
AMBIVALENCE IN INTERPRETATIONS OF MULTICULTURALISM AS A PROBLEM OF FORMING THE ETHICO-AXIOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS IN AN INTEGRATED SOCIETY

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Abstract

The cultural turn in both the scientific and public spheres means an increased interest in the way of life and thinking (culture) of different groups within the communities. Multiculturalism has become a methodological, ideological and interpretative tool. On a descriptive level, multiculturalism interprets each society as multicultural, based on the most diverse, sometimes unrelated, differences. The axiological dimension of multiculturalism defines cultural diversity as a norm, whose violation is a negative phenomenon. The goal of applied multiculturalism (in education and politics) is to build tolerance and a knowledge base about cultural diversity. However, it also forms prefabricated cultures and attributes minority identities to the detriment of social inclusion. The axiological scale of the public and political spheres, from liberal to critical multiculturalism, represents radical, moderate, conservative multiculturalism and radical anti-multiculturalism. The intent of multiculturalism is to ensure the social inclusion of individuals into the civil society based on the coexistence of culturally compatible groups.

Keywords: multiculturalism, cultural diversity, civil society, cultural compatibility

1. Introduction

We live in times that force us to think, review, and sometimes redefine what we believed was right and could not be otherwise [1]. People's way of life is constantly changing. In times of slower or less noticeable changes, we get a sense of stability, immutability and order. In the periods of a great change, we are more open to a new view, and also to look at known things in a different way. We do it in hope of seeing something new, that we will understand better what is happening around us and find out how to deal with it. We often do so because time uncompromisingly forces us to [2, 3]. Current social and media pressures increasingly raise doubts, disorientation, contradictions, and internal conflicts with generally accepted ideas, findings, opinions and attitudes. How should an

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individual stand up to contemporary cultural and social themes? Should he/she be only a consumer of mass media and politically spread ideas? (As it is the case in totalitarianism?) Or does he/she have the space and duty to lead (even an internal) discourse? Intercultural communication in the society has been intensified. When we talk about ‘the others’, in the globalizing world, more and more they are not far off in exotic countries or on TV screens but directly ‘between us’. Not superficial, but the true cultural diversity, defined by primordially understood values and opposing ethical systems, is in the deeply interconnected global society, the reality in its most extreme and brutal form [4].

2. Cultural turn and cultural diversity

The current view of social and human sciences on the way of life and thinking (culture) is the result of the so-called cultural turn in the Euro-American socio-cultural area, which peaked in the last third of the 20th century. In the sphere of Science, it resulted in focusing the interest on the cultural research [5]. Religious, ethnic, or racial parameters in the approach to research groups and individuals have continued to be the subject of interest, however studying variety of other differences (gender, socio-occupational, geographical, sexual orientation, disability, etc.) increased to the same level of interest [6]. At present, we can see and understand both nations and local communities not only as ethnically, racially or religiously diverse/homogeneous communities, but above all as culturally diverse/homogeneous entities (cultures, subcultures, contra-cultures). In the newly-designed global society, politics and legislation in accordance with the human rights ideology, issues of race, ethnicity, and confessionalism are officially presented as less important or completely displaced from civic discourse [7-9]. Sometimes, in a diligent attempt to prevent discrimination, xenophobia, homophobia, sexism, racism, etc. taking into account, or merely recognizing the existence of this type of disparity, is considered to be unethical, discriminatory, xenophobic, racist and stigmatizing. If the racist is the one who raises the racism [10], then the same applies to xenophobes, homophobes and others. It is the one who causes intolerance, which is fundamentally unrelated to the majority or the minority status. Anyway, society and its way of life (culture) are de-ethnized, de-confessionalized and displaced [11, 12]. An exception to these processes is a group or an individual disparity, when the minority that fights the most for their rights and recognition institutionalizes around it [13, 14]. Cultural diversity is so deepened and defined in a completely different way, far from the well-established and adopted ethical-axiological parameters on which the cohesion, existence and identity of each community is historically built. Every social identity rises from one’s own cultural and historical experiences. It is the result of (sometimes latent) religious, ethnic, racial or gender stereotypes, patterns and normative systems [15].

