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*Chair of Political Philosophy*

## **The Question of Diversity**

**Liberalism Between Contradictions and Solutions**

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Academic Year **2021/2022**

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## INTRODUCTION

Liberalism has distinguished itself in the philosophical political landscape as the necessary and most credible option for asserting its place in a pluralist society. Its emphasis on defending concepts such as tolerance, neutrality, and pluralism configure it as the possible solution to the problems that may be encountered in an increasingly interconnected world. However, the guarantees that can be offered by the choice of a liberal approach must necessarily be balanced with special attention to minorities on the one hand, and to contexts that present and defend a different conception of the good on the other.

One of the main criticisms leveled at liberalism is that it sees its founding features as being closely linked to the western world in which they have developed. Although their functioning appears to be flawless to the extent that these cardinal values are easily applicable in the western society that is the offspring of the enlightenment, the problem arises when their applicability and exportation to cultures that promote completely different values and principles are taken for granted.

The assimilation of liberal 'practices' is not without friction. A certain level of confrontation is essential to ensure that a possible liberal choice is conscious and the result of a positive exchange of different positions.

From a certain point of view, liberalism must limit certain conceptions of the good. Embracing a liberal ideology as a whole means admitting a certain character of exclusivity.

To give liberalism the merit of wanting to defend the most vulnerable portions of society at all costs, disregard the need to construct a democratic framework in which some conceptions of the good cannot be included for the system's proper functioning.

The focal point remains to be, which conceptions are to be considered acceptable and pursuable and which ones find the cessation of their existence in the democratic-liberal context, and above all, based on which criteria something is to be excluded for something else. Many liberalists have wondered about this, finding concrete answers in the definition of those founding pillars of liberal democracy, such as the concepts of tolerance and autonomy. On the contrary, others have shown the limits of these specific concepts when applied to concrete situations in cultures with different influences and traditions.

This thesis project will aim to deconstruct the claim of liberal universality, exposing the uncertainties and limitations that characterize liberalism in the first chapter, and subsequently reconstruct a conception of liberalism that is as functional as possible to the accommodation of diversity in the second chapter. Some of the theories proposed by the most influential liberal thinkers on the theme of diversity will help to delineate the features necessary for a conception of liberalism that maintains its cardinal values but bends them to the demands of different cultural groups, insofar as possible.

The last part of the paper will attempt to show how the theories proposed above can be applied in concrete situations, providing interesting hints on how to deal with the problems that arise in a society that admits different traditions and cultures.

The hope is to guide the reader on a journey into the specificities of liberalism in seeing those peculiarities emerge to the surface that can complement a conception that does not impose its own beliefs but is capable of including different visions and providing solutions even in cases where a traditional community does not accept any kind of assimilation with the wider society, such as the case of the Amish proposed in the last chapter.

## 1. THE LIMITS OF LIBERALISM: CHALLENGES TO THE PROMOTION OF THE LIBERAL ORDER

In this part of the paper, I will consequently focus on understanding and using the principles that form liberalism, unmasking possible weaknesses and emphasizing those strengths that make this ideology so powerful and in perspective resolving cultural inconsistencies in the world.

The affirmation of liberalism on such a wide scale on the world scene certainly testifies to the persuasiveness of the message it wants to convey. The fact that even today there is still a focus on which key to use to ensure that the liberal claim is unrestricted is a clear example of how this current has the fundamental characteristics to earn the role of a leading player on the world stage. Despite the inconsistencies that occur in the practical application of liberal principles in non-westernized countries, a subject for which this paper will attempt to propose solutions by borrowing the reflections of various intellectuals, there is a strong desire to reconcile different visions by bending them to a liberal perspective.

Analyzing the reflections of many scholars although each adopts its particular points of view, there is a strong basic recognition of liberalism as the most suitable expression of each individual. It is widely believed that a liberal approach, albeit with the necessary adjustments, is the best guarantor of a stable and prosperous society.

### 1.1. THE LIBERAL IDEA OF TOLERATION AND ITS LIMITS

The concept of tolerance has been one of the cornerstones of liberal ideology and an indispensable virtue of a democratic system since the earliest times. The strong pluralistic meaning of liberalism implies the development of respect for others and tolerance of different beliefs. For liberals, educating for tolerance means helping to build a society in which everyone can pursue his or her conception of life without necessarily pretending to impose it on others.<sup>1</sup> In this way, we are faced with a full realization of the human being, who balances the desire to pursue his principles with the need to adapt in order to co-exist with different ideals. However, the process through which the concept of tolerance is convincingly affirmed has been and continues to be far from unimpeded.

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<sup>1</sup> Education for Democratic Tolerance, Respect, and the Limits of Political Liberalism JOHANNES DRERUP Journal of Philosophy of Education, Vol. 52, No. 3, 2018.

On the one hand, the very idea of having to tolerate something implies the recognition of another's value as something alien and wrong in a certain sense. This component informs what is referred to in classical liberalism as the objection component<sup>2</sup>: the perception of something intrinsically different to be tolerated.

To be morally guided by a tolerance-driven attitude subsequently implies a generous dose of acceptance (the acceptance component) that does not eliminate the perceived aliens found in the thinking of others, but rather overcomes it.<sup>3</sup>

The fact of not forgetting the wrongness of the idea to be tolerated comes in handy as a constituent part of the third component, that of rejection.

This part represents the fine line on which the limit of tolerance is delineated. That moment when *'the reasons for rejection override those for acceptance'*<sup>4</sup> in a legitimate way according to many liberals.

It is precisely on this third component that a debate has developed over the years concerning the exact extent to which this limit should be established, sometimes highlighting the limits of the concept of tolerance itself in the factual confrontation with realities that are alien to the general conception of the good of the Western matrix.

The concept of tolerance finds weakness when it tries to present a justificatory component 'per se'. As Forst has pointed out, tolerance is a normatively dependent concept<sup>5</sup> that requires a clear definition of the parameters within which it is to be configured: a minimalist conception of tolerance would not be sufficient to ensure the equal inclusion of all actors in a pluralist society.

The foundational paradox of tolerance is well explained in the words of Scheffler, who states: *"on the one hand, it is difficult to see how a regime of tolerance can be given a prominent justification without resorting to and relying on certain principles. However, on the other hand, any principle one chooses to endorse would probably be challenged in a pluralist society"*.<sup>6</sup>

These inconsistencies show part of the fragilities to which the concept of tolerance is exposed. Some liberals have grounded the defense of an account of toleration based upon the idea of individual or

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<sup>2</sup> Forst, R. (2013) *Toleration in Conflict* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> Forst, R. (2012) *Toleration*, in E. Zalta (ed.) *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2012 Edition). p. 2

<sup>6</sup> Scheffler, 2012, p. 318

personal autonomy, another very powerful liberal prerogative. In this regard, the wide variety of practices, rituals and cultural assumptions are justified and therefore tolerated as long as they do not encroach on personal autonomy.<sup>7</sup>

Tolerance itself acquires a strong meaning from the link with the idea of autonomy. Especially intending to guarantee fundamental human rights, the liberal state thus finds in tolerance the element capable of creating the condition in which personal autonomy becomes the first-order aspect of a person's life. The main problem revolves around a criticism that is often leveled against liberalism, namely its claim of necessarily having to assert its vision on contexts and cultures that do not embrace the same line of thought, and its desire to address a universal audience.<sup>8</sup> In this case, with the strenuous defense of personal autonomy, the individual is given a value of primary importance. In other contexts, to embrace this orientation on individual autonomy would mean subordinating one's ethical vision and, for some, even sacrificing their communal commitment for a sort of individual self-realization.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Education for Democratic Tolerance, Respect, and the Limits of Political Liberalism JOHANNES DRERUP *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, Vol. 52, No. 3, 2018

<sup>8</sup> Autonomy as a Good: Liberalism, Autonomy and Toleration DEBORAH FITZMAURICE, *The Journal of Political Philosophy*: Volume I, Number I, 1993, pp. 1-16

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*

## 1.2. FRENCH REPUBLICANISM CASE STUDY: A PROOF OF LIBERAL LIMITATIONS

This part of the chapter provides an insight into the history of French Republicanism, showing how deeply the values that informed the French political and philosophical culture have contributed to creating an account of liberalism quite closed towards the inclusion of minorities and the accommodation of cultural differences.

Some studies, such as the ones undertaken by Helena Rosenblatt, ascribe to France the birth of liberalism in the nineteenth century, arguing that this term would have been taken over by Americans only later, in the twentieth century<sup>10</sup>. As compared to the liberal Anglo-Saxon tradition, the France conception of liberalism presents itself with a strong unitary character built around a supportive but quite closed community. The typical openness towards pluralism of the Anglo-Saxon scholars is not shared nor embraced at all. As a testimony to this, it suffices to mention the relentless French attack on Muslims in the twentieth century, grounded upon the belief that their way of dressing could not have been tolerated within the boundaries of the French Republic<sup>11</sup>. This account of exclusivity was justified in terms of a desire to maintain the Republic secular in its character. However, it seems unpleasurable to see a highly modernized Western states put so much emphasis on defending such a discriminating conviction, far from the ideals of tolerance aforementioned.

### 1.2.1. The concept of Laïcité

The widening of the term Laïcité during the nineteenth century, conceived as *'a separation between church and state that protects the freedom of religion and of non-religion, whose intention is to avoid any discrimination against people on the basis of their religious affiliation or lack thereof'*<sup>12</sup> apparently resolve any inconsistency about the possibility of showing sign of intolerance. However, in its interpretation, it turned out to be not absolute freedom to profess whichever religion one prefers freely and without obstacles. A distinguishing feature of French liberalism is the high level of intervention permitted to the state, an entity that, for instance, Anglo-Saxon liberals look at with suspicion. The government intervention in the public space even overcame the pluralist and toleration-oriented recognition of religious freedom, in the name of an apparent safeguard of

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<sup>10</sup> Helena Rosenblatt, *The Lost History of Liberalism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018): 3

<sup>11</sup> Raphael Almagor Cohen, just and reasonable multiculturalism, *Multiculturalism v. Security Considerations Behind the French Veil of Ignorance*, pg 239.

<sup>12</sup> 5 Shaira Nanwani, 'The Burqa Ban: An Unreasonable Limitation on Religious Freedom or a Justifiable Restriction?', *Emory International Law Review*, 25 (2011): 1431–1475.



the Unitarianism of the French society.<sup>13</sup> The regulatory mechanism enforced by the state does put under pressure religious practitioners, impeding them to live fully the relationship with what they believe in.

Boundaries are set in the interest of preserving order, a presumed account of strong toleration turns itself into a weak one. The French republicanism start to delineate that specific account of liberalism highly criticized up to our days, a tolerance that speaks the language of exclusion in certain situations.

The choice was made in the desire to bind even more a community of people, to conform and unify every citizen of the nation around a common sense of belonging.<sup>14</sup> Culturally diverse people find themselves in the situation of having no available option but to homologate to the French customs and vision. Otherwise, they would have not been tolerated.

1.2.2. France: a soil of immigrant which runs contrary to the principles it argues to defend  
The strong position of maintaining an intact secular state continues to affect Muslim communities in France up to these days. Despite being one of the countries in Europe in which the immigrant presence is most visible, as far as particular groups in society are concerned, such as Muslims, France has shown itself reluctant in a wide range of situations to use this factor as an enriching one. A clear example has been the constant perception of the fundamentalist threat, felt to be incumbent in the French national territory during the twentieth century<sup>15</sup>. The rapport de la Commission de Nationality in 1987 testify this fear.<sup>16</sup>

Muslims and Algerians have been identified as presences capable of undermining French national identity from the inside. The risk was seen in the extreme adherence of followers of Islam to their religious principles, up to threatening the idea of a unified national community<sup>17</sup>. The need of showing complete loyalty to the French values could not be subordinated to anything else, not even the choice to be guided in every area by religious dictates.

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<sup>13</sup> Chabal, A Divided Republic, 105–128, 131–133, 158–160, 233–240, 245–248; Chin, The Crisis of Multiculturalism in Europe, 112–113

<sup>14</sup> Raphael Almagor Cohen, just and reasonable multiculturalism, Multiculturalism v. Security Considerations Behind the French Veil of Ignorance, pg 249-250.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> La Commission de la Nationalité, une instance singulière (Entretien avec Jacqueline CostaLascoux), [www.persee.fr/doc/remi\\_0765-0752\\_1988\\_num\\_4\\_1\\_1156](http://www.persee.fr/doc/remi_0765-0752_1988_num_4_1_1156).

<sup>17</sup> Raphael Almagor Cohen, just and reasonable multiculturalism, Multiculturalism v. Security Considerations Behind the French Veil of Ignorance, pg 254.

The Pasqua policy drove as well in this direction. It was enacted in 1993 with the conviction of stopping the flow of Arab migrants in the country.<sup>18</sup> This law was a full expression of the national resentment and discomfort towards that specific population. Among the many measures envisaged, one regarded the prohibition of job offer acceptance by graduated Arabs in France. It seems difficult once again to justify from a liberal point of view such a resolute position.

Considerations about the Islamization of France started to emerge in the public debate encouraged by the speeches of conservative political parties the aim of which was to restore the true civic bond in France.<sup>19</sup> Being a citizen of the nation was codified as a factor of uniqueness, sometimes almost impossible to extend to cultures deemed unsuitable.

Terrorism, which developed on a large scale in Europe, served as an additional disruptive element, rallying the public opinion towards the need to reject an inclusive approach towards Arabs in favor of a closed attitude deemed necessary in terms of stability and control. Security reasons were also invoked in the quite recent decision of the French government to ban the burqa.

Behind the choice of preserving public order, France decided to ban the burqa mainly because, from a moral point of view, it was considered a radical instrument to affirm and perpetuate the inequality between men and women. It was considered a priori, a means to discredit the figure of women, to threaten their dignity in the name of higher religious convictions.<sup>20</sup> In the French opinion, women would have welcomed this measure with pride and satisfaction, as they were tired of seeing their lives marked by religious extremes.

Once again, however, there are many reasons why this measure contradicts the liberal values of tolerance and respect for the conceptions of life pursued by different cultures.

To take for granted women's discomfort in wearing the burqa is to have failed to establish a constructive dialogue with the Muslim presence in France over the years. France is the European

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<sup>18</sup> Virginie Guiraudon, 'Immigration Policy in France', Brookings (1 July 2001), [www.brookings.edu/articles/immigration-policy-in-france/](http://www.brookings.edu/articles/immigration-policy-in-france/); Eleonore Kofman, Madalina Rogoz and Florence Lévy, *Family Migration Policies in France* (Vienna: International Centre for Migration Policy Development, January 2010): 5.

