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Table of Contents

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Articles

Introduction

○ Roberto MIGUELEZ

La Philosophie des Religions et la Sociologie des Religions

○ Cristián PARKER GUMUCIO

Les Nouvelles Formes de Religion dans la Société Globalisée: Un Défi à L'interprétation Sociologique

○ John FULTON

Religion and Enmity in Ireland: Institutions and Relational Beliefs

○ Jean MEYER

De la Violence à la Religion: Aller-retour

○ Massimo INTROVIGNE

"There is No Place for Us to Go but Up": New Religious Movements and Violence

○ James V. SPICKARD

Human Rights Through a Religious Lens: a Programmatic Argument

○ Irena BOROWIK

The Roman Catholic Church in the Process of Democratic Transformation: the Case of Poland

○ Judit BOKSER-LIWIERANT

Globalization and Collective Identities

○ Pauline CÔTÉ

Religion, Politique et Liberté

○ Milagros PEÑA

Devising a Study on Religion and the Latina Experience

Manuel J. MEJIDO

The Illusion of Neutrality: Reflections on the Term "Popular Religion"

○ Jean Remy

Forum

Livres Reçus/Books Received



Judith BOKSER-LIWERANT

Globalization and Collective Identities

Globalization implies multiple processes that are not uniform, as they take place in a differentiated manner in time and place. They are also of a multi-faceted and contradictory nature. The diverse and paradoxical nature of globalization processes has given rise to new identities with different levels of aggregation, such as global identities and has given renewed importance to ethnic and religious identities in the shaping and re-ordering of global, regional, national and local spaces. Paralleling these trends has been a resurgence of theoretical debate about the challenges posed by globalization, such as the identity and freedom of the individual vis-à-vis community and belonging; justice vis-à-vis membership; diversity and pluralism; collective identities and religion; and the changing scope of the private and public spheres. The author explores some of the new challenges and trends and their expression in the theoretical debate.

La globalisation implique de multiples processus qui prennent place de diverses façons dans le temps et l'espace et qui, dès lors, sont hétérogènes. Ils sont aussi multi-facés et de nature contradictoire. Ce caractère différencié et paradoxal des processus de globalisation a donné naissance à de nouvelles identités s'exprimant à divers niveaux d'agrégation, telles que les identités globales. Il a en outre amené un regain d'importance aux identités ethniques à travers le remodelage et le réordonnement des espaces globaux, régionaux, nationaux et locaux. Parallèlement à ces tendances, on a assisté à une résurgence du débat théorique à propos des défis que soulève la globalisation, concernant des questions telles que l'identité et la liberté de l'individu vis-à-vis de la communauté et de l'appartenance; celles aussi de la justice face au membership, de la diversité et du pluralisme; celles encore des identités collectives et de la religion et des changements de perspective dans la distinction des sphères privée et publique. L'auteure entend explorer certains de ces nouveaux défis et de ces nouvelles tendances, ainsi que les expressions qu'ils revêtent dans le débat théorique.

Globalization implies multiple processes, which, since they take place in a differentiated manner in time and place, are not uniform. They are also of a multi-faceted, multi-dimensional and contradictory nature: multi-faceted, insofar as they bring together economic, socio-political and cultural aspects, as well as the interdependence and influences between these realms; multi-dimensional, because they are expressed both in networks of interaction between transnational institutions and agents and in processes of organizational, institutional and cultural convergences and standardization; and contradictory, because they can be simultaneously reflexive and unintentional, and of international as well as regional, national or local scope.

The diverse and paradoxical nature of globalization processes has given rise to new identities with different levels of aggregation, such as global identities, and has given renewed importance to religious and ethnic identities in the shaping of global, national and local spaces and in the re-ordering of territorial and even geopolitical spaces.¹

Collective identities may be defined as patterns of similarity and dissimilarity constructed in order to build social boundaries: social construction and the maintenance of trust and solidarity among the members of a collectivity become its central core. The construction and reproduction of collective identity is effected through a combination of the promulgation and institutionalization of models of social and cultural order; thus the construction of identity and membership in different collectivities is combined with the codes available to those participating in such collectivities (Eisenstadt, 1998). Therefore, it is influenced or shaped, as is that of most arenas of social activity, by distinct codes, the major ones being those of primordiality, civility and sacredness or transcendence. While the primordial code focuses on such components as ethnicity, gender, kinship or language from which to construct the boundary between inside and outside, and the civic code is constructed on the basis of familiarity with implicit and explicit rules of conduct, traditions and social routines, the sacral or transcendental links the boundary between us and them to the realm of the sacred (Eisenstadt, 1998). The interaction between ethnic and religious identities in the framework of the contradictory trends of globalization thus becomes an important realm where changes in collective identities take place.

