

“Multinationalism and Polyethnicity in the Canadian Philosophy of Multiculturalism”

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Introduction

Throughout the 1990s, the debate on multiculturalism gained in importance both in Canadian politics and in Western political philosophy. New answers to the question of cultural diversity in Canada are needed because the structures of the debate and the use of the distinction between polyethnicity and multinationalism limit the possibilities of hearing correctly and responding satisfactorily to the positions of minority groups. Consequently, this paper will explore how the distinction between multinationalism and polyethnicity, operated in the writings of four Canadian political philosophers (Will Kymlicka, Charles Taylor, Michael Ignatieff, and James Tully), is related to the political field it aims to describe. This distinction (the object of section III) gained its importance and role because the Canadian philosophers who participated and occupied a central place in the debate share a set of common assumptions, on the basis of shared intellectual ties (section I) and of a shared set of political concerns (section II). I will also defend the normative theses that, as a result of these shared origins, the debate is limited and cannot lead to new, better suited answers to the question of diversity (section IV), unless the debate is structured anew – and that such an opening is present in James Tully’s work, because of his heritage and his set of philosophical connections that differ from those of the other philosophers central to the debate, leading him to develop a different conception of culture (section V).

I. The Philosophical Field and the Centrality of Isaiah Berlin

Of the four philosophers who are central to the Canadian debate on multiculturalism, three are linked to Isaiah Berlin, who taught at All Souls College, in Oxford: Taylor and Ignatieff, one generation apart, both studied with him, whereas Kymlicka studied with Gerald Cohen, who had studied with Berlin and continued to approach political philosophy in analytic terms. Tully, who studied with John Dunn and Quentin Skinner in Cambridge, does not share this lineage; instead, he finds himself tied to the tradition of republicanism and of the social history of political thought. He did, however, teach alongside Taylor at McGill University and was influenced directly by his work in that earlier stage of his career.¹

The distinctions Berlin operated and the concepts he created have been central to the Canadian field of political philosophy. What matters here are not Berlin’s philosophical and political positions, but rather the space of possibilities he defined through the questions he asked. His paper “Two Concepts of Freedom” (2002) offers the basic distinctions which he used to

¹ Although there is no room within the limits of this essay to explain and defend the methodology, this analysis is inspired by sociological work accomplished by Randall Collins (1998) and by Pierre Bourdieu (2000).

describe the debates around liberty – the central question of liberalism – and to position himself in this debate by asserting the centrality of the question of liberty in the field of political philosophy.

Berlin's basic operation is a distinction between negative and positive freedom, with the addition of recognition as a mixture of the two. Negative freedom has to do with setting limits to the interference of others, whereas positive freedom has to do with pursuing specific goals. Problems *might* then emerge when these specific goals are collective, and serve to impose the will of some over others. For Berlin, nationalism is a matter of an excess of positive freedom – one of the many possibilities for evil and unjust consequences emerging out of collective goals and actions (the class, the race, and the religion can also lead to unfreedom and totalitarianism). His answer is then to give primacy to negative liberty, which for Berlin is also necessarily and exclusively individual liberty. Elements of positive liberty are then acceptable, and possible, but only insofar as they extend this more essential negative liberty.

Berlin also presents a second distinction between the ends of individuals and the ends of collectivities. The reason why collective ends are problematic is that they are imposed by some individuals over others – collectivities appearing as ideological fictions. Thus the opposition between politics based on individuals or on collectives is repeated in Berlin's opposition between value pluralism and value monism. Individuals or groups who adopt a monist position impose their ends on others – nationalism and communism justifying such oppression –, making collective ends equivalent to monism and monism equivalent to unfreedom. Individuals who adopt a pluralist position understand that their ends might not correspond to those of others, that they will need to choose among their own ends depending on their context, and that politics must thus enable individuals the freedom to choose between ends and defend negative liberty, rather than pursue positive collective ends.

Taylor will be able to reverse Berlin's position on nationalism by focusing on his notion of recognition. For Berlin, freedom in terms of recognition is a mixture of positive and negative liberty; it has to do with not being ignored and not being degraded, to be treated as a unique individual or group, to feel a sense of belonging. To be recognized is for an agent to have his will and image of himself taken into consideration (2002: 202); however, Berlin does not recognize collective entities – only that individuals are asking that they be recognized.