<sup>19</sup> Pierre-André Taguieff, *Les contre-réactionnaires: le progressisme entre illusion et imposture* (Paris: Denoel, 2007); Pierre-André Taguieff, *La République enlisée: pluralisme, communautarisme et citoyenneté* (Paris: Syrtès 2005). See also Gilles Kepel, 'The Trail of Political Islam', *Open Democracy* (2 July 2002), [www.opendemocracy.net/en/articlejspid526debateid5726articled421/](http://www.opendemocracy.net/en/articlejspid526debateid5726articled421/); Emile Chabal, 'Writing the French National Narrative in the Twenty-First Century', *The Historical Journal*, 53(2) (2010): 500–501; Chabal, *A Divided Republic*, 100–101; Alain Finkielkraut, 'La nation disparaît au profit des tribus', *Le Monde* (13 July 1989).

<sup>20</sup> Raphael Almagor Cohen, *Just and reasonable multiculturalism, Multiculturalism v. Security Considerations Behind the French Veil of Ignorance*, pg 259.

country with the highest Arab presence and its history has been linked to these peoples and the Islamic religion for centuries. Approaching Islamic culture in a tolerant manner and with a view to mutual enrichment would certainly have led to different decisions.

Moreover, intervening in the practices of another religious culture is a very important step, which needs very solid ground to be taken.

The path of compromise, the most suitable way of approaching a different culture according to many scholars, has not been explored. Similarly, attempts have been made to build women's consensus on unfounded premises, deemed valid by French politics, eager to always preserve meaningful conformity in every citizen. Deliberation has not been allowed and the opinion of those directly concerned, Muslim women, has not been asked for, but cleverly constructed in the service of national unity.<sup>21</sup>

A way of living and showing oneself that is so different, irrational, and far removed from French traditions and values cannot be allowed in the public sphere.

In its desire to free women from the oppression of their own religious principles, through the ban on the burqa and niqab, the liberal French state has forced them to choose a completely different conception of life than the one that formed them<sup>22</sup>, by coercing them rather than liberating them in a certain sense.

When cases concerning this decision were brought before the United Nations human rights committee, it ruled in favor of Muslim applicants.<sup>23</sup>

The committee found the French decision to ban the burqa and niqab illegitimate, especially if it was for internal security reasons or to facilitate a certain social cohesion, a spirit of living together that presupposes homologation and detachment from one's cultural roots.<sup>24</sup>

The Islamic religion is thus a clear example of how French liberalism is opposed to cultural inclusion. It speaks the language of oppression insofar as it claims to triumph indiscriminately over other conceptions of the good, building a social model of solidarity, united by ideals of freedom, equality,

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<sup>21</sup> Raphael Almagor Cohen, just and reasonable multiculturalism, *Multiculturalism v. Security Considerations Behind the French Veil of Ignorance*, pg 260.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

<sup>23</sup> See for instance International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966). [www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx)

<sup>24</sup> For more specific arguments see *Sonia Yaker v. France*, 15; *Miriana Hebbadj v. France*, 15.

and brotherhood, which sees the annulment of freedom of choice, the erosion of the boundaries of religious tolerance and above all the extreme desire for national integration to replace the neutrality towards conceptions of life so beloved of the liberalists<sup>25</sup>.

The nationalism defended by France thus ends up canceling out the connotations of brotherhood and freedom, the founding values of the French spirit. The historical motto that formed the French spirit has been replaced by a new one that celebrates its laicity, security, and indivisibility<sup>26</sup>. Social union, security against the threats not only of fundamentalists but of French Muslims in general, and secularism have contributed to the construction of an identity that does not embrace cultural differences but fears them in order to preserve the general will of the state.

### 1.3. THE LIBERAL ETHNOCENTRIC BIAS

If the French case has proven the internal inconsistencies of one of the most valued liberal states to be true, the analysis here and in the next section will focus on the specificity of the liberal model as a limit to its universal claim.

From the process of colonization onwards, it has become evident how the Liberal desire to impose its perceived moral and ideological superiority has grown up during the passing of the years. The rise of the modern states, the success of the European project, and the economic and political dominance of prominent liberal states have historically provided the framework through which to articulate an account of the universal ideological spreading of liberal values and principles.<sup>27</sup>

If for any non-western country we have the tendency to classify it based on its specificity, this same orientation does not occur when we reason in terms of liberal states<sup>28</sup>. Even if guided by a form of reductionism and simplistic thought, we are used to defining liberal states as possessing more or less the same particularities and intrinsic values. What is needed to be questioned is the pretense of imposition of this ethnocentric vision on other countries that differs in their cultural roots.

Therefore, this part of the paper would be devoted to showing certain aspects of the ethnocentric bias of liberal western states. Experiences that have formed the western vision of the world are

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<sup>25</sup> Raphael Almagor Cohen, just and reasonable multiculturalism, *Multiculturalism v. Security Considerations Behind the French Veil of Ignorance*, pg 275.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid

<sup>27</sup> Bhikhu Parekh *Ethnocentric Political Theory the Pursuit of Flawed Universals*, Palgrave Macmillan; 2019.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid

strictly linked to the geographical area to which western thinkers belong, developing a Eurocentric perspective dangerous to be affiliated to non-western societies.

It would be highly pretentious to suppose that the direction history needs can only be pursued following the liberal standard. <sup>29</sup>Admitting the presence of other alternatives, like the pluralism liberal assumption effectively does, means leaving space for the development of perspectives that for instance, depart from the individualistic liberal setting.

Respect for others, an essential liberal value, would imply the acceptance of the fact that other cultures have not been influenced by such a strong deal of human rationality. If the concept of reason and rationality-driven choices acquire a meaningful place among the liberal premises this is not so in a cultural context where the Enlightenment has not occurred.

Talking about the theoretical framework in which liberal theories are constructed, one can barely see the right degree of attention to non-west ways of reasoning. The argument of this line of critique is exactly the fact that even among the most influential liberal thinkers, the flux of thought follows a strong attachment to European or, more in general, liberal norms.<sup>30</sup>

Little is known about non-western philosophical traditions, and little interest is shown in general by liberal scholars towards the exploration of how their way of reasoning is built. The empathy directed at them is not accompanied by a real insight into their cultural roots.

The non-western world ends up being an intellectual construct<sup>31</sup>, a sort of imaginary world in which any idea brought into prominence by liberalists can find its practical realization. Generalizations about fundamental features of human existence became a typical liberal act academically speaking. The inherent supremacy of western reasoning substitutes for what would be needed when facing diversity, an intimate knowledge of the other which would effectively provide powerful grounds for justification. These assumptions fuel the ethnocentric western bias, which, as a result, presents all his dangerous implications. It is peculiar in this sense to observe the lack of ethnocentric reasoning, or a diminishing presence of it, in liberal authors who have lived in non-western countries and have consequently developed a mode of thought that embraces cultural diversity in the right way.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid

<sup>30</sup> ibid

<sup>31</sup> ibid

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. See Charles Taylor, Fred Dallmayr, and others

The undisputed supremacy of the west in the population mindset has shaped beliefs and values in such a way that certain liberal assumptions are taken for granted and with no need for justification. The way in which a very large segment of the human population reason paves the way for the victory of the concept of individualism, autonomy, and so on.

The ideas of neutrality, justice, and reason itself are so widespread to make liberalism the standard point to which every other culture should conform.

As a result, all the other traditions of the world lose their peculiarities and are incorporated into one single realm, that of illiberal societies. Being accepted by an international community so widely affected by Western ideals becomes a matter of pride and necessity at the same time. Most scholars feel the need to include in their conceptualizations some liberal element<sup>33</sup>, to be classified as one of them, one among the many which theories count.

This level of homologation is reaching an unprecedented level and has some serious problems in it. First, it amplifies the weaknesses of different moral standards, but, above all, it impoverishes the capacity for the creation of alternatives, extremely important for any theory. In this context, imagination finds its death in the name of overly celebrated equality.<sup>34</sup>

#### 1.3.1. Liberalized democracy and its inconsistencies

The sacralization of the liberal outlook as an entity free from incongruencies does even shape that fundamental characteristic through which democracy had been conceived. From its initial premises, a purely democratic system would have fostered the active participation of all people involved in the societal scheme. The epistemology of the term democracy speaks the language of attributing power to the people through active participation as far as possible.

However, the clearest term from which liberalism distance itself from democracy is the idea of community. The definition of the individual as a self-interested human being highly valuable eliminates a perspective in which the values promoted by a community are assumed as guiding principles<sup>35</sup>. Mutual respect for members of the same circle is not encouraged and the democratic meaning of community lack, following its reasoning, its conductive capabilities.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid

<sup>34</sup> Ibid

<sup>35</sup> Bhikhu Parekh *Ethnocentric Political Theory the Pursuit of Flawed Universals*, Palgrave Macmillan; 2019.

Entering into specificities, a focus on the liberal conception of individualism will be better suited to understand all the damage caused to the democratic idea attributing to the community a leading role in humans' formation.

Liberals take the individuals as the ultimate and most important unit of society, giving meaning to the latter using it.<sup>36</sup> All the subsequent classical liberal premises depart from a strong individualism. The societal world can only be understood as an environment in which individuals are in relationships the one with the others. The individualist turn precedes the definition of society, both ontologically and conceptually.<sup>37</sup>

Each human being is master of his destiny, encouraged to develop rationally his conception of life by adopting choices that strengthen his separateness from the other, accentuating his uniqueness. The separateness from the others is what needs to be protected and preserved.<sup>38</sup> Whenever someone overcomes the boundaries of one's own individuality, this fact is perceived as a threat. The goal of the liberal man is to deconstruct the image of a communal view in which any member of a specific community builds its definition on the grounds of a common moral vision.

The high degree of autonomy granted to the liberal man translate itself into the recognition of one's ability in choosing on its own for itself, being guided by self-constructed values and beliefs. The relationships among liberal men try to avoid any emotional attachment,<sup>39</sup> voiding the sentimental and emphatical factors of its otherwise utmost importance, to favor the so invoked principle of mutual respect and recognition.

Entering the sphere of another is neither permissible nor desirable.

Independence and self-determination are highly valued principles, so cherished to make morality, justice, and equality secondary virtues. To solve a possible objection that could be moved towards liberalism, when individuals find something in common in their process of self-definition, they ultimately decide how much to share of it in the so celebrated realm of civil society<sup>40</sup>.

Therefore, to arrive at a conclusion about the bond that exists between the very different paradigms of liberalism and democracy it means to ascertain the fact that liberalism put its values and beliefs

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<sup>36</sup> The Cultural Particularity of Liberal Democracy, Bhikhu Parekh, Political studies (1992), XL, special issue .160-175.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid

<sup>38</sup> The Cultural Particularity of Liberal Democracy, Bhikhu Parekh, Political studies (1992), XL, special issue . 162.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid

<sup>40</sup> The Cultural Particularity of Liberal Democracy, Bhikhu Parekh, Political studies (1992), XL, special issue . 163.

in a prioritizing position, admitting the presence of democracy for secondary reasons. Liberal democracy is liberalized democracy, a democracy shaped by the central liberal concerns<sup>41</sup>.

The instrumental use of democracy is attributed to the need of finding a mechanism through which to build trust in governmental institutions. Liberal people do require a certain authority legitimized to exercise power over them, as long as consent over it is implied and monitoring mechanisms are enforced to ensure that the highest possible amount of liberty is guaranteed to any liberal citizen.

However, the way in which democracy was first conceived relies on very different premises. The fathers of the democratic concept, namely the Athenians, perceived democracy as a way to foster a culture of social cohesion, a way to promote a collective existence, in synthesis, a way of life rather than a form of government, as liberals perceive it.<sup>42</sup>

In the simplest distinction, for liberals, democracy is a tool to preserve one's own integrity and safe space, allowing the realization of self-established goals in a legally guaranteed environment.<sup>43</sup> For those who have defined the "spiritual "character" of democracy, it was a powerful intermediary in the pursuit of collective self-determination.

The instrumentalization and appropriation of a biased view of democracy have constituted the liberal democratic model which has still nowadays the desire of conquering the world with its idea and values. The hegemonic role exercised by liberalization at the expense of democracy can be easily detached by the liberal definition of basic inviolable rights.<sup>44</sup>

Liberals define essential rights a priori and then build around them a democratic structure. The problem is when new rights emerge in light of historical conditions. Being this the case, whether the majority disagrees or not on the defense of some values rather than others is not worthy of relevance for liberals.<sup>45</sup>

### 1.3.2. An exaggerated reliance on the idea of rights

As far as human rights as a specific category are concerned, another contradiction arises. Liberals have provided an indisputable contribution in terms of human rights, enriching their scope, and

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 165.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid

<sup>43</sup> Locke is ascertained to be the first to formulate the basic structure of liberal democracies

<sup>44</sup> The Cultural Particularity of Liberal Democracy, Bhikhu Parekh, Political studies (1992), XL, special issue. 166

<sup>45</sup> Ibid



defending large sectors of the population worldwide. Nevertheless, the element of universality, largely justifiable in the case of human rights, causes once again serious issues, especially if associated with the concept of dignity.

Human rights are conceived in order to allow the conduct of a dignified life. The fact is that different societies with different cultural traditions diverge in their definition of what constitutes a dignified life.<sup>46</sup> As long as the delineation of one does not imply unresolvable questions to the other, the cohesiveness of the different conceptions is not affected. The claim to expand the universality of human rights, although of extreme importance in order not to reduce the argument of human rights to a relativistic conception, indirectly weakens the definition of a dignified life generated by some societies, acting to their detriment in the interests of others.

The uncontrolled expansion of human rights necessarily nullifies their special status, dissolving the moral attribution of superiority that is inherent in these rights.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, such an indiscriminate expansion favors the defenders of specific conceptions of the good and feeds controversies with culturally opposed traditions. Rawls himself defined only a few basic human rights as worthy of this attribution, framing the rest and the ever newcomers as pure liberalist aspirations to spread their standards.<sup>48</sup> When a liberal state is based on the cultivation of a culture of right, there needs to be a strong specification of what is meant. Assigning rights their specific moral value and source of responsibility is more than legitimate; what is not appropriate is to build a social environment entirely based and structured on an exaggerated culture of human rights per se. If the case turns out to be the last mentioned, the moral pluralist component that liberalism claims to defend is heavily attacked and consequently impoverished<sup>49</sup>. If the aim is to build a society based exclusively on rights, the moral languages and expressions of certain social groups risk losing their value, as does the moral and political weight of institutions. Every decision on every issue is brought before the court of rights. Congruence with it becomes the only standard of judgment, nullifying the value of other moral motivations.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Bhikhu Parekh *Ethnocentric Political Theory the Pursuit of Flawed Universals*, Palgrave Macmillan; 2019. See specifically the concept of rights, chapter 2.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. See also Rawls comment on article 3-18 of UNDHR.