Collective identities were considered a marginal or side effect of social structural processes, mainly those connected with a power and economic process and with the structural transformation of society under the impact of modernization. Therefore, they were supposed to constitute a primordial component which would be diluted or be dissolved on the way to modernity under the “universalistic pressures, social convergence and globalization” (Roniger and Sznajder, 1998). Contrary to this assumption, collective identities organized around primordial pivots have actually become nuclei of social movements that interact and co-exist with new global identities, such as those represented by epistemic communities, international organizations and other expressions of virtual identities. Globalization processes are encouraging simultaneously small social groups and ethnic communities to create and recreate their own social and cultural networks side by side or in opposition to both national states and to wider global realms. Certainly, the process of building collective identities takes place in different institutional arenas—territorial, communal or religious—and in different political-ecological settings—local, regional, national—in the framework of a global context where they interact and overlap and their components become re-linked.

The emergence of diverse worlds of identity stems from various sequences of events:

1. From the dissolution and porosity of borders, which separate and at the same time connect identities with specific geographical areas.

2. From the new interaction between the global, regional, national and local realms.
3. As a result of the transformations that the state is undergoing, in particular, the loss of state monopoly in various spheres. One may point to the crisis of centralism and its consequent withdrawal from various economic, social and cultural spheres, as well as to its diminishing influence on the building of political images, thus increasing the need to use other cultural and symbolic systems.
4. The uncertainty arising from the speed and intensity of global flows, which turn ethnic identities into a moral resource to face insecurity and instability. These new worlds of identity stem from a society of networks, which places communication resources not only within the reach of new identity groups but also of particularistic communities in order to formulate their claim to be different on global planes.
5. Finally, it is associated with transformations in the religious world, in the diverse dimensions and changing expressions of secularization, which have an ongoing impact on the building of collective identities. Certainly there has been a generalized religious revival expressed in the emergence of new religious movements and experiences which offer individual certainties as well as community and belonging. Following Stark and Bainbridge in their understanding of the theory of secularization as a self-limiting process, Swatos and Christiano (2000) consider it precisely as an attempt to account for the way in which pluralism has redrawn the religious map expressing itself in a world religious ferment of “contesting epistemologies”. Beyond the revival which may or may not be fundamentalist (Marty and Appleby, 1987), new religious movements emerge, some of them with a global character.

It is significant that, in the midst of secularization trends, religion has assumed a growing public role and visibility. This has been characterized as the “de-privatization” of religion. Religious traditions have gained a new public relevance, as a result of their interaction with social movements and public agencies and by their claim to a new sort of interaction between private and public morality (Casanova, 1994).

These new trends pose several challenges to the way social life develops and certainly reinforce the need to formulate new theoretical syntheses that should not be understood as eclectic, but on the contrary, as the sum of the diverse approaches needed to respond to the challenges of interpretation which stem from the contradictory, multi-dimensional and multi-faceted nature of globalization processes.

One of the main challenges is the need to address diversity, exacerbated by the intensification of population displacements that reinforce encounters and conflicts—religious, ethnic and nationalist—between majorities and minorities. Closely related to this requirement is the necessity of finding a new equilibrium between the concept of justice (individual) and membership (collective) developed by social theory in the 1970s and 1980s, respectively (Kymlicka and Norman, 1995).

Another related set of questions has to do with the way pluralism may be characterized today, taking into account that it has come to represent a significant social good that enables the expansion of freedom. Its advocacy has come to be bound up with what William James called the “democratic temperament”. Moreover, pluralism has a wide significance for democracy and theology as well as for social theory. It is related to the identity of individuals and groups in their relations to one another and to the institutional order of political life. Therefore, the affirmation of difference—in culture, in religion, in ethnicity, among others—is related to the recognition of the liberty that collective identities have to maintain themselves within society and, simultaneously, their commitment to the building of citizenship and civility. In this line of thought it has been recently affirmed that the reconstitution of civility is central to counterweight pluralism, because of the potential factionalism and fragmentation that pluralism carries (Mittleman, 2001).

Complementing this, one may ask if religious pluralism as an existing historical option is only intensified by globalization or if it acquires new forms of expression and articulation as a result of its interaction with the old and new worlds of collective identities. It is worth emphasizing the new interaction between the religious and ethnic identities in the framework of globalization. Its diverse dimensions and contradictory trends have helped the revival of ethnic identities in many communities precisely through the return to religion and religious mythologies. The re-appropriation of an ethnic past has helped to advance a religious revival which can be seen in the return of secular Muslims to Islam in Bosnia; in the interaction between Islam and Hinduism on the Indian subcontinent; in the return to nationalist Orthodoxy in Russia; and in the presence of Islamic movements among Islamic communities in the West. All these cases are related to the intensification of ethnic identity among embattled ethnic communities in the midst of what is perceived and felt to be an alien environment (Smith, 1995). This ethnic-religious revival is to be found not only in non-western contexts in the face of fear of the western influx of globalization, but also in the West as well as westernized contexts: in America as well as in Japan, Poland, Ireland, and Mexico. As Smith has noted, the Protestant revival and the renaissance of Catholicism and Judaism, though not as impressive as the resurgence of Islam and Hinduism, have considerable followings, and are very often linked to ethnic self-assertion.

