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# *Value Pluralism and Multiculturalism*

## Abstract

The society characterized by pluralism of identities and values has become one of the crucial problems of social and political theory. The pluralistic structures raise the question whether liberal institutions are the right ones to meet the requirements of this type of pluralism. Contrary to liberal universal model, the communitarian, post-liberal, liberal-pluralist and multiculturalist conceptions are supporting collective loyalties and identities, as the corner stone of political structure. I will argue that the post-liberal pluralistic perspectives do not offer guaranties in providing adequate answers to the issues of pluralism of identities, for they produce some new problems. In connection with it the implications of value pluralism will be examined together with pluralist views to the idea of state neutrality, and to cultural diversity and multiculturalism, as well as the implications of multicultural policies for liberal democracy and its institutional architecture.

## Multiculturalism and political institutions

The society characterized by pluralism of identities and values has become one of the crucial problems of social and political theory at the end of the 20th century. Contemporary societies are confronted with demands of religious, linguistic, ethnic, cultural and national groups for recognition and for protection of their cultures, values, identities and ways of life. Such requests for recognition are followed with the campaigns for legal protection of mi-

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[*]    The paper is printed as submitted.

norities, public financing of their institutions, establishment of institutional mechanisms for influencing political decision making in the issues of special interests for minorities, for the access to state media and for cultural, political and territorial autonomy and political participation, and even to some kind of federal structure of society.

Different and special social and political contexts and environments establish different ways of meeting with pluralism of identities.[1] Thereby the crucial question is how to respond at this explosion of pluralism – culturally, legally and politically, without disturbing basic values and institutions of liberal society? Does it require a complete or partial redefinition of liberal values, institutions and procedures as being argued by communitarian, post-liberal, liberal-pluralistic and multicultural critics of liberal universalism?[2]

Diversity of value pluralism and pluralism of identities comes in complex societies from pluralism of ways of life in which basic units are communities with particular cultures, morals and exclusive loyalties.[3] Namely, in difference to pluralism of interest, where for the expression and regulation of conflicts there are more or less adequate mechanisms in the form of representative democracy, pluralism of identities is such kind of pluralism for which expression and public recognition an adequate response has not been found yet.

How can liberal universalism – with all its legal and political inventions and innovations – the rule of law and constitutionalism, morally neutral state, representative democracy, various kinds of dispersion of power, decentralisation and regional autonomy and so on – respond at this explosion of identities? Post-liberal, multicultural and communitarian critics try to demonstrate

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[1] Cf. Will Kymlicka and Wayne Norman, „Citizenship in Culturally Diverse Societies: Issues, Contexts, Concepts", in. Will Kymlicka and Wayne Norman (eds.), *Citizenship in Diverse Societies,* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001, p. 40

[2] Univerzalist pretensions of liberalism are recently under an attack from communitarian conception and post-liberal and post-modern perspectives, which insist on historicist perspective of liberal institutions, leaving of universalism and formulating liberal values locally and particularly and through pluralism of legal and political orders. The first is characterized by such names as MacIntyre, Taylor and Sanders, and the second with Gray and Galston. Some kind of meeting of both perspectives we can find by Michael Walzer.

[3] John Gray, *Enlightenment's wake. Politics and culture at the close of the modern age,* Routledge, London and New York. 1996., p. 136. Cf. also good critic of Gay's „objective-value pluralism" in: Slobodan Divjak, *Problem identiteta*, (Problem of Identities), Službeni glasnik, Beograd, 2006, pp. 25-27.

that that is not possible and therefore insist upon redefinition of liberal universalism. What are the consequences of this redefinition for the freedom of individual, and for the unity of the state? It is obvious that value pluralism and pluralism of identities require some other type of institutions than is required by pluralism of interests? But how far we are allowed to go in institutional change and not to jeopardize „the cement of the society„[4]. How much we could distort classical institutions of liberal democracy in order to preserve both concern and respect for diversity and on the other side to preserve unity of the society and to strengthen the spirit of communality and common appertainance? How to reconcile demands for difference on one side, and demands for social unity and cohesion, on the other side (Bhikhu Parekh). How far we can go in the politics of recognition? The problem is the proper interplay between values of unity and diversity. Even Will Kymlicka who is a robust advocate of multicultural political programs, admit that even in societies with the increased level of institutional fairness, the corresponding level of the lived experience of the inter-group relations is still rather low.

## Multicultural vs. liberal

Minimalist conception of politics of classical liberalism in the last 20 years in political theory as well as in political practice has been questioned by multiculturalists and communitarians who have placed politics of identity as addition (by modest multiculturalists – like Will Kymlicka – who begin from the compatibility of individual and group rights and possibility of their combining inside one political system) or as alternative (by radical multiculturalists and communitarians, who hold that individual and group rights are in conflict and that sometimes individual rights have to be sacrificed in order to protect and safeguard group values) to liberal politics.