<sup>49</sup> Bhikhu Parekh *Ethnocentric Political Theory the Pursuit of Flawed Universals*, Palgrave Macmillan; 2019. See specifically the concept of rights, chapter 2.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid

#### 1.4. PROBLEMS RELATED TO LIBERAL DEMOCRACY PROMOTION

Practices of democracy promotion and implementation have seemed to be attractive to liberals as a way to reach, step by step, a sort of universality of their claim. The model liberals usually search to implement is the one that best suits their ideas, a modern representative democracy that finds its expression in the nation-state.<sup>51</sup>

Historically, the formation of this democratic model has been strongly shaped by liberal values. Since its beginnings, liberalism's relationship with the masses has been characterized by contrasts. The Enlightenment values so much promoted by the liberalists, such as the ability to develop a critical spirit, could hardly be ascribed to the generality of people. From its founding values, liberalism derives a certain amount of elitism<sup>52</sup>. Once the overwhelming force of the concept of democracy had been realized, liberals took their steps intending to somehow contain the democratic triumph of guaranteeing access to power and decision-making to every social group. As previously pointed out, in order to limit the alleged threat of a large majority as an expression of democracy, liberals have constituted constitutional rights that exist above it. Moreover, they have cleverly constructed an educational machine that presupposes a strong state control over education, shaping the masses on the basis of founding liberal values.

With regard to representation, because they did not hold the masses in high esteem, liberals themselves, like Mill, warned of the danger of representative democracy in an indirect way, arguing that "*the real danger of democracy lies in the substitution of delegation for representation*".<sup>53</sup>

On the contrary, they promoted a representative government, in which the representatives acquired legitimacy from the fact that their election derived from the vote of the people, but left them with a wide room for maneuver on public management once elected. Mill spoke in this case of a well-regulated and rational democracy, which defended the enlightened elitism implicit in liberalism.<sup>54</sup>

The choice of wanting to 'subjugate' different cultures with the model developed by the West through liberal democratic promotion is closely linked to the ideal of wanting to construct a datum of universality in liberalist claims.

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<sup>51</sup> The Cultural Particularity of Liberal Democracy, Bhikhu Parekh, Political studies (1992), XL, special issue . 167.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 168.

<sup>53</sup> Gertrude Himmelfarb(ed). Essays on politics and cultures by Jhon Stuart Mill(New York.Anchor books.1962)p 197

<sup>54</sup> A valuable discussion on this can be found in Amy Gutmann Liberal Equality(Cambridge University Press,1980). Pg 48.

To think that societies from different backgrounds would wear the tailor-made suit of liberalism on the basis of its historical and social contingencies seems highly misleading.

What constituted the West as it is today has in a completely different way shaped the non-Western world, constructing political visions and conceptions at opposite ends of the spectrum.

Promoting democracy on the liberalist model means misunderstanding the potential and abilities of each individual non-Westernised country and wasting the opportunity to accompany a lesser-known culture towards a constructive growth based on its own values<sup>55</sup>.

Non-liberal societies follow a different path in the realization of their perception of life. This fact does not make them necessarily incompatible with liberal traditions, nor completely illiberal.

Unless the western political construction style is ascertained to be the ultimate reality of all human beings' political realizations, we cannot admit an uncontrolled expansion in democracy promotion practices.<sup>56</sup> Sensitivity of societies based on a communal conception of the individual towards the maintenance of their traditional ways of living with a view to the continuous development of the community as a whole cannot be got over by an overthrowing liberal doctrine.

For instance, elections articulated in a liberal manner can provoke tremendous consequences on the other's pursuit of community-based goals<sup>57</sup>. If a society is not accustomed to the development of shared values, or if it is not so open to the reality of having contrasting opinions to be solved via dialogue and confrontation, the boundaries of a world that finishes in the community itself would be eroded with negative implications in what it is believed to be the only path possible.

The exportation of democracies takes different connotations depending on the situation in which it is deemed necessary to intervene. In certain contexts, to further restrict the liberalist universal claim, has been the evidence of coercive democratic imposition practices<sup>58</sup>. Whether promoting democracy outside the western sphere of action is a matter of ensuring the instillment of certain institutions or there requires the creation of specific economic prerequisites is not of any interest here. What must be acknowledged is the evidence of external pressure to facilitate the occurrence

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<sup>55</sup> Rethinking democracy promotion Author(s): BEATE JAHN Source: *Review of International Studies* , OCTOBER 2012, Vol. 38, No. 4 (OCTOBER 2012), pp. 685-705 Published by: Cambridge University Press

<sup>56</sup> The Limits of Liberal-Democracy Promotion Author(s): Christopher Hobson Source: *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* , Oct.-Dec. 2009, Vol. 34, No. 4 (Oct.-Dec. 2009), pp. 383-405 Published by: Sage Publications, Inc.

<sup>57</sup> The Cultural Particularity of Liberal Democracy, Bhikhu Parekh, *Political studies* (1992), XL, special issue . 172.

<sup>58</sup> The Limits of Liberal-Democracy Promotion Author(s): Christopher Hobson Source: *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* , Oct.-Dec. 2009, Vol. 34, No. 4 (Oct.-Dec. 2009), pp. 383-405 Published by: Sage Publications, Inc.

of a democratic political subversion in an obscure manner. In virtue of the classification of hostile regimes as rogue states, liberals presume to have the right to coercively exercise a decisive push in terms of political pressure.

Given the hegemonic role played by liberal democracy internationally, states that refuse a legitimate liberal corrective action are defined as delinquent and defective<sup>59</sup>. Liberals think of themselves as the missionaries<sup>60</sup> of global peace, achievable only by way of spreading democracy all over the world, by any means possible, even violence if needed.

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid

<sup>60</sup>Talking politics: Bhikhu Parekh in conversation with Ramin Jahanbegloo Print publication date: 2011 Print ISBN-13: 9780198071549 Published to Oxford Scholarship Online: September 2012

## 2. What political-philosophical path to choose to accommodate diversity?

Despite all the criticism that moved toward liberalism, it is undoubtedly interesting to analyze how different scholars have worked on a conception of liberalism that would foster cultural diversity.

In its intrinsic values, Liberalism shows all the potentialities to develop a conception of the good which takes into account the claim and the issues of very heterogeneous social groups. If the pretense is to maintain the liberal ideologic hegemony it goes without saying the fact that a need to redefine some liberal concepts is required.

However, given the large affirmation of the liberal ideology, the weaknesses of other theories do not guarantee them a place in the development of a “global” project.

The liberal ideology inherently presents a large margin of maneuver. Its pluralistic spirit and desire for the well-being of any portion of society constitute a reassurance about the possibilities of accommodating others’ instances.

This chapter would explore how the effort to bring together almost opposing desires and positions could ultimately be considered acceptable by large social and cultural segments. Fusing the key elements of liberalism and multiculturalism will tend to achieve a scheme that is considered credible and respectful of the parties involved. Looking at the world through the eyes of a single political and philosophical tradition would mean falling back into the cultural and historical bias of a certain social context. Enriching liberalism with ideas from outside its conception could mean opening up a route that looks at the world with different eyes, increasingly informed by the thousand shades of people that make it up, and increasingly receptive to all types of thought. This line of reasoning could also be attractive to certain groups that do not want to or simply cannot feel defended by liberal norms concerning certain aspects of their lives.

The strong urge is to untie the concept of political power exercised over a social body from the different conceptions of life that every single individual wants to pursue. We have already seen how the fallacy of universal claims can lead to situations in which the level of consensus and support is at its lowest.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Domenico Melidoro, dealing with diversity, Liberalism and diversity, pg.10

The analysis of the different theoretical approaches presented will primarily focus on the presentation and critical discussion of liberal perspectives that fail to escape the sphere of comprehensiveness in finding a solution to accommodate diversity. Kymlicka's and Galston's theories will in fact end up being defective in their attempt to construct a liberalism that rests on solid foundations but is ill-suited to grasping the facets that different cultural groups can display in a social system, since they present a strong attachment to a specific conception of the good. If the shift to a more political liberal perspective allows the stumbling block of comprehensiveness to be overcome, Macedo's position will prove inadequate in the excessive demands made on cultural groups. Finally, the possible solution will be found in Kukhatas and his liberal archipelago, emptied of overly expensive demands and fascinating in its articulation of a potential coexistence.

### 2.1. LIBERAL MULTICULTURALISM, A VIABLE SOLUTION?

Among the most influential author in the field of liberal multiculturalism, it would be an error not to mention Will Kymlicka. He presents a strong account of how to practically recognize different cultural groups within a society and conciliate their different positions, preceding this research with the unquestionable requirement of respecting some of the foundational liberal values, such as basic liberties and autonomy.

This perceived visceral attachment to specific liberal concepts set the ground for the criticisms moved to this author. The very substantial step which is carried out by Kymlicka is properly the admittance of a scenario in which there is not only one conception of the good. Its trust towards the individual manifest itself in the extreme freedom to choose whichever conception of the good is made available by societal and cultural inputs. Culture becomes valued for its powerful role of arming the individual with the weapon of contextually based choice, with a considerable orientative capacity.

A factor that consistently weakens, according to many scholars<sup>62</sup>, Will Kymlicka theory of cultural recognition, is the fact that he frames culture primarily as incorporation by a state, that consequently becomes polyethnic, or as an argument that emerges in the case of waves of migration in large Western realities. This limited diversification allows critics of ethnocentrism to frame Kymlicka as an author unable to divorce himself from the western reality, in this regard, what would

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<sup>62</sup> Bikhu Parekh, the cultural particularity of liberal democracies

characterize Kymlicka's thought on the consideration of the imposition of liberal models in non-western territories? how would the dialogue between different cultural realities be set up in this case?

An answer cannot be given since Kymlicka avoids posing the question itself. Nevertheless, what is interesting is his attempt to widen the liberalist spectrum to different visions, admitting to culture a leading role, not in itself but for the service it provides. The state does not configure itself anymore as the sole property of the hegemonic cultural reality but as an entity voted concretely to weigh the same as any cultural group demands. In many different Western states, the degree of conformity required diminishes in favor of higher levels of participation in the public sphere, and ethnic identity is not a matter to be worried about anymore.<sup>63</sup>

These measures drive in the direction of guaranteeing a proper space for diversity via recognition of minority rights, in Kymlicka's opinion. Acknowledgments of liberal failures bring necessarily to solve the situation pursuing this path. The positive outlook that Kymlicka builds around the idea of minority rights is linked with the liberal idea of autonomy. Reasoning in this term means exactly creating a bridge between the liberal untouchable premises and the new wave of treating the "diverse" other. The prosperity of the previously mentioned concept of culture is found to be a way to elevate the liberal concept of autonomy. Allowing the contextual choice in the name of culture paves the way for the attainment of the liberal objective of developing individual autonomy as a primary goal.

However, this attempt at reconciliation is not devoid of critiques. Kymlicka finds the need to better clarify what he considers appropriate in the devolution of rights to minorities. He specifies that the function of these rights is that of a sort of reparation for the injustices generated out of the individual autonomous choices. The idea is to establish justice in those situations of inequality that do not depend on autonomous personal decisions, but perhaps on the environment in which minorities are forced to interact with a majority that has opposing views.<sup>64</sup>

The subordination of any kind of openness toward cultural minority groups to the liberal concept of autonomy constitutes a powerful limit to the idea Kymlicka seeks to propose. As highlighted in the first chapter of this paper, recognizing absolute validity to the concept of autonomy means reducing

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<sup>63</sup> Domenico Melidoro, dealing with diversity, Liberalism and minority rights: liberalizing minorities, pg. 26  
Kymlicka(2007 c:65)

<sup>64</sup> Kymlicka(1989a:190). See also Melidoro, Dealing with diversity, pg.30

the presumed enlargement of liberalism toward the inclusion of many cultural groups advocated by Kymlicka. The fact of apparently admitting to any individual the capacity of developing its conception of the good through personal choices is permitted after indirectly imposing the burden of autonomy upon him/her. The degree of freedom and respect guaranteed to non-majoritarian views in westernized countries is bent on the view that the idea of autonomy cannot be neglected, on the contrary, it has to be secured as the first-order principle. What if some minority groups do not attach so much importance to the concept of autonomy as an essential value to build their conception of the good?

The risk is to transform them in light of liberal key features, such as autonomy, into something they are not.<sup>65</sup> The balance of this transformation necessarily depends on the part of the minority, which must be transformed based on principles that it does not feel its own. In an attempt to increase the importance of marginalized cultural sections of the society, Kymlicka almost end up weakening those who wanted to help.

## 2.2. POLYGLOT AND PROTECTIVE LIBERAL MULTICULTURALISM

Another influential work in the field of a theoretical mix of Liberalism and multiculturalism is the one proposed by Robert Goodin. In distinguishing between two different types of liberal multiculturalism, he attempts to explore a viable solution to recognizing marginalized groups in society.

Protective multiculturalism departs from that similar premises that have informed Kymlicka work on Liberal multiculturalism. If on one hand, it borrows from Mac Pherson the model of protective democracy, which explicates the task of a democratic regime in the insurance of coverage and defense of people from governmental actions, on the other hand, sees in its multiculturalist component the growth of minority rights as a way of sheltering the minority from the overwhelming influence of the majority and, again, from the government itself.<sup>66</sup>

The second liberal-multicultural perspective owes to Goodin the name of polyglot multiculturalism. According to the author, this typology is strictly linked with Mac Pherson's idea of developmental democracy, defining this latter as a regime aiming at individual personal realization and growth. To

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<sup>65</sup> Parekh (2000). See also Melidoro, Dealing with diversity, pg.35

<sup>66</sup> Robert Goodin, liberal multiculturalism: protective and polyglot, pg.2. See also Political Theory, Jun. 2006, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Jun. 2006), pg. 289, Sage publications



accomplish this target, Kymlicka position explaining the importance of an enlargement in the choices available to the individual as connected to cultural belonging turns out to be useful.

As suggested by the name attributed to it, protective multiculturalism is oriented towards the protection of marginalized cultures in a liberal society. However, what can be configured as a limit to this conception is the fact that respect and guarantee of rights are linked to the factual presence of marginalized groups in a liberal society. The idea of ensuring an enriching cultural exchange between the two is not considered at all. If there are minorities, it is somehow appropriate to defend their demands; if there are none, the liberal democratic culture reigns supreme, legitimizing its superiority for what it simply is: the hegemon.