Although there is no agreement among scholars regarding the origins of globalization or its main characteristics, there is a basic consensus in identifying radical changes that upset spatial, temporal, geographical and/or territorial references, without which it would be impossible to think of economic, political, social and cultural relations in the contemporary world (Waters, 1995; Robertson, 1992; Scholte, 1998).² All these changes are closely related and underscore aspects of the same phenomenon: the fact that time and space cease to have the same influence on the way in which social relations and institutions are structured. Thus, economic, social, cultural and political arrangements depend neither on distance nor on borders, which become more diffuse, porous and permeable (Giddens, 1994).

Globalization may be characterized by an increased density of networks (the effects of events in one geographical area, on one dimension, can have profound effects in other geographical areas, on other dimensions); increased institutional velocity (as distinguished from the message velocity, which refers to how rapidly a system and the units within it change, that is, the intensity of contact); and increased transnational participation (the pluralization of number and participants in global networks) (Keohane and Nye, 2000). Thus, the world becomes structured as a space that is at once unique and different because, whereas on the one hand territorial borders lose importance, on the other, for the first time, identities and communities can be built irrespective of national feelings, spaces and borders (Scholte, 1998). The natural and primordial referents that shape collective identities emerge with unexpected vigour, in a tense fluctuation between the moment of the unique or universal and that of the different or particular. Simultaneously, global spaces are realms for collective reflection used, occupied, and to a lesser or greater extent structured and controlled by supra-national actors, such as transnational enterprises, international organizations and private agencies, as well as by international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and epistemic communities (Haas, 1992; Giddens, 1994). Their presence radically transforms the State, its powers and functions. Far from what some hurried estimates maintained (Ohmae, 1990; Fukuyama, 1992), states not only do not disappear but continue to have a decisive influence in many fields at national and international level. None the less, their sovereign status weakens in various fields: the state becomes incapable, for example, of regulating financial and trade flows, property and authorship rights, universally sanctioned human rights and other cross-border economic, social and cultural transactions. Likewise, the state loses authority in regulating and applying sanctions to international NGOs and its relations with communities and identities that go beyond national borders are reconsidered, reconnecting the links between the local, the national and the global.

Globalization also restates some of the cultural grounds of sovereignty. States lose the capacity to influence both in the concepts of nation and in the particular, ethnic and religious imageries and identities that mix and overlap aspirations of a local, national, regional and global scope.³ The emphasis on the imaginary dimension of collective identities makes it possible to recover the dynamic nature inherent in its social and cultural construction. Identities are relational and are produced by social and cultural processes. They recover the past as a space for certainty in order to project themselves towards the future. Thus, in a context of intense changes, religion becomes a source of certainty and identity or a reference of belonging and community. This is so even though increasing pluralism undermines the claim to certainty that characterizes some religions in the context of a market-place where competing options define "religion à la carte" and diverse personal arrangements coexist as a "bricolage" (Luckmann, 1967; Bibby, 1987).

States must share the task of governing with international public agencies and non-governmental, private and civic organizations. Simultaneously, within their borders, they face new forms of regrouping of civil society, of

individual and collective social and political participation, ethnic and religious, civic and social. States are subjected to pressures stemming from what Beiner (1995) has defined as the dialectics between globalism and localism.

Vis-à-vis the conception of pluralism as an option throughout history “simply intensified by globalization” (Swatos and Christiano, 2000), our analysis leads us to underscore the qualitative nature of the changes brought by globalization. As a result of increasingly intense cross-border interaction, communities and groups develop identities and loyalties over and above national sentiments placing various values such as ethics, human rights and the rights of minorities above sovereignty and even self-determination. Global spaces give a new density to the close, specific and particular, and encourage the building of collective identities on institutional bases, spaces and frameworks that are radically different from those known by social theory. The multi-dimensional and multi-faceted character of globalization, expressed in the simultaneity of the local, the national, the regional and the global levels, is evident in the diverse dynamics of collective identities (among which religious identification refers both to local and to global developments). These new trends, which we previously referred to in terms of the coexistence and interaction of the particular and the global, or the challenge derived from a global network of cultural diversity, can be seen, following Beyer (1998), in the religion of immigrant groups that may look locally like cultural adaptation but are also tied into transnational and global movements. Such is the case among recent Muslim immigrants to Europe and North America who adopted diverse local forms of religious institutions (congregational and multi-functional), but the proliferation and strength of these organizational manifestations are related to the global characteristics of contemporary Islam.

While the opening up to interaction and interdependence among the different regions of the world has been facilitated by globalization, reinforcing religious and cultural pluralism, encounters and diversity, the rejection of the Other has enhanced inflexibility which in turn has minimized the margins for pluralistic coexistence. While the opening up results in recognition of the diversity of the human condition, inflexibility translates into its denial, thus questioning and weakening the scope of pluralism and consequently of the freedom of the individual and the group.

Therefore, diversity seems to imply the elaboration of institutional arrangements and settings, which necessarily vary from place to place, but play a central role in reinforcing pluralism. Institutions matter because they can shape and cultivate shared norms. It is the possibility of approaching religious and cultural pluralism together with institutional and political pluralism which opens new perspectives for addressing the diverse sources of collective identities. In this line of thought, we may distinguish between societies in which plural identities have not threatened the idea of civil society, and where voluntary associations are organized by legitimizing their different interests and their joint achievements at an institutional level; and societies in which the principle of equality and individual autonomy as a stratum of political life and consequently of association has not developed (Seligman, 1992). In the first case, the interaction between

groups' values seems to be defined by an instrumental rationality, and none of them represents an alternative moral vision to society as a whole. In the second, particular values, when emerging as alternative metaphysical-moral universes, do not appear as the expression of collectivities as interest groups, but rather as antagonistic entities.