Multiculturalism is today like democracy, „thing desirable in itself" and even „trade mark", label which sells commodity, and everybody speaks of it in everyday communication conceiving it in connection with tolerance towards cultural differences. Multiculturalism is a catchall term that refers generally to a set of related cultural movements and trends which emphasize the diversity of culture and society. Its various projects seek to recognize, encourage, and affirm the participation of cultural groups in all aspects of civic life. Multicul-

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[4] Jon Elster, *The Cement of Society: A Study of Social Order*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1989

turalism represents such approach to public policies which seeks to empha-size the need for mutual respect among citizens and cultural groups in some multicultural or multiethnic society. Emphasizing particularity of different cultures and ethnic groups (linguistic, religious or national) multiculturalism represents normative position and prescriptive politics.

Against liberal universalist model, where political community, based on lib-eral constitutional principles and ethnically neutral political institutions does not stimulate (and even does not recognize) particularist status of collective identities, communitarian and multicultural conception of community sup-port safeguard of collective loyalties and identities as fundamental and prime. So non-political community of origin is laid down as main basis of political construction, and collective rights (and through them particular conceptions of good) as fundamental political good, and main element of protection of national and ethnic identity. In this way, political recognition of pre-political, organic identities – which political status draws from belonging to particular community of origin and not on the basis of universal rights, neutral political institutions and non-arbitrary procedures – support and emphasize national-ism and ethnic conflict.

Provision of the conditions for development of one's own culture implicates its public recognition, or assignment of some special rights to the cultural groups. With public recognition cultural groups become in some extent con-stituents of the public sphere. Contrary to liberals who have reduced public sphere and widened the private one, multiculturalists expand public sphere and so politicize society assigning political significance to cultural identities striving to institutionalize them. So, allocation of special rights means leaving equal treatment and so the state ceased to be any more impartial and indif-ferent to particular conceptions of substantive good immanent to particular cultures. In this way the state begins to protect particular goods of differ-ent groups and ceases to be state of citizens and becomes state of different cultural-ethnic groups or communities or nations in cultural-ethnic meaning as political subjects. They are treated differently, privileged from the state in order to make them in the political practice on the same foot with dominant ethnic group.

In what sense such multicultural pluralist response diverges from the central institutions of liberal society? Main bearers of the rights and obligations in

pluralist political and legal order became communities, nations, cultures and ways of life, and not individuals.

While liberals have faced with the crisis of national state and the problems of culturally heterogeneous societies, leaving an impression that they are incapable to find the answer to that challenges, advocates of politics of identity have offered their response in the form of *group differentiated* politics. Multiculturalists demand addition to the theory of human rights with group differentiated rights or with „special status" of minority rights or *group-specific rights*, particular rights and constitutional measures what forms *differentiated citizenship* (Iris Young) in contrast to liberal universalist *equal citizenship*. In contrast to liberal individualism and universalism, multiculturalists say, *differences and identity* should be appreciated and recognized, which are based on the values of communities and lead to demands for *recognition*.[5]

According to communitarians and multiculturalists, the supposed myth of liberal universalism begins from wrong presupposition about real existence of a supposed universal system of cultural values. Since it is not so and since liberal neutral state really privilege prevailing cultural and ethnic group, then the only solution, according to multiculturalists, is to establish politics of recognition of the groups. It means, if the prevailing group use the state for maintaining and developing its own nation and culture, the same should be applied to the other (minority) cultural groups, and to provide them some favours which majority group use and employ, from special representation in central bodies, then incentives and state care for the culture of minorities, until the rights to territorial organization and territorial autonomy, relative autonomous economic, political and cultural subsystem, use of the language in public institutions and so on. Multiculturalism therefore requests public expression and political and legal institutionalization of ethno-cultural diversity. The final demand of multiculturalists is transformation of the fact of multiculturalism in legal regulation and political institutionalization.

Multiculturalists do not see state as ethno-national, assuming that the very fact of the existence of various cultural groups prevent the creation of national state at moral and political level. But they do not see it as citizens' state either,

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[5]    On the relation between „identity" and „recognition" cf. Charles Taylor, „Politika priznanja", in: *Multikulturalizam. Ispitivanje politike priznanja*, ur. Ejmi Gatman, Centar za multikulturalnost, Novi Sad, 2003, p. 33. *(*Serbian translation of *Multiculturalism And „The Politics of Recognition,"*, ed. by Amy Gutmann, Princeton University Press, 1994)

just because they emphasize that there is no single universal citizens identity. And just by the fact that they conceive state as multicultural (multiethnic) community, in which every nation and culture has the right to develop their own identity, multiculturalism is ethnic and nationalist politics, which in the same way as nationalism (of prevailing nation) absolutize the ethnic principle of nationality or collective ethnic identity and rise it to the level of the basic integrative principle. So multiculturalism as well as nationalism, takes nation as constitutive principle. The only difference is that in multiculturalism all the nations are constitutive elements of the state, and in nationalism only the prevailing nation. But there is no place for the individuals as creators of the state and constitutive factors of its existence. That means that there is only *generalisation of the ethnic principle* and its dispersion and domination in political field. The problems with this arise because this principle is substantive and it is impossible to universalize it.

