt trips laid on it by champions of cultures based on despotism, superstition, tribalism, and fanaticism” (1991: 82). Schlesinger also places emphasis on the individualism of the Western civilisation and is critical of the “collectivist” cultures which put loyalty to the group over individual aspirations (1991). This is strongly related to scepticism about granting any collective rights that might lead to unnecessary divisiveness, threatening the unity of the polity. As Nathan Glazer emphasises, multiculturalist policies often not only have separatist effects, but also encourage other groups to reinvent their ethnicities, and claim group rights and privileges at the expense of the idea of unity and “fraternity” of the American society (1993).

Assimilationism as advocated by liberal scholars today, is different from a coercive, forced assimilation known from the beginning of the century¹. Few advocates of assimilation claim the return to all-encompassing doctrines of assimilation similar to those of e.g. post-WWI “Americanization” (Kumar, 2008). What is more, some advocates of assimilationist approach may put emphasis on political and economic assimilation without cultural one. Rainer Baubock usefully differentiates between assimilation and acculturation, pointing to the fact that the former requires “some ratification” by the receiving group. If acculturation implies “the process by which an individual comes to acquire cultural practices belonging to the tradition of another group”, whereas, assimilation indicates a further step that “indicates a change of membership which makes an individual similar to a receiving community in the sense that the members recognize her as one of their kind (cited in Barry, 2001:73). As Barry

¹ E.g. in Australia „up to a third of Aboriginal children were forcibly removed from their families between 1910 and 1970... The stolen boys were set to sheep and cattle stations and paid in rations and pennies. The girls, who were the majority, were sent for training as domestic servants, then “indentured” to “masters” in white middle-class homes”, John Pilger remarks that when he was growing up, “this was known as assimilation” (cited in Barry, 2001:76).

notes, this distinction leaves a possibility open for people to assimilate to the common nationality without giving up their distinctive culture, in other words, “complete acculturation is not necessary for assimilation” (Barry, 2001:81). This possibility depends on whether the national identity is defined in ethno-cultural or in civic terms. If ethno-cultural vision of a society emphasises the common ancestry and cultural sameness, civic vision implies treating all members of the society as equals bounded by a set of political and civic principles.²

The need to redefine national identity from ethno-cultural to civil language has become clear not only to supporters of the multiculturalist approach. As Joppke (2004) has noted, national identities being affirmed in the process of the “retreat from multiculturalism” are detached from any particularly Dutch or British values and replaced by generic liberal democracy tenets. He writes that when a government document tried to spell out the fundamental principles of the British citizenship, it came up with respecting human rights and liberties, upholding democratic values, fulfilling duties and obligations and obeying law. The German attempts were no more “successful”, as the definition of the dominant German culture ended up with the idea of Europe, the norms of the constitution, and the equality of women. As Joppke insists, it is not a return to monoculturalism, but the more robust assertion by the liberal state of its tenets, its liberal culture. In this understanding, Habermasian “constitutional patriotism” is also a modern version of this approach.

Some proponents of this approach also open to the possibility of special measures for members of disadvantaged groups. However, as Brian Barry emphasises such measures are reserved only to the groups that suffer systematic disadvantage arisen out of circumstances that are not their responsibility. Such measures are always temporary and aim at approximating the egalitarian liberal ideal (2001).

² Interestingly enough, an earlier version of a multicultural society model proposed by Rex is strikingly similar to the new discourse on assimilation. Rex differentiates between two sets of institutions which heavily relies on the public-private spheres dualism. The public sphere institutions should focus on the rights of citizens within the welfare state, while private sphere institutions are responsible for sustaining the minority cultures, religions and languages. His justification for sustaining minority cultures is two-fold. On the one hand, it should give an individual the sense of the Durkheimian “organic solidarity”, on the other the institutional basis gives an opportunity for collective bargaining and guaranteeing of equal rights (Rex, 1996). Thus, cultural difference is confined to the private sphere, while public sphere remains neutral, as Barry or Schlesinger suggest.

The liberal assimilationist approach needs not be a flattening vision of diversity, it well may accept cultural difference up to a point, but is not prepared to support and promote it or to make too many concessions to it. Difference is a matter of individual private life, while in the public sphere members of the society are seen as equals with identical rights and responsibilities. The greatest challenge to this approach, however, is the fact that it too hastily assumes “the model citizen”, the target of its policies to be a white, heterosexual, healthy, middle-aged, moderately religious, male of the dominant culture and all too easily chases away “difference” into the private sphere. As a result, the confinement of “difference” in the private sphere may also lead to the lack of possibility to exercise one’s universal rights and thus, fully participating in the society.