We have seen that globalization has changed the influence time and place have on the way social relations and institutions are structured. As a result of increasingly intense cross-border interaction, diverse groups and communities adopt identities and loyalties over and above territorial constraints or national sentiments. Such is the case with new social movements, diasporas, religious and ethnic groups, as well as members of the corporate elite, epistemic communities or transnational organizations. Global spaces give a new density to the close and specific, the characteristic and particular that in various contexts have reinforced the emergence of conflicts with local tinges. As social relations expand, the processes of local autonomy and regional cultural identity are strengthened (Giddens, 1994).

Today the issue of the "Other" fluctuates between its recognition and its negation, and the latter has assumed new forms of exclusion, marginalization, rejection and discrimination which, confronted with the ethnic and religious dimensions, are nourished and influenced by the historical weight of prejudices (Bokser, 1997b). It is worth emphasizing that as a result of the wide range of ethnic, religious and nationalistic conflicts, a new racism has developed.⁴

According to Appadurai (1992), the tension between homogenization and cultural differentiation is the central problem of global interactions. In a context of uncertainty and uncontrollable transformations, the search for identity becomes one of the moral resources for attaining security. People feel the need to regroup around their primordial, religious, ethnic, territorial or national identities. As Castells (1999) points out: "In a world of global flows of wealth, power and images, the search for an identity, collective or individual, assigned or built, becomes the fundamental source of social meaning." In contrast to Appadurai, who stresses the dimension of differential acculturation, Castells underscores the dimension of resistance of identities, which, with cultural codes rooted in tradition or local experience, oppose the new world of information.⁵

However, the ethnic affirmation through religious revival has not developed only as resistance in regions opposed to the pressures derived from the alleged westernized pattern of globalization. The revival is to be found in western or westernized societies, where, as in Poland, Ireland or Mexico, religious mythologies act as guarantors of the redemption of oppressed *ethneis* or reinstators of by-passed ethnic values and life-styles. Moreover, through the myth of the resurgent religion and its chosen bearers, the forces of modernity and globalization can be brought under control and made to serve the interests of aspirant or marginalized *ethneis*. Therefore, according to Smith (1995) it is a mistake to see in the return to radical forms of religion only fear or resentment, or the result of a crisis of traditional values and symbols. By stressing the community-forming propensity of most of the religious myths, symbols and traditions, as well as

the longevity and pervasiveness of their influence, he discovers their instrumentality to help and make sense of both the opportunities and the tribulations of rapid change. The return to religion and to ethnic myths enables elites and people alike to relativize their immediate experience through traditions that promise salvation or immortality beyond the present order of experience. Simultaneously, they combine this traditional promise with an expectation of terrestrial redemption judged by the coming generation of the identical community of history and destiny (Smith, 1995).

From other perspectives the role of religion has also been stressed in shaping ethnicity associated with what Bruce defines as its main social roles in modernity: cultural defence and cultural transition (Bruce, 1997). While the first points to the new significance religious identity can acquire as a way of asserting ethnic pride, the second refers to the role involved in helping communities to cope with the shift from one world to the other. Both dimensions certainly become intensified by globalization because of the cultural contents and implications of global change, the growing flows of migrant populations and the intensification of local conflicts. Thus, the transformation of large, previously dominant cultural groups into minorities inside new national units has facilitated the conditions for the emergence of local, ethnic, religious and nationalist movements. Such has been the case after the political dissolution and economic collapse of the former USSR and is the case in important areas of central Europe. With their own dynamics, Asia, Africa and Latin America have been scenarios of this new interaction between ethnicity, religion and social movements both as a result of population displacements and the geo-cultural transition it implies, and as a consequence of the changes that take place at home where people do not migrate.

The changing scope of the private and public spheres has led to reconsideration of the transformations that surround the process of secularization thus affecting the interaction between religion and diverse referents of collective identities. It has necessitated distinguishing the different propositions that have nourished what has been seen as a single theory of secularization: embedded in the understanding of secularization as differentiation, it has developed the concept of secularization as privatization and as religious decline (Casanova, 1994). While the thesis of the differentiation of the religious and secular spheres seems to be the defensible core of the theory of secularization, the assumptions that religion will tend to disappear and will be confined to the private sphere are revisited (Casanova, 1994). Thus, new ways are open to the encounter and interaction of the public and the private spheres, specifically the ways religion may inhabit the public sphere in the framework of differentiated modern arrangements and claims to redefine the boundaries between individual and community, civil society and the state, state and religion, reason and faith. While Casanova refers to de-privatization underscoring the need to differentiate the three theoretical propositions intertwined in the secularization theory, other authors emphasize the historical, both theoretical and practical changes brought by advanced modernity and its impact on secularization (Voyé, 2000). Hence, there is a consensus on the renewed and changing role religion plays in terms of

“performances”—as a resource for other systems, with the required capacity to solve problems generated in other fields but not solved there (Luhmann, 1990), specifically interacting with the political field and as a source of ethical discourse (Voyé, 2000), generating a dual, interrelated process of re-politicization of the private religious and moral spheres and re-normativization of the public sphere.

