

The Normative Flaws of Liberal Culturalism**

This paper examines normative issues of liberal culturalism. It starts with a premise that, though it offers a good critique of national states, liberal culturalism still leaves some salient questions unanswered. Following the structure of the vast majority of liberal culturalism theories, the author divides these normative flaws into three categories: methodological, epistemological and practical. Methodological flaws deal with problems of definition as well as with primacy between methodological individualism and collectivism. Epistemological flaws lie in the way that liberal culturalism understands culture by essentialising it, reducing political to cultural, construing “absolute identities” etc. In the last part, the author focuses on practical shortcomings that stem from normative positions of liberal culturalism.

Key words: liberal culturalism, multiculturalism, absolute identities, minorities, community, recognition, nationalism

1. Introduction

The main argument of this chapter is that liberal concept of multiculturalism — sometimes named cultural or national liberalism, or liberal culturalism¹, although with unquestionably correct diagnoses of the normative issues within contemporary societies, offers no adequate normative and political answers to burning issues of minorities within plural societies. In three decades of academic presence, the theorists of multiculturalism developed a great debate and raised various relevant questions². During this

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¹ Multiculturalism is an essentially contested concept (W. B. Gallie), probably like most of the notions in political theory. Here, I use Kymlicka’s general term *liberal culturalism*, which in his view includes both liberal multiculturalism and liberal nationalism. I find this term adequate for it puts the stress on the notion of culture. It corresponds to the main line of critique of these theories that I elaborate in this chapter. See: Will Kymlicka, *Politics in the vernacular: nationalism, multiculturalism, and citizenship* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 41.

² I will particularly, but not exclusively, focus on these works: Kymlicka, Will. *Multicultural citizenship: a liberal theory of minority rights*. Oxford: Clarendon

significant time of its presence in academic debates, this body of literature has brought up numerous salient issues concerning minorities. Nevertheless, in my view, it failed to give appropriate normative reflections and solutions.

The normative issues within multicultural theories are numerous and due to their theoretical nature and implications, I subsume those under three main categories: *methodological*, *epistemological* and *practical*. At the outset of this examination, two disclaimers are necessary. First, the division is purely analytical since the issues in question are highly intertwined. This means that methodological aspects might have impact on epistemological ones and vice versa, both leading to problems in practical sphere. These titles, this is the second disclaimer, can be somewhat misleading. Even though methodological and epistemological as categories sound as possessing pure theoretical significance, it is important to underline that all these subgroups and issues, analysed here, have or might have an evident normative character. In other words, cluster names have analytical purpose and should only indicate the segment of the theory in which these issues emerge, without blurring their normative nature.

There is a structural reason for congregating these concerns in such a manner. This division follows the common structure in which multicultural theories are organised and elaborated: they start with definition of the main categories (*methodology and definitions*), and after the elaboration of the theory that explains social phenomena (*epistemological*), they end up with proposals of concrete policies (*practical*). Therefore, it is methodologically (analytically) justified to look up for the normative flaws of these theories in each part of these theories.

2. Methodological issues — defining key notions and causal mechanisms

2.1. Definition of minorities

The first methodological question, with its crucial significance for the implication of the whole theory, is who is *minority*? Minority *vs.* majority dichotomy might appear more complex than it seems at first look. The dominant view among multiculturalists is that either only ethno-cultural minorities should be taken into normative consideration or that these should take precedence over other minorities. Furthermore, the argumentation of recognition and multicultural theorists in favor of the protection of minority rights is

Press, 1995.; Kymlicka, Will. *Politics in the vernacular: nationalism, multiculturalism, and citizenship*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001.; Parekh, Bhikhu C. *Rethinking multiculturalism: cultural diversity and political theory*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000.

for some reason reserved only for national, more specifically — ethno-cultural minorities. Other minorities come into focus only as a way to discuss internal minorities issue or to stress certain sub-cultural perspective, be it feminist, queer or other.

This methodological issue probably stems out from the way in which multiculturalists perceive culture — as an unquestionable and principal value. Both sorts of theories, those that give culture inherent value (*per se*, like e. g. Taylor) and those that consider it as an instrumental mean to achieving some other values (e. g. autonomy, like Kymlicka) give primacy to one category of identity on which the definition of minority/minorities is dependent on. However, I see no acceptable argument for this kind of normative differentiation among minorities. If we accept that different identity groups cohabit in contemporary plural societies and that their need for recognition and acknowledgment of their specific worldviews needs to be valorized and respected, then leaving some groups aside makes little sense. It is obvious that different minorities have different social status in different societies but the complexity of political reality will not disappear just because we have chosen to offer a normative safeguard to one or few specific types of minorities. The forms of misrecognition are usually reflection of overall cultural context in which political and legal system are just a constitutive part. Constitutional identities of citizens, political subject of a polity are a sort of petrified experiences of their cultural and political interactions. Thus, it is important to contextualize the problems of misrecognition and injustice, in their relative significance. Nevertheless, a general theory of citizenship should not give *ex ante* superiority to any type of minorities. Undoubtedly, due to their different features and forms, different minorities will need different sets of laws, different set of policies and probably different constitutional reference. In other words, it is acceptable to treat different minority issues separately once we apply a concrete policy. This fact, however, should not prevent us from treating minorities equally on the normative, theoretical level, especially if not doing so might have unacceptable normative implications.

Deciding upon *the key word* in multicultural theory, *i. e.* the most important feature of a certain group or a defining value, upon which it builds up argumentation, has a strong normative impact. By stressing one or few dimensions of group's distinctiveness, we actually determine which groups will fall under the notion of minority: identity, culture, autonomy, authenticity, the need for recognition etc. If we take culture as a *differentia specifica* it will automatically cancel out all the groups like LGBT population or the whole population of women that, clearly, do not create a distinct culture. It might also exclude individual (im)migrants in host societies uprooted from their own cultures. The stress on autonomy leads us to a more liberal solution, but still, it would depend on the specific notion of autonomy that one might use: moral, political or personal.

However, this undifferentiated approach to the issue of minorities can be identified in some, broadly defined, multiculturalism theories. Charles Taylor, in his politics of recognition, identifies recognition and authenticity of life as important social need of individuals as well as of different cultural groups:

The importance of recognition is now universally acknowledged in one form or another; on an intimate plane, we are all aware of how identity can be formed or malformed through the course of our contact with significant others. On the social plane, we have a continuing politics of equal recognition. Both planes have been shaped by the growing ideal of authenticity, and recognition plays an essential role in the culture that has arisen around this ideal.³

The theory of recognition is a thought-provoking perspective, for it leads us to the center of empirical multicultural dialectics: in the sphere in which certain groups recognize each other on the equal standing. The relational character of the recognition process that takes place in various spheres of human flourishing, in my view, argues for a normatively comprehensive concept of minorities. We should define minorities in a way to avoid simplifications and reductions that usually stem out from the need of political theorists to offer concrete policy solutions.

