

DILEMMAS OF PLURALIST DEMOCRACY

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Abstract: This study is a theoretical paper that may be classified as political philosophy. We consider its relevance manifests itself in two aspects: first, in that the world is heading towards multiculturalism, the first signs of which David Holinger believes to have detected in "post-ethnic pluralism" inside American society. Second, in that nationalism exists in different ways and with varying emphasis in all societies, which seriously endangers the stability of the world today. Our paradoxical world seeks answers to the question which road is more practicable: a nation-state position of power or being receptive towards the path of multicultural development.

The question is a difficult one, its answer, political. We may only endeavor to contemplate it. This is possible and necessary, since the European Union, which our country also belongs to, is organized along the principle of the rule of law; national laws are formulated in the European spirit, and the rule of law binds us to their observance. Despite this, one cannot deny that there are certain infringements related to nationality and ethnicity that thwart multicultural cohabitation from time to time, both in places where the majority population forms the local minority and where ethnic groups are the minority. We address two dilemmas in this paper: one refers to the extent to which the qualifier "multicultural" may be associated with citizenship, and the other, to whether it is relevant to speak about the relativization of culture in European nation-states.

Our goal is to direct attention towards the unique multiculturalism of Central and Eastern European democracies, with the conviction that the 21st century will be the age of "peaceful nationalism" among peoples.

Keywords: open society, multicultural explosion, multicultural citizenship, minority rights, post-ethnic pluralism, multicultural status, nations within.

1. Introduction

The 20th century might enter history as the century of "sour memories", since it afforded the chance for the aspirations of power and expansion, shrouded in ideological and territorial claims, of human societies to clash on the battlefield of imperial pipe dreams – one has only to look at the disheveling and ravaging of Europe, on two separate occasions, during which nations had been cast about through redrawn borders, relocations and collective punishment. It was also good for allowing, by virtue of the lessening (hopefully ceasing) of Cold War political confrontations and the recognizing of economic globalism, the ideal of *open society* (1).

The basic principles of the European Economic Community founded in the middle of the last century had already foreshadowed the proliferation of existential and political migration, as well as the acceleration of the associated cultural movements in the European continent. It was this trend of economic, political and societal changes that had drawn the attention of sociologists, economists, philosophers and other scholars of society to multiculturalism, which has since become an inescapable fact of society.

¹ to become a reality in our very own Eastern European region: "the magical or tribal or collectivist society will also be called the closed society, and the society in which individuals are confronted with personal decisions, the open society." (Popper: *The Open Society and its Enemies*, 1962, p. 176, <http://www.inf.fu-berlin.de/lehre/WS06/pmo/eng/Popper-OpenSociety.pdf>, downloaded 10. 04. 2014.)

Referring to school-centered press materials in the 90s, Nathan Glazer is right to speak about a *multicultural explosion* (2) –, albeit in an American context. Yet the meeting of cultures is not exclusive to the American models, which is essentially connected to the voluntary migration of people with varied racial and ethnic backgrounds.

European mobility had been amplified and made diverse primarily by the quasi-internal migration within former colonial empires (viz. France and the Netherlands), but external, existential migration had also made its contribution. The Turkish immigration into Germany has been one of the more visible examples of such mass relocation after the Second World War.

The presence of several cultures can also be encountered in circumstances rooted not in migration, but history or population dynamics. The former can be a consequence of shifting national borders, peace agreements, annexations or certain territories becoming independent – the latter may also be caused by ethnically disproportionate population growth.

The processes outlined above are, of course, not exclusive.

Thus, if political philosophy talks about a multicultural explosion in the sense of global migration, a fact which makes the intricate and diverse mingling of races, ethnicities and cultures increasingly likely – call it a Babel syndrome –, the question is self-evident: *is there, can there be such a thing as a multicultural status?*

2. Citizenship and multicultural status

The issue is raised in Will Kymlicka's book published in 1995 and entitled *Multicultural citizenship: a liberal theory of minority rights*. The title of the book turns quite a few heads by using the “multicultural” qualifier together with citizenship, which is unusual and brazen. This is not the only work in which Kymlicka expresses his liberal views regarding the rights and status of ethnic groups living in a minority, but connecting citizenship to nation-states is genuinely novel. According to the traditional approach, the defining element of citizenship in contemporary societies is belonging to a state, and its quality is given by the accessibility and free practice of political and social rights, as well as the dynamics of the national sentiment and patriotism as the manifestation of commitment. This sense of belonging, as is well-known, activates emotional and motivational mechanisms in the citizen of the state.