No value is attributed at all to multiculturalism, conveying the message that minority rights are a sort of problematic issue needed to be sorted out if their presence results to be somehow threatening. Diversity is consequently tolerated rather than celebrated as an enriching opportunity.<sup>67</sup>

Polyglot multiculturalism seems to defend a different instance. Diversity is extremely valued and the decision on how much to allocate physically and symbolically to minority cultural groups derives from a mix and match interchange between different cultural assumptions. A crucial prerequisite to developing this kind of liberal multiculturalism is the presence of a societal culture in which the majority is open to lending and the minorities are willing to borrow.<sup>68</sup>

The perplexity with which the polyglot model is viewed derives from a simple observation: if the borrowing cultures can build their house with bricks from the liberal culture, skilfully mixed with their own, the perception of enrichment for the borrowers is not the same. The majority are not convinced of the realization of this scheme because they find it difficult to detect any enriching factors in their own culture. To put it in Kymlickian terms, while there is a clear perception of a cultural widening of the contexts of choice in one counterpart, there is no certainty at all that this will happen on behalf of the other part. The admission test is to see whether a community twinned as polyglot can find something stimulating in the relationship with other new cultures. If the

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<sup>67</sup> Robert Goodin, liberal multiculturalism: protective and polyglot, pg.8. See also Political Theory, Jun. 2006, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Jun. 2006), pg. 295, Sage publications

<sup>68</sup> Robert Goodin, liberal multiculturalism: protective and polyglot, pg.8. See also Political Theory, Jun. 2006, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Jun. 2006), pg. 295, Sage publications

admission test does not close, the circle does not close, and the installed quid pro quo mechanism ends up not being completed.

The liberal stand in the polyglot community finds itself approaching situations in which enrichment is precluded by the extreme illiberal character of another cultural background. As a matter of fact, the exchange loses credibility and productivity altogether, functioning effectively only in one specific direction. Another issue that undermines the polyglot discourse is represented by the refusal of some closed cultures<sup>69</sup> to bind their members forbidding them to detach from specific cultural requirements and directly limiting the appropriation of other cultural assumptions.

Both liberal multiculturalist models turn out to be inefficient in many of their components, making it difficult to perceive them as viable solutions to address the concept of diversity.

### 2.3. GALSTON LIBERAL PLURALISM: A STEP FORWARD TOWARDS THE ACCOMMODATION OF DIVERSITY

Galston offers a very powerful account of how to conciliate liberalism with the requests of different cultural groups. His alternative view is built on a premise of refusal of autonomy liberalism, consequently overcoming the obstacle presented for instance in Kymlicka's work with relation to the acceptance of the concept of autonomy given "culture as a context of choice"<sup>70</sup> argument. Galston is aware of the fact that many cultures do not embrace autonomy as a primary value in their conception of the good, and they cannot be bounded by a liberal system that requires them to do so<sup>71</sup>.

His liberal outlook elevates the concept of diversity as a central concern in promoting a policy of "maximum feasible accommodation"<sup>72</sup>, which allows diversity to flourish by avoiding an aggressive imposition of liberal ideas on other cultural groups' conception of life. The concept of tolerance takes centre stage,<sup>73</sup> given the awareness that if liberals insist on promoting the value of individual autonomy as the highest on their scale of values, they risk alienating many citizens of goodwill by creating opponents rather than allies. This conception leads Galston to embrace reform liberalism

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<sup>69</sup> Robert Goodin, liberal multiculturalism: protective and polyglot, pg.11. See also Political Theory, Jun. 2006, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Jun. 2006), pg. 299, Sage publications

<sup>70</sup> Domenico Melidoro, dealing with diversity, Liberalism and minority rights: liberalizing minorities, pg. 24. See also Kymlicka (1995:82:4)

<sup>71</sup> Domenico Melidoro, dealing with diversity, Liberal pluralism and diversity, pg. 43.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.,44.

<sup>73</sup> George Crowder, Two Concepts of Liberal Pluralism, Political Theory Volume 35 Number 2 April 2007 121-146 © 2007 Sage Publication.

that relies on three fundamental pillars.<sup>74</sup> The first of these is expressive freedom, defined as the ability of *'individuals to guide their lives as they see fit, defending their conceptions of life and meaning'*.<sup>75</sup> This freedom, though not unlimited, but required to respect the minimum demands of a certain civic unity in order to preserve a certain public order, *'provides protection for individuals and groups to live their lives in ways that others would consider illiberal'*.<sup>76</sup>

The second pill Galston refers to is that of political pluralism. The liberal state must renounce its tendencies to assert itself without restraint, evaluating the enrichment that might come from illiberal groups and associations. They take on a relevant functionality, creating moral competition and acting as barriers to the establishment of secular and totalitarian liberalism. Galston fully feels the danger of a tyranny of the majority leading to unlimited political power.<sup>77</sup>

Avoiding this situation means preserving the liberal spirit itself, which wants to avoid at all costs the concentration of power and the assertion above all of a single authority. <sup>78</sup>Granting rights to individuals in illiberal groups and associations is not enough to guarantee their existence.<sup>79</sup> What is necessary is to admit their separateness and legitimacy as illiberal non-state authorities, <sup>80</sup>allowing them to realize their lives according to their own practices and develop their own culture with a few predefined prohibitions. According to Galston, a true commitment to political pluralism passes through the recognition of these intermediary associations and their ability to permeate associative members according to their own ideals. Despite this, in order to prevent the tyranny of any one group, Galston admits the possibility of the right of exit as a guarantee against forcing the individual to become a slave to ideals in which he or she does not fit.<sup>81</sup>

The third point, at the same time the most significant, to inform the conception of reformative liberalism is value pluralism. Inspired by Isaiah Berlin's theories, Galston's value pluralism embraces Berlin's notion of the *"irreducible plurality and incommensurability of human goods, as opposed to*

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<sup>74</sup> Domenico Melidoro, Dealing with diversity, Liberal pluralism and diversity, pg. 45.

<sup>75</sup> George Crowder, Two Concepts of Liberal Pluralism, Political Theory Volume 35 Number 2 April 2007 121-146 © 2007 Sage Publication.

<sup>76</sup> Bernard Williams, "Introduction" to I. Berlin, Concepts and Categories: Philosophical Essays, ed. H. Hardy (London: Hogarth, 1978), xvii.

<sup>77</sup> The limits of liberal pluralism: a comment on William Galston, Author(s): Robin West Source: Nomos, Vol. 49, Moral Universalism and Pluralism (2009), pp. 149-166

<sup>78</sup> Ibid

<sup>79</sup> Ibid

<sup>80</sup> Ibid

<sup>81</sup> Galston(2005:41). See also Domenico Melidoro, dealing with diversity, pg.47

*the idea of plural monism*".<sup>82</sup> According to moral monism, in fact, every moral instance can be included in a single system capable of solving every ethical problem.

In contrast, Galston's value pluralism is built on the incommensurability and heterogeneity of every moral value. The importance Galston attaches to this diversity does not allow any conception of the good to overwhelm the others and establish itself as the common denominator guaranteeing solutions to every ethical contradiction that emerges. The universality of a few basic human goods, such as freedom, equality, and justice, finds its usefulness in situations of conflict, generally taking precedence, since "*Some goods form part of any choice worthy conception of human life*"<sup>83</sup> and assume a high value in themselves in the need for a minimum "*common moral horizon*".<sup>84</sup> This does not, in Galston's view, equate to basic superiority, nor to untouchability in the olympus of morality.

Value pluralism does not fear confrontation, but rather enhances the constructiveness arising from moral dilemmas that emerge in society.<sup>85</sup> Giving value to every conception by admitting incommensurability allows everyone to be a protagonist in the theatre of moral confrontation. Few conceptions of the good are incompatible with the minimum threshold of human decency, the others must be assigned equal value and importance.

Harmonization under the dictates of a single comprehensive conception of life is not possible in Galston's moral universe. The refusal to find an ultimate right answer is linked to the desire to embrace a world that in fact sees, in reality, the measurement of '*claims equally absolute and ends equally ultimate*'.<sup>86</sup>

### 2.3.1. Critiques moved to galston perspective

Some of the criticisms leveled at William Galston's theory are built on his infinite to consider autonomy as a primary good. Starting with Mill, but including autonomous liberals in a broader circle, considering autonomy as a primary value does not necessarily mean imposing autonomy as a way of life on translational groups that do not celebrate this value<sup>87</sup>. Liberalism in a broad sense

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<sup>82</sup> William Galston, *Liberal Pluralism: The Implications of Value Pluralism for Political Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); idem, *The Practice of Liberal Pluralism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>83</sup> Ibid

<sup>84</sup> Golam Azam, *Justification of Galston's liberal pluralism*, DOI 10.1186/s40064-016-2993-8, Springer Plus(2016).

<sup>85</sup> George Crowder, *Two Concepts of Liberal Pluralism*, *Political Theory* Volume 35 Number 2 April 2007 121-146 © 2007 Sage Publication

<sup>86</sup> Golam Azam, *Justification of Galston's liberal pluralism*, DOI 10.1186/s40064-016-2993-8, Springer Plus(2016).

<sup>87</sup> Domenico Melidoro, *dealing with diversity*, *Liberal pluralism and diversity*, pg. 60. See also Kymlicka(1995:64)

aims to provide that situation through which every human being can flourish following his or her conception of the good, whether inspired by a character of autonomy or not. As Crowder points out, Galston rejects this scheme entirely but seems to approach it when he admits a right off exit to members of cultural groups that follow specific practices<sup>88</sup>. His emphasis on not turning a conception of the good into prison for individuals indirectly allows room for the valorization of personal autonomy. Galston recognizes the ability to be able to critically evaluate and seems to embrace the autonomy of judgment to be allowed to withdraw from the group.

Another critical issue that emerges in the evaluation of the idea proposed by Galston concerns the sphere of practicality in a certain sense. Galston remains vague in promoting diversity as a core value. In concrete terms, his ideas of building liberalism based on diversity and promoting policies of maximum feasible accommodation find no room in state authority to emerge with any practical measures<sup>89</sup>. Galston's resolution appears more ideal than concrete. Many critics of his theory amputate Galston for constructing liberalism that revolves around the diversity paradigm, yet the framework that liberalism must construct is to offer solutions, to pursue ends to ensure a peaceful existence. Diversity cannot in this sense become the basis on which to construct everything else, but, as Kukathas specified, "the problem to which a solution is offered"<sup>90</sup>.

The conflict that can legitimately arise in pluralist societies between groups with different conceptions of the good is not fully resolved in the theory constructed by Galston.

Moreover, still addressing the sphere of concreteness, minority groups may not see their interests fully considered except by increasing their participation and political weight<sup>91</sup>. Some have criticized Galston for not recognizing a certain decision-making power for cultural minorities, providing no state guarantees that their treatment is fair and respectful of their particular demands. Galston does not take a stand, ensuring intentions of respect and promotion of diversity he remains stuck in a sphere of idealization lacking in some specific aspects of pragmatism.

#### 2.4. MACEDO LIBERALISM: POLITICIZATION VS COMPREHENSIVENESS

In Macedo's view, the fundamental prerequisite to better accommodate diversity claims is by politicizing liberalism. Ascertaining the weakness demonstrated by comprehensive liberal theories,

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<sup>88</sup> George Crowder, Two Concepts of Liberal Pluralism, Political Theory Volume 35 Number 2 April 2007 121-146 © 2007 Sage Publication, pg 127.

<sup>89</sup> Domenico Melidoro, dealing with diversity, Liberal pluralism and diversity, pg. 60

<sup>90</sup> Kukathas (2009:29)

<sup>91</sup> Golam Azam, Justification of Galston's liberal pluralism, DOI 10.1186/s40064-016-2993-8, Springer Plus(2016).

Macedo tries to go further in building a conception of liberalism that does not rely on diversity as a per se value but specifically chooses those accounts of diversity that permits fostering and encouraging liberal claims.

The politicization of liberalism allows people to agree on a single direction on public and common issues, which does not necessarily imply abandoning one's own particular conceptions, but rather setting them aside in order to embrace a shared idea on how to deal with the instances that arise in a diverse society<sup>92</sup>. Macedo does not advocate indifference to each individual's community or religious affiliations; everyone can pour his or her particular vision into the political domain, keeping in mind that any proposal must be bent to the condition that all reasonable people must be able to share the individual's particular interpretation. Common public goals thus override personal inclinations and convictions in the belief that an agreement can be reached in public matters on what characterizes common freedoms for all or, for example, a basic social safety net.<sup>93</sup>

In his book *Diversity and Distrust*, Macedo is clear in defining the need for liberal institutions, stating that '*Liberal democratic public institutions count on shaping wider social norms and expectations so that people are gently encouraged to behave in ways that are broadly supportive of our shared civic project*'.<sup>94</sup> The insistence is that if we cannot agree with all points of liberalism, then it should guide us not to threaten it in any way. To achieve this, it is necessary to mold citizens who are tolerant. With the goal of common political life, they sacrifice their comprehensive visions. But how can this be achieved if citizens do not have sufficient perception of the diversity of others?<sup>95</sup> How do they train themselves to this tolerance if they know little about the difference of others? Here Macedo identifies the public school system as the basic element that can lead to the realization of his liberal project.

In this way, the enemies of Macedo's liberalism are configured in those who do not bend to the necessity of sacrificing their particular conceptions in public matters and those who prevent institutions such as schools from contributing to the shaping of tolerant citizens.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Domenico Melidoro, *dealing with diversity*, Political liberalism and diversity, pg.71

<sup>93</sup> *ibid*

<sup>94</sup> *Diversity and Distrust: Civic Education in a Multicultural Democracy* Stephen Macedo. Harvard University Press (2000). Reviewed by Cristopher Wolfe.

<sup>95</sup> *ibid*

<sup>96</sup> *ibid*

The tolerance that Macedo promotes does not aim at the recognition of the valuability and promotion of every idea of individuals, nor is it configured as the recognition of a moral right of every human being to believe what he or she wants. It is more a belief that people have the legal and political right to believe what they want.<sup>97</sup> However, this specification creates problems in the justification of a necessary exposure to diversity towards those who hold different and distant conceptions. Indeed, it seems unrealistic that this exposure would benefit the tolerance that Macedo advocates.