It is highly questionable whether such an approach makes sense, especially taking into account the diversity of contexts and relations into which minorities are intertwined. For a theory that wants to give a comprehensive answer to the minority issue this is wrong and unacceptable on both practical and normative level. The question who will be self-understood and/or be seen by other groups as a minority depends on the dominant majoritarian cultural discourses. Therefore, minorities and their perspectives differ significantly across societies. This, however, does not mean that we should leave the question unanswered. We should rather see what the importance of identity *en general* is and what place it should take in the realm of political philosophy. In other words, it is an endeavor of putting individuals with all their multilayered identities and loyalties, and the whole spectrum of different faiths, beliefs and philosophies into a citizenship puzzle. The idea is to determine the concept of equality in citizenship theory and then proceed to political mechanisms that give sense to that equality. These mechanisms, which is quite self-evident, will differ among themselves and should be defined on a case-to-case basis.

³ Charles Taylor, "The politics of recognition," in *Multiculturalism: examining the politics of recognition*, edited by Charles Taylor and Amy Gutmann (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 36

One cannot reduce identity to its objective side. The perception of the others and self-perception both by individuals and groups is the arcane domain of contemporary intercultural and interpersonal relations. Identities can be inclusive and exclusive, harmonic and conflicting, static and variable. The general theory that takes into account minorities should account for the relativity and changeability entangled with the issue and offer a comprehensive normative theory of minorities. Instead of proposing static and reductionist solutions that petrify identities, we might opt for a more ample approach and a more nuanced interpretation of the notion of identity.

In the theory I was particularly interested in, Will Kymlicka limits his argumentation to national minorities, as 'distinct and potentially self-governing societies incorporated into larger a state' and ethnic groups, 'immigrants, who have left their national community to enter another society.'⁴ Kymlicka, however, concedes that there is a third group of what he calls 'new social movements' associations and movements that consists of LGBT population, women, the poor, persons with handicap etc. which, in his view, relate to the first two groups in many ways. Nevertheless, by stressing one form of identity and giving it primacy, these different claims are already put in the hierarchical order, with unequal normative significance.

For Birkhu Parek, an advocate of a different multiculturalism theory, there are three kinds of diversity: subcultural, perspectival and communal. Subcultural diversity is the one that stems from different ways of life among the members that share a broadly common culture. Perspectival diversity relates to ways in which some members of the society contest the dominant culture and ask for its reconstitution. Finally, communal diversity is sustained by the existence of communities with different systems of beliefs and practices.⁵ Multiculturalism in his view refers to the society which has any of the three kinds of diversities but the third one that includes communities 'has on balance the most to be said for'. In my view, Parekh looks at the problem by analyzing the western societies in the present, the ones where the edge of conflicts and misunderstanding is dominantly between ethno-cultural groups. After the decades of fight for the recognition of gays, alternative groups etc. that Parekh puts in the first group as well as women or liberals that he puts in the second, it might seem that normative and epistemological gap between these minority groups and the corresponding majoritarian community with its discourse is reconciled. The gaps between heterosexual majority *and* LGBT, petty bourgeois majority *and*. alternative groups, or simply patriarchal societies *and* women seems to be resolved through political and legal mechanisms of Western

⁴ Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural citizenship: a liberal theory of minority rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 19.

⁵ Bhikhu C. Parekh, *Rethinking multiculturalism: cultural diversity and political theory* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 3.

democracies. It is true to some extent, since all of these groups gained relatively full legal recognition within Western societies, in the set of rights and *de facto* empowerment through the various forms of public discourse. However, a full recognition of these groups has not been achieved yet. Consequently, the on-going struggle for affirmation still makes sense — the lack of women in politics or the issues related to the same sex marriages legislation (the debate recently raised in France) could serve us as an *ad hoc* empirical confirmation that these groups, seen from their perspective, still do not enjoy the citizenship equality, even in the most prominent democracies. Nor does it mean that in other, less liberal and democratic societies, with lower standard of civil political and minority rights, this differentiation among communities makes sense. In certain societies the dominant culture with a patriarchal, traditional discourse can be equally shared by all ethnic groups and yet represent an oppressive matrix for some of the abovementioned groups.

It would be improper to claim that these minorities are identical in their political and social organization, political relevance, influence, and coherence of their membership. We could hardly imagine women mobilized in political groups and parties in the way the representatives of national minorities might be. The elements of identity that constitute these groups might not be adequate for a single-issue based political activism, but the issues connected with these identities are part of many political parties' programs.⁶ Besides, there are certain rights like the right to self-determination, inherently group rights, which cannot be enjoyed individually. Thus, the territorial concentration of the group is sometimes condition *sine qua non* for the enjoyment of certain rights. However, when dealing with minority identity in the realm of constitutional framing of modern states do the contingent historical and geographical features always have to be central?

This, in my view, constitutes the starting point of the critique of multiculturalism. If multiculturalism was 'invented' as a way to address the inequalities among individuals belonging to different groups, it should not confine itself to the pure inter-group equality, forgetting the internal minorities and individuals. Multiculturalism should not be understood as onetime policy, but as a continuous exploration of the mutual recognition of the individuals and the groups within a complex plural society. The very fact that it deals with questionable and contested notions like recognition, equality, identity should make the authors in this field be more aware of the real politics implications of their theoretical findings. As Anne Phillips

⁶ There are to my knowledge very few historical and contemporary cases of these social groups (perspectival and subcultural groups in Parekh's terms) making political parties, like Christable and Emmeline Pankhurst's Women's party in 1919, or LGBT party Ladlad, founded in 2003: <http://www.ladladpartylist.blogspot.it/>.

puts it: ‘the future critics of multiculturalism would be more likely to dwell on the way policies defended in the name of all members of a disadvantaged cultural group end up favoring some over others, creating a new kind of injustice in the course of redressing an old.’⁷ In other words, if plurality and tolerance, together with liberty, are the ground normative reasons advocated by multicultural theories, then the existing empirical plurality of the modern society must remain in its very focus.

To sum up, treating only ethno-cultural minorities separately and making case out of them exclusively on the normative level bears several serious shortcomings:

(a) Obviously, it does not allow for a general theory of minority rights. If the arguments of political theory do focus on *should* claims, and operate on a required level of abstraction, it is necessary that a theory dealing with minority issues should take in consideration *all* identity minorities.

(b) This exclusion of various identity minorities has no normative justification and is primarily based on ethno-cultural determinism, liberal nationalism and similar biased concepts and the corresponding arguments of territorial concentration, historical presence, national state etc., which, in these theories, often take precedence over normative arguments of equality and justice.

(c) This prevents us from understanding the complex dynamics of internal minorities’ issues⁸, which might be crucially important for a liberal perspective. Minority within a minority is still a minority. The focus that we take either as apologists of universal or vernacular language might change our perspective but the normative challenge how to correct unjust political arrangements⁹ remains. Moreover, we are not allowed to quantify, compare minorities as in that way we just reiterate majoritarian arguments: the injustice done to a small group of dispersed immigrants in its essence is not different to the same or similar injustice done to the members of a numerous and territorially organized national minority. Again, the claims

⁷ Anne Phillips, *Multiculturalism without Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 12.