Nationalism is then a specific problem: it is “the elevation of the interests of the unity and self-determination of the nation to the status of the supreme value before which all other considerations must, if need be, yield at all times.” (1980: 338) It is the ideology that: (1) individual human beings are shaped by the group to which they belong and its practices and values; (2) this group is similar to a biological organism, whose survival is to be secured and whose interests thus prevail over other values that might conflict with its own; (3) individual human beings hold values because they are those of the nation, because they are demands on them emerging out of the form of life into which they were born, and can only be happy if they adopt these common values; (4) the values of different nations can only come into conflict with each other, and so those who adopt contrasting values, internally or externally, must be made to yield to the needs of the nation (1980: 341-343). From Berlin's point of view, pluralism requires that nationalism be understood and taken into account and combated. There is, strictly speaking, no such thing as liberal or pluralist nationalism. From Taylor's point of view, pluralism requires that nationalism be recognized and accommodated – if it is a civic form of nationalism.

A series of questions are raised at any time within the field of political philosophy, some more central than others. Two questions frame the debate on multiculturalism, the centrality of this debate in political philosophy in general being due to its implication in larger questions that structure the field of political philosophy in general – as well as its other debates, which address its questions differently.

The first question that organizes the field of political philosophy deals with whether politics is about individuals or about groups or, in Berlin's terms, whether the self is individual or collective. Do societies, cultures, peoples, and nations exist? A weaker version of the question would be: can such collective entities be the source of justified claims? We thus have on the one hand individualists and, on the other hand, nationalists or collectivists. This question, which belongs to the field of *political* philosophy, is a specific derivation of the more general ontological question, central to the more general field of philosophy: are non-observable entities *real* and, if so, what is their reality?

The second question deals with the notion of rights and duties, and was already central in the debates following the French Revolution (Gauchet 1989): is politics about rights or about duties – in other words, can we have rights without also having duties, and do we have responsibilities other than those that correspond to the rights of others? We thus have those who defend negative liberty, where rights appear as protections from other persons and from the state, and those who defend what Berlin calls positive liberty, where responsibilities appear as what allows for collective action that leaves room for individuality. In the late 20th century, this particular question sometimes takes the form of the politics of recognition, itself a derivation of a larger problem in philosophy in that time period (Descombes 1979): what is the meaning of difference? In political philosophy, the question is: what does it mean to ask for recognition, should differences be recognized, which ones ought to be recognized, and what does this recognition entail? Is there a duty of recognition, or a right to recognition – in other words, is recognition a way to ask for rights to be recognized, or for duties to be performed by other groups?

By relating these two questions to each other and to broader ones, we can better understand Berlin's treatment of freedom. Negative freedom is individual; positive freedom is individual or collective. Negative freedom is about rights; positive freedom is about duties. Duties are usually duties toward an external entity, and run the risk of oppressing the individual members of the group, thus positive freedom is usually collective and often oppressive (Berlin 2002: 208, 214; see also 2002: 180-182, 194-195; 1980: 338, 341-3). In the extent to which positive freedom remains individual, it is better protected through the negative freedom of choice. In distinguishing between negative and positive freedom, Berlin conflates two greater questions and limits the possibilities for answers: his position does not allow for individual responsibility and collective rights; he also refuses collective responsibility as too dangerous. It should not then be surprising that we will find a liberal version of these occulted positions defended by Canadian philosophers, in relation to non-liberal traditions of philosophy.

II. The Political Field and the Centrality of Québec in the Early 1990s

For Canadian philosophers of the 1990s, given the urgency of the Québec national question, multiculturalism became the tool to address these two questions proper to the field of political philosophy. We must consequently explore this political situation and the Canadian

political field in the years when these philosophers were writing and exchanging. Two main factors explain the rise of a *political* debate around multiculturalism, set in terms of multinationalism and polyethnicity.