‘Traditional’ minorities built on ethnic, racial, religious, social, professional, ancestral, gender (in this case dichotomic!) and generational identity, have the society in which the system of coexistence has been historically

used [16]. Although it is never ideal because the very principle of difference and the essence of the relationship excludes the minority and the majority, 'our' non-integrated, excluded, marginalized, foreigners, white/black people, Jews/Muslims, homeless people/millionaires, women/men and so on, are an inseparable part of the surrounding, yet diversified and relatively organized cultural, social, political, and economic space. As autochthonous, legitimized, stereotyped minorities, they create 'colourfulness' and define cultural diversity [17, 18]. At present, however, they have to 'fight for attention' with new rivals. In the context of minority, cultural, educational, funding, legislative and institutional security against them stand migrant, asylum, feminist, gender, LGBT agendas, culture of health or otherwise handicapped [19], or socially disadvantaged groups [17], which also act as institutionalized and politically established minorities. In this new paradigm of cultural diversity, naturally emerges the question of the relevance of ethnicity and confessionalism [20]. Do the ethnic and religious identities in the world of people who have come together on the basis of new identities and completely different principles have any meaning at all? And on the contrary, are current philosophical-axiological systems (including humanism and multiculturalism) applied as ideologies and policies of the global (or rather globalizing) civil society actually de-ethnised, de-confessionalised and displaced, or just presented that way? Are they universal in their essence or rather versatile and hidden Eurocentric, valid and applicable only within the Euro-American socio-cultural area?

3. Dimensions of multiculturalism

At present, multiculturalism is an idea, policy and strategy in the environment that is by itself referred to as civilized. Multiculturalism can now be related to any people integrated into groups based on any differences. In practice, it often matters, what types of differences are currently considered important, progressive and worthy of attention. Education for tolerance and learning about diversity are no longer just about ethnic, religious, or racial differences and relationships. They are about differences in gender issues, completely different social roles, statuses and relationships between man and woman, redefining the very essence of man and woman, marriage and family. They are about differences in the understanding of sexual orientation, significantly deviating from the traditional gender dichotomy of genders and its stability during the life of the individual.

Human rights are universal and unrestricted. They define the basic relationship between the two farthest human limits of man and mankind. The problem is a huge space between them, filled with the tangle of the most diverse collective identities with relevant partial strategies of survival (cultures), in the context of which this relationship is interpreted, entangled and often lost in the struggle for resources and survival. The questioning and critical analysis of the consequences of the universal application of human rights in a truly culturally diversified world invokes at least dilemma. The ideal basis of multiculturalism is

to operate in the area of this battle of ideas, axioms, concepts and strategies with the aim to give its sure, accepted order. The expectations and opinions of all participants in the multicultural discourse are equally wide - from enthusiasm through scepticism to rejection. Regardless of this scale, what other human option exists?

Multiculturalism means *everything and nothing* [21], it is a *rebus* [22], a *fashion word padding* [13, p. 14]. *Every attempt to define it is accompanied by dilemma* [23]. "Multiculturalism refers to": 1) "the real state of existence of many cultures side by side (in one region, in one state, etc.)"; 2) "an ideology proclaiming such a fact as necessity" [24]; or 3) a method of political management.

3.1. Multiculturalism on a descriptive level

Multiculturalism on a descriptive level is based on the premise that "multiculturalism is a situation where ethnic, religious or cultural groups coexist within a single society" [23]. This theory "refers to a picture of reality that she draws. ... Multiculturalism is a descriptive scheme of social reality in which the differences based on the confusing principle of ethnicity (and derived categories) that are understood as cultural" appear to be "objectively and above all other types of social differentiation" [25]. Such an understanding is based on a discourse agreement that cultural differences create relatively closed entities - individual cultures/subcultures. The description of social reality thus makes it possible to identify (form) individual cultures. With regard to the trendiness of multiculturalism, we are prone to see each society as multi-culturally based on the most diverse, sometimes unrelated, differences.