⁸ v. Leslie Green, “Internal Minorities and Their Rights”, in *Group Rights*, J. Baker (ed.), Toronto: University of Toronto Press, (1994): 101–117.

⁹ Once the right of a self-determination of a group whose culture does not fit in the universalism of a certain political and legal is respected and it is granted autonomy or political independence we might still face with the problem of a new minority within a new political and legal context. This is similar to the problem of new minorities in the context of Kosovo that I have already mentioned. Besides, there is an issue more precisely defined as internal minority which relates to the issue of subaltern categories within cultures: women, children, old, homosexuals etc. What Kymlicka calls „internal restrictions” poses an important question when and under what conditions can state intervene in the tissue of cultural practices in the name of proclaimed universalism. At this stage of analysis, I shall confine to claiming that reductionism of minorities to ethnicity and nationality is simply not normatively acceptable.

of these different groups have a different weight taken in their historical complexity and encompassing positive legal arrangements as they are, but should not the scope of normative investigation go beyond that? It seems to me that this kind of theorizing of minorities, which consequently gives the advantage to the national minorities over immigrants, and to these two over other minorities, simply for the reason of leaving them out of the focus or by imposing general liberal ideals of autonomy, self-determination etc. goes contrary to the essence of *minority issue*. When treating minority issues, the majoritarian arguments of democracy (e. g. majority decides) are unacceptable: it cannot be persuasive reason for a coherent normative argumentation.

2.2. *Individual or community — the issue of primacy*

In the ‘pre-multiculturalism’ period, before the liberal interpretation of the pluralist societies, it was clear cut: liberals saw individual as a pivotal point of political thinking while communitarians in their writings privileged the notion of community¹⁰. Clearly, though the supremacy of individual or community was sharply determined, neither of these approaches did exclude the other entity entirely. This issue, associated with the *realism vs. nominalism* debate within philosophy and sociology, and the way it is approached, becomes crucial not only for a methodological purpose but also for its direct normative consequences.¹¹

When liberal culturalist discuss minority issues, it is not always clear who is given the primacy: individual as a bearer of autonomy or the group as a source of choices, lifestyles and values. This has an impact on the coherence of the theory but also on its practical implications. These two approaches are apparently mutually exclusive, at least to the extent to which we try to translate them into a normative judgment.

If we give precedence to community then we remain with an issue of internal minorities in non-liberal cultures. On the other side, if we put the stress on individual we might be in the danger of imposing a dogmatic liberal view with little understanding for non-Western cultural models. So, both normative standpoints taken as exclusive are unsatisfactory: the relationship between the individual and

¹⁰ However, as Mason explains the notion of community, especially its normative significance, communitarians have not adequately addressed who often had different even opposite views on this issue. See. Mason, Andrew. *Community, Solidarity, and Belonging Levels of Community and Their Normative Significance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 3

¹¹ In philosophy and logics, the origin of this debate with its peak in medieval scholastic concerning the universals, can be tracked back at least to Plato, who was a realist. In sociology, this debate focuses on the issue the existence of society — is it a separate entity with its own structure and dynamics or just a plain collection of individuals.

community varies and is dependent on certain set of cultural norms. This is to say that we cannot give *ex ante*, final and universal answer to this problem and give normative overweight to one perspective without becoming ideologically or culturally biased.

The view I find reasonable, having in mind the peculiar nature of minority issue, is to accept both individuals and groups as entitled to certain rights and duties within a common citizenship. Both of these entities entail different but equal normative value, and represent two forms in which human beings pursue the life goals: as free individuals and as members of various cultural, political, ethnical groups. There is no value-neutral approach to the question of primacy between individuals and cultural groups, since we all value them from our own moral perspective influenced by our upbringing and the presence of collectivity in our lives. Therefore, the theory dealing with minority issue should dismiss this dilemma. Consequently, the state that tends to be neutral must consider both forms of political agency equal.

In the dialectical process of human development, individual might dedicate himself to an already formed concept of happiness dwelling in the sphere of his own communal or other's community life (as traditional Catholic or Muallaf, a newly converted Muslim) or one might simply choose to invent new life projects as an individual outside the communion. Any reduction to individual or deduction from concepts like group and community without taking in consideration the variety of human beings, cultural models and the interaction of the two would be inaccurate and simply improper. Only by embracing both perspectives of human flourishing as equally valuable and acceptable can we escape the dead ends of communitarian and liberal philosophy of the selfhood.

This question also touches upon the issue of internal minorities. Namely, it would be incoherent from the liberal point of view not to allow the individuals within the minorities to choose their *mode* of citizenship, be it collective or individualistic. This solution adequately corresponds to the reality of everyday political life where both individuals and groups or group representatives participate in the political process.

The answer is quite simple so far. Nevertheless, there must be an unambiguous legal demarcation of individual and collective enjoyment of the rights and citizenship, and these have to find their place in the basic constitutional consensus and the norms and principles that constitute it. It must be a legitimate constitutional power that will define and determine the scope of various entities (individual and group) within public and social life. Undoubtedly, these norms cannot be just the mere projection of a majoritarian will and must take in due consideration minority viewpoints.

3. Epistemological issues — understanding “the essence of culture”¹²

3.1. Essentialising culture

What comes to be problematic in the theories of multiculturalism is an essentialized concept (s) of culture. Put simply, we speak of essentialism when culture, as a dynamic and complex interaction of processes and structures, is perceived as static and homogenous. Instead of perceiving culture as a changing and adapting phenomenon that reacts actively to social reality, an essentialising approach rather focuses on elements that in its view represent the core of the culture, its “never changing essence”.

Liberal culturalists stress the importance of ‘the respect for cultural groups in instrumental terms—that is cultural groups are respected because doing so helps secure the liberal goal of individual autonomy’¹³. Kymlicka sees intercultural diversity as a contribution to the richness of people’s lives that expands cultural recourses. For Parekh, culture refers to a historically inherited system of meaning and significance, it has no co-ordinating authority, and develops over time, with internal variations.¹⁴ The communitarian perspective on culture is substantially different. Charles Taylor makes a stronger case for the inherent value of the culture and sees culture as an irreducibly social good. Independent of our individual instrumental use, cultures have inherent significance and value and as such should be protected by society.¹⁵ The difference lies in the axiological status of the culture: while for the liberal culturalists the value of culture is instrumental and comes through the perspective of individual, Taylor’s culture is a good *per se*. It is not a mere instrument of the individual goods’ and ‘[i]t can’t be distinguished from them as their merely contingent condition, something they could in principle exist without’¹⁶.

Despite the obvious differences, liberal culturalist approach to the notion of culture significantly resembles its communitarian versions.

¹² The inverted commas in the title should indicate a simple epistemological fact: though cultures might have essence from the perspective of those who belong to them it does not mean that social scientists should give culture in scientific terms the same essence and meaning.

¹³ Jeff Spinner — Halev, “Multiculturalism and its critics,” in *The Oxford handbook of political theory*, ed. John S. Dryzek et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 547.