Therefore, the distinction between levels of analysis of the theories of secularization maintained by Dobbelaere (2000)—the macro, meso and micro levels—helps us to understand secularization as the particularization in the religious subsystem of the general process of functional differentiation on the macro level, while pluralization refers to the segmentary differentiation of the religion subsystem that results, on the meso level, in a religious market of competing options. At the individual level, it refers to the processes of individualization, bricolage, and decline in church religiosity.

Similar to the retreat from traditional approaches to collective identities that saw them as a primordial component which would be diluted or would dissolve on the way to modernity, there is a move away from conceptions of secularization that see modernization as the inevitable decline, weakening and even disappearance of religion and which does not distinguish between level of impact and religious change. Moreover, secularization, from a multi-dimensional and institutional perspective, becomes a descriptive and not a predictive hypothesis (Dobbelaere, 2000).

Thus, in the midst of the contradictory trends of globalization and the responses it elicits, religion interacts in unknown and unexpected ways, shaping and reshaping collective identities, claiming a renewed legitimacy in the social and political realms, displayed along local, national, regional and global dimensions, assuming different forms as well as meanings.

From another perspective, universal human rights have acquired a new importance and, paradoxically, created favourable conditions for the new social movements to formulate demands of a particular, specific and historical nature. Undoubtedly ethnic-national movements use the legal framework of human rights to promote their demands. The possibilities that they find in the context of globalization are increased not only for the reasons already mentioned, but also because by becoming linked to networks and social movements of global scope, their potential for organization and development expands considerably. This can undoubtedly also be read in a code of respect and tolerance for religious, cultural and political pluralism claimed as a condition for their development and as such, as prerequisites for new forms of coexistence. In this paradox a substantive part of contemporary debates becomes condensed.

The radical changes brought about by globalization and the re-emergence of collective identities have significant implications for social theory. They led to a resurgence of theoretical debate, in the light of the need to promote tolerance and the right to difference, reinforced also by the renaissance experienced by normative social theory during the 1960s. The debate has developed around several axes, associated with the various challenges that globalization poses to questions such as the identity, autonomy and freedom of the individual vis-à-vis collective identities; justice vis-à-vis membership;

universalism vis-à-vis particularisms; diversity, pluralism and the changing scope of the private and public spheres.

Among the main theoretical currents that participate in the debate, communitarian thinking and liberalism have a central place. However, to speak about them as two homogeneous, antagonistic and endogamous theories would lead us to reductionism and undue simplification. In Europe the debate has developed around two axes of characterization: whether it be realist liberalism vis-à-vis ethical liberalism (Bellamy, 1992) or individualist liberalism vis-à-vis social liberalism (Merquior, 1997). In the USA it is known as communitarian vis-à-vis liberalism, which partly corresponds to the former currents and is partly distinct from them. Within each of these currents diverse formulations are differentiated and enriched.⁶

The debate between these and other currents of social thought has produced formulations aimed at enriching and deepening the arguments and purging them of their most dogmatic expressions (Bokser and Salas Porras, 1999). Isaiah Berlin's contribution (1983, 1991), nourished by the Enlightenment tradition and simultaneously open to similar criticism, might be seen as a central effort to face liberalism with the question of difference and pluralism. One has to stress the intense interaction and feedback between these currents of thought, between the diverse combinations produced by the debate and the multiple institutional experiences emanating from the political struggle and discussion on a regional, national, and global scale.

Let us address some axes associated with the various challenges that globalization poses. Among them are those derived from the conflict between the universalist principles of constitutional democracies and the particularist claims of communities to preserve the integrity of their habitual lifestyles (Habermas, 1995) and the associated challenge of organizing civil society around pivots in which ethnicity or political membership jostle for position.

A central figure in the renewal of normative theory has been Rawls, who considers that the source of unity in modern societies is a shared sense of justice; despite the fact that a well-ordered society is pluralist and divided, public agreement around questions of social and political justice reinforces civic friendship and ensures the associative links (Rawls, 1993). Stressing the need for liberalism to face the problem of difference, Rawls focuses on the conditions required for a decent public life in recognition of human complexity, variety and possibility. He seeks to move away from the concept of undifferentiated, abstract persons in search of a common ground behind a veil of ignorance (Rawls, 1971) to a concept of justice as codes that make a public political life possible based on an *overlapping consensus* drawn from vastly different commitments and identities that are not compatible (Rawls, 1989).