First, a constitutional debate took place from the 1970s to the 1990s, tied to the inclusion of Québec or its separation from the Canadian federation. The Quiet Revolution had brought together the questions of political and social justice, making claims for them in nationalistic terms: self-government was needed just as much as economic and social equality, the former being a tool for the latter. The federalist, moderate, or undecided nationalist could then state that if either could not be achieved within Canada, then the federation was to be renegotiated, or secession might be necessary. This negotiation and a new arrangement would have to begin with the recognition of the distinct character of Québec from other provinces and lead to constitutional and institutional transformations. The radical sovereigntist position stated that neither objective would ever be possible within Canada, in part because this recognition would always remain impossible or irrelevant – and so that secession was necessary. Second, the changes in immigration policy of the 1960s and the policy of multiculturalism of 1971 transformed the political problem from relations between Québec and the Rest of the Canada – the biculturalism of the Royal Commission –, to relations between the various minority cultures present in Canada to the two majority national groups, alongside a series of different claims from the nations grouped under the term “Aboriginal.”

Two other transformations occurred at the same time as these changes took place within the Canadian political field: a shift in the Canadian political identity took place, both in English Canada and in French Canada (with the apparition of the Québécois, Acadian, and provincial francophone identities: Igartua 2006; Meunier and Warren 2002); and a project of refoundation of the country on liberal bases was being spearheaded by Pierre Elliott Trudeau. Correspondingly, the debate over multiculturalism is also a debate over Canadian identity. It is a debate that attempts to set the terms of an acceptable democratization and extension of the Canadian identity beyond the British connection. To address Canadian identity through the problem of multiculturalism is then to open a state and its laws to the many cultures and nations and to defend the basic premise of inclusion. As a result, the critics of multiculturalism have not been able to make their way into the mainstream Anglophone debate: it is driven by the underlying political goal of including Quebecers and members of ethno-cultural minority groups into the Canadian state, political community, and identity, so as to achieve political unity within the country. The themes of nationality, ethnicity and culture were intermingled in the general political and constitutional debate throughout the period ranging from the adoption of the policy of multiculturalism in 1971 to the rejection of the Charlottetown Accord and of Quebec sovereignty-association in 1993 and 1995, the period when the central philosophical texts on multiculturalism were written and published.

The political field thus presents a series of problems and questions, which Canadian philosophers were left to answer, leading to a certain originality given the overlap of national and cultural concerns that is specific to Canada. Two questions appear as most important to the constitutional negotiations of the 1980s and 1990s. First, what should be at the centre of Canadian politics: the Constitution and the tradition of executive federalism, which had to do since 1867 with the interaction of groups and the centrality of governments; or the Charter and the tradition of liberalism, which was gaining in momentum since the Second World War and has to do with interactions between individuals and a recourse to the Courts? Second: how can

the Canadian identity be defined in such a way as to allow for the inclusion of francophone Quebecers, members of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis, as well as members of ethnocultural minority groups, and *convince them* to participate in Canada's institutions? Does multiculturalism indeed reduce nationality to only one ethnicity among countless others, as several Quebecers have suggested?

III. Culture and the Distinction between Multinationalism and Polyethnicity

In reaction to these political challenges, the debate on multiculturalism is the guise under which the questions of difference and of pluralism have been addressed in Canada. Central to this debate, and present throughout as one of its central presuppositions and analytical tools, is the distinction between multinationalism and polyethnicity. It is perhaps best developed by Kymlicka (1995), who uses it to overcome the confusion and conflation of what he sees as two distinct problems related to the challenges of including minorities in a democracy and of avoiding the violence that is often tied to ethno-cultural and nationalist conflicts.²

The distinction itself is quite straightforward. Polyethnicity can be found where “cultural diversity arises from individual and familial immigration,” which in turn leads immigrants to “coalesce into loose associations” (10) to maintain their practices and values, all the while seeking accommodations in the mainstream society's institutions so as to be able to participate in them. Multinationalism, instead, refers to the presence of multiple nations, one of which is in a position of majority and has incorporated “previously self-governing, territorially concentrated cultures into a larger state.” (10) These minority cultures wish to remain distinct from the mainstream society and govern themselves, or at least seek to do so, to the fullest possible extent. We can observe that on both counts, the underlying issue is cultural diversity within a political community.

There is another important distinction at the centre of these definitions Kymlicka offers: ethnicity has to do with *individuals* presenting themselves as individuals, whereas nationality has to do with *societies* that wish to survive and to govern themselves to make that end possible. What is more, ethnocultural differences are exhibited in the private sphere, and only reach the public sphere when the laws of the majority or their attitudes prevent them from expressing their culture (14-15). National differences, on the other hand, are exhibited in the public sphere, insofar as they are tied to the self-government of a parallel society within the same state.