¹⁴ Bhikhu Parekh, “Dialogues between cultures,” in *Democracy, nationalism, and multiculturalism*. ed. Suárez, Ramón, and Ferran Coll, (London: Routledge, 2005), 13.

¹⁵ See Charles Taylor, “Irreducibly Social Goods,” in Taylor, C. *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 127–45.

¹⁶ Charles Taylor, *Philosophical arguments*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 137.

Perceived as a monolithically formed and homogenous bodies of values and worldviews from which the individual is supposed to autonomously choose and interpret her lifestyle, cultures do not communicate or exchange among each other and remain a sort of isolated systems of values and signs. Parekh defines this problem as 'culturalism', a view that argues that human beings are culturally defined, and 'share in common only the minimal species-derived properties from which nothing of moral and political significance could be deduced.'¹⁷ This view ignores the differences within culture, its internal and external dynamic, alterability and historicity.

There are several problems with this sort of approach to culture. First, though it considers culture a source for individual choices, it leaves little space for individually construed context of values and meanings. Culture in this way obtains moral superiority over individual since it contains the meanings and interpretations necessary for the individual to pursue a life worth living. The two-way interaction between an individual and culture is biased, and favors culture. It is not an individual who, together with other individuals, constructs cultural structure and its ethical paradigms, culture is the primary source of sense and values. There shall be no doubt: social constructivism is always a two ends process. In normative political theory, however, we should not give primacy to biased conceptualizations of culture¹⁸. Liberal cultures are more individualistic and progressive while some other theories might be collectivistic and traditional. Does it allow us to give normative primacy to culture and essentialise it? When it comes to strategic essentialism one should be equally skeptical. Although we might have strategies in theories and reasoning in reality these tend to be more than that: once we give cultures the utmost importance it would be hard to imagine that those profiting from such a normative perspective (cultural elites, empowered groups) would leave the acquired benefits once that the justice was done to their culture.

Secondly, this concept of culture obscures the whole range of differences within cultures. The culture is depicted as a homogenous and harmonic set of norms, beliefs and signs. Defined in this way, this 'abstract' culture is inert to internal conflicts and debates, what renders changes almost impossible.

Finally, it does not allow for natural change and dynamics of cultural processes that result from the intercultural influences. Even when not exposed to assimilation and oppression, cultures constantly change, adapting to social circumstances, inventing new functional but also axiological models. In my view, this empirical and normative complexity of the notion of culture must be taken into due consideration whatever theoretical framework we choose.

¹⁷ Parekh, *Rethinking multiculturalism*, 10.

¹⁸ v. e. g. Scheffler, 2007

3.2. Reducing political to cultural

The corollary of essentializing culture is, using Habermasian terminology, a sort of *encroachment* or *colonization* of politics by the inherent functional, structural and aesthetic principles of culture. In other words, if we consider culture as an essentially distinct sphere of human self-understanding, then its norms and principles become legitimate rules of political life in general. By emphasizing culture as a tool for autonomous acting, as a framework that enables us to conceive and develop life choices, we give culture a superior position within social world of a human. Societal culture is in this understanding a self-referring system and source of all values, including political ones. If there is a dichotomy politics — culture, in this view, culture prevails as a primary structure. I will now briefly elaborate the theoretical, both legal and broadly political implications of favoring culture and its particular values and practices within social life.

On the one hand, if cultures we are part of have so indispensable role in our social and political life, then this consequently leads us to the need to preserve culture through the system of collective rights. Moreover, multiculturalism tends to protect cultures legally as inherently valuable phenomena of social life. As Habermas explains, ‘one cannot think of’ “preservation” of cultures in the same sense as most of us advocate the preservation of animals or other species. The reproduction of traditions and cultural forms is an achievement which “can be legally enabled, but by no means granted”¹⁹. If culture is defined as ethno-national idiosyncrasy of certain groups, it is impossible to think in terms of positive obligations of the state. Furthermore, it deprives the individuals from free enjoyment and continuous assessment of the value of that culture and destroys ‘the very space for hermeneutical appropriation which provides the only way to maintain cultural forms’²⁰. In this regard, Habermas is right when he indirectly argues for negatively formulated rights for the reproduction of certain cultural forms.

On the other hand, is the culture the only paradigm we should be led by in politics? Needless to say, cultural models and frames will influence the way we perceive politics and decide on ethical issues. Notwithstanding the importance of ethnicity as a sort of pre-political self-understanding, there is a whole range of issues in contemporary societies that stem out from common interests driven by rationality of contemporary global society. The complexity of life in modern politics implies a vast array of political, security, economical, ecological and other issues where the particular nature of the cultural membership does not really matter. It is simply wrong to define

¹⁹ Jürgen Habermas — Address: “Multiculturalism and the Liberal State”, *Stanford Law Review*, Vol. 47, No. 5 (May, 1995): 850.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 850.

and reduce politics to a dialogue among cultures or more precisely the set of legal obligations to be adopted by the majority in order to preserve minority's or minorities' existence. Politics is multi-layered, multi-level communication and interaction of different agents. Only by understanding the complexity of both culture and politics might we grasp these relations. Besides, politics as a virtue and practice of finding a compromise in thorny situations might be imperiled by this encroachment of culture. Cultures, understood in their complexity, can be so different among themselves; sometimes they have different, even opposite epistemological and axiological principles²¹. It might be extremely hard to reconcile such deep clashes in a political realm. The politics of contemporary diversified states confirms that it is necessary to find solutions for the peaceful and tolerant coexistence. It seems more realistic to look for a compromise in the parts of public life, where citizens express themselves in a more prudent way and accept the plurality as a condition for common life *sine qua non*²², rather than in the immense realm of culture. Public and political sphere also constitutes a part of culture understood broadly, though in this sphere people are more inclined to intersubjective communication, dialogue, understanding of the otherness and toleration of the difference. It comes from a vivid and dynamic culture as *modus vivendi*, not from ahistorical ideal of self-referring cultural system.

Culture and politics, however, are not clear-cut spheres of human life, especially if culture is defined as to represent the totality of human life. Instead of conceptualizing culture as a monolith, as defined structures with dynamics independent of the surrounding, we might try to define culture in relation to politics. We might begin with a normatively decisive point. When does identity, be it cultural, linguistic, religious or other become relevant for political and legal policies to be thought through and implemented? In my view, it does so only when this identity has entered the realm of power politics, when it is used and abused in the political arena in order to give dominance or impose oppression to certain groups. Without this omnipresent 'momentum' interfering in the sphere of private, particular conceptions of the good, cultural values etc. would not be normatively justified. This might sound tautological, but the complexity of the biological, social and cultural essence of the human being is the imperative to be borne in mind when theorizing pluralism within political theory. Sexuality is a private matter of every individual, but once it is used as a reason for oppressing certain

²¹ A persuasive vision of multiculturalism that is escaping from cultural essentialism can be found here: Anne Phillips, *Multiculturalism without Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007)

²² v. e. g. Quong, Jonathan. *Liberalism without Perfection*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. Oxford Scholarship Online, 2011. doi: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199594870.001.0001.

population and restricting their basic civil and political rights, then, through *pro et contra* arguments, it becomes politically relevant and enters public, political arena. It is the same with language or cultural rights: if the oppression of certain groups has the elements of discrimination or disables the group from exercising basic rights, it is not only a relativized question of culture any more, but a question of a significant public importance.