#### 2.4.1. Transformative liberalism and civic diversity

In the preface of the book "Diversity and Distrust", Macedo makes immediately reference to the fact that his aim is to "*is, from beginning to end, about liberalism's transformative ambitions*" (p. xi). Liberals have too often uncritically valued diversity and difference<sup>98</sup>, "*but the core claim of this book is that diversity needs to be kept in its place,*" limited by a "*liberal educative project that shapes diversity for civic purposes*"<sup>99</sup> (p. 3).

Developing the liberalism proposed by Macedo entails great personal sacrifices. For a liberal society to be alive and active, there is a need for a 'shared public morality.'<sup>100</sup> Intervening in the foundations of the formation of society through education, as specified above, allows for the development of characteristics in individuals that are not natural. The aim is to bring about a transformation in the commitment of individuals so that they are conscious of supporting the liberal project with all their strength. Spontaneity is not included in this narrative; the work is one of continuous construction and direction. Personal identities are not valued per se but based on their ability to change in order to embrace the project of a democratic and liberal society.

The natural course of things in a democratic and liberal society will see the beliefs opposed to liberalism gradually lose importance.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid. See specifically Liberalism and the need for tolerance.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid

<sup>99</sup> Macedo(2003a:3)

<sup>100</sup> Macedo(2003a:146)

<sup>101</sup> Transformative Constitutionalism and the Case of Religion: Defending the Moderate Hegemony of Liberalism  
Author(s): Stephen Macedo Source: Political Theory, Feb. 1998, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Feb. 1998), pp. 56-80 Published by:  
Sage Publications, Inc

In this way, one might think that diversity does not assume value in Macedo's plans. Later, Macedo makes it clear that his intention is not to destroy diversity but to promote forms of diversity that are healthy, and respectful of basic principles of justice and liberal civic virtues<sup>102</sup>.

The appeal provided by this theory, although the position defended by Macedo is undoubtedly strong, lies in the prospect of making citizens equal participants in a common moral order. Macedo presses on the idea of a 'broad civic life'<sup>103</sup>, overcoming conceptions that see political liberalism anchored to the guarantee of constitutional principles.

Macedo also departs from comprehensive visions based on conceptions of the good. Inevitably, the project he wants to promote appears unfeasible if informed by primary goods on which to build everything else, such as the liberal pillars of autonomy and individuality<sup>104</sup>.

Many have wondered whether the transformative character through which Macedo wants to delineate his liberalism does not cultivate oppression in itself. While Macedo goes so far as to achieve almost totalizing assimilation, he often makes it clear that non-oppression must be the engine of this process and that the values for which this transformative choice is made must be pure and defensible. The transformism he proposes is political and is embraced with a view to 'securing a system of political freedoms.'<sup>105</sup>

In Macedo's view, diversity does not automatically harmonize and harmonize it does not mean dissolving particularities but bending them when it serves a common political project.

#### 2.4.2. An account of macedo's neutrality

Macedo's idea of building transformative liberalism reveals at first glance the lack of neutrality in the assessment of everyone's personal conceptions. If there were no reference to neutrality in Macedo's theory, this would create ample room for criticism for liberals who defend this conception as one of the liberal pillars.

The transformation process invoked by Macedo would certainly penalize some conceptions of the good at the expense of others, at least in the public sphere.

These possible considerations are not of great interest to Macedo since his line of thought does not embrace this concept of neutrality. He perceives as inevitable the fact that the effect of state

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid

<sup>103</sup> Macedo(2000a:169)

<sup>104</sup> Macedo(2000a:175)

<sup>105</sup> Macedo(2000a:137).



measures is different for people with different conceptions of the good and does not blame himself. Macedo rejects the view identifying liberalism “with an insistence that public policies be neutral with respect to conceptions of the good life. Liberalism properly understood is anything but neutral with respect to basic moral and religious issues, and it does not stand for an ultimate commitment to fairness or impartiality” (p. 8)<sup>106</sup>

The only form of neutrality to which Macedo gives merit in his theory is that of justificatory neutrality.<sup>107</sup> This limited conception of neutrality implies 'liberal political values should not depend upon particular religious comprehensive philosophical worldviews'.<sup>108</sup>

During an interview, Macedo clarifies that *'It is perfectly OK to use public policy to advance reasonable judgments about the social good even when those judgments are controversial, and some people reject them. And we do this all the time. So, it is quite radical to say that government should remain neutral on questions of the good life: it never has, and it should not'*.<sup>109</sup>

#### 2.4.3. Limits of Macedo's transformative liberalism

The choice of politicizing liberalism as a way to accommodate diversity put Macedo a step closer to the recognition of different cultural groups in a liberal democracy. Escaping from the pretense of comprehensive accounts and concentrating on the political realm, the transformative liberalism of Macedo can enlarge the spectrum of the people who would feel comfortable not following a comprehensive liberal society.<sup>110</sup>

Macedo is aware of the fact that not all groups can find full recognition of their demands and emphasizes that there is nothing wrong with discriminating between certain groups as long as objective parameters are maintained that can be shared by the majority. The problem emerges when deciding which cultural groups are worthy, Macedo grants a strong decision-making power to the majority, to the liberal 'we'.<sup>111</sup> Identifying concretely which 'we' is to be given the last degree of judgment in liberal societies highly diversified in their societal stratification is problematic. As already announced in this thesis work, liberalism follows a common thread in all its facets but

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<sup>106</sup> *ibid*

<sup>107</sup> Domenico Melidoro, *dealing with diversity, Political liberalism and diversity*, pg77.

<sup>108</sup> Macedo(2010:24);author's translation

<sup>109</sup> An interview with Stephen Macedo Mitja Sardoc` Educational Research Institute, Ljubljana, Slovenia.

<sup>110</sup> Domenico Melidoro *dealing with diversity, Political liberalism and diversity*, pg.84

<sup>111</sup> *ibid*

presents particular characteristics as the society and nation of reference vary. Even different people in the same society, though permeated by the same liberal features, might be divided on the parameters of judgment to be adopted, on what terms of inclusion to establish, and on what is the best path to accommodate diversity. In general terms, giving a specific majority such a wide range of action in delimiting which instances to welcome and which not, and how far the minority should go in the transformative process, seems to direct Macedo's liberalism towards a much more than 'moderate hegemony'.<sup>112</sup>

Another aspect worth pointing out to define the weaknesses of Macedo's work concerns the transformation process itself. It seems unrealistic to imagine that the transformation in societies as interconnected as the present one only touches minorities without affecting the majority.<sup>113</sup> As pointed out by Melidoro,<sup>114</sup> Macedo correctly identifies the process through which minorities have to make a change to accommodate diversity but is unpersuasive in pointing out the effects of the same process on the majority.<sup>115</sup> The receiving society cannot exempt itself from the transformation that it itself requires. As Parekh points out, '*we cannot integrate them as long as we remain we*'.<sup>116</sup>

The accommodation of diversity cannot, therefore, be grasped in its fullness in the theory proposed by Macedo, since the richness of cultural exchange is not captured by a majority that does not transform itself, leaving the process unfinished.

Moreover, Macedo demands too much and in an impartial manner, leading to the mutation of some groups into what they are not, under the dictates of a majority that lays down rules and principles.<sup>117</sup>

## 2.5. KUKATHAS RESHAPE OF LIBERALISM

The vision offered by Kukathas assumes a strong character of originality, breaking away from previous liberals and their attempts to accommodate diversity in a coherent theory. Kukathas begins with a redefinition of liberalism, making it clear from the outset that it is centered more on '*identifying principles by which different moral standards might be allowed to coexist*' than on '*establishing values and moral standards to which each community must necessarily conform*'.<sup>118</sup> Kukathas advocates a free society, where no doctrine assumes a privileged position or moral

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<sup>112</sup> See Melidoro, dealing with diversity, pg85. See also the title of Macedo(1998)

<sup>113</sup> *ibid*

<sup>114</sup> See Domenico Melidoro dealing with diversity, Political liberalism and diversity, pg.86.

<sup>115</sup> *ibid*

<sup>116</sup> Parekh (2006:204).

<sup>117</sup> Domenico Melidoro dealing with diversity, Political liberalism and diversity, pg.89.

<sup>118</sup> The Liberal Archipelago: A Theory of Diversity and Freedom Chandran Kukathas, Print publication date: 2003

superiority. Society is constituted by a collection of communities<sup>119</sup> and associations that do not answer to a single authority but many, and that grant individuals full freedom in determining with whom they wish to associate. He admits the supremacy of politics over morality and distances himself from discourses that see liberalism as anchored in the desire to build social unity. Establishing it is of no interest to Kukathas.

To realize his liberal project, Kukathas underlies how necessary it is for him to emphasize the value of tolerance. For him, a society is only defined as liberal if it is tolerant<sup>120</sup>. Rather than constructing a complicated explanation of the value of tolerance and how it should be practiced, Kukathas argues that he has chosen it as an undemanding virtue<sup>121</sup>. It requires neither compassion nor the prospect of necessary constructive dialogue, at most only tolerance or indifference, a resigned acceptance<sup>122</sup> that does not require understanding the other.

Individuals who suffer from non-tolerance towards them as well as those who refuse to be tolerant must have the possibility of finding other associations that welcome them. The right to leave an association or community scheme must not be prejudiced or precluded in any way by society understood on the highest spectrum.

The liberalism that Kukathas promotes must be able to accommodate multiple authorities<sup>123</sup>, the legitimacy of which depends on the acquiescence of the subjects<sup>124</sup>. Authority is framed by Kukathas as a fundamental element in the resolution of conflicts, not as the bearer of absolute truths. However, if the decisions taken by authorities do not satisfy individuals, it is accepted that they never act against conscience and do not necessarily accept something if it is considered wrong. The concept of conscience underlies the liberal idea of tolerance for Kukathas<sup>125</sup>. If individuals see fit, they can defer to the judgment of another authority or even create their own. A society is liberal insofar as it can tolerate the multiplication of authorities.<sup>126</sup> In this way, Kukathas thinks of allowing different moral standards to coexist instead of forcing people to submit to what is defined as liberal

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<sup>119</sup> *ibid*

<sup>120</sup> *ibid*

<sup>121</sup> *ibid*

<sup>122</sup> *ibid*

<sup>123</sup> *ibid*

<sup>124</sup> *ibid*

<sup>125</sup> *ibid*

<sup>126</sup> *ibid*

standards. Solving the problems provided by diversity does not mean assimilating all to one, but rather finding a way through which all can coexist.

#### 2.5.1. Redefining the political community

In his journey to redefine the liberal characters that informed previous conceptions of liberalism, Kukathas provides a detailed explanation of how to understand a political community within the liberal archipelago he hopes to define.

Departing from the conception of a society built based on a single shared idea of justice allows room for diversity to be reconciled, however superficially, with a datum of social unity that the very idea of community conveys.<sup>127</sup> Kukathas does not value diversity per se and does not aim for its total valorization, but clarifies how the very idea of community, including even a political community, must be conceived as partial. Every form of association and community is partial, and it is the task of politics to find a way for different communities to coexist.<sup>128</sup>

Attaching exaggerated importance to a specific political community breaks the relationship of partiality that exists between all communities and grants direct access to the subordination of other communities by the one to which extreme significance is attributed. This situation could generate oppression and marginalization to the point of isolating and nullifying other communities. It is configured as to *'experience how the dominant meanings of a society render the particular perspective of one's own group visible at the same time as they stereotype one's group and mark it out as the Other'*.<sup>129</sup> Cultural imperialism involves the *'universalization of a dominant group's experience and culture, and its establishment as the norm'*.<sup>130</sup>

In this way, the group that is able to subjugate others perceives its instances as universal and required to be imposed and to permeate the lives of all others. When a confrontation with other associations becomes apparent, the more significant the difference in partiality in relation to any other form of association, the more the dominant group will be able to exert control and establish its norms as the only legitimate ones.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> On the tension between diversity and identity see 'Multiculturalism and the Idea of an Australian Identity', in Kukathas (1993a: 145–57).

<sup>128</sup> The Liberal Archipelago: A Theory of Diversity and Freedom Chandran Kukathas, Print publication date: 2003

<sup>129</sup> Young (2002: 58–9).

<sup>130</sup> Young (2002: 59).

<sup>131</sup> The Liberal Archipelago: A Theory of Diversity and Freedom Chandran Kukathas, Print publication date: 2003

Another reason why a revision of the conception of the political community and the degree of authority conferred upon it is necessary is that it runs the risk of weakening the other partial communities to such an extent that individuals are left without the possibility of binding themselves and belonging to something.<sup>132</sup> In this way, by suppressing other associations, Kukathas speaks of the atomization of society.<sup>133</sup> If the dominant political community is identified with the nation itself, this mechanism of oppression leads directly to the concentration of power in a strong state, which is incapable of accommodating the instances of local communities. Moreover, for Kukathas, all this would undermine individual freedoms.<sup>134</sup> On the one hand, minorities would be easily bypassed by the majority with the help of the state. On the other hand, there would be a risk that certain groups would use the state to bring about a transformation of society according to their own standards.

To escape these situations, one must recognize the specific political community like all others, a partial association, notwithstanding its particularistic character of being able to take advantage of the state to profoundly influence other forms of association. In order to support his thesis, it is necessary to move away from the vision of the deep commitment that every member of a community must show as a prerequisite for being part of that community.<sup>135</sup> If the goal is coexistence requiring this strong basis of social unity is neither necessary nor desirable, for Kukathas *'A political community need be no more than an association of people who recognize the terms of coexistence'*.<sup>136</sup>

#### 2.5.2. The function of the state and the issue of recognition

From the reconstruction carried out by Kukathas in relation to the role that a political community must play in the archipelago of different associations and authorities, the purpose that the state must pursue is not delineated in the promotion of equality in the liberal sense nor in playing the role of 'architect of culture' and 'guardian of society'.<sup>137</sup>

What the state needs, as understood by Kukathas, is to be an arbiter in the disputes that emerge in society between different groups and associations in order to preserve the order that allows for the coexistence of different social realities.<sup>138</sup> It does not have to intervene in establishing the rules of

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid

<sup>133</sup> Ibid

<sup>134</sup> Ibid

<sup>135</sup> Ibid

<sup>136</sup> Ibid

<sup>137</sup> The Liberal Archipelago: A Theory of Diversity and Freedom Chandran Kukathas, Print publication date: 2003.Pg 213.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid

the game nor in determining the outcome by directing it in a certain way.<sup>139</sup> It must only keep the game alive and stable by resolving conflict situations. Its importance lies in deciding which standard or principle must prevail among the many existing ones so that the parties involved in the dispute can appreciate the decision. Moreover, this role must not be played in an attempt to establish what is right and thus create a standard to which all must adhere, but only from the standpoint of maintaining the condition of coexistence.