So, there is an agreement on this fundamental level between nationalists, communitarians and multiculturalists, because all of them start with the *priority of cultural community*, and then *ethnical principle*. The difference is only that nationalists prefer national state without minorities, or at best with certain minority rights, and multiculturalists (who could be named in this sense as „multi-nationalists") look at the state as a simple sum or association of various nations, which cooperate until it is in their interest – looking at the „common state" as the product of the compromise of group (ethnic) values and as derivative second-level „community" in relation to the „primar" ethnic (organic) community.

In this way, political recognition of pre-political, organic identities, before and on the expense of individual identities – which political status derive from particular communities of origin, and not at the basis of universal individual rights, neutral political institutions and impartial procedures – supports and emphasises (ethno)nationalism. So on the side of prevailed identity aspiration to domination is supported, and on the side of minorial identity, strengthen impression of deprivation and pushes in secessionistic and other forms of self-sufficiency.

Such communitarian foundation of multicultural community is potentially politically dangerous, because it would demand some kind of political „refeudalisation" or „mediaevalisation" of society and complete redefinition of integration in the way of transformation of representative democracy in such

extent that the principle of political representation being exchanged with some kind of corporatism, where collective identities become decisive factor and basic criterion of representation? Does it not mean coming back to pre-modern ways of integration, moving in reverse direction from direction of formation of modern (liberal) state of citizens. While its development went in direction of abstraction, neutralization, non-privileginess, now the process would go in opposite direction – the state would more and more make the public sphere such decisions as confessional, national and ethnic belonging, where organic attributes would gain the feature of politically relevant differences.

Pre-modern societies were integrated in a *substantive* way, having substantive identity conceived as „common good" whose content was filled up with a particular religion, morality or ideology. It was particular conception of good life which as public good had obligatory character and it was the duty of the state to enforce and protect it. The process of formation of modern state of citizens has been the process of desubstantialization of the common good together with the process of privatisation of good and emancipation of the private domain.

Post-liberal pluralist perspective does not give enough guarantees that the complex problems of plurality of identities and values would get adequate respond, rather it would produce new problems. Translated to the governing field of the territorial organization of power, pluralism of legal and political orders inside a complex society would rather reinforce separatist drives then lead to general consensus.

## Formal and substantive integration

In the dispute between liberalism and multiculturalism basic problem is finding of common identity in multicultural society, or possible principles and mechanisms of social and political integration.

Liberal way of integration and building of common identity in multicultural society – so called, *constitutional patriotism* – represents legal or formal, and so (the only) universal type of integration in difference from substantive type of integration as is every type of *cultural integration* which lay on some cultural attribute: ethnic, religious, national or linguistic. This substantive way of integration means integration on the basis of *ethnic appertainance*, where community is defined as the community of particular nation or as *national*

*state*. In contrast to the community of citizens which is laid on the citizens identity and liberal integration of citizens, (multi)ethnic community derive its identity from cultural and ethnic characteristics, so from some substantive quality, which could not be universalized. Namely, as belonging to the specific ethnic group or ethnic appertainance as cultural content assume that all are not members of specific ethnic group, so those who does not belong to that ethnic group are not integrated, moreover they feel themselves as second-level citizens. Substantive integration makes inclusiveness impossible. Nation-state is ethnic community of one nation of the same origin, religion, tradition, language, values and memories, who share the same common cultural or ethnic characteristics. The state is not culturally, ideologically, value-neutral or in this case ethnically neutral.

*On the same substantive principle (of ethnicity) rests also the concept of* multiculturalism. *In the same way as nationalism, multiculturalism assumes rejection of cultural neutrality of the state and just stressing of its (multi)ethnic basis. It is „(political) community of (ethnic) communities". The only difference is that multiculturalism looks at the state as the community of different cultural groups, while nationalism looks at it as monocultural community, or the community of one single cultural group. In both instances it is the case of leaving liberal universalism and neutrality and holding of substantive definition of community.*

*There is indeed one important difference between national and multinational state. The latter is inclusive while the former is exclusive. Nevertheless there are always some cultural groups which are not recognized and still wait for recognition because of their small number or some other reason, so that this inclusiveness is limited. To explain this we can use analogy with the catalogue of rights and freedoms. Wherever there is codified catalogue of the rights and liberties, some special freedom is defined with its „insertion" in the catalogue, so if it is not recognized by catalogue, it does not exist. In contrast, when there is no catalogue, there is „presumption" of freedom. It means that in the sum the level of freedom in a society is greater where there is no catalogue since there is a* priori *free every „new", idiosyncratic action which is not planned in advance. So, in that case there is no need that something be first recognized and codified in order to be free action. Similar is with multicultural state in comparison with national and liberal state of citizens.*