Finally, by emphasizing collective identity, not only do we protect the difference among various cultures as it is claimed, but we consequentially encourage the use of “culture argument” in some future political struggles. We should understand political processes and phenomena in their entirety and dynamics, the use and abuse of human rights claims including collective ones and their conflictual nature (collective vs, individual e. g.). The same is with culture. What was once instrumentally and strategically achieved to correct injustices of the time might in the long course of time re-essentialise its own grounds. Furthermore, religious autonomy rights e. g. that were meant to preserve vulnerability of the group might later cause other vulnerabilities to internal minorities within the group. Besides, the controversial use of the right claims often poses a threat to unity and intercultural understanding. Insisting on national minority rights in a community might impede the building of civic nation, or too liberal language rights might be an obstacle for a normal functioning of a community, just to name these two. That is why it is so crucial to determine the set of basic principles according to which one political community will be organized and make sure these are truly neutral. Without this minimum of constitutional standards, we might end up in a situation of perpetual conflict of culturally biased claims that would draw ‘legitimacy’ from the overall discourse of multicultural citizenship.

3.3. *Constructing absolute identities*

One of the essential flaws of multicultural theories is the idea of a monolithically and culturally defined identity. Broadly speaking, the notion of *collective* identity, understood as an idea that one shares values and practices with other members of a cultural group, is a pivotal point of multiculturalism. The idea that we need our culture as a source of values and life choices can be hardly argued against. Although some people might find their ethno cultural origin as a crucial dimension of their identity, it is disputable whether we could make a general case out of it. This problem is closely related to previously elaborated issue of essentialised culture. It is that inert and auto-referring culture, portrayed above, that now becomes the unique and only source of our moral decisions and acts. Once one defines culture in that manner, the next step is deducting this rigid and abstract concept to the members of communities as bearers of the assumed identity.

The philosophical, psychological, social and political, and many other identity dimensions and the discussions about them certainly go beyond the aim and scope of this project. Nevertheless, it does not mean that we can neglect their importance. Even if we confine ourselves to the political dimensions of identity and assume that in this sphere the cultural (national) identity prevails, we still reduce the concept of political and the whole sphere of class, ideological, party and other affiliations one might identify with. Perchance this reduction might appear as justifiable to a certain degree in deeply divided or culturally sensitive societies (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Belgium eg.) but it shows only a correlation, in complex historical and social circumstances, and not a causal mechanism that proves that culture is a dominant normative or explanatory variable in the life of a political community. In other words, cultural arguments do not provide us with answers to all important political issues in a political community. New social movements, for example, that arise in Bosnia and Herzegovina show that people's preoccupation are primarily pensions, social security and other issues mainly belonging to left political spectrum. Besides, the complex ethnically divided decision process often obstructs Bosnia²³. Similarly, the recent issue of terrorism in Belgium shows that crucial political issues often go beyond ethnical and cultural divisions and might be impeded by pin pointing responsibility between linguistically divided levels of governing²⁴.

As Parekh notices, even though collective identities have their advantages, they have three important drawbacks. Firstly, collective identity tends to 'essentialise identity and impose on the relevant groups a unity of views and experiences they do not, and cannot, have'. 'Not all women, gay people, black people and Muslims', he continues, 'take the same view of their identity, or manifest it in the same way'. Nevertheless, the need to impose an official view of certain identity and 'dismiss dissenters' creates the omnipresent issue called 'the paradox of identity'²⁵. Instead of being the sphere of free self-realization, identity becomes already tailored and imposed construct that is in severe contradiction with the plurality of forms and shapes in which one can express herself. Secondly, collective identity might create 'we-others' dichotomy and often breaks the society into 'exclusive, hostile and epistemologically closed groups'²⁶. Finally, collective identity has a tendency to freeze or naturalize historically shaped identity. By giving importance to their acquired identities, as

²³ <https://www.theguardian.com/global/2015/nov/10/bosnia-bitter-flawed-peace-deal-dayton-agreement-20-years-on>

²⁴ https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/a-terror-attack-exposed-belgiums-security-failings-europes-problem-is-far-bigger/2016/03/28/47be66acf39d-11e5-a2a3-d4e9697917d1_story.html

²⁵ Bhikhu C. Parekh, *A new politics of identity: political principles for an interdependent world* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 36.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

the result of the marginalization that group faced through the history, the groups tend to stress and perpetuate their heteronomy²⁷. If the aim of political theory is to find a solution for diverse societies and with respect to differences determine the realm of common values and principles, these disadvantages of collective identities should be taken seriously into account.

It is true that the second part of the twentieth century brought to life various forms of identity politics, articulated by the different social and cultural groups. The 'globalization era' accelerates these process and modern technologies seem to enhance the exchange of know how among civil society networks and activist putting the pressure on the monolith 'tower' of national state. In the same time, we have been witnessing the revival of the old identity paradigms, national movements in the case of post-Soviet and post-Yugoslav states for instance. Does this allow us to reduce politics to ethno-cultural clashes within societies and more importantly does it suffice to give ethno-cultural membership normative superiority when we deal with questions of justice and equality? In my view, the answer is no. Oppressing certain ways of life is equally wrong as imposing certain models of life as compulsory. This is exactly what happens when the ethnicity, as a particular and contingent feature, is given the supreme moral authority and the ultimate importance in the political structure of multinational societies. The Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights, a judicial body that decides on the violations of the convention norms which already constitute a sort of European common law, in *Sejdic & Finci vs. Bosnia and Herzegovina* had found that applicants' ineligibility to stand for election to the House of Peoples violates Art. 14 of European Convention on Human Rights (*ban of discrimination in the field of Convention rights*) taken in conjunction with Article 3 of Protocol No. 1 (*free elections*), and that their ineligibility to stand for election to the Presidency violates Article 1 of Protocol No. 12 (*general ban of discrimination*)²⁸.

For the aforementioned reasons, there is no doubt that the construction of identity in absolute terms poses at least two problems. Firstly, it reduces the richness of identity perspectives for the individual and imposes one. In the case of national liberalism that is national or societal culture, in politics of recognition that identity varies between cultural membership, gender, sexuality, race etc.

In addition, instead of ensuring that members of certain groups freely enjoy and construe their identity, this approach imposes an identity model that others should implicitly follow. According to Appiah, the politics of recognition "requires that one's skin color, one's sexual body, should be acknowledged politically in ways that

²⁷ Ibid, 38.