The state must not inculcate justice, and morality or promote a specific way of life. It must aspire to neutrality, but never empty itself of the burden of judgment.<sup>140</sup> In fact, it must feel within itself the task of recognizing dangerous situations and dealing with them by employing a mechanism aimed at stability.

The risk of which Kukathas is aware concerns the orientation of the state towards becoming a creator of ethical standards.<sup>141</sup> Simply asserting the neutrality of the state as other liberals had previously proposed does not give enough guarantees. It is, therefore, crucial to control the state and its possible attempts to modify society at will and prevent state manipulation. Its capacities must therefore be limited, and Kukathas shows his skepticism in giving the state a primary role in the cultural construction of a society.

The implications of this definition of the state inevitably touch upon the sphere of political recognition. If the cultural construction of society is seen as inadequate in the same way, multiculturalist demands must be addressed with a view to ensuring *'practical accommodation when feasible'*<sup>142</sup> rather than turning the demands of cultural minorities into cardinal principles.

*'Difference should not be suppressed, but neither should it be elevated'*. In this regard, Kukathas is straightforward in stating that individuals must be left free to live according to their own cultural conceptions and habits. Their freedom only ceases when in the pursuit of a specific conception *'the political order that ensures peaceful coexistence'* is threatened.

In promoting his liberal vision, Kukathas distances himself from authors who see the interests of individuals and the groups they affiliate with as important. Kukathas's liberalism works to the extent that one shows indifference to which group the individual chooses and what interests he or she

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid

<sup>140</sup> Kukathas(2003:214)

<sup>141</sup> Ibid

<sup>142</sup> Kukathas(2003:216)

pursues. Furthermore, indifference must also characterize the identity that the individual wants to construct for himself.<sup>143</sup> The aim is not to make humanity flourish nor to promote conceptions to the detriment of others. The only concern ought to be with upholding the framework of law within which individuals and groups can function peacefully.

This also means not having to save minorities who feel excluded from society. However, Kukathas appears to be aware that it is difficult to resist the demands of certain groups for recognition and that one can sometimes be tempted by impartiality by promoting one specific interest at the expense of others. Despite this, supporting the archipelago means perceiving these temptations as 'unnecessary'.

The metaphor of the archipelago on which Kukathas bases his theoretical construction can be intuitively even more powerful at this point in the discussion. Each island of the large archipelago lives according to its own dictates, with different inhabitants, sometimes happy with their situation, sometimes not, sometimes willing to open up to unknown opportunities, and sometimes faithful to their own conceptions. Some islands are advantaged, either by their proximity to others or more simply by the conception they hold that allows them to emerge. Apart from a control mechanism for the preservation of peaceful order, the archipelago is not ruled by anyone. Everyone can freely choose to leave their own island and head to another at will.

Everyone can develop themselves and coexist with the rest. The enigma of how to deal with diversity is apparently revealed.

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid

### 3. AMISH EDUCATION IN A LIBERAL WORLD: A POSSIBILITY FOR A CONCRETE ANALYSIS

The concluding chapter of this thesis project aims to examine several practical cases in order to justify the theoretical positions taken by the scholars whose work the paper dealt with. In this way, it will be possible to discern clear differences in the theoretical construction of the various scholars. If for some cases it will be evident how certain positions are better suited to deal with a specific topic, for others the limitations and incompleteness that emerge on the surface when the idea of the individual author is interfaced with concrete examples will be highlighted. Starting from the assumption that there is no perfect equation in solving the problem that emerges when liberalism has to come to terms with accommodating diversity and respecting minority groups, the path of this chapter will not be oriented toward the search for the perfect solution but will attempt to show how some of the scholars treated have necessarily brought innovations at the expense of others, framing diversity in a broader perspective. A pivotal theme will be that of education. Very often, liberal states find it difficult to reconcile their national positions on education with different cultural demands. Finding a way to ensure that there is respect for both cultural perspectives is of paramount importance. The contribution made by many scholars in this field helps a better understanding of the educational landscape. Dealing with concrete situations will make the path addressed in this thesis work more visible regarding the peaceful relationship between different traditions. While sacrificing one's own cultural identity to be compelled to respect another cultural authority seems unfair, generating cohesion between different instances means being willing to limit one's claims. There is no ultimate judge who can set a cultural standard to which everyone must assert themselves. The process of limitation required to accommodate the needs of different social groups must necessarily be carried out by both parties to the dispute in the specific case. The claim is not to direct one way of reasoning, but rather to see that among the many possible ways, there is in one way or another a preference for one at the expense of others because it results to be more inclusive.

#### 3.1. THE AMISH COMMUNITY: A GROUND FOR REFLECTION

The Amish community and its integration into American society have always constituted a case of great interest in the political and philosophical landscape, as many scholars have tried to find a solution to reconcile the demands of the Amish community and that of a liberal state like America. Leveraging their own theories, each scholar bent the situation in a certain way in their favor, framing



the problem from their own perspective and providing insights that would allow the implications of their specific theories to be perceived in a concrete manner. A booster was certainly provided by the famous case dealt with by the American Supreme Court, in *Wisconsin v Yoder* (1972).<sup>144</sup> The resonance of this case has indeed led to careful reflections by those academics interested in finding a balance between liberalism and accommodation of diversity coming from social groups with different cultures. This section will therefore focus on this topic by reviewing the positions taken by various scholars whose theories have been elucidated in this paper, reflecting on possible criticalities and strengths, and bringing to light a concrete application of the competing theories in the previous chapter.

### 3.2. A REASONABLE MULTICULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

In his famous *Just and Reasonable Multiculturalism*<sup>145</sup>, Raphael Almagro Cohen reflects on the education of Amish children, proposing a vision that succeeds in making multiculturalism reasonable and thus capable of asserting itself decisively in a liberal society.

Cohen analyses in detail the circumstances that led to the famous US Supreme Court case *Wisconsin v. Yoder*.<sup>146</sup> In 1970, the Amish community wanted to withdraw their children from the state education system before the age of sixteen, arguing that continuing education after the eighth grade<sup>147</sup> would pose a threat to their respect for Amish beliefs and cultural practices. Moreover, continuing with the American education system would alienate them from their community at a crucial time in their lives.

The Amish culture already placed limitations on the American education system, as they did not take science courses, which were contrary to their conception of goodness and the Bible<sup>148</sup>, and did not embrace the innovations of technological progress.

For them, withdrawing children at the age of sixteen meant guiding them towards a life guided by work, community welfare, and separation from society.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> *Wisconsin v. Yoder* 406 US 205, 92 S.Ct 1526 (1972)

<sup>145</sup> See Raphael Almagro Cohen, *Just, Reasonable Multiculturalism: Liberalism, Culture and Coercion* Cambridge University Press Publication date: July 2021

<sup>146</sup> *Wisconsin v. Yoder* 406 US 205, 92 S.Ct 1526 (1972)

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>148</sup> Thomas J. Meyers, 'The Old Order Amish: To Remain in the Faith or to Leave', *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 68 (1994): 378–395; Karen Johnson-Weiner, *Train Up a Child: Old Order Amish and Mennonite Schools* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

<sup>149</sup> Raphael Almagro Cohen, *Just, Reasonable Multiculturalism: Liberalism, Culture and Coercion* Cambridge University Press Publication date: July 2021

The narrow-mindedness of the Amish community did not allow the children to interact with different cultures, devoted themselves to diversity and pluralism. In Wisconsin in 1972, they questioned whether this provided sufficient grounds for state intervention<sup>150</sup>. Denying standard American education was seen as a prohibition of opportunity for the children, who were unable to build their own destinies.

The defendants wanted to pull their Amish children out of school at the age of 15 when a law provided for compulsory schooling until 16 in Wisconsin. The Supreme Court upheld the defendants' position outright, relying on the free exercise of religion<sup>151</sup>.

From a purely liberal point of view, Cohen argues that this decision in no way encourages the development of personal autonomy, nor does it orient the children towards freedom<sup>152</sup>. While it is in fact true that a parental and community education provides a stable, secure environment oriented towards respect for community values, compulsory education in liberal states is justified as guaranteeing greater freedom and conscience at the expense of erasure of it. State intervention in this sense enriches the individual in the long run, not tightening its gates strictly to the community perspective.<sup>153</sup>

In addition, Cohen considers the perspective that Amish education does not allow its members to leave the group, isolate themselves and chart their own course. He criticizes the court's decision from the perspective of favoring those guys who wish to pursue a typically Amish lifestyle but being indifferent to those who might wish to break out of the community scheme.<sup>154</sup>

Cohen is convinced that the court's decision was influenced by a fear of interfering with the religious freedoms of the Amish. This would have had serious consequences for the image of a liberal state like America. The importance of the '*concededly sincere Amish religious practice to the survival of that sect*<sup>155</sup>' was considered paramount to ensuring an extra year of compulsory education.

The task of a liberal court is instead, according to Cohen, to analyze and contrast paternalism with the autonomy of the individual. In this case, the court legitimately grasped the conflict between

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<sup>150</sup> Wisconsin v. Yoder 406 US 205, 92 S.Ct 1526 (1972).

<sup>151</sup> Ibid

<sup>152</sup> Raphael Almagro Cohen, Just, Reasonable Multiculturalism: Liberalism, Culture and Coercion Cambridge University Press Publication date: July 2021

<sup>153</sup> Ibid

<sup>154</sup> Ibid

<sup>155</sup> Wisconsin v. Yoder, at 231.

state and parental paternalism but ignored the individual and his possible desire to free himself from restrictive community circumstances.<sup>156</sup>

The test adopted by the court has no basis in Cohen's view. While it is true that liberal constitutional principles affect a diverse community, not in a compulsory manner, the Amish community's appeal to the constitutionally guaranteed right to liberty directly implies an interpretation of it as a defense of the individual's ability to form and revise their religious beliefs.<sup>157</sup>

The protectiveness offered by the Amish community to their members goes so far as to treat crimes with the search for a spiritual solution that looks inward.<sup>158</sup> Detachment from mainstream society in no way facilitates connection with the world around them, not guaranteeing the possibility of solutions that analyze the psychology of the individual offender or that simply condemn him or her according to an established and competent code of justice.

According to Cohen, the Amish community provides a very limited opportunity for its adolescents to revise their conception of the good. Before being baptized, Amish children are entitled to a period of release from community life that can last from a few months to a few years, called Rumspringa<sup>159</sup>. Not being baptized according to Amish canons, the children can look around, learn about the world, wear western clothes, have access to technology, drive and have sexual experiences.<sup>160</sup> They can do this independently or by staying with their families. After this period, the prospect of interaction with the world around them diminishes considerably when the child decides to be baptized.<sup>161</sup> Leaving the choice up to the individual, it is easy to see how there is a possibility of exercising personal autonomy and opting for a different lifestyle. Cohen is pessimistic in this regard since children experience such a closed and limited world from an early age that taking such a 'transgressive' step is not in their grasp.

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<sup>156</sup> Raphael Almagro Cohen, *Just, Reasonable Multiculturalism: Liberalism, Culture and Coercion* Cambridge University Press Publication date: July 2021

<sup>157</sup> For further discussion of the court's (divided) reasoning on this case, see Richard Arneson and Ian Shapiro, 'Democratic Autonomy and Religious Freedom: A Critique of *Wisconsin v. Yoder*', in Ian Shapiro and Russell Hardin (eds), *Political Order: Nomos 38* (New York: New York University Press, 1996): 365–411, and Shelley Burt's reply, 'In Defense of *Yoder: Parental Authority and the Public Schools*', in I. Shapiro and R. Hardin (eds), *Political Order*, 412–437.

<sup>158</sup> Raphael Almagro Cohen, *Just, Reasonable Multiculturalism: Liberalism, Culture and Coercion* Cambridge University Press Publication date: July 2021

<sup>159</sup> Not all Amish communities allow Rumspringa. See Emma Gingerich, *Runaway Amish Girl: The Great Escape* (Progressive Rising Phoenix Press, 2014).

<sup>160</sup> Raphael Almagro Cohen, *Just, Reasonable Multiculturalism: Liberalism, Culture and Coercion* Cambridge University Press Publication date: July 2021

<sup>161</sup> 1 Shachtman, *Rumspringa; Devil's Background*, a Documentary about Amish Teenage Culture (2002).

Having internalized the practices of the community order so deeply, after Rumspringa, the youngsters mostly become aware of the uncertainty of a life outside the community. Being oriented to only one way of life, leaving the group would presumably mean paying too high a cost away from what they have hitherto known as legitimate<sup>162</sup>. This security and willingness to leave concerns few, since there is only the Amish way, and nothing else.<sup>163</sup>

Failing to perceive this situation as offering reasonable and balanced multiculturalism, Cohen presents the need to balance interests in this case. In concrete terms, this translates into a court judgment that should have looked at the future development of the adolescent.<sup>164</sup> The term individuality never emerges during the judgment, and this is unexpected since it is issued by a liberal court that also rarely speaks of autonomy.<sup>165</sup>

As already mentioned, the Amish consciously restrict the open future of their teenagers, depriving them of choice in many cases and narrowing avenues to the single Amish avenue. If they had been able to freely study the typical American course of study, they might have been attracted to being part of the wider society.

Cohen sides with Parekh, a staunch multi-culturalist, to justify his position. Parekh himself stated in fact how an education that is most appropriate in a plural world is one that allows the child to engage in discussion with others informed by different conceptions of the good. To be guided in the light of a single truth is to close one's mind and not open it to the benefits of multicultural education.<sup>166</sup>

Parekh states that one should allow knowledge of various cultures and clash over different interpretations to live in a diverse society. The Amish do the opposite of this, hence, according to Cohen, state intervention would be more than legitimate and reasonable. Opening the door to constructive multiculturalism means opening opportunities and not restricting them, but also giving imagination, and critical thinking skills.

If the cultural environment does not guarantee this, it is the task of the liberal state to help the liberal third parties, in which case it is easy to see how Cohen's thinking can be reconciled with

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<sup>162</sup> Raphael Almagro Cohen, *Just, Reasonable Multiculturalism: Liberalism, Culture and Coercion* Cambridge University Press Publication date: July 2021

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>165</sup> *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, at 221.

<sup>166</sup> Bhikhu Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2000): 229–230.