Autonomist Multiculturalism or ‘plural monoculturalisms’

This approach emerged not only as strong criticism of the assimilationist or “difference-blind approach” but also of what is termed “liberal multiculturalism” (as described below). The charge against liberalism is that it wants to homogenise or exclude difference, and the hidden aim of liberalism is assimilation, as the idea of liberal principles of equal treatment are bound up with assimilation (Young, 1990; Tully, 1995; Parekh, 2001). It places a very strong emphasis on the cultural group and its importance for the self-definition of an individual. This variety of diversity management assumes the existence and salience of well-defined relatively self-contained communities not only as a social reality but also as a necessity and value in itself. It is critical of the universalism of the liberal state and demands strong formal, legal and constitutional recognition and permits to govern their members “in accord with their customs and views” (Tully, 1995:111).

Cultural membership is not seen as a matter of choice here, “cultures are not options”, as Parekh emphasises (1995:208). Parekh’s definition of culture is full-blooded and all-encompassing. Even if he admits that there are important shared features of human condition, the impact of cultural roots on an individual is more significant and definitive. He is careful enough to emphasise that cultures are not totally comprehensive or unchangeable, yet in his understanding, the changes come about very slowly. Thus cultures are dense bonds and networks and one has to respect their depth and rich quality. It is naïve, he believes, to expect a human being to be able to jump like “a magpie” between very different cultural reference points (Isn’t it what everybody does these days?). Parekh also emphasises the intertwining of

culture and religion, which in his opinion makes one's cultural membership permanent, all-inclusive, and determining an individual's being that cannot be changed at will:

Cultures are too deeply woven into the lives of their members to be jettisoned at will. Most of them, further, are embedded in or at least intertwined with religion, and outsiders cannot assimilate into them without changing their religion, which they are often reluctant to do. Cultures are also extremely complex structures of beliefs and practices, and their nuances, unspoken assumptions and deeper sensibilities cannot be easily acquired unless one is born into them. Total cultural assimilation therefore requires biological assimilation. (2000: 198)

In other words, radical multiculturalists do not only claim that people can exist only as members of a culture, but also that a person's cultural background, inherited identity frames and defines one's being. What follows, according to e.g. Parekh, if we agree that all individuals deserve equal respect, and should be treated equally, we should also treat all cultures and ways of life with equal respect, since human beings are embedded in these cultures. In the same vein, Young believes that groups cannot be treated equally unless their culture, experience and social contributions are publically acknowledged, recognised and affirmed.

Some radical multiculturalism theorists discuss not only ethno-cultural difference, but also other forms of difference, such as gender, religion, race, and age. Iris Marion Young claims that modern democracies are constituted by social groups, that are always and inevitably organised in a hierarchical order, where social relations are "tightly defined by domination and oppression" (Young, 1990:32).

What follows, the duty of a multicultural state is to take a positive measure in order to preserve the diversity of identity groups, to enable them to maintain the separate identities and traditions. Thus a just democratic state cannot simply rely on the constitution focused on the protection of individual rights, its goal should be getting rid of "an imperial yoke, galling the necks of the culturally diverse citizenry" (Tully, 1995:5). Young, among others links justice to the full expression of particularity and difference. She claims, the good society "does not eliminate or transcend group difference". On the contrary, "group differentiation is both an inevitable and desirable aspect of modern social processes" (1990:163). Diversity should be actively promoted by granting special rights to minority cultures, by creating "islands of self-

government” (Shachar, 1998:90), by financially supporting them as well as by officially including the diverse voices of identity groups within the constitutional framework and public sphere. So, the role of institutions is to “promote reproduction of and respect for group differences” (1990:47). In practice the outcome of such an approach is what Amartya Sen aptly labels “plural monoculturalisms” that he contrasts with true multiculturalism of mixing and mingling (2006).

What is characteristic for this approach is deep scepticism towards the dominant culture, which is seen as oppressive for identity groups. Since the long-established culture of a society is deeply inscribed in its beliefs, institutions and practices, it has certain inbuilt advantages (Parekh, 2000: 221), it is not enough to broaden the understanding of the dominant culture to include the previously silent voices, it is necessary to do away with the dominant culture and create a new common culture, where every participant identity group has an equal footing.