²⁸ ECHR, Applications No. 27996/06 and 34836/06 of 22 December 2009

make it hard for those who want to treat their skin and their sexual body as personal dimensions of the self. And personal means not secret, but not too tightly scripted.” In this way, the politics of recognition becomes ‘the politics of compulsion’²⁹. If identity and its expression are necessary requisites for a citizen in plural society to lead a good life then clearly it cannot be based on compulsion. We might not agree on the level of salience or definitional aspects of the notion of identity but we might easily agree that it must not be equated to imposition of any sort of models or prescriptions on how to lead a good life or what/who to be.

3.4. *The issue of ‘groupism’*

In liberal culturalism culture, ethnicity, race, nationality and gender are often conceived not only as theoretical categories but also as ‘monolith’ agents of different forms of social conflicts and cooperation. This issue is analogous to the issue of essentialized cultures and the construction of absolute identities. Brubaker uses the notion of groupism to describe ‘the tendency to take discrete, sharply differentiated, internally homogenous and externally bounded groups as basic constituents of social life, chief protagonist of social conflicts, and fundamental units of social analysis’³⁰. This is one of the major flaws of the theories dealing with multiculturalism: the idea that processes of conflict and compromise take place among cultural groups as if those were real (intention driven) social agents. It is often forgotten that nations are usually represented by certain political parties, cultural institutions or lobby groups, whose interests do not necessarily reflect the interests of the nation. As Brubaker suggests, we can keep ethnicity, nationality etc. as categories but we should not understand them as substantial groups. ‘Ethnicity, race, and nation should be conceptualized not as substances or things or entities or organism or collective individuals—as the imagery of discrete, concrete tangible, bounded, and enduring “groups” encourages us to do — but rather in relational, processual, dynamic, eventful, and disaggregate terms.’³¹ This might be especially important for the issue of minorities since it takes into account the processes, phenomena, events as objects of scientific inquiry bypassing omnipresent simplified and stereotyped concepts of minority groups. The problematic collectivizing character of culture within political theory of multiculturalism was well elaborated by

²⁹ K A. Appiah, “Identity, Authenticity, Survival: Multicultural Societies and Social Reproduction,” in *Multiculturalism: examining the politics of recognition*, edited by Charles Taylor and Amy Gutmann (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 149–163.

³⁰ Rogers Brubaker, “Ethnicity without Groups,” *European Journal of Sociology* 43, no. 3 (2002), 164

³¹ Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without groups* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 11

Ann Phillips. Although she defends the basic idea of multiculturalism, Philips argues that ‘...any analysis that divides up the world through categories like sex, gender, culture sexuality, ethnicity, or religion will invoke stereotypes...’³². If policies envisaged by liberal culturalism operate with such simplified categories then it would be hard to believe that they would bring about the recognition that individuals within these overlapping groups need. One wants to be recognized in complexity of his/her identity and not to be reduced to a collectivity.

3.5. *Accepting status quo*

Instead of looking for Archimedean points in politics it seems more prudent to determine the normative coordinates that should stand as a barrier to different types of aberration in politics. Domination of majority over minority is a distortion of democratic ideal. Modern national states, with several exceptions, are construed in a way to reflect the culturally biased rules and to determine nation, i. e. dominant ethno-cultural group, as a crucial axle of nation-building process. In this sense, multiculturalism that questions neutral character of the modern state correctly diagnoses the *status quo* and detects the flaws of modern constitutionalism. Nevertheless, ‘anamnesis and therapy’ of these theories, that include mechanism of collective rights and self-determination, in my view, do not tackle the complexity of the issue and might have numerous normative backlashes, some of which I have already indicated.

Multiculturalism seems to accept majority-minority dichotomy as inherent to contemporary societies and all of its consequences as a byproduct of modern nation and state building. Paradoxically, multiculturalists seem to justify the imposition of culturally biased rules on the state. The solutions that these theories usually dwell on are concerned with how to find an autonomous, usually territorial domain of political life where minorities will do what majorities have already done: impose their rules, ethical and political principles to everyone within this domain. Usually, in practice, these guarantees are envisaged only for ethno cultural minorities. In other words, it seems that for multiculturalism the state is not neutral because it cannot be neutral so the by recognizing the autonomous space of cultural minorities can proportionally do more justice.

The ‘emerging consensus’ among liberal nationalists regarding the role of culture, and its legitimized use within a national state, is nothing else but the acceptance of *status quo*. Kymlicka makes clear that “[u]nder a scheme of liberal nationalism, public institutions may be stamped with a particular national character (i. e. the institutions may adopt the language, holidays, and symbols of a

³² Ann Philips, *ibid*, 58.

particular national group)”³³ It seems to me that this kind of reasoning does not fully realize the fundamentals of modern state. The constitutional basis of the contemporary national states is deeply influenced by the elements of majoritarian culture. In this way, minorities are excluded from a dominant constitutional discourse what consequently keeps them out of common citizenship. Nevertheless, I shall be precise here: unified common nature of citizenship is not problematic. What might bring normative troubles is the character of that unity which reflects the identity and the value system of the dominant group. In other words, it is not the *form* of universal citizenship (as a common set of rights and corresponding allegiances) but rather its *content* (implicit biased normative standpoints) that poses a problem. I consider universal citizenship still capable of serving as a tool for vindicating vast spectrum of rights once it is deconstructed and its majority imposed features are problematized. Believing in equality and fraternity as a promise of French citizenship and doing one’s best to see these principles work in contemporary context does not necessarily mean subscribing e. g. to secularism and Enlightenment. Citizenship is a dynamic category and its normative dilemmas change throughout its development. Universal ideas often ask for debate and questioning but one can clearly distinguish them from imposed, culturally biased values and identities.

Constitutional patriotism, in its theoretical elaboration, begins with a different conception of political order and its legitimization. The source of the legitimate exercise of political power lies in the minimal political rules accepted by citizens, including those who belong to different ethno-cultural groups.

In my view, identity minorities are significantly different to minorities in a procedural democratic sense. It is a platitude to state that the latter are a common part of everyday political life while the former raise serious questions for citizenship and democracy. In other words, instead of looking for the invention of various types of plural citizenship and atomizing different ‘ethical communities’, should we ask how was the common set of political rules and principles colonized by dominant ethno-cultural, race, religious or national group in the first place? Why would it be legitimate for a majority to impose a value system and build it into the basic political structures of the society and impose it to minority groups and individuals? Unlike common democratic process where you as individual expect to swift between majority and minority status, meaning that you consciously accept to be in a win — lose game called democracy, the issue with minority identities is different. That is to say, as a member of minority group in a state with majoritarian

³³ Will Kymlicka, *Politics in the vernacular: nationalism, multiculturalism, and citizenship* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 39.

ethical, political and legal discourses embedded in state's constitutional identity you are doomed to permanent political defeat.

It seems that liberal culturalist view often overlooks the very essence of political. The politics in contemporary societies focuses on reconciling the plurality of worldviews and inventing new forms of *modus vivendi* between groups and citizens in diversity of their identities and interests. That is the reason why plurality within contemporary societies gained such a pivotal place in political theory.