*Multicultural justice assumes that the political form or institutional structure of multicultural society would represent cultural diversity. But which are institutional consequences of multicultural politics. Multiculturalism with its insisting in the priority of group rights leads to the conclusion that the state have to be organized in one type of plurality of political and legal orders, or some kind of confederal or consociationist structure. Multiculturalism as on ethnic principle based politics is opposed to nationalism and on the very ethnical principle based ideology and politics. But in difference to nationalism's insisting on unitary and mononuclear state, multiculturalism views political community as (quasi)federal multicultural, or multiethnic community of ethnic groups. But it is in the same time evenly opposed to liberal universalism and its constitutional patriotism. For whether it is case of open privilegization of one nation (nationalism) or disguised and factual privilegization of dominant nation (group) (liberal universalism and neutralism), multiculturalism looks at the liberalism as well as to nationalism as obstacle to the respect of different cultures and identities.*

Multiculturalism insists on differences and neglects similarities, even pushing them back. But the overall politization of differences could lead to the group egoism. The differences serve to point to the need of equalizing the status of non recognized groups with dominant group, and not their isolation. Radical multiculturalism and its institutionalization of differences leads to disintegration and even dissolution.

## Conclusion

1. Liberal, limited, constitutional, market democracy and multiculturalism are not compatible since the former is based on equality and indifference and the latter on diversity and difference. So called „mirror representation" of various cultural groups is incompatible with liberal-democratic conception of representation.

2. Politics of identity forgets the fact of multiple identities and reduces the richness of personal identities to only one of its dimensions. Why it would be better to reduce the complexity and richness of anyone's identity. Multicultural politics presumes that one of our identities should prevail over others, and it have to be the ground for institutional architecture of society divided into distinct groups. It is deeply contrary to liberal view with the ideal of leaving others alone and not using state power to promote any particular conception of the good life.

3. The spread of ethnocentrism leads to and requires the destruction of an individual's self-confidence. Such an individual then anxiously seeks a sense of identity by clinging to some group, giving its ethnic group right to speak in his name and so abandoning his autonomy and his rights.

4. In spite of being opposed to nationalism, by rooting concepts of identity, community and political legitimacy in ethnos and culture, multiculturalism reproduces the very pattern of nationalism. In such a way mirroring phenomenon it opposes, multiculturalism could not propose institutions, mechanism and legal and political means necessary for overcoming collectivist politics and nationalism.

5. Theory and politics of multiculturalism is contaminated with collectivist approach requiring state power for its implementation and seeks to direct state power in the interest of ethnic groups, cementing priority and domination of group's over individual's rights. It means that multiculturalism is a *statist ideology*, as libertarian critic of racism John F. Welsh put it: for it „looks to the state, public, and institutional policy and enforcement mechanisms to ameliorate, rectify, or eliminate forms of prejudice, discrimination, and violence. Multiculturalism's vision for responding to coercion against disadvantaged social groups is the acquisition of state power and the application of its coercive resources … Multiculturalism is a statist ideology because it looks to the state for the solution of all critical social problems"[6]

6. Politics of identity and multiculturalism have wrongly renamed problems of social justice and civic equality as questions of ethnic and cultural identifications (Brian Barry). Multicultural citizenship with politics of difference and group differentiated politics in the form of „differentiated citizenship" is in contrast to liberal equal citizenship. Liberal state should be culturally neutral and rooted in the „politics of indifference" unconcerned with the interests, beliefs, and life pursuits of its citizens.

7. Concerning communitarian and multicultural politics of recognition liberalism is not concerned with granting recognition to anyone. Since liberalism has no collective project it has no group preferences and it promotes no particular interest at all, individual or group. It is impartial and neutral political philosophy.

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[6]     John E. Welsh, *After Multiculturalism: The Politics of Race and the Dialectics of Liberty*, Lexington Books, Lanham, Maryland, 2008, p. 15

8. In contrast to the 20<sup>th</sup> century which was marked mostly by socio-economic conflict, centralisation of power and political accommodation of working class, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century the process which began in last decade is the process of segmentation and fragmentation and crumble of states along ethnical lines of division and political accommodation of minorities as the major contemporary demand across the world. This process would be the main characteristic of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Decentralisation would come instead of centralisation, whereas segmentation and fragmentation would replace unitarism and federalism. Accommodation of ethnic and other cultural groups is coming in the place of accommodation of working class. All that would come with the decline of liberalism and rise of multiculturalism.