Thus, proponents of this approach often acknowledge the need for a common ground, yet see it the sum of the existing groups, a “community of communities” (Parekh, 2000). According to Parekh such a multicultural common culture can emerge and gain legitimacy only as a result of multicultural dialogue that guarantees the participation of all constituent cultures on a level ground and does not privilege any particular cultural outlook, including liberalism, in terms of self-expression, access to public space, power and resources and the ability to criticise each other (2002). The state is seen largely as “content-empty”, its task is to manage the rights claims of various groups without imposing substantive moral claims of its own (Hartmann and Gerteis, 2005).

Parekh, similarly to Kymlicka to be discussed below acknowledges that fact that collective rights of cultural groups may oppress individual members of these groups, yet more important to him is the belief that individual rights, conflicting with cultural values of a given group may destroy cultural communities. Thus, the right of a cultural group to prosper is at least as important as individual rights of its members. What follows, even if values and practices of a cultural group offend against those of the majority, the common principles that should apply to everyone should not exceed the bare minimum, which in Parekh’s words is defined as “respect for human life and dignity” (1998:11). Since liberal democracy, or any other “cultural perspective”, cannot be treated as an obvious choice and dominant perspective in a multicultural society (which any European society today is) gender equality, children’s rights

or a right to religious freedom, including the right to apostasy, cannot be assumed as given or what is worse, “imposed” on illiberal communities.

This approach is simultaneously radical, progressive and conservative. It demands considerable adjustments on the part of the state and its public institutions to the “minority groups”, yet, in the name of counteracting the homogenising power of the state it often justifies cultural practices that would normally be considered oppressive or at least very traditionalist are justified as a true expression of one’s particular being.

In sum, it is a very relativist and collectivistic approach. Its underlying premise is that individuals have no control over their respective cultural belonging, they are expected to act and believe as the group does. It focuses on the particular, seeks to address one’s particular needs, yet the needs are automatically defined by the cultural membership, which in its turn is strongly ascriptive. As Hartmann and Gerteis aptly note, in this vision “each unit acts as its own solidaristic community” (Hartmann and Gerteis, 2005: 230) What follows, if we substitute groups for nations, this approach can be seen as a version of assimilationism, with all its consequences of marginalising all those who “differ” from the pre-defined model member of the group. The important difference is that while the relationship between citizens and the state is direct and the beneficiaries of public policies are individual members of the society in case of liberal assimilationist state, the pluralist multiculturalist approach focuses on groups and its relations with the state, where groups are mediate individual’s membership in the society and relationship with the state.

Liberal Multiculturalism

Critical of both too insensitive “difference-blind” approach and too deterministic and collectivist multiculturalist approach, authors such as Kymlicka and Taylor take up a synthetic approach to individual rights-based liberalism and a strong version of multiculturalism. They defend a type of liberal multiculturalism that makes room for minority cultural rights while remaining committed to a core of individual rights that should not be trumped in the name of or cultural difference. Thus, this vision considers groups and not individuals as beneficiaries of diversity management policies, at the same time they adopt a more relaxed attitude to culture as the defining feature of an individual.

Kymlicka is critical of early Rawls who does not pay adequate attention to culture as a one of “primary goods” and believes that culture is a value of such fundamental importance that it not only can be protected by a liberal state, but also the liberal state committed to ensuring individual freedom should endorse cultural rights. In contrast to his communitarian peers, however, culture for Kymlicka does not epitomise a “particular way of life” but rather secures a cultural context for a range of meaningful choices. Individuals pursuing their own lives are forced to make choices, yet “the range of options is determined by our cultural heritage”³ (1989: 172). In other words,

What sets apart such authors as Kymlicka and Taylor from their more radical colleagues is their attention to the limitations of group-differentiated rights by the individual rights and freedoms. In order to make sure that individual rights are not violated in pursuit of cultural rights, Kymlicka makes a distinction between two types of collective rights: “external protections” and “internal restrictions”.⁴ In the first case, a group may demand the limitation of the economic or political power exercised towards it by the large society. Thus, external protections may include language rights, guaranteed political representation, funding of ethnic media, land claims, regional devolution of power or compensation of historical injustice. In the second, the group may wish to curtail its members’ individual rights in the name of “cultural purity: or “group solidarity”. The aim of these group rights is to restrict the ability of individuals “to question, revise, or abandon traditional cultural roles and practices” (Kymlicka, 1999:116).