Kymlicka can operate this distinction on the basis of his understanding of the concept of culture. He takes the precautionary step of limiting his use of culture to a conceptual space located somewhere between the localized idea of lifestyles and of “the distinct customs, perspectives, or ethos of a group or association” (18), and the globalized idea of Western culture as “a modern, urban, secular industrialized civilization” (18). He takes it to be synonymous with a nation or a people, “an intergenerational community, more or less institutionally complete, occupying a given territory or homeland, sharing a distinct language and history.” (18) Kymlicka thus defines nations in cultural terms, rather than racial ones, and deems culture to be synonymous with society.

² Kymlicka himself points out the rarity of this distinction, outside of the work of Michael Walzer and Nathan Glazer.

Beyond his explanation of the concept of culture, we must also see how Kymlicka uses it if we are to understand its full extension and the role it plays in his distinction between polyethnicity and multinationalism. Liberalism and “principles of individual freedom” (75) are central to Kymlicka’s position. Consequently, the rights of individuals come first: he is in favour of respecting only these cultural differences of groups “that support the liberty of their members” (75) and not those that do not and can thus be called illiberal. Liberalism allows individuals to live the life they want, according to their beliefs and values, and seeks to eliminate the fear of discrimination or of punishment that would keep them from doing so. Liberalism also recognizes that individuals can question their own beliefs as to what makes a good life and eventually change these beliefs as they relate to other conceptions of the good life.

It is thus coherent that Kymlicka would limit multiculturalism to issues that regard what he calls “societal cultures” and which provide “meaningful ways of life across the full range of human activities, including social, education, religious, recreational, and economic life, encompassing both public and private spheres.” (76) They are real through their embodiment in institutions – the schools, the media, the government, the economic structures of a society – and they are thus linked to the majority in a democratic state, or to the group that has power in any other state. Immigrants leave their institutions behind, and only find the institutions of the dominant culture after they emigrate. Their culture is thus relegated to the private sphere; their options and life chances are decided upon by the dominant culture. National minorities, on the other hand, refuse this integration into the dominant culture, and seek to create the institutions necessary to institutionalize and consolidate their societal culture.

What is most significant in this liberal understanding of culture is that a societal culture makes freedom possible by providing a context for choice. Our beliefs and the meanings of our practices come from the shared vocabulary, traditions and conventions that make up a societal culture. We define ourselves in part through our membership in our culture, we find security for our identity and for our choices and beliefs in the security of our culture, and it is easier for us as individuals to feel and express solidarity with those who, like us, continue something that preceded us and that will outlive us. As a result, liberals demand the freedom for individuals to make their life choices within their societal culture, to change these choices, to change cultural roles and features, and to change the importance of some values over others. In the end, for liberals, a culture “provides a meaningful context of choice for people, without limiting their ability to question and revise particular values or beliefs” (93), for individuals who can revise any and all of the ends they pursue.

The difference, in terms of polyethnicity and multinationalism, is that within the context of a state with a dominant majority societal culture – in the case of Canada, the English Canadian culture – some minority groups will have their own societal cultures and corresponding institutions, and will call themselves nations, while others will merge the societal culture of the country whence they emigrated or whence their parents emigrated, with the dominant culture and its institutions. Cultures themselves can be chosen: just as choices are made on the basis of available possibilities, cultures seem to lie before individuals as more general options for what will open different sets of possibilities, and they are also subject to individual choices. As a result, in rare individual cases, it is possible to move from one societal culture to another, a process that tends to happen more often through generational change.

The same distinction is also adopted by Michael Ignatieff (1999, 2000, 2001), with different consequences. For Ignatieff, the distinction that matters is between ethnic groups that

subscribe to a civic nationalism, which amounts to a culture of individual rights used as a tool for dialogue, and those that subscribe to an ethnic nationalism, which amounts to a culture of collective existence, claims to self-government, and separation. The political culture of Canada is neither individualistic nor centralist, and is common to all Canadians, beyond their ethnic and national differences – its nationalism is thus civic, expressed in terms of group rights. Ethnic minorities seek to protect their culture, and can thus be accommodated under such a liberal regime of individual rights. In more extreme cases, internal autonomy and group rights are sufficient to force the majority ethnic group to respect the minority groups; claims for statehood from ethnic groups are only justified if the groups cannot live in peace, or if this devolution of state powers is not accepted by the majority.