The concept of multicultural citizenship goes beyond any citizenship status formulated until now – let us consider the historically defined evolution and content expansion that the concept of citizenship has undergone, from the polis citizenships of Greek democracies and through the national citizenships formed as a result of the Napoleonic wars to multiple citizenship, as well as the transnational citizenship that attained official status with the Maastricht Treaty ratified on November 1, 1993 –, and it foreshadows the concept of a multicultural state, which, if we consider the definition of the form of government, has heretofore not appeared in the constitution of any body politic. Aside from this, the development of societies is visibly pointing in this direction.

Citizenship is a political status, so multicultural citizenship cannot be other than a political status. In other words: multicultural citizenship implies a multicultural status. But is there such a thing as multicultural status?

According to the definition of the on-line social sciences dictionary, status “refers to the state of the individual or the group in relation to the society around it, which depends on

² – the first chapter of N. Glazer's 1997 book, entitled *We are all multiculturalists now* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England), had received this title

the prestige it enjoys within the current group or societal hierarchy” (3). Status is therefore a *state* that legitimizes one’s place in culture and relational code.

We thus know what cultural (and subcultural) status is (4), but the multicultural status as such might prove challenging to define, since for this, we would need a multicultural form of government. In liberal political philosophy, alluding to the principle of “universalism” (John Gray, cited by Paár www.meltanyossag.hu) suggests, to an extent, the so-called multicultural state, if we were to accept the chance for ethnic and cultural relativism, i.e., the abandonment of the nation state. Any liberal party may adorn their ideological flag with the relativization of the nation and national culture, although up until now, no liberal government has ever accomplished the unity and equality of cultural and ethnic values and interest, which leads us to believe that the political philosophy principle of universalism is just an ideal. This seems to indicate that, all in all, the values of liberty, the state of law and human rights (Paár, www.meltanyossag.hu) are very fragile indeed. The majority nation has no interest in “relativizing” its own cultural and national identity. The aspirations of minorities are also geared towards maintaining their own cultural communal identity and strengthening their cultural independence, using all available means – most commonly within the boundaries of the law, but if laws are overly restrictive, even circumventing them – to this end. Therefore we must content ourselves with defining multiculturalism as the multitude of parallel cultures unfolding peacefully, side by side. Otherwise, if ethnicities or nations were to accept relinquishing their own ancestral culture, the neutrality towards one’s own culture should prevail, which is, as of yet, unimaginable. It can only happen on an individual level. It seems that today, everyone is still carrying their own nationalism on their shoulders, even though, rationally, they perceive its limitations.

Cultural status is the expresser of cultural identity. But do we have the means which designate multicultural status as multicultural identity? Multicultural status – according to this reasoning – posits the equality, equitable appreciation and mutual acceptance of cultural statuses within the same societal space, i.e., the symmetry of cultural identities, and in no case their inferiority/superiority or hierarchy. We could define multicultural status – as an analogy to cultural status – as a cultural state whose governing element would be multicultural identity. But is there such?

3. What is the problem?

“Do we have the means which designate multicultural status as multicultural identity?”, we asked previously. If we assess the nationalism in Eastern European post-communist societies, we come to the conclusion that nationalism will continue to prevail for a long time; at least until the factors standing in the way of mental emancipation are still in effect. Mental emancipation will probably come about concurrently with the thinning of the emotional shell, which means no less than what the great thinkers of the antiquity – Plato and Aristotle – convey by the concept of *phronesis* (5). To wit, nationalism feeds off invisible depths; such depths that accepting their non-existence in reality would mean to deprive man of his own essence, his emotions. But, since man is adequately rational, the wisdom of discretion may be expected from him, and then we have already trod on the path of mental emancipation. It ensues from Ralf Dahrendorf’s analysis that “togetherness and country means homogeneity for most people” (Dahrendorf 2004, 38.). Homogeneity – also according

³ (<http://tarstudszotar.adatbank.transindex.ro/?szo=87>).