Kymlicka's. The American state should open up strong channels of communication with the Amish culture, and show itself predisposed to a constructive dialogue that is stimulating for both sides. In this way, compromises will be generated on the basis of mutual respect and opposing interests will be balanced.<sup>167</sup>

### 3.3. GALSTON VIEW CONCERNING THE AMISH COMMUNITIES

The theory proposed by Galston in favor of the accommodation of diversity is based, as mentioned above, on three fundamental pillars. Analyzing the specific case concerning the Amish community and their relationship with mainstream society allows us to get a concrete glimpse of what Galston intended in his theoretical assumptions. Galston's discourse differs from that presented by Cohen in that the space he attributes to diversity as a value to be promoted directs him towards absolute respect for the demands presented by the Amish. Galston has no problem in stating that "Yoder was correctly decided".<sup>168</sup> In this way, he distances himself from all those liberal discourses that, by basing themselves on the essentiality of autonomy, close the way to educational paths that do not allow children to let their autonomous spirit flourish.

In respect of the expressive freedom he promotes, Galston asserts that it is respected if it is the parents who bring up their children *'in a manner consistent with their deepest commitments'*.<sup>169</sup> He seems almost to come close to a fiduciary educational model, elaborated by Arneson and Shapiro,<sup>170</sup> which sees in the children's weakness and uncertainty the necessary parental guidance as a spotlight to illuminate their future. Instead of individuality Galston seems to press for the fundamental role of parents in shaping the future of their children, in fact, *'parenting is typically undertaken as one of the central meaning-giving tasks of our lives'*<sup>171</sup>. It is therefore the task of liberal states to respect the expressive freedom of their citizens and not to opt instead for a dangerous homogeneity.<sup>172</sup>

Many scholars have interpreted Galston's position on this subject as being more concerned with respect for the founding values of different cultures than with the enhancement of civic virtues. Amy Gutman, a pioneer in educational studies, has in fact defined Galston's position as a form of

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<sup>167</sup> Raphael Almagro Cohen, *Just, Reasonable Multiculturalism: Liberalism, Culture and Coercion* Cambridge University Press Publication date: July 2021.

<sup>168</sup> Two Concepts of Liberalism Author(s): William A. Galston Source: *Ethics*, Apr., 1995, Vol. 105, No. 3 (Apr., 1995), pp. 516-534 Published by: The University of Chicago Press.

<sup>169</sup> Galston (2002a: 102).

<sup>170</sup> Arneson and Shapiro (1996).

<sup>171</sup> Galston (2002a: 102). See also Callan (1997).

<sup>172</sup> The limits of liberal pluralism: a comment on William Galston, Author(s): Robin West Source: *Nomos*, Vol. 49, *Moral Universalism and Pluralism* (2009), pp. 149-166

civic minimalism<sup>173</sup>, aimed at the acceptance of minimal educational standards, thus in practice accepting the defendants' demand in *Wisconsin v. Yoder*.

Unlike Cohen, Galston perceives the Amish environment as providing sufficient exit rights. In the Amish, in fact, Galston does not find elements of psychological coercion<sup>174</sup>. The fact that the choice to belong and remain in the community is left to the young individuals presages the presence of sufficient ground to respect the exit right. All this grants legitimacy to parents in managing their children's upbringing to a certain extent. Basing his theory on the supremacy of value pluralism, Galston cannot subject the Amish to respect for the core values that inform liberalism, but rather must prioritize diversity, even if it manifests itself in a way that contradicts primary liberal ideals.<sup>175</sup>

#### 3.4. MACEDO'S THOUGHTS ON EDUCATION: REFLECTION ON WISCONSIN YODER

Macedo's insistence on identifying the progressive transformation of the individual as an element capable of creating the very person who supports the liberal order leads him to elaborate a particular conception of education to which even traditional communities such as the Amish must adapt. The fact that he can permeate the transformation of the individual at a young age when he does not yet have the characteristics and consciousness of an adult being encourages Macedo even more towards the establishment of a particular educational order<sup>176</sup>. If Galston centered his argument on the extreme valorization of diversity, Macedo aims at smoothing out inconsistencies by building entities capable of embracing a liberal order.

In fact, the child must be able to delineate himself and make autonomous judgments, and independent and lucid decisions. Macedo is clear in stating that *'liberal freedoms to choose are the birthright of every child'*.<sup>177</sup>

Creating individuals' consciences capable of engaging in critical thinking comes from ensuring that certain liberal civic virtues are instilled in the school system. This could balance the eventual exposure of children, outside the school system, to virtues and values that do not support a liberal scheme.

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<sup>173</sup> Domenico Melidoro, *dealing with diversity, Liberal pluralism and diversity*, pg 57.

<sup>174</sup> Galston (2002a: 123)

<sup>175</sup> Domenico Melidoro, *dealing with diversity, Liberal pluralism and diversity*, pg 58.

<sup>176</sup> Domenico Melidoro, *dealing with diversity, Political liberalism and diversity*, pg 80.

<sup>177</sup> Macedo(2000a:207).

More specifically, in the case of the Amish, and in particular with reference to the famous *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, Macedo respects the cultural tradition of the Amish but perceives them as being really far from adapting to certain dynamics that are adaptable to a liberal order.<sup>178</sup>

With reference to the education field, for instance, the view Macedo provides sees the Amish as perpetuating an educational system that does not help but rather harms the development of critical skills. If education is only imposed in a patriarchal manner, nothing more can be expected than the formation of individuals who lack the characteristics of being good liberal citizens<sup>179</sup>. For Macedo, the civic dimension assumes an important weight. Preparing children for an Amish life without exploring in a committed manner whether this is really what they want does not respect their autonomy and freedom.

It follows that Macedo sees the decision in *Yoder* as a negative episode in American constitutional law and hopes for its invalidation.<sup>180</sup>

The weak point of Macedo's theory in the field of education is to be found in his desire to provide children with an educational system that in a certain sense restricts their choices or steers them decisively towards liberal qualities on the one hand. On the other, Macedo attaches considerable importance to the flowering of the human being for its own sake. A state committed to imparting such a pervasive education system in a certain sense does not match as well with a state that aims at the personal realization of the being outside predefined or imposed conceptions.<sup>181</sup>

### 3.5. KUKATHAS POSSIBLE DEDUCTIONS ON THE AMISH CASE

Referring to the possible resolution of the Amish question presented by Macedo, Kukathas presents all the criticalities of bending the cultural demands of different groups to established liberal values, or at least constraining them in situations where support for the constitution of good liberal citizens can arise. It is evident how, based on the theoretical assumptions presented in the previous chapter, Kukathas wants to provide a perspective that diminishes the role of the state in its educational intervention in the name of a tolerance largely necessary for the creation of a good society.

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<sup>178</sup> Macedo (2000a: 207). With regard to this point, Macedo admittedly relies on Spinner-Halev (1994: 87–108).

<sup>179</sup> Domenico Melidoro, dealing with diversity, *Political liberalism and diversity*, pg 81.

<sup>180</sup> Macedo(2000a:208).

<sup>181</sup> Domenico Melidoro, dealing with diversity, *Political liberalism and diversity*, pg 81.

Kukathas credits Macedo with advocating a degree of tolerance towards diversity. In his view, however, the tolerance constructed by Macedo is cyclical in the sense that it is activated in order to ensure a sustaining mechanism for the liberal order. In this sense, *'education is necessary to ensure the creation of liberal citizens who will sustain the regime that is capable of exercising this level of toleration'*.<sup>182</sup> In addition to this, Kukathas attempts to unmask Macedo's central position on education, namely the need for citizenship education and the *'construction of diversity according to liberal democratic purposes'*.<sup>183</sup>

Kukathas is aware of the fact that social institutions can shape the type of subjects that inhabit a specific region, what he views with skepticism is the hypothesis that it is actually desirable for a liberal system to bend culturally different realities to some of its peculiarities.<sup>184</sup>

In the case of the Amish, Kukathas' predisposition towards the recognition of freedom of association allows ample room for the legitimacy of these groups and their demands.<sup>185</sup> Admitting in his theory a high degree of tolerance, Kukathas does not go too far in analyzing the practices of the Amish and judging their educational system. It is not the task of the liberal state to guide and direct operations as a higher authority. Resolving disputes is the task of the umpire, who must show himself to be both an interested and disinterested party in the dispute, not providing direction but only indications for coexistence.

In the liberal archipelago conceived by Kukathas, there is no such thing as a definitive rule, and gratitude to different types of authority and association even allows illiberal practices to exist. By recognizing the right to leave the group, albeit in a limited way, the Amish preserve Kukathas' demand for a free society.

Despite the presence of the Rumspringa, the anchoring in terms of psychological factors that bind the individual to their culture is a relevant fact in Amish tradition. Kukathas is aware that the Amish do not provide the perfect exit option but does not find in this a reason to criticize them and subject them to liberal rule.

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<sup>182</sup> Education and citizenship in diverse societies Chandran Kukathas Australian Defence Forces Academy, School of Politics, University of New South Wales, Canberra ACT 2600, Australia.

<sup>183</sup> (Macedo, 1995, p. 68).

<sup>184</sup> Education and citizenship in diverse societies Chandran Kukathas Australian Defence Forces Academy, School of Politics, University of New South Wales, Canberra ACT 2600, Australia.

<sup>185</sup> Consenting Adults? Amish Rumspringa and the Quandary of Exit in Liberalism Author(s): Steven V. Mazie Source: Perspectives on Politics, Dec., 2005, Vol. 3, No. 4 (Dec., 2005), pp. 745-759 Published by: American Political Science Association.



In the specific case of *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, it is safe to assume that Kukathas does not find the supreme court's choice to be the perfect illustration of the theoretical assumptions he constructs. In fact, he does not see state intervention aimed at securing political support and recognition as something to be promoted.<sup>186</sup> Each island in the archipelago must delineate its own destiny by itself, bearing in mind that coexistence with different cultures is what is to be promoted and valued.

State interference must not take the form either of cases in which minority cultural groups find themselves in difficulty in comparison with the larger society (such as the Amish in *Wisconsin v Yoder*), or of targeted interventions aimed at placing restrictions on the internal practices of a group in order to orient them towards the practices of the majority (such as the position defended by Macedo).<sup>187</sup>

This approach, however, opens up space for criticism such as that proposed by Spinner-Halev when he argues that Kukathas bases his oppositions on the idea of non-interference by a majority society such as the liberal one in the American state. The problem is that he does not identify a wider or mainstream society, a common public space where individuals can feel part of a large polity without configuring themselves primarily as members of a group.<sup>188</sup>

However, it is difficult to demonstrate how the possibility of interaction with a majority society is desirable for minority members. For the Amish, it is to a certain extent, but they do not see interchange with the larger society as such a rich source of enrichment for their culture.

They seem to want to live in peace on their island and not be disturbed. Kukathas find this position legitimate and have no objection, as long as there is a strong degree of coexistence.

### 3.6. FINAL REFLECTIONS

This chapter has attempted to draw connections between the theories presented above and practical cases that could demonstrate the strengths and weaknesses of each position integrating diversity and liberalism. There is no correct answer if one asks the question of which of these positions is best suited to support the arduous task of finding full application in a concrete situation.

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid

<sup>187</sup> Kukathas 1992.

<sup>188</sup> Consenting Adults? Amish Rumspringa and the Quandary of Exit in Liberalism Author(s): Steven V. Mazie Source: *Perspectives on Politics*, Dec., 2005, Vol. 3, No. 4 (Dec., 2005), pp. 745-759 Published by: American Political Science Association.

However, it is interesting to outline how each author's reflections, reflecting their own theory, attempt to find a strong position on which to stand above all others.

## CONCLUSION

In the contemporary political debate, it is widely disputed what is the most correct interpretation of liberalism to accommodate diversity.

The complexity of different cultural traditions makes it difficult to find a solution that is shared by all. Each cultural group comes from different experiences, pursues different conceptions of the good, and does not want to give up its specific characteristics.

Liberalism finds several challenges along its way to rise to a decisive position in dealing with the plurality of beliefs and traditions that inhabit the same society. In the first chapter I wanted to show how some of the challenges liberalism has to respond to come from within, from the uncertainty generated by some of its pillars.

Embracing multicultural instances sometimes means recognizing the narrowness of one's own positions. In fact, Western liberalism must in a certain sense escape the temptation to assimilate according to uniform standards, considered valid because they are the result of a hegemonic position of dominance perpetuated for centuries.

Pillars such as the concepts of tolerance and the conception of right must come to terms with a world open to different and sometimes conflicting ways of thinking. In this sense, the small case study on France included in the central part of the first chapter was intended to show the risks incurred when thinking in terms of separateness and uniqueness.

Indeed, among the criticisms levelled at liberalism as a philosophical-political conception, one finds the tendency to reason from a particularistic cultural perspective, the offspring of specific experiences of the Western world and therefore not suitable for imposing itself on a broader spectrum. Ethnocentric partiality is in fact seen as one of those factors that make liberalism impossible in its claims to universality and affirmation in a plural world. In fact, scholars such as Parekh argue that history cannot be seen as a journey with only one destination and only one way to get there. Following the tradition of a single form of thought reduces the whole to a simplistic view and implies conforming to a way of seeing things that is the product of an experience that is not common to all.

In the second chapter, an attempt was made instead to give voice to conceptions of liberalism that allow as much as possible to interface with different instances. While it is widely defensible to argue that liberalism has the characteristics that allow it to fit into the broader conditioning of global society, it is equally true that the right key is to be found in allowing the broadest possible inclusion of different beliefs. Starting from the relevant position taken by Kymlicka, an attempt was made to proceed logically towards the deduction of a theory that does not present such comprehensible traits that it requires considerable effort on the part of those in a minority position who must fit into broader societal circumstances.

Although the point reached with Kukathas's general position apparently allows for the coexistence of different cultural groups on the basis of a strong degree of tolerance, the realization that an ultimate and uncritical answer does not exist has been made clear several times in the course of this paper. The attempt, however, to discern a light capable of illuminating the diverse world we inhabit is not to be considered vain or without foundation.

In fact, the last portion of the thesis project turned its gaze towards the concrete application of some of the theoretical principles discussed in the main body of the work, highlighting possible scenarios of progress in respecting a group strongly opposed to assimilation into the larger society.

The entire project has been strongly animated by the desire to trace a path that allows for the valorization of the idea of diversity, transposing into practice the image of a world that does not impose but listens, that knows how to direct but does not demand a common path from everyone, that appreciates different paths and does not subject them to the analysis of an ultimate judge. The world to which this project aspires does not admit a single authority but respects each position and gives it importance for what it is, enriching itself with what it brings, not bending it to universal standards, in the idea that *'Difference is of the essence of humanity. Difference is an accident of birth and it should therefore never be the source of hatred or conflict. The answer to difference is to respect it. Therein lies a most fundamental principle of peace – respect for diversity'*<sup>189</sup>.