However, nationalist claims that go beyond the protection of ethnic groups, beyond individual rights, and that are collectivist (and thus amount to ethnic nationalism, nationalism in Berlin's terms), make coexistence difficult. The principle of coexistence present in individual rights lies in that what is given to one group must be given to the others as well, whereas ethnic nationalism only defends the rights of the national group. In Canada, it is thus the claims and the political culture of minority groups that define them as ethnic groups – whose civic nationalism, tied to a nation located elsewhere finds its place in relation to the civic nationalism of the majority – or as national groups – whose ethnic nationalist political culture and claims clashes with the civic, liberal nationalism of the majority.

In contrast, Taylor (1994) argues that our identity is so closely tied to our cultural membership that we receive our ends from our community, and that our ends are defined by our culture, rather than individuals deciding on their own ends and defining themselves. We simply are not able to change some of our aims because they do not depend on choices, but rather on our insertion in a larger culture. For Taylor, individuals and groups are formed through their recognition by others as equal, as equally worthy of respect, and as pursuing equally valuable goals. Groups want their own cultural survival, but they also want other groups to recognize that the goal of cultural survival is legitimate. They want to defend themselves and want others, especially majority cultures, to let them defend themselves collectively. The danger lies in that “multinational societies can break up, in large part because of a lack of (perceived) recognition of the equal worth of one group by another.” (64) Demands for policies of multiculturalism are demands of recognition and equal respect, which entail the recognition of the distinct character of the other culture and the refusal to appreciate or judge it from our own standards (71). There is no place, no horizon, where a culture can judge another – and many multiculturalists fail because they give greater value to their own culture and judge others according to their standards, rather than simply valuing their own culture.

Taylor thus reverses the outlook presented by Kymlicka, but he maintains the terms and the distinction. In those of his texts that deal with the Canadian situation (1993), the distinction between polyethnicity and multinationalism is the reason behind his almost entirely exclusive focus on multinationalism. Polyethnicity emerges as a topic of interest only in the case of education and the demand for multicultural curricula. The exclusion and lack of recognition as equally valuable of groups such as women and ethnocultural minorities can be overcome by their recognition as equal individuals. There is a fundamental difference when it comes to nations, insofar as the recognition of a deep diversity is needed because each nation defines itself and its potential attachment to Canada in ways that exclude other nations' identities, that focus on their own concerns and misrecognize the other nations. Quebec is as guilty of misrecognition as

English Canada. (194) The difference thus lies in that there are two levels of diversity. The first level, the difference between English Canadians and members of ethnocultural groups, has to do with a shared idea of what it means to belong to Canada paired with a difference in culture, outlook and back ground. The second, deeper level, has to do with a difference between understandings of belonging to Canada: Quebecers, Aboriginals, and Canadians outside of Quebec are Canadian in different manners. (183) In a manner analogous to Berlin's recognition of the importance of nationalism, Taylor argues that liberal English Canadians must recognize that individual communitarian Quebecers understand themselves as belonging to a nation – but *he* does not recognize the nation as a collective entity.

We can thus find, in these three philosophies, a devaluation of the problem of polyethnicity in favour of a focus on multinationalism, which results from the threat nationalism poses to the liberal conception of culture as a context for individual choice underlying these philosophies, as well as to the position of dominance of liberalism in Canada with regard to other societal, ethnic nationalist, or deeply diverse cultures (Taylor indeed also participated in what was termed the “debate on Asian values”). The greater challenge in the political debate on multiculturalism; the claims that must be given priority, and in response to which the most compromise will be needed, all have to do with multinationalism.