Moreover, Kymlicka claims that although immigrants for clear reasons cannot embrace their own nation-building agenda, and their aim should be to integrate into the new society as good as they can, the state has an obligation to make the process as smooth as possible. In order to ensure this integration, however, the state needs to recognise, respect and even help preserve different cultures that immigrants bring with them. Polyethnic rights that should be granted to immigrants, as he explains, “protect specific religious and cultural practices which might not

³ “This understanding of cultural membership doesn’t involve any necessary connection with the shared ends which characterize the culture at any given moment. The primary good being recognized is the cultural community as a context of choice, not the character of the community or its traditional ways of life, which people are free to endorse or reject” (Kymlicka, 1989: 172).

⁴ “It is clear that some kinds of minority rights would undermine, rather than support, individual autonomy.... A crucial task facing liberal defenders of multiculturalism, therefore, is to distinguish the ‘bad’ minority rights that involve *restricting* individual rights from the ‘good’ minority rights that can be seen as *supplementing* individual rights” (Kymlicka 2001: 340).

be adequately supported through the market... or which are disadvantaged ... by existing legislation” (1995: 38). He also emphasises that the process of integration takes time and so special accommodation services for the transitional period (e.g. mother-tongue services) are required. He believes that “common institutions into which immigrants are pressured to integrate provide the same degree of respect, recognition, and accommodation of the identities and practices of immigrants as they traditionally have of the identities and practices of the majority group” (2007: 40). This requires a systematic examination of institutions to see where they put immigrants at disadvantage, either in terms of symbols or rules. This involves, dress codes, public holidays, height and weight prescriptions, as well as examination of text books and school curriculums with regard to possible stereotyping of immigrants or failure to recognise their contribution to the society. An example of legitimate “polyethnic” rights for Kymlicka includes Muslim and Jewish exemptions from Sunday closing laws and animal slaughtering legislation; Orthodox Jews’ and Sikhs’ exclusion from headgear requirements in the police and military; dress codes exemptions for Muslim girls who wish to wear headscarves. Kymlicka believes that the liberal state needs to respect such minority claims that “are simply asking that their religion needs be taken into consideration in the same way that the needs of Christians have always been taken into account” (1995: 114).

The placing of cultural rights on the liberal individual rights foundation leads Kymlicka to defend cultural rights only insofar as they conform to liberal principles. He claims that liberal proponents of multiculturalism must be alert to abuses of the cultural rights arguments by those who claim that the survival of their cultures is endangered without restrictions of their members’ the freedom of religion, speech, sexual practices, or press. He believes that these claims are “wildly implausible” and argues that even though some cultural communities may be less prone to liberalism than others, “if the English can allow the character of their culture to change... without destroying their cultural community, why can’t other cultures?” (1989:168-169).

Yet, Kymlicka is much more ambiguous about the approach towards illiberal communities than it seems at first. He emphasises that liberals must not force them to liberalise except in case of gross human rights abuse. In other words, liberals must tolerate what they oppose. Even when we accept internal restrictions by illiberal cultures, Kymlicka believes, these should be seen as “temporary measures” aimed at helping the cultures to move carefully towards a fully liberal society. The greatest challenge of the liberal multicultural state is

“finding a way to liberalize a cultural community without destroying it” (1989: 170-71). He is more willing to accept the legitimacy of the state to compel voluntary immigrant to acknowledge liberal principles, provided they know about it before coming to a given state (1995). Thus, in the long-run, in Kymlicka’s ideal world illiberal cultures become liberalised, he is just too careful to forcefully impose certain values and standards on others⁵.

Taylor is also faced with a dilemma how to find a middle ground between atomistic versions of individualism and unacceptable claims of minority cultures that wish to restrict individual rights of their members. He argues for a type of liberalism which assumes that culture considerably shapes an individual’s idea of makes a good life. In his version of liberal multiculturalism, he is willing to allow for collective goals in certain cases. His model would “weigh the importance of certain forms of uniform treatment against the importance of cultural survival, and opt sometimes in favor of the latter” (1994:61). Fundamental liberties that could never be violated in the name of protecting minority cultures, are much more encompassing, than those of Parekh’s and include rights to life, liberty, due process, free speech, and free practice of religion. Taylor is also a strong advocate of cross-cultural communication and criticism which ultimately should result in Gadamerian “fusion of cultural horizons” (1994:67).