The *status quo* of contemporary national states conceals diachronic formation of national state. Majoritarian nations conquered public space, which, in ideal theory, should equally belong to all citizens, and imposed a specific discourse in the form of sectarian values and principles that *encroached* political life in its totality. In other words, the first task of political theory should be to determine the legitimacy of these sectarian systems of values. In this regard, some of the principles of political liberalism and constitutional patriotism, which to certain points follow its argumentation, in different aspects might be a helpful tool for such a task.

4. *Practical issues*³⁴ — *applying multicultural theories*

The issues of multicultural societies and normative principles by which those should be organized, pose the underpinning question: is a general multicultural theory possible? As Parekh correctly notes the political theorist in the past 'claimed universal validity for their vision of good life, models of political unity, theories of rights, justice, political obligation, equality and so on.'³⁵The societies, societal culture, communities etc., as many theorists were pointing out, are so different in their worldviews. The relations between minorities and majority as we can see differ from state to state, from society to society. The histories of intercultural dynamics within states are so various that one could hardly propose a normative solution equally

³⁴ The term practical in this title is a reminiscence of an Aristotelian concept of 'practical wisdom' as 'a reasoned and true state of capacity to act with regard to human goods'. Thus, we should not understand practical here as just an equivalent to feasible or functional. Certainly, all things discussed in this thesis would be, according to Aristotle, addressed by practical thinking (*praktikê dianoia*) which is aimed at changeable and contingent and where the truth is defined and attained with regard to human action. Modern political theory has subsequently inclined towards a rationalist, scientific method, which is still present in political science, while its recent developments can hardly be distinguished from pure normative philosophy. Both streams, which contemporary political thinking employs, somehow depart from Aristotelian view of politics. Nevertheless, contemporary normative theory still has to test its ideas in the phenomenal world of everyday political life. Practice, as conceived by Aristotle, remains the final test of a theoretical inquiry.

³⁵ Parekh, *Rethinking multiculturalism*, p. 9.

applicable to various minority issues around the globe. How is a theory of multicultural citizenship possible then?

The issue of diversified identities within a national state is an emerging issue that political theory is trying to reflect. However, theories dealing with such a touchy notion of identity and the value added these bring to general discourse will be measured not only by theoretical coherence and the respect for plurality of worldviews, but additionally by the empirical implications of its assumptions and conclusions.

General, universal and abstract theories of multicultural citizenship fail to correspond to historical and political circumstances. This discrepancy between theory and praxis often leads to incoherent argumentation. Interestingly enough, while these theories try to narrow the concept of minorities and limit it to certain groups, they still seek for a universal application of their theories.

Kymlicka's idea for practical solution of minority issue is based on minority-majority dichotomy, for it presupposes that majority should grant certain types of rights to minorities, while Parek's concept is more egalitarian in its outset, putting all cultures in the position to deal with the common issues by discussing them using 'public operative values'.

The problems with Kymlicka's solution is in the argument construction: if autonomy that stems from the culture is so important as the source of choice for the life worth living then why should different types of minorities be treated differently? Why would a descendant of a migrant in Belgium, already rooted in the life of the political community, would have a different status with regard to his Walloon peer if autonomy were that essential? This is not to say that differentiated group rights make no sense, or that autonomy stemming out from our 'societal culture' is not important. However, if these two are inherently connected then for the cause of justice everybody is to be granted equal treatment, i. e. maximum standard of minority rights. That includes immigrants, guest workers and everyone who plans to continue his/her life in that political community and has legitimate claims for it. Autonomy is universal, in liberal interpretation, so it is vital for everyone and this cannot depend on context. If the autonomy associated with societal culture cedes to exist or modifies its importance in the moment when someone decides or is forced to leave it (in the case of emigrants) then I wonder if it is coherent to base the whole argument of multiculturalism on it. Obviously, this is an argument taken to its extreme but it is still a logical interpretation of it. Starting with a highly theoretical and vague concept of autonomy and then adjust it to the needs of real-politics is neither coherent nor prudent.

Secondly, granting the right of autonomy to a dominant cultural group on a certain territory does not solve all majority vs. minority issues. On one hand, it might equally worsen their relations

although this argument strongly depends on the case-to-case logics. It remains, however the fact that these groups have other questions to tackle in the common politics, questioning the existence of basic social unity necessary for dealing with the common ground issues in a political community. The case of terrorism in a societally divided Belgium would be one of the examples. On other hand, the whole point of multicultural theory lies in the fact that contemporary states and regions are not ethnically and culturally homogeneous, so granting autonomy will inevitably open the issue of new minorities within self-governing area. All these assumptions clearly stem out from the reality of interethnic relations in their contemporary and historical dimension.

The type of inter-cultural dialogue offered by Parekh, a harmonic vision of intercultural dialogue leaves us with different unresolved questions: (a) what to do with majoritarian discourses that already exist within the state — its constitutional and legal system, political institutions etc. — are they just and legitimate? (b) who would judge the relations between cultures in the case of conflict of paradigms and worldviews, or more important which standards shall be used for adjudication and finally (c) how are we to deal with remainder majoritarian discourses within a liberal state — its sediments in constitution, positive law, institutionalized practice, i. e. in abovementioned ‘operative public values’? Even though I find plausible Parekh’s findings on the normative issues of contemporary pluralistic societies and the concept of the selfhood and culture in general, one could reasonably doubt that his practical solutions would be beneficial to minorities, their need for recognition and equality. Clear constitutional guarantees that majority will not use democracy to impose culturally biased rules is a prerequisite that would secure a fair and just inter-cultural dialogue, between groups and individuals. In my view, this is the element, which some multicultural theories, including Parekh’s, seem to neglect.

To sum up, both these examples of multicultural citizenship theories, albeit they have different policy proposals, still do not offer a satisfactory solution for minority issues. In this part I discussed the implications of some multicultural theories, taking the view ‘from inside’ — what are the consequences that these theories entail inherently. In the next section, I will explore one specific problem related to the applicability of multicultural theories in a broader context of inter-cultural relations.

4.1. The dialectics of unity and diversity

Another practical and salient questions of the theories dealing with multicultural society, especially having in mind the feasibility of proposed policies, is the dialectics of cohesion and unity. The starting point of all liberal multicultural theories is a national state, modern state that should accommodate minorities. The modern state,

by definition, should have a more or less unified political authority and give a consensual umbrella to the diversified collective ethical worldviews.

These two social values, diversity and unity, stand on seemingly opposite ends and rekindle the never-ending debate in political theory how to reconcile this issues. Just like liberty *versus* security or liberty *versus* equality, diversity and unity are a mutually dependent pair of values that need to be taken together in consideration. Unlike the mentioned pairs, unity and diversity are not only mutually dependent but also directly proportionate. It would be hard to conceive a highly diversified society with no cohesion. That would rather be what Amartia Sen calls 'pluralistic monoculturalism' ie. a compound of divided cultures that barely interact and understand among each other. Political elites understand unity as a way to impose a dominant majoritarian discourse and assimilate minority cultures and their values. In deeply divided societies, with little understanding for otherness, this might often be the case. Nevertheless, it is possible to conceive unity as an inherently positive category that fosters and strengthens the diversity.