3.2. Multiculturalism at the axiological level

Multiculturalism at the axiological level registers the fact that some members are disadvantaged or advantaged in accessing social resources, because they belong to another category (to a dominant or subordinate group). The programme is the integration of excluded groups into a civilian entity in a specific way - by recognizing their different cultures, institutional legitimization, and accepting their existence. In the spirit of this concept, assimilation is perceived as the biggest overthrow of the majority against the minority. A specific culture is determinant for the existence of a minority. Its extinction (or letting it to happen) is a violation of the ideal state. The normative - ethical and political demands of minorities are the prerogatives of individuals and societies. Emphasis on these rights of minorities strengthens the idea of their homogeneous composition and the need for equal treatment with all their members. This idea arises only from the minority membership itself, which is sometimes assigned and not elected. "Ethnic homogenization is in fact a kind of manipulation or ideological construction." [26] It is true that all French, Roma, Afro-Americans, disabled people in

wheelchairs, homosexuals, or Protestants are the same because they belong to these categories and therefore it is necessary to approach them equally?

3.3. Multiculturalism in the applied level

Multiculturalism in the applied level aims to fulfil the normative-ethical ideal of equality of disadvantaged groups. It is the aim and also a means of fulfilling the ideals of civic equality. In practice, these objectives fulfil the area of education and public policy. The concept of multicultural education appears to be inevitable and the only one possible. But the critique of multiculturalism lies in the fact that multiculturalism points to differences, explains them, educates them in 'good faith' and manages the society. At the same time, however, it keeps them conscious of these differences and constantly updates the existence of the majority and the minority, and their mutual substitution relationship. It permanently determines the position of individuals and groups as a priori disadvantaged or favoured. The very issue of ethnicity, confessionality, race, gender, sexual orientation, etc. present in education is thus an instrument of creating and supporting these differences [13, p. 14-15]. In the real civil society, where everyone is truly equal, the social and individual qualities of an individual are primary, and not those created by the policy and ideology of multiculturalism. It is the social and individual characteristics that play a decisive role in the socialization of the individual and the integration of the groups into society. The project of multicultural education has been set up to create a civil society, to ensure its functionality by maintaining and promoting cultural diversity. Can multiculturalism master this challenge? Does it contribute to maintaining and promoting differences in the integration of individuals and groups into the civil society?

Different individuals and groups are in the real world often stigmatized by the primordial and social stereotypes of their own group and the surrounding environment. First of all, they are members of the minority, through their different culture. It is represented by selected symbols, patterns and 'ornaments', which have been chosen by either the majority or the minority [27]. Typically, the same key applies to all minority types, within effective marketing tools for minority management. It often happens, no matter what the minority or the majority thinks of it. Multiculturalism teaches all of us how to perceive these individuals properly. Educational programmes, according to critics of multiculturalism, should be absolutely de-nationalized, de-ethnized and de-idealized. They should focus on what really determines the lives of those individuals and families that are included in the project of the minority culture. Otherwise, it is not possible to see neither the individual nor anything else, just multiculturalism prefabricated ethnic, religious, ethno-religious and other cultures/communities. Within the management of (any) minorities a special purpose image is created. Achieving the complexity of this image is undesirable for the applied dimension of multiculturalism. 'Exposing cards' may disrupt the purpose and lose the enthusiasm/sense of the integration. For this reason, the policy of multiculturalism

is primarily realized by reducing the knowledge of the complex way of life and thinking, and the expectations of 'the others' mainly to superficial, simplified or representative cultural compatible selected phenomena, elements and processes that are acceptable, understandable and expected to others. The core of culture (the principles of thinking and the organization of standards), which is the paradigm of every normative system that subsequently determines each action, is rarely spoken in public and political correct discourses. If it is spoken, it is mostly scandalized and demonized.