Liberal multiculturalism places value on distinctive cultures so that individuals could make meaningful choices, as well as take pride in their identity, which implies that liberal state

⁵ An important variation on Kymlicka’s and his adherents’ model is Chandran Kukathas’ approach who derives his understanding of a just liberal multicultural society not from the principle of autonomy as Kymlicka does but from that of toleration. In his understanding, cultural groups should be treated by a liberal state as voluntary associations, the state does not have a duty to encourage their existence but also does not have the right to interfere into their functioning even if it perceives them as illiberal. An important qualification for this approach is the freedom of exit from such a group. If the members of a cultural group whose personal autonomy is limited have a substantive right to leave the community, yet remain in it, the state cannot force such groups to become more liberal and to grant personal autonomy to its members. (Kukathas, 1992; 2003). Kukathas preaches what he calls the “politics of indifference” in contrast to the politics of difference. Kukathas places himself firmly within the liberal tradition, however, he differs from the majority of liberal multiculturalists who rather emphasise “external protections”, as Kymlicka does, and are prepared to accept usually a much more qualified version of “internal restrictions” than Kukathas – who sets his limits to toleration as “liberal norms forbidding slavery and physical coercion” (Kukathas 1992: 128). Thus Kukathas is difficult to place in this chart. His non-interference approach locates him within the radical multiculturalists camp, his argumentation is grounded in liberalism.

should worry about the survival of minority 'cultures' - hence the 'collectivistic' its element. As a result, the public spheres should reflect the diversity of the population via ensuring special rights for minority groups. The unwillingness to support the right to "internal restrictions" however distinguishes the liberal multiculturalism approach from its more radical versions or from the old-fashioned liberal toleration approach, exemplified by e.g. Kukathas. The main problem with this approach is that just as the radical pluralist multiculturalism it places too much weight on a cultural group and treats it in a too deterministic and homogenising and essentialised way. As Vincent rightly points out, even if at an ontological level, essentialisation of groups, and identity politics is criticised, at the political level, this is precisely what is happening. As he puts it, "practice, rather than theory determines essences" (2003: 54). Hollinger is write to say: "Kymlicka's principles for political organization make the most sense in an ethno-racially and linguistically diverse polity in which there is a minimum of mixing and mingling (2002: 236). Hollinger's diagnosis of the problem with the liberal multiculturalist approach seems to be very pertinent, it completely ignores the diversifying reality, and enhances inherited boundaries.

Cosmopolitan and Post-ethnic Multiculturalism

When Amartya Sen tries to explain what he sees as a problem with multiculturalism, he gives us a simple example:

If a young girl in a conservative immigrant family wants to go out on a date with an English boy, that would certainly be a multicultural initiative. In contrast, the attempt by her guardians to stop her from doing this (a common enough occurrence) is hardly a multicultural move, since it seeks to keep the cultures sequestered. (2006: 157).

Yet, as Sen complains, many champions of multiculturalism would support the girl's guardians in an attempt to show respect for a traditional culture and its rights rather than the cultural freedom of a young woman, as if distinct cultures were meant to remain in separate containers, as different monocultures. He terms this respect for tradition approach "plural monoculturalisms" and contrasts it with what he believes is true multiculturalism, a multiculturalism that does not impose limitations on people's cultural choices on the basis of their descent. This approach attempts to "develop cosmopolitan instincts within this new appreciation for the ethnic" (Hollinger, 1995: 4).

As early as in 1992 Jeremy Waldron coined a term “cosmopolitan multiculturalism”. Several years later, David Hollinger picked it up and developed what he termed a “post-ethnic” approach (1996). The basic principle that lies at the core of this approach is the view that group associations should be voluntary and group boundaries fluid. It acknowledges the fact that people do not choose whether they are born into a Japanese or into a Turkish family, but it emphasises, that the fact of being born into a given family does not determine all our choices. On the contrary, it is for us to decide what importance we attach to our inherited cultural or religious traditions. As Hollinger aptly puts it: “A postethnic approach denies neither history nor biology – nor the need for affiliations – but it does deny that history and biology provide a set of clear orders for the affiliations we make” (1995: 119).

This post-ethnicity thinking has been triggered by an observation of ever diversifying reality that surrounds us. Hollinger, calls this phenomenon of an unprecedented level of multiplicity and mixture of people a “diversification of diversity” (12), which has made the old “pentagon” or ethno-racial groups dominating the American society simply obsolete as a description of the society and as a social policy framework. In the British debate, this notion was developed by Steven Vertovec, who speaks of the new “super-diversity” that has emerged due to changing migration patterns (2006).