Tully also focuses on nationalism, devoting chapters of *Strange Multiplicity* (1995) to Aboriginal Canadians and to Quebecers. He maintains the difference between nations and ethnicities, yet places these groups side by side with other groups emerging out of social differences and demands for cultural recognition: nationalism, supranationalism, linguistic minorities, ethnic minorities, interculturalism, and feminism. He thus uses the distinction, but also complicates it by separating supranationalism (as in the case of the European or transamerican identities) and nationalism, as well as ethnic and cultural minorities, where the former are longstanding ethnic groups within the regime, and the latter have come directly out of recent immigration. All these forms of demands for cultural recognition conflict with one another in practice, even as they present the same characteristics: they “are aspirations for appropriate forms of self government” (4) although at different levels; they claim “that the basic laws and institutions of modern societies, and their authoritative traditions of interpretation, are unjust” (5) and so that they cannot consent to them; and they claim that culture cannot be separated from politics, that it constitutes it – that laws emerge from culture. As a result, none of these demands for cultural recognition take precedence over the others.

Belonging and allegiance to a culture are tied to the respect we have and that others have for our culture as it is present in a wider fabric of associated cultures. A culture is only capable of achievements because it is interwoven with other cultures; if other cultures disappear or become weaker, it does as well. Individuals constantly borrow from other cultures and reimagine their own to integrate or refuse other cultures. Because of this close connection with other cultures, the members of a culture can become aware that their own is only one viewpoint, related to others in at least as many ways as it is different from them. This entanglement of cultures leads to a constant disequilibrium and rearrangement – of each culture, and of the fabric of the cultures that interact.

Tully thus conceptualizes culture “as overlapping, interactive and internally negotiated” (10) and so as intrinsically relational, entirely present in the interactions between persons. Culture is not located in individuals, as a context for their choices or for their self-understanding, and it is also not synonymous with a nation. Culture being relational, the entanglement of

cultures is that of relationships themselves and so more than one culture will shape individuals at once. However, Tully does not expand on this relational ontology of culture, which thus remains to be developed. What matters for our purposes is that although some groups or cultures do find themselves in a position of power in a country, they are no more than central to that country than any other. If individuals adopt this view – and they often do in practice – they can criticize their own culture because through their contacts with other cultures, they can free themselves from what is familiar, without leaving it. They can also engage in much broader and radical dissent, that will not be seen as dangerous to their identity and their culture, as nothing is taken for granted, not in their culture, not in the fabric of cultures, and as the terms on which these cultures coexist (the constitution) remain open for discussion and review. (207) Discussion and constant reinstitution of the constitution can bring people together through their differences.

IV. The Positions within the Field of Political Philosophy

Each philosopher central to the Canadian debate on multiculturalism answered the questions presented by the political and by the philosophical fields, and has adopted a version of the positions put forward by one of the political forces in presence. Given that they are part of the majority group in Canada – whose questions they tried to answer – and part of the main debate in the international philosophical field – whose concerns they addressed –, they achieved a position of visibility both in Canada and abroad. However, because of the terms of the debate, they also have not been able to address the positions of the minority groups in terms that are acceptable for all the groups participating in the debate.

Kymlicka's main statement can be found in *Multicultural Citizenship*, published in 1995. He attempts to define a liberal nationalism, usually named "civic nationalism," which is not based on ethnicity but rather on "the fact that anyone can integrate into the common culture, regardless of race or color." (24) This integration is important because it is a shared identity and sense of belonging that keeps people together or apart, and this identity can only come from a common history, language, and often religion – none of which are shared in multination states. The first step toward creating such integration would then be to accommodate the minority nation and not to subordinate it, so as to make their allegiance to the larger community possible. The members of the minority nation must want to live with the other group and value their relationship. But this mutual solidarity cannot be forced; it can only emerge as individuals live together. For Kymlicka, multiculturalism is about the rights of individuals as members of groups, insofar as individuals understand themselves as belonging to groups and must coexist in a peaceful manner.

When he intervened in the debate, Taylor had already been writing about Quebec and Canada for decades. In "The Politics of Recognition," first published in 1992, Taylor's main focus is on Québec nationalism, and his answer to the problem is the respect of deep diversity, mutual recognition, and mutual duties. For him³, deep diversity has to do with the difference between individualism and communitarianism: there are two philosophies as to what constitutes a liberal society and, in Canada, they have come to clash politically. For individualist liberals (Taylor names John Rawls, Richard Dworkin and Bruce Ackerman), individual rights always come before collective goals and individuals are primarily agents who *choose*. Society thus

³ But not necessarily for other communitarians who, like MacIntyre, may not be liberals at all.

cannot be organized around values other than freedom of choice – even though other values like social justice might appear, limited by freedom of choice. For communitarians, “a society can be organized around a definition of the good life” (1994: 176) as long as the good is sought in common and as minorities are included in this search and given the fundamental liberties that protect them from their vulnerability with regard to the preferences of the majority in this common search.