Considering that this is "an approach grounded not in the flattening of difference but in the mutual accommodation of difference within a common public frame", while discussing with Adam Michnik the possibilities of mating liberalism and pluralism, Katznelson (1996) formulated several questions that reflect a core problem of contemporary debate:

If the plurality of ethical views and groups is to define a public sphere where an overlapping consensus obtains, which views are to be admitted and how are entry rules to be defined? Must people modify their deeply held identities and preferences to qualify? Can views be reasonable in the now much disputed private sphere but not reasonable when inserted in the public sphere? (Katznelson, 1996: 152)⁷

The question becomes even more salient insofar as Rawls identifies a civil society of diverse groups and commitments but separating ways of life by distinctive social groupings which appear to interact and mildly conflict. Rawls's individuals continue to be rationalist, therefore trying to keep moral and group conflict outside the public realm and admitting it only when capable of contributing to an overlapping consensus.

For communitarian thought the challenge lies in the definition and collective articulation of the criteria of "truth". Next to its criticism of the individual able to choose in conditions of isolation stands its claim that a universal standard of justice does not exist for the citizen. Each society, culture or religion determines the principles of justice according to its specific shared meanings. So, according to Walzer, the political community is "a world of common meanings" that defines and redefines the moral contents of right and good. A society's morality is constructed by the definition of social meanings inherent in the common interactions and understanding of its members; thus one cannot evaluate or compare different societies in regard to their moral or legal codes (Walzer, 1983; Breña, 1995).

Thus, among the debate's dimensions the question of individual rights vis-à-vis group rights has become salient. Regarding the first, communitarianism has submitted to criticism the alleged incapacity of liberalism to incorporate a constitutive sense of civic virtue as a consequence of its exclusive vision of the individual and the priority of the right over the good. It has criticized its community vision as mainly instrumentalist, insofar as it conceives it merely as a means to satisfy and secure the particular interests of individuals (Paul et al., 1996). Thus, for Sandel (1982), for example, the "politics of common good" stands above the "politics of rights" and is based on the same understanding of the political community's role in our moral life: the nation serves as a formative community for a common life and not, as in the politics of rights, as a neutral framework for competing interests. The common good is defined and redefined in the community.

For its part, liberalism has stressed a vision of the state as a neutral order vis-à-vis the plurality of concepts of the good and of ways of life. The State appears as a figure with important functions to fulfil, provided that it is understood as the form in which the group finds its unity by submitting itself to the law. In this line is the concept of the State maintained by George Armstrong Kelly (1979), who, following Shlomo Avineri, considers it as instrumental and immanent: instrumental because it ensures the peace that allows people to have a more elevated vision, as expressed in people's talents and particularities; immanent because it is the general form by means of which the aspirations of humanity are reconciled with its presence in the secular sphere. The state, in this line of thought, is seen as governed by law and not by intentions, providing the framework for a plurality of aims without its integrity being threatened.

Communitarian thought considers that the liberal tradition has not placed enough emphasis on moral conflict or on the collective dimension of human life, because it has not integrated particularistic criteria in the construction of a universal citizenship. Therefore, according to this view, liberalism is unable to face the emergence of collective identities and is vulnerable when facing its demands. However, liberalism has deliberately made an abstraction of the particular and historical context because it considers that it can be a source of privileges and exclusion.

The contemporary debate, while aimed at addressing new processes and trends, evokes the theoretical struggle between the contradictory and diverse founding projects of modernity: Enlightenment or Romantic historicism; market-state or civilization-state; state of natural law or state of historical culture; state of law or state of the national spirit. While for liberal Enlightenment, human rights became the new principle of institutionalization of the private and public spheres, for historicism it rested on an abstract and a historical universal reason and had to be confronted by historicity and subjectivity. While rejection of the principles of the Enlightenment had diverse sources—liberal and conservative, revolutionary and reactionary—the historicist concept of the state (of the national culture and spirit) resulted in excluding chauvinistic and nationalist positions (Berlin, 1983). The contemporary debate, for its part, has stressed the homogenizing nature of both projects, one in its alleged individualistic, juridical abstraction and the other in its relativism.

Seeking to overcome polarization, the concept of a multi-cultural citizenship (Kymlicka, 1998) seeks to demonstrate that liberalism is as capable as communitarianism of valuing the social nature of human life and that liberal principles demand the protection of minority cultures from infringement by the dominant culture. According to this concept, the plural manifestations of cultural diversity demand reconsideration of the rights of minorities in new terms, among which three different types, associated with the different conditions confronted by the groups, are distinguished: (1) special representation rights; (2) self-government rights for national minorities; (3) multi-cultural (poly-ethnic) rights, for religious and immigrant groups.⁸ These types of rights open a twofold vein of problems, because they reflect the logic of modernity as well as the transformations which the public–private separation is undergoing, the latter being the sphere for the expression of diversity, and the former the domain for building the universal and common. It is from this perspective that we might view Rawls's initial concept that a society in which rights and claims

... depend on religious affiliation, social class, and so on may not have a concept of citizenship at all; for this concept, as we are using it, goes with the concept of society as a fair system of co-operation for mutual advantage between free and equal persons. (Rawls, 1989: 241)

Liberalism's arguments refer to the risks entailed in the subordination of the individual to the group and the cancelling of individual freedom. It questions the possibilities of bringing together collective cultural diversity and individual diversity due to the authoritarian potential of group belonging.