⁴ A concept identical to cultural identity, in the sense that all cultures and subcultures have their own patterns of behavior, emotional and symbolic topology, based on which one can accurately determine who belong in them.

⁵ A wise deduction which leads one to act. It is wise because reason, desire and intention are one, and thus prejudice or any type of selfish interest is eliminated from acting.

to Dahrendorf's iteration – “is expressed by the desire for the ethnically homogeneous homeland”, which often results in conflicts (Dahrendorf 2004, 38.). Yet the prerequisite for this would be for nationalistic cultural patterns and the effect of factors influencing these to weaken in time, as well as for minority ethnic groups to perceive that the rights due them have not suffered harm, and their relationship with the majority ethnic group is based on partnership. For all these, precise demarcation, formulation, expression and acknowledgment of interests are indispensable requirements.

The minority cultural status is inherently laden with frustration, since it is built on such affective and emotional blocks as marginalization, second-rate citizenship, the feeling of exclusion from power; and these emotional charges are the benchmarks of allegiance and loyalty. Liberal societies see the possibility for a fair and equitable solution in the equality of individual rights. Charles Taylor (1994) analyzes the benefits and disadvantages of liberal solutions, and comes to the conclusion that “neutrality” does not lead to the desired results. The individual cannot be relegated from their own cultural system; as a consequence, a solution must be found which seeks redress at the collective level. According to Ch. Taylor (1994), procedural liberalism doesn't enable acceptance of people with different cultural backgrounds because it doesn't differentiate politically between minority and majority. Instead of the politics of “equal dignity”, he suggests the principle of “political difference”, which allows minority cultures to not have to make provisions for survival alone. This means that it treats and recognizes the culture of ethnic minorities as a value, allowing it to be expressed as respect. Nobody can be made to respect minority cultures, but directing attention to and providing education about them is not only a possibility, but an obligation as well. It is easier to declare one's respect and tolerance towards otherness than to act on it, since respect is not something that can be demanded from someone. Respect cannot be a dictative principle (Taylor 1994, cited by Beck 2004).

4. Instead of a conclusion: postethnic pluralism or nationalism?

David Hollinger published his work entitled *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism*, which has since become a classic, in 1995; in it, he enriched political philosophy with a new concept, that of *postethnic pluralism*. “The term postethnic signifies an effort to articulate and develop cosmopolitan instincts within this new appreciation for the ethnos” (Hollinger, 1995, 4). We are inclined to believe that Hollinger expresses a very significant status quo by this technical term, since today's societies, in the present commingling of cultures, and similarly to America, may actually end up in this status. However, he cautions us that the ethnic perspectives of cultural pluralism should not be exaggerated, but one must notice that it is fashionable. „It refers to a cluster of insights and dispositions that are actually quite widespread in our time...” (Hollinger, 1995, 6).

Multiculturalism manifests in cultural pluralism, and may thus be considered the ideology of cultural pluralism. As to its content, multiculturalism is the politics of recognizing diversity. Provided that a state attempts, in its political discourse and in practice, to support the unfolding of national-ethnic-racial-linguistic-religious-political-ideological and other brands of identities – as manifestations of cultural pluralism –, it can be considered multicultural. Such a state has the institutional means to mediate, if need be, between dissimilar cultures, and to alleviate tensions arising from the disparity of minority and dominant cultures, to adjust for possible distortions, to prevent disadvantages from coming into being and the abuses that may ensue from these. It is also the role of state or civilian mediation institutions to have multiple cultures live alongside each other and form a whole. This implies the necessity for the values of adjoining cultures to encounter each other. The

aim is not to have them close off hermetically, but to unfold hermetically. By that we mean that they must be helped. So that cultures living side by side may live their organic life. Nationalism is still going strong today. It may well be that nationalism is the shackles of multiculturalism. At the same time, nationalism also has a value-creating function, and blends into culture. Thus are national cultures created, as parts of universal human culture. Nationalism can at the same time hinder the exchange of values between cultures. This is why we believe that it must decompose to an extent, but most of all, the walls of nationalism, be it national or ethnic, must weaken. The political class may help or hinder this. Both entities must attain recognition of their interests and needs, and must communicate these. Historic minorities, it seems, have attained the recognition, formulation and conveyance of their own needs; it is only that they don't yet possess effective and associable means, because the tools of majority democracy are insufficient for this. Majority nations still concerned for their privileges, and consequently, they relate to the issue with an emotional approach. Maybe this is the problem?