How to talk and teach about taboo topics, controversial cultural patterns and people who realize them? What attitude to take towards communities that profess contradictory values and standards that are hardly identifiable because they are destructive? Are we not going to lose our own cultural identity by accepting them?

4. Layers of multiculturalism

Opinions on the ability of multiculturalism to fulfil its aim - building a civil society, are therefore different. On the one hand, there is radical multiculturalism that promotes the "*principle of equal coexistence of cultures and rejects any assimilation and integration efforts and pressures*" of institutions [28]. It is based in consistent promotion and respect of the unlimited cultivation of the cultural diversity (identity) of groups, without any intervention and moderation of this process. The argument is the finality of freedom, the universality of human rights, and the unwavering belief in humanism as the primary anthropogenic universality. The desired outcome is a global de-nationalized, de-confessionalized, de-nationalized, and displaced society; a practical tool to achieve it is left-wing extremism and anarchism.

Next to it stands a moderate multiculturalism that reflects and works with worries and fear of differentness. Xenophobia is considered a natural human tool for survival and humanism as a result of cultural and social development, scientific knowledge, and education in the environment of Euro-American/Western (advanced) civilization. It emphasizes social integration and tolerance and warns against radical multiculturalism that ultimately leads to exclusion, ghettoization, homophobia, racism, and the collapse of the 'traditional' civil society - based on historical ethno-religious, tribal-religious bases. Moderate multiculturalism is represented by the original strategies and official Euro-integration processes (with the exception of current immigration activities in the EU), which should result in a conscious Euro-citizen ('Western type') with his own ethnic, religious, linguistic, cultural and geographic background [29]. The difference between moderate and conservative multiculturalism lies precisely in whether this 'background' should be European or national.

Conservative anti-multiculturalism is a concept that works with the terms homogeneous national, state cultural collective subject. Multiculturalism is here considered to be a destructive concept for the state and the nation. It prefers disinterest for cultural cooperation and the exchange of cultural values. It does not

support them. It insists on gradual assimilation and homogenization. It tolerates multiculturalism only as a necessary transitional status and stage of transformation. In the context of current global trends and political movements, it is represented by conservative religious-national and pro-patriotic lines [30].

On the other hand, there is radical anti-multiculturalism, which requires a strict definition of the boundaries and pillars of one's own culture. It supports the creation of mechanisms which prevent the penetration of foreign cultural patterns, values and standards [28, p. 61]. Its ethnic interpretation is ethno-centrism, religious interpretation is dogmatism, respectively fundamentalism. Gender and sexuality interpretations are traditional gender dichotomies and sexual orientation is solely focused on the opposite sex. For example, in the area of civic / national and community trends, it is represented by right-wing extremism. In the context of the concept of European continental culture, it is represented by radical anti-immigration attitudes and extreme nationalist movements.

An alternative to multicultural policy is a socially inclusive policy, which replaces 'cultural' by 'social' [31, 32]. Essential is the focus on individuals and families, who must be guaranteed equal opportunities, rights, freedoms and responsibilities. The minority status should be chosen in the open society, not ascribed. The successful end of a multicultural project lies in coexistence without any (both positive and negative) discrimination. It is questionable to what extent multiculturalism is able/willing to achieve/accept this status.