Vis-à-vis cultural diversity, liberalism emphasizes the universalistic proposal as a substratum that underscores the common as a resource for coexistence. Similarly, it questions the possibility that human rights may find a stable ground in cultural contexts where their original philosophical assumptions have not developed. Thus, seeing liberalism's main challenge today as the need to deal with diversity and difference, it is worth referring to Isaiah Berlin's sceptical liberalism, which aimed to combat its tendency to flatten cultural differences in the name of reason and therefore rejected the idea that reason permits the discovery of one true way of thought and life. Berlin has certainly struggled to defend a deep and wide pluralism of "many objective ends, ultimate values, some incompatible with others, pursued by different societies at different times, or by different groups in the same society, by entire classes, churches or races, or by a particular individual within them" (Berlin, 1991: 79). Simultaneously, he has rejected a relativism so complete that it brings people to be captives of history without the capacity to consider, evaluate and judge. Therefore the emphasis on the understanding of cultures as

... never unitary, never indivisible, never organic, always assemblages of distinctive ideas, elements, patterns and behaviour ... and therefore while only the immersion in specific cultures can give individuals access to the universal, only universal standards provide means for evaluating specific aspects of cultures from outside the framework of their own exclusivity. (Berlin, 1991: 85)

The distinction between pluralism and relativism plays a central role in seeking to bring liberal tradition to grips with the question of diversity. While pluralism "denies that there is one, and only one true morality or aesthetics or theology, and allows equally objective alternative values or system of values", relativism "is a doctrine according to which the judgement of a man or a group, since it is the expression of a statement of a taste, or emotional attitude or outlook, is simply what it is, with no objective correlates which determine its truth or falsehood" (Berlin, 1991: 87, 80).

Because liberalism's universalism and individualism make it difficult to recognize diversity when confronting people whose self-understandings and moral commitments reject liberal principles, the contemporary debate is nourished by the alternative theoretical roots of John Stuart Mill and Locke. Thus, in the framework of the intense flow of encounters between populations and cultures, migrant groups and minorities, globalization confronts the challenges of an interconnected and open world built up by a network of closed societies (Portinaro, 2000). It certainly reflects the conflict between the universalist principles of constitutional democracies and the particularist claims of communities to preserve the integrity of their habitual life-styles (Habermas, 1995).

In the new scenarios posed by globalization, where liberalism has become a meta-ideology, it is also a profound challenge to build a plural liberalism as

... a balanced commitment between the ideals of rationality and rights understood in an intrinsic and Kantian sense to apply universally irrespective of cultural and geographical variations and a more than grudging recognition of the communal, religious, ethnic and

national ties that are vital to the human impulses of belonging, recognition and self-definition. (Katznelson, 1996: 167)

However, because the transformations are derived from the globalization processes, these questions might also be addressed from new perspectives. In fact, sovereignty understood as the national state's right to self-determination has ceased to act as an untransferable and general *de jure* argument. At present, there is no state which is not part of some international or regional agreement or other, obliging it to implement in its territory different universal norms, among which, for example, human rights are a shared concern and a priority. Thus the various links between the local, national, regional and global levels open new roads for mediation between cultural and political approaches that conceive human rights and diversity as parameters for the construction of political life. In this line of thought, citizenship can be considered and built as a communication channel between multiple communities.

In bringing together the religious and the sociological dimensions of diversity, a need emerges for new ways of building citizenship. When exploring the roads by which citizenship and its interaction with cultural diversity and minorities are theorized today, the state-civil society binomial acquires a new centrality as an outstanding angle from which to view the interactions between freedom and equality; justice and solidarity; individual and community. The idea of civil society has been formulated historically in different ways: as an ethical ideal of social order, in its original formulation; as a resource to oppose the authoritarian tendencies of the state; and as the realm in which to include the claim to learn to deal with the difference and to guarantee political participation and citizenship (Bokser, 1995). Thus, for example, according to Walzer (1995), "the civility that makes possible democratic politics can only be learnt in associative networks" which might have a global reach as a consequence of the cross-border interactions that are developed among its members.

Deliberative approaches find in new social movements a democratic action based on communicative interaction. Through these groups' interaction a plurality of democratic forms might emerge similar to the functioning of society in its ethical formulation. So, according to Cohen (1985), a structural plurality in the public sphere of civil society ensures the possibility of defining social life in terms of public participation which would renovate and revitalize the public sphere. There are risks associated with a homogenizing vision of civil society where the understanding would necessarily lead to consensus (Cohen, 1985). Therefore there is a need to approach civil society from a pluralistic point of view that takes into account mechanisms to regulate differences and conflict and deal with dissent.

Pluralism is related to its significance as a way of linking the private and the public, the primordial and the civil, which rests on a conception of a civil society where the virtue of civility has a role to play. Therefore, the reconstitution of civility is also understood as a counterweight to pluralism and its potential fragmentation. It is in the midst of this type of society that the experience of collective identities—among which religious identity

plays a central role, with its mutuality, commonality, mutual involvement and common purpose—may provide the bases for a shared and peaceful life. Here lies also the potential of the covenant traditions in axial religions to reinforce the common ground (Mittleman, 2001; Elazar, 1999).