This definition of the good life can consequently include the survival and thriving of the group as a collective goal. Taylor also suggests that Kymlicka’s argument bridges the liberal-communitarian debate. (185-6, note 10) For Taylor, multiculturalism is not about rights; it is about the responsibility to respect the self-understanding of other individuals, where, in the end, the individualist Canadian majority must respect that communitarian Quebecers understand themselves as a nation. And so Taylor can only go so far in recognizing Quebecers’ self-understanding, given the limitations to the debate: the responsibility is that of individuals, not of groups.

A more radical individualism can be found in Michael Ignatieff’s *The Rights Revolution*, published in 2000 after presenting them as the Massey lectures. Ignatieff had written about nationalism in Europe and human rights and gained recognition through *Blood and Belonging*, which had first been a documentary TV series, and had then become a book in 1993. Through his these essays, Ignatieff presents the thesis that while there has been a move from an imperialist to a post-imperialist period in the course of the twentieth century, a similar shift away from a deeply entrenched nationalism is not in fact possible, even though it is desirable (1993). Indeed, the main danger of nationalism comes from its ethnic variant, which leads to violence and conflict. Instead, strong nation-states, built upon the principles of civic nationalism, are needed to enforce the law and maintain security. Only once the law is upheld can a cosmopolitan, post-nationalist spirit become possible. Ignatieff can thus state: “I am a civic nationalist, someone who believes in the necessity of nations and in the duty of citizens to defend the capacity of nations to provide the security and the rights we all need in order to live cosmopolitan lives” (14) In line with his position, he highlights what is distinctive about Canada: it is secular and liberal, it is oriented toward social democracy, and it makes a significant place for group rights. However, there has been a surge within the “bystander majority” of English Canadian ethnic nationalism (2000:114), in reaction to rights that are perceived as one-side, fragmentary, and leading to its disempowerment and its lack of power in defining the culture of the country (118).

Universalist individual rights, which are a part of a civic nationalism, are central to multiculturalism, and they should always trump group rights, which form the core of ethnic nationalism (19). Here, as for Berlin, collectivism is identified with totalitarianism (23). And as Berlin does, Ignatieff argues for rights, and not recognition, adding that the agency rights seek to protect is synonymous with Berlin’s negative liberty: “A human rights abuse is something more than an inconvenience, and seeking human rights redress is distinct from seeking recognition. It is about protecting an essential exercise of human agency.” (2001, 56-57) Rights allow a diversity of people to choose diverse ways to live their lives, and indicate that “our species is one, and each of the individuals who compose it is entitled to equal moral consideration.” (3-4) The protection and enhancement of individuals allows them not to be abused and oppressed and to exercise their agency and freedom.

For Ignatieff, any kind of rights talk commits us to individualism and to framing political questions in terms of individual ends and autonomy. The language of rights allows us to speak in

terms of reciprocity, respecting “the rights of the other side” (2001: 10), rather than in terms of individual conflicting interests (2000: 120). Since rights are not trumps but rather a common language, security may be at times more important than self-determination. (2001: 29) Although rights are not trumps, they are meant to facilitate political dialogue and negotiation toward individual agency, individual rights do trump group rights (which themselves are nothing more than rights given to individuals as members of groups), and human rights arbitrate conflicts between the two insofar as they “define the irreducible minimum beyond which group and collective claims must not go in constraining the lives of individuals.” (69) Constitutionalism, judicial review, and minority rights are necessary to the reconciliation of democracy and human rights – but statehood comes first, before the courts, as state sovereignty of constitutional regimes is the best guarantee for human rights (35). The central role of human rights then has to do with reciprocity and with universality, imposing only duties to respect the rights of other individuals, leaving particularities and questions of recognition, responsibility, and collective action outside of politics, and making room for group rights only as a compromise.

James Tully, in *Strange Multiplicity*, published in 1995 after being given as lectures, focuses not on