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<sup>189</sup> John Hume delivering his Nobel Peace Prize lecture. © Knudsens fotosenter/Dextra Photo, Norsk Teknisk Museum. Nobel Lecture, Oslo, December 10, 1998

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## SUMMARY

Il liberalismo è stato inquadrato da diversi studiosi e sostenitori come la teoria politico-filosofica più in grado di fornire risposte adeguate circa l'integrazione di tradizioni culturali diverse all'interno di una società che rispetti equamente i principi e i credi di ogni gruppo culturale.

L'enfasi posta dal liberalismo su valori cardine quali il pluralismo, l'autonomia, la neutralità e la tolleranza hanno permesso a vari accademici di costruire teorie che partendo dai caratteri fondanti del liberalismo stesso si muovessero verso una pretesa di universalità e talvolta di imposizione. La posizione egemonica acquisita dal liberalismo nel corso dei secoli è stata favorita, secondo alcuni critici,<sup>190</sup> dal contesto sociale e culturale nel quale essa ha trovato la sua formazione.

Il rigore analitico e l'autocoscienza metodologica che fanno del liberalismo una teoria senza eguali nell'ambito politico e filosofico sono frutto infatti di secoli di sviluppo nel continente occidentale. La costruzione sui dettami dell'illuminismo e l'interesse verso una gamma vastissima di questioni umane hanno reso il liberalismo dominante in confronto a qualsiasi altro approccio filosofico-politico. Inoltre, il dominio esercitato dall'occidente in ambito economico e militare nel corso degli ultimi secoli si è automaticamente tradotto nella diffusione dei propri modi di vivere e di pensare, i quali hanno sempre più acquisito prestigio e legittimità.

Le contingenze storiche come il colonialismo hanno alimentato la costruzione di un mondo a immagine e somiglianza di quello liberale e occidentale, permettendo a quest'ultimo di permeare in maniera consistente le istituzioni politiche e gli stili di vita di milioni di persone provenienti da contesti diversi.

Tutto ciò ha creato quasi una categorizzazione anche culturale riguardo cosa potesse essere accettato e cosa dovesse essere declinato agli occhi del giudice ultimo occidentale, il quale complice una forza e vitalità intellettuale imparagonabili ha assunto senza chiederlo il ruolo di leader nelle dispute comprendenti visioni differenti.

Se da un lato è indubbia la capacità intrinseca del liberalismo nel fornire un approccio che possa il più possibile radunare sotto un unico schema istanze così differenti le une dalle altre, questo elaborato ha tentato di tracciare un sentiero che veda sempre meno ostile il connubio tra liberalismo e diversità.

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<sup>190</sup> The Cultural Particularity of Liberal Democracy, Bhikhu Parekh, Political studies (1992), XL, special issue .



Nella prima parte della trattazione, l'attenzione è stata posta su quegli aspetti critici che non attribuiscono al liberalismo le potenzialità di affermarsi in maniera universale sopra altre teorie politiche e filosofiche. L'attacco posto ad un concetto liberale fondante come quello della tolleranza ha delineato fin da subito lo spirito critico di questa porzione dell'elaborato.

L'atto stesso di dover tollerare presuppone l'esistenza di un forte dato di diversità e alienità. Se la volontà di accettazione dell'altro garantisce al concetto di tolleranza un'accezione decisamente positiva, i limiti emergono nel momento in cui si deve stabilire quando un fatto o una pratica concreta siano da considerarsi non tollerabili ma degni di accusa. La dipendenza normativa della tolleranza implicita nella sua definizione, se da un lato permette di tracciare quei bordi che non possono essere sorpassati, tramite il sapiente ausilio di concetti come quello dell'autonomia personale, dall'altro necessariamente esclude quelle istanze che non valorizzano la combinazione di valori liberali così marcati. Gruppi culturali che perseguono una differente concezione del bene o che prediligono la promozione di valori comunitari si trovano nella situazione di subordinare le proprie visioni etiche ad una forte componente individualistica.

In modo analogo, anche se partendo da premesse differenti, l'inserimento di un caso studio in questa precisa parte del lavoro di tesi ha permesso di attaccare con ancora più veemenza i valori cardine del liberalismo, di matrice francese in questo caso.

L'impronta liberal-francese vede nell'interventismo statale una componente fondamentale per reindirizzare gruppi culturali, le quali azioni sono percepite come una minaccia, verso il rispetto dell'unitarietà comunitaria. Il fatto che questa posizione trovi difesa anche nelle parole di persone di spicco come Nicolas Sarkozy durante il suo mandato da presidente, opera a discapito delle premesse liberali di tolleranza e pluralismo. Ciò che ne deriva è una richiesta di conformità e un dato di esclusione al tempo stesso, i quali corrono il rischio di nutrire il sentimento d'odio di una nazione culla del liberalismo. L'enfasi posta su un ordine comunitario stabilito, fondato su valori ben precisi si coniuga con una preoccupazione nazionale verso il pericolo fondamentalista. Ne conseguono forti limitazioni alle pratiche culturali di alcuni gruppi, soprattutto dal punto di vista religioso. Questa visione non permette appieno di far co-abitare sotto lo stesso tetto diverse concezioni del bene e pertanto mostra la fallacità di uno dei più gloriosi stati liberali.

L'universalità del liberalismo viene quindi preclusa sia dalla eventuale debolezza che emerge nell'analisi di alcuni suoi caratteri fondanti, sia da dimostrazioni pratiche che talvolta si orientano in una direzione che si allontana da quei punti fondanti ai quali molti liberali sono ancorati.

Per tracciare una strada che riconosca importanza e merito al liberalismo senza per forza sfociare in una pretesa di imposizione e sovraffermazione si devono quindi modellare i principi liberali alle necessità di società sempre più multiculturali.

Il percorso intrapreso da Kymlicka assume particolare importanza in questo ambito. Kymlicka, infatti, apre la strada ad una visione di liberalismo che vede nel riconoscimento di specifici diritti alle minoranze culturali un'occasione per conciliare diverse istanze culturali, previa accettazione e riconoscenza da parte dei gruppi minoritari di alcuni principi liberali fondamentali. Il passo compiuto da Kymlicka è significativo nell'ottica di ammettere la legittimità di più di una concezione del bene. Concependo la cultura come importante contesto di scelta, Kymlicka rispetta ampiamente la costituzione di valori differenti all'interno di un ambiente sociale. Tuttavia, egli non si svincola da alcune premesse liberali che nella sua teoria assumono un dato di intoccabilità.

Il principio di autonomia, per esempio, non distingue tra gruppi culturali che supportano o meno un certo dato di fioritura individuale autonoma. Ne consegue che i diritti da attribuire alle minoranze sono per Kymlicka un tentativo di riparazione a ingiustizie e circostanze storiche e sociali che vedono le minoranze partire da una posizione svantaggiata rispetto alla maggioranza sebbene fuori da qualsiasi decisione personale autonoma. La sfera della riconoscenza e dell'accomodazione si chiude ai cancelli dell'autonomia personale. Questo limita la teoria di Kymlicka nel momento in cui si deve interagire con gruppi culturali che non vedono nel concetto di autonomia un pilastro fondante nella formazione del proprio credo. Involontariamente, Kymlicka finisce per sfavorire quei gruppi sociali dei quali voleva aumentare il peso specifico nell'ordine societario, assoggettandoli al rispetto di un valore sostanzialmente liberale e sancendo ancora una volta la supremazia di un qualche aspetto di una concezione del bene sopra le altre.

A questo punto, mostrate le debolezze di un approccio teorico che vede la dipendenza dei valori etici di alcuni gruppi al principio di autonomia, un cambio di rotta nella concezione stessa di liberalismo viene reso necessario al fine di valorizzare le comunità culturali e la loro diversità.

William Galston rappresenta in questo scenario colui in grado di discostare il liberalismo per lo meno da quella sua aurea di armonizzazione delle varie pretese sociali sotto una sfera di comprensività e prevaricazione di alcune concezioni sopra le altre. Galston focalizza la diversità come il centro del suo universo teorico e vede nella sua valorizzazione estrema la risoluzione alle problematiche derivanti i contrasti tra differenti modi di vivere e di pensare.

Con l'obiettivo di garantire la più elevata accomodazione possibile, Galston identifica nella tolleranza l'elemento in grado di sostituire quello che per Kymlicka rappresentava l'autonomia. Il suo liberalismo vuole riformare la concezione del rispetto dell'altro secondo parametri ben definiti, tra i quali viene incluso il riconoscimento della libertà espressiva degli individui, quindi la possibilità per ognuno di perseguire e sviluppare i propri principi anche fino a toccare la sfera dell'illiberalità. Concedere diritti non è abbastanza per promuovere a pieno le istanze delle minoranze culturali. Pertanto, Galston intraprende un sentiero che lo porta fino alla accettazione delle autorità illiberali non statali in uno schema societario. In questo modo, egli intende preservare il liberalismo stesso dal pericolo di una concentrazione di potere così elevata da sfociare in tirannia. Legittimare il ruolo di associazioni che si discostano dagli standard liberali permette senza dubbio un superamento rispetto all'elargizione di diritti.

Dal punto di vista morale, rifiutando l'inclusione sotto i dettami di un'unica dottrina comprensiva, Galston celebra l'eterogeneità dei valori morali, garantendo precedenza solamente a pochi principi in grado di risolvere situazioni di conflitto. Nell'approccio di questo autore il pluralismo prende vitalità e ogni sfaccettatura di esso si colora di sfumature che nel confronto con le altre si valorizzano e arricchiscono la tela.

Eppure, è proprio in questa intuizione di ampliare la legittimità delle istanze morali di diversi gruppi che Galston trova le sue contraddizioni. Abbandonando con posizioni forti l'idea di costruire una visione politica e filosofica incentrata sull'autonomia personale, Galston sembra abbracciarla quando ammette la valorizzazione di ogni concezione del bene e lo sviluppo della persona secondo canoni stabiliti da essa stessa, e soprattutto nella sua proiezione del diritto di uscita garantito ad alcuni membri di gruppi sociali i quali si professano inadatti nel seguire necessariamente i dettami imposti dalla loro comunità di appartenenza.

Questa contraddizione nell'edificazione stessa della teoria di Galston viene ulteriormente rafforzata in maniera negativa dall'incapacità dell'autore nel fornire prospettive concrete nel suo desiderio di valorizzare la diversità. La sostanza ideativa dell'autore non viene infatti bilanciata da un dato di pragmaticità necessario a rendere la posizione più credibile.

In questo scenario una linea di deduzione logica porta a soddisfare il bisogno di concretezza tramite un liberalismo alimentato da una forte componente politica, e Macedo rappresenta il profilo adatto per attribuire sostanza a prospettive largamente idealizzate.

La posizione di questo autore però sposta completamente l'ago della bilancia dalla celebrazione della diversità verso l'esigenza di uno schema societario che promuova omologazione nel pubblico, permettendo una pluralità controllata nel privato. L'obiettivo è la formazione di individui che siano in grado di supportare ed arricchire uno ordine politico liberale, sacrificando le loro concezioni personali nel nome di una prospera vita politica comune. La diversità di visione trova spazio solamente in quelle circostanze in cui non si minaccia il più alto ordine liberale.

Per permeare cittadini in grado di sorreggere lo schema societario previsto da Macedo diviene fondamentale nel concreto il ruolo dell'educazione pubblica nel sistema scolastico. L'ambizione più alta dell'autore è quella di distaccarsi da teorie che hanno messo la diversità in primo piano senza avvertirne le potenziali minacce alle virtù liberali e ai principi di giustizia comuni. La tolleranza che quindi questo autore ammette assume connotati restrittivi. Le visioni di ognuno non assumono valore in sé ma sono accettate solo fino al punto in cui l'ordine civico non richiede un'adequazione alla prospettiva liberale.

L'armonizzazione della diversità non è un processo automatico secondo Macedo. Intervenire con l'obiettivo di incentivare un progetto politico comune è più che legittimo per sostenere gli ingranaggi di un meccanismo trasformativo liberale.

In tal senso, Stephen Macedo compie considerevoli passi in avanti verso teorie che legavano l'individuo alla quasi venerazione di punti cardine predefiniti dall'ordine liberale. Politicizzando il liberalismo in questo modo, sebbene l'autore includa la sua concezione in un'ottica più tangibile, alcuni gruppi sociali trovano necessariamente affermazione a discapito di altri. Macedo non trova in questo un punto debole della sua teoria; tuttavia, il problema viene a galla nel momento in cui bisogna stabilire e indirizzare tramite misure politiche o educative quale gruppo sia più meritevole di considerazione e perché, e soprattutto individuare chi sia il giudice ultimo che debba compiere questa decisione.

Inoltre, risulta difficile immaginare come il processo trasformativo del quale Macedo si fa portavoce porti ad un cambiamento effettivo solamente nelle minoranze culturali. L'intoccabilità della maggioranza in società multiculturali sottostima lo scambio culturale che ogni giorno avviene nel mondo e restituisce immaginazione più che realtà alla teoria dell'autore.

Per uscire dallo spettro dei dilemmi presentati nel corso di queste concezioni liberali, questo lavoro di tesi fa riferimento alla posizione assunta da Kukathas, sicuramente diversa e rivoluzionaria sia da

istanze politiche trasformative così ambiziose come quelle di Macedo che da prospettive altamente contraddittorie o richiedenti un qualcosa di innaturale a gruppi culturalmente diversi.

Kukathas auspica ad una società libera, nella quale non è prevista una singola autorità, ma viene bensì garantita la legittimità di differenti associazioni, che gli individui possono creare e distruggere, alle quali possono legarsi o distaccarsi. In questo contesto la possibilità dell'individuo di delineare sé stesso non sono limitate dalla comunità che lo ha formato. Nell'arcipelago liberale di Kukathas chiunque può raggiungere l'isola che predilige e perseguire la concezione del bene che più gradisce. Tutto ciò è permesso da una definizione di tolleranza che non stabilisce limiti ma che rasenta l'indifferenza e l'accettazione rassegnata che ognuno può vivere seguendo i propri standard. Nessuna comunità politica assume una posizione prioritaria a discapito delle altre. Lo stato assume sostanzialmente il ruolo di arbitro nell'indirizzare la risoluzione dei conflitti che possono emergere verso un percorso che sia equamente rispettabile delle istanze proposte da ognuno e permetta la coesistenza dei diversi gruppi.

In questo modo, l'enigma di come accomodare la diversità si avvicina maggiormente alla risoluzione, rinnegando l'imposizione e preferendo la coesistenza, attribuendo legittimità e non pretendendo limitazioni significative.