Intertwined with the latter, we find in the transformations stemming from the globalization processes possible points of departure to approach new theoretical syntheses. The accelerated pace of communications, the multi-dimensional interdependence and population flows, as well as the porosity of borders and the new profile of boundaries make it possible to recognize the collective dimensions of identities and the capacity to interact and build bridges that cross “belongings” while assuming the profound implications of the fact that members of the same cultural group may not share the same moral code; or, in counterpart, the same ethics can unite people from different ethnic origins. Interaction beyond space, through networks of worlds of identity—primordial as well as virtual—creates conditions for a qualitative change.

Civil society, interest groups and cultural pluralism entwine connecting collectivities of various kinds. Pointing to the interaction between cultural, institutional and political pluralism, Katznelson has stated:

When these three pluralisms are taken together, they help identify a zone akin to that of Locke’s public privacy by furnishing institutional vehicles for group particularity to enter the public arena as voluntary interest groups. In this manner, groups can become political neighbours who are not expected to repress their competing cultural or ethical preferences or to contain them wholly in the zone of the private. In turn, the subsumption of nationality, religion and ethnicity into the interest group form entails the thinning out of cultural intensity required for the play of liberal democracy in which there can be no permanent or ultimate winners. (Katznelson, 1996: 176)

From another perspective, following Benhabib (1996), institutions of liberal democracies embody the idealized content of a certain form of practical reason, understood as historical, that has become the anonymous and collective property of traditions. In this way, diverse sorts of boundaries (including national sovereignty) are weakened as the excuse of relativist argument, since globalization provides the opportunity for norms, procedures and practices to acquire an “intelligible, expansive and anonymous” character, reaching in this way the status of communication bridge between different collectivities. Simultaneously, through global communication more people than ever are participants in society, a trend reinforced by the pluralization of actors.

As we can see, globalization has given a new impetus to the theoretical debates. Its multi-dimensional, multi-faceted and contradictory character has given rise to new identities with different levels of aggregation, such as global identities, and has fostered primordial identities in the shaping and reordering of institutional and territorial spaces. These transformations and the ways they influence the feeling of full membership in a community, the ongoing process of individualization, the differentiation derived from cultural diversity, and pluralism, underscore the need for new theoretical syntheses.

NOTES

¹. The interaction between globalization processes and the structuring of identities has previously been analysed in Bokser and Salas Porras (1999).

². Among the changes that most perceptibly affect spatial and temporal referents, the following are recognized: the communication media that intensify the density and speed of cross-border connections as a result of the diverse combinations between telecommunications, digital computers, audiovisual media and satellites; the global corporations, the networks of alliances and associations they establish and the global products they develop and promote—from food to television programmes, advertisements, and global newspapers and magazines that standardize consumption patterns—and the linkage between supranational agencies that tend to align and standardize economic, social and cultural policy criteria.

³. A dramatic loss of the state's capacity to orient the construction of identity imagery may be seen in the Balkans, where geographical regions mix and overlap ethnic regions. Sarajevo and Kosovo are extreme cases. However, Africa and some regions of Latin America went through similar experiences.

⁴. If the idea of a link between the natural or biological attributes of an individual or group and its intellectual or moral traits has historically characterized racism, the novelty today is that it is no longer associated exclusively with the naturalization of the Other, in the name of a supposed biological inferiority and natural inequality. It is basically a differentialist, more veiled attitude, which is diverted through culture and attacks national, ethnic and religious groups and minorities, isolating, excluding and segregating them (Wieviorka, 1992; Taguieff, 1995). The distinction between the old racism of a biological nature and the new racism, basically of a cultural nature, rather than responding to a linear view of temporal succession, points toward the changes regarding global, regional and local levels where encounters between groups take place.

⁵. It should be pointed out that by recognizing that the network society, processor of information flows, is incapable of producing plausible identities on its own, precisely because of the radical destructuring to which it submits space and time, Castells subsumes the different logic and options of traditional identities in the common denominator of the local.

⁶. The realistic version of liberalism developed through the contractual expressions of Locke and Rousseau, the utilitarian ones of John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham, the individualist of Weber, Pareto and Nozick and the neutralist of von Mises and Hayek; while the ethical version (communitarianism) went through diverse social expressions, such as those of Adam Ferguson and Emile Durkheim, communitarian (relativist and rationalist) such as Michael Walzer (relativist communitarianism) and Joseph Raz (rationalist communitarianism) and even socialists ones such as Bobbio.

⁷. Katznelson's arguments refer to Locke's concept of civil society as multiple individuals who oscillate between values, positions, identities and possibilities.

⁸. The special representation rights are based on the concept that political processes should be sufficiently representative of disadvantaged groups, including religious and ethnic minorities; self-government rights refer to minorities living in states where they claim these rights as central for preserving their cultural identities; and multi-cultural rights include polyethnic and representation rights as primarily demands for inclusion, for full membership in the larger society. The liberal view sees self-government rights as a threat to solidarity and stability. However, Kymlicka considers the denial of self-government rights as destabilizing, since it encourages resentment and even secession (Kymlicka, 1998).

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