Multiculturalism, in its deliberation on the politics of plural societies, though primarily focused on diversity and particularity, does not forget the importance of unity and solidarity in contemporary societies. Multicultural society should, according to Parekh, 'foster a strong sense of unity and common belonging among its citizens, as otherwise it cannot act as a united community able to take and enforce collectively binding decision and regulate and resolve conflicts.'³⁶ For Parekh, cohesion is a prerequisite for holding the society together and 'nurture its diversity'. 'Identifying the bases of social unity in multination states is' as Kymlicka concedes, 'one of the most pressing tasks facing liberals today'³⁷In his view 'despite these long-standing mutual suspicions, it is increasingly recognized that any plausible or attractive political theory must attend to both the claim of ethnocultural minorities and the promotion of responsible democratic citizenship'³⁸. How this ideal of unitary overarching citizenship can accommodate the ethical specificity of ethno cultural and other minorities that these authors stress, remains to be a question.

In next chapters, I advocate that constitutional democracies defined in a form constitutional patriotism might provide us with the answer. The main line of argumentation lies on the presumption that the minimal political consensus provided by constitutional patriotism, beyond the discursive constitutional aberrations of the national state, allows for the recognition of the various group identities and

³⁶ Parekh, *Rethinking multiculturalism*, p. 196.

³⁷ Kymlicka, *Multicultural citizenship*, p. 7.

³⁸ Will Kymlicka and W. J. Norman, *Citizenship in diverse societies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 1.

their inclusion in a common citizenship framework, on an equal footing. The unity, as a corollary value to diversity, in this theoretical conception renders constitutional consensus a safeguard of normative neutrality of political and legal order to all groups and individuals.

5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have dealt with the issues related to the argumentation of liberal culturalism. I tried to support the claim that liberal culturalism, notwithstanding the correct detection of the principal problems of plural societies, does not propose correct answers to these problems. Moreover, through an evaluative inquiry, I tried to detect the problematic and pernicious consequences of cultural liberalism.

For Rawls in *A theory of justice*, the concept of justice was the Archimedean point in the kaleidoscope of politics. It seems that communitarians and, in a more sophisticated way, liberal culturalist found a new focal point in a vague concept of culture. Developing the nuanced concept of *the political* goes definitely beyond the scope of this dissertation. Nevertheless, the history of political thought teaches us that the reduction of *political* to either abstract, universalistic (ethical, metaphysical etc.) or empirical concepts and notions (nation, labor, race, law e. g.) proved to give not only static but also erroneous answers to this complex and dynamic sphere of human activity. This ‘ontology’ of politics, its inherent nature, is crucial if we want to make some conclusions regarding its actors, processes and institutions.

In contemporary societies, politics is constituted by the interaction of various individuals, groups and institution that are often substantially different among themselves, in their identities, interests, worldviews etc. All minimally democratic and liberal societies are prone to human and societal diversity. The birthplace of Western political thought is the world of Ancient Greece and its dialogical culture. In other words, empirical fact of diversity renders the need for politics and these two are dialectically interconnected. Inter-subjectivity, dialogue and compromise would make no sense if agents would not differ in their identity and motivations. In other words, diversity of cultures does not necessarily impede politics, even though it is often an excuse for doing so.

The theorists within multicultural theories I have explored, primarily Kymlicka, tacitly concede that majority is legitimately imposing its culturally biased rules on state apparatus, laws and institutions. In their view, a remedy would be giving different forms of autonomy for the minorities in the form of group rights, territorial autonomy etc. This view, as I have shown, overlooks the need for recognition coming from the groups whose source of identity cannot be found in national or territorial key. These groups, following the

essence of identity politics and concern for minority issues, must be part of a normative theoretical consideration. Besides, minorities do not have to be necessarily territorially or politically organized to be minorities. Their need for recognition might only indirectly use political and social mechanisms (lobbying, party organization, NGO activism) but this should not prevent us from reflecting on their perspectives on citizenship and the way to make justice to their claims.

The second part was dealing with the ossification of culture as a by-product of national liberalism, cultural liberalism and similar theories. This part explains why reducing politics in its complexity to indeterminate and broad notion such as culture or 'univalent' concepts of ethnicity and nation is wrong. It does not mean that these parts of human experience do not matter at all. However, their use in normative political philosophy should undergo a necessary critical scrutiny. Once the culture or ethnicity gains normative value, we might expect socially constructed identities while authenticity of self-understanding and necessary epistemological prerequisites might be lost. If authenticity and self-respect were the initial values one wants to preserve in the politics of multiculturalism, then legal and political imposition of culturalism might be its dead-end.

The final point deals with *status quo* — the state of affairs in most national states of Western world. Multiculturalism accepts value biased national state as legitimate and instead of questioning the grounds of political order, it offers remedies in the form of minority rights. Liberal and constitutional norms, in the view of liberal culturalism, reflect the axiological principles inherent to culture (or nation). Moreover, some of its foundation points — that separated cultures are unique sources of autonomy and other political values, leads argumentation into vicious circle. One of the echoes of this issue lies in the problem of adjudication. Specifically, all theories show great respect and concern for the plurality and diversity within society. So-called illiberal minorities pose the only problem. The theories I refer to have one goal in common: the suppression of illiberal practices. However, there is no clear answer to who and how would judge these practise. In other words, what kind of political or legal institution would do it? In my view, the sense of vagueness in normative implications of these theories should raise concern whether the minority interest, or the interest of individual belonging to internal minority, shall those theories become a political program, would be adequately protected.

In the last part, I take a consequentialist, practice-oriented view on the prudence of liberal culturalism theories. Namely, the studies of minorities and multiculturalism in general represent only a part of the complex political puzzle called citizenship in its diachronical/synchronical, local/global, redistribution/recognition paradigms. A functional conception of a just citizenship that can accommodate ethical and other specificities of the groups in need of recognition remains to be more of an ideal for liberal culturalism than its sensible project.

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NORMATIVNI NEDOSTACI LIBERALNOG KULTURALIZMA

U ovom radu analiziraju se normativni problemi liberalnog kulturalizma. Osnovno polazište rada je da, premda nudi utemeljenu kritiku nacionalne države, liberalni kulturalizam ne odgovara na neka od važnih pitanja političke teorije. Prateći strukturu većine teorija liberalnog kulturalizma, autor njihove nedostatke dijeli u tri klase: metodološke, epistemološke i praktičke. Metodološki nedostaci se tiču problema definicija i pitanja primata kod metodološkog individualizma i kolektivismu. Epistemološki problemi opstaju u načinu na koji liberalni kulturalizam razumijeva kulturu kroz njenu esencijalizaciju, svodeći političko na kulturno, stvaranjem „apsolutnih identiteta” i dr. U posljednjem dijelu, autor se usredsređuje na praktičke nedostatke koji proističu iz normativnih stanovišta liberalnog kulturalizma.

Ključne riječi: liberalni kulturalizam, multikulturalizam, apsolutni identiteti, manjine, zajednica, priznanje, nacionalizam