It is significant, that this cosmopolitan multiculturalism is neither exclusively and blindly universalistic, nor just nationalist and particularist. This bifocal perspective is strongly emphasised by Beck and Grande, who explore cosmopolitanism as a solution to Europe’s diversity and unity challenge, but also for the approach to “the other” in contemporary liberal democratic societies. As these authors write what distinguishes this new cosmopolitanism is the maxim that “in our thinking, our actions, and our living together, the recognition of otherness and the renunciation of the egoistic insistence on our own interests”⁶ (2007:70). Hollinger also differentiates the new sensitivity to the roots with rootlessness of the old cosmopolitanism (1995). Indeed, cosmopolitan multiculturalism attempts to marry the two

⁶ Although their very relativist explanation further on makes one wonder what the difference is between their idea of cosmopolitanism, and multiculturalism as promoted by the majority of its advocates: “Difference should neither be arranged hierarchically nor should they be replaced by common norms, values, and standards; rather, they should be accepted as such and even have a positive value placed on them. In a cosmopolitan perspective, it is vital to perceive others as different and as the same – something that is ruled out by both hierarchical ordering and universal equality” (2007: 70-71). The real value of diversity is precisely the possibility of choice but also of critical examination of traditions, which is made easier in the context of comparison. E.g. one should be able to criticise a culture that firmly places women in the private sphere and excludes them from public life and not just be satisfied with saying that this is just good a tradition as any other and we should respect it.

philosophic traditions, universalism and particularism, but puts emphasis differently than the traditional multiculturalism does. Its task is not to simply revalorise previously ignored cultures, but to make the concept of the national community and of the citizen more inclusive, in order to embrace different experiences, traditions and needs, not necessarily defined by primordial and ascriptive identities. In other words, it broadens the norm, not reaffirms some norms for some cultural groups and some for other. All the proponents of this approach are also firmly grounded within the liberal democracy tradition

Probably the best exemplification of Hollinger's argument is what he calls Arthur Haley's "choice". In the best selling *Roots* Haley told the story of one side of his family ancestry, the African, while his Irish lineage was omitted. Unsurprisingly so, as in our contemporary society a Black American calling himself Irish American would provoke "general hilarity" as he would be judged primarily by his skin colour. In Hollinger's ideal world, either side of the story would be legitimate, as every individual is free to chose their place in the ethnic mosaic.

Thus society is viewed not as a sum of groups that constitute it, but a sum of individuals of different backgrounds, and different affiliations. Sen, among others, is very critical of the conception of Britain as a federation of relatively distinct entities, of compartmentalisation of ethnic and religious groups. What follows, advocates of this cosmopolitan and post-ethnic approach do not believe in the idea that the role of the state is to protect cultural groups or to bow to any cultural claims. As Sen insists, the task of the state is to improve communication between people of different political, linguistic, religious and social backgrounds in different spheres of life, and different capacities, including as citizens (2006).

The real value of diversity, as many emphasise is the possibility to compare different traditions, learn about different religious, and ultimately to be able to make informed choices about our lives. To quote Kenan Malik, who eloquently explains why contemporary multiculturalism prevents dialogue and disintegrates diverse societies:

Diversity is important, not in and of itself, but because it allows us to expand our horizons, to compare and contrast different values, beliefs and lifestyles, and make judgements upon them. In other words, because it allows us to engage in political dialogue and debate that can help create more universal values and beliefs, and a collective language of citizenship. But it is precisely such dialogue and debate, and the making of such judgements, that contemporary multiculturalism attempts to suppress in the name of 'tolerance' and 'respect' (2002b).

In a similar mode, criticising denominational schools, and especially the public funding of those, Sen emphasises that education is not about placing children firmly within their inherited cultural and religious traditions, but rather about teaching how to make reasoned decisions, after being exposed to a variety of worldviews, attitudes and beliefs and traditions.

Thus, cosmopolitan and post-ethnic multiculturalism advocates diversity insofar as it enhances the rights and freedoms of an individual. What follows, it does not assume cultural or religious groups to be direct beneficiaries of its policies, nor defines policies in accordance with the division of the society into few cultural and religious groups. As Anthias and Lloyd emphasise, even though it is important to recognise that ethnicity is important for groups, this does not require the state to cast them as actors, and treat them as essential or adequate means for pursuing various social and political ends (2002).

The aim of the post-ethnic and cosmopolitan approach is to broaden the concept of national community as well as the definition of a citizen in order to embrace the “super-diversity”. It seems to be the most adequate approach to the contemporary challenges of the ever changing and diversifying societies. It does not fall prey to cultural relativism of radical and even liberal multiculturalisms, as its method is not to “respect” but to “examine, and reason” every cultural tradition. At the same time, it escapes the unification of the liberal assimilationism that all too easily ignores vital differences and often defines the society too narrowly leaving many of its citizens on its margins.

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