The 21st century might – perchance – show a more rational aspect, since societies are – seemingly – more calculated than they used to be. The hunger for profits might be a good teacher in this respect. The intolerance of majority democracy, bias, or old, preconditioned responses, prejudice, the cultural expansion of the majority – meaning national and regional majority – might be tempered by the introduction of *a kind of minority veto* that extends to issues pertaining to the minority in question. Veto rights have been used throughout history as a means of guarding interests, for example in the slave-keeping society of Rome, where the plebeian tribune (who would be called an ombudsman today) were invested with this right, or in feudal societies, where privileged estates had the right of veto. It is still practiced in international law where decisions are made via single voting. The European Union uses this case law, for example in the accession procedure of member state candidates, or in the case of entry into the Schengen Area, which is delaying Romania and Bulgaria from acceding completely into the Union. Recently, it was Moscow who practiced its right to veto in the UN Security Council, with respect to the situation in Crimea.

As to what concerns perceived postethnic pluralism in American democracy, it is only with caution that we endeavor to affirm that it might be genuine multiculturalism; but it does seem to be the one closest to accomplishing multicultural status if we ponder the fact that citizens of such societies belong to a certain nation, yet have an American identity; they belong to a certain nation, yet have an Australian identity; they belong to a certain nation, yet have a Canadian identity, and any of them might even be elected president of the state, irrespective of the national or racial provenance of their forebears. These have become factual accomplishments. Despite this, the concept of multicultural status must be handled with care. “*We are all multiculturalists now*” might still be considered a brave, if not brazen announcement today. Society itself may be multicultural, multinational, multilingual and displaying multiple cultures, yet this is more of an evidence of the polyethnicity of society, and diversity is more of a subcultural than a characteristic trait. The multicultural state posits not the coexistence of cultures, but their interaction. And this might be the key to multicultural status, since the vectors produced during coexistence might point to genuine multicultural directions. Such are for example tolerance, respect for diversity, equal fairness, attention to sensitivity, eliminating taboos from grievances, appreciating values, etc. We can only speak of multicultural status once the value exchange of cultural traits between individuals and ethnic groups living in identical sociocultural spaces has been accomplished. This process might be the first step towards postethnic cultural democracy. No nation would willingly give up their own group identity, their own cultural status – something that may be done by and individual –, not even if they live in a national minority status. Multicultural status is overwritten by the sense of national belonging, the status of nationality. We might

ponder Dahrendorf’s remark, which states that “the so-called multicultural societies are only really statistically multicultural; in actuality, different cultures separate with amazing ability” (Dahrendorf 2004, 38.). Where does the world stand, in the end?

5. Conclusion, or raising the issue once more

The 19th and 20th centuries still considered the national ideal to be the organizational principle of state politics (classic nationalism), and this fed off the national emancipation aspirations of the 19th century. „Nationalism is one of the ways in which a nation may identify its interests” (Chatterjee 2013). At this time, the national ideal as a central value served as the basis of cultural self-identification. Classical nationalism had a historical role of fashioning nations, but has to this day carried in itself the possibility for “hateful nationalism” (Chatterjee 2013), which is most often spurred by political interests. Viewed from this perspective, nationalism carries inherent dangers. In its extreme manifestation – collectively expressed as aggressive nationalism –, it can even constitute an adequate ideological basis for eradicating entire masses of people.

In places where the creation of a strong national identity had not been completed with the founding and consolidation of nation states, the ideal of the nation state continues to live on at the beginning of the 21st century. Its weakening might be hastened by globalization.

Western societies attained the level of maturity enabling the obsolescence of classical nationalism earlier. This does not mean that today’s developed societies that we endow with the qualifier “democratic” had altogether gotten rid of nationalism; they have just become more tolerant, or at least, that is what we are led to believe by the paradigm of “*peaceful nationalism*” (Chatterjee 2013). “Peaceful nationalism” might constitute a foundation for a multicultural status built on the constructive appreciation of ourselves and others (meaning the individual and the group). Chatterjee (2013) displays the Indian society he lives in as such. Will there ever come a time when Central Eastern Europe would nod in agreement with Chatterjee?

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