5. Cultural compatibility and flexibility of tolerance

Cultural compatibility is the expression of diversity and difference. If it absents, the society does not work as a system. If the coexistence of culturally compatible societies is historically present in the long term, it is an ideal example and argument of the merit of multiculturalism. Examples are traditional national and ethnic minorities in national states, with their own elites, institutions, organizations, education, art, cultural production, legislative and financial securities, 'living' communities, cultural heritage and constructive relations with the majority and other minorities [33]. These can be an example in solving the present-day community challenges. However, it is necessary to realize: 1) that this condition is the result of a long-lasting and sometimes painful historical process; 2) a certain degree of cultural compatibility is essential. In the case of culturally incompatible communities, with different goals and the legitimacy of presence in the common area, this generally results in conflicts. Multicultural cohabitation is not based on the existence of different cultures next to each other, but on their common coexistence. *"Even the Jews and the Palestinians have been living side by side for thousands of years, yet they do not understand each other and they kill one other."* [24, p. 56-57] The coexistence of culturally diverse groups is a matter of intercultural understanding, empathy and tolerance. However, unfortunately, but obviously, it cannot be relied on humanism and human love. It is necessary to identify and purposely build common values pillars, interdependent interpersonal

relationships, to work together and to meet the same goals, optionally to fight against the ‘other people’ together.

The fundamental problem of multiculturalism, in its normative and applied dimension, lies in the confusion of what the open society is and what are the limits of this openness in relation to the fulfilment of the expectations of all participants in the multicultural discourse. If the initial recognition is the legitimacy of the presence of individual groups in this discourse, the majority and the minority will be defined, as well as their initial negotiation/struggle positions: domestic and foreign, indigenous and immigrant, nation and nationality/ethnic group, ‘those’ with citizenship and ‘those’ without citizenship, heterosexual and homosexual, male and female, original culture/religion and ‘new’ phenomena, forms and values, etc. If the legitimacy of individual groups is the same, negotiation is more difficult because it is problematic to define the majority and the minority. Other problematic areas are: position of women in the Western society, in the ‘dark’ regimes of the Persian Gulf or Africa, transvestites in Mexico or Thailand, in the Russian Federation, in the South African Republic and in Eastern Europe.

Confusion related to openness of the society lies in misunderstandings, but also in purposeful confusion of the terms tolerance, relativism and indifference. The indifference expresses absolute disinterest, absence and ignorance. Relativism is the belief that there is not only one right opinion, but it is only more or less different one. Those many, or even all opinions, can be regarded as equally correct, relevant and true as somebody’s own opinions which are not more valuable and more truthful than the others. Tolerance is built on clear principles and beliefs that are believed to be true and correct. At the same time, it admits (tolerates) that others also have the right to have their own beliefs and principles, which they can only believe to be correct and true. Tolerance does not require the views and convictions of others to be equally true and correct; it even allows them to be considered wrong. Tolerance does not expect and has nothing to do with relativism or indifference, as it might seem. It is neither borderless nor unconditional. (If someone cares about something, he tries to do it; otherwise it is hard to believe that he cares about it. Sometimes it happens through interference with the rights, values, and perceptions of others - beyond tolerance.) The boundary of tolerance ends where the boundary of self-destruction, detriment and disaster starts. Tolerance creates reciprocity – tolerate and to be tolerated at the same time. Otherwise it is not tolerance [10, p. 28]. Tolerance is necessary for the success of building a multicultural civil society.

6. Conclusions

Globalization and world culture act as levelling, wiping out the exclusive features of all cultures. The way of life of ‘affected’ people and communities (as members of one large ‘global village’) are directed towards cultural homogeneity. On the other hand, there is a community life (based on primary groups), functioning through local culture, which is largely based on traditional values.

Often it does not have an ethnic, racial or religious character and basis. It is the community environment where interpersonal communication, socialization and enculturation of individuals happens, their opinions, attitudes, values, ways of thinking, emotional and psychological mechanisms of behaviour are formed and where their psycho-social knowledge and skills are gained [34].

The role of multiculturalism is to compatibilize the existing and ever-emerging cultural diversity (in all its forms), not to induce, encourage and enforce it. In fulfilling the main goal of multiculturalism - building a civil society based on brotherhood, equality and freedom of equal (not the same!) citizens, it is essential to create a knowledge base and mechanisms for all to be able to coexist. Because that is the basic idea of multiculturalism, not the normative maintenance and production of cultural diversity as a dogmatic value at any cost. It is probably the greatest challenge of the present and the near future, with the uncertain result. But is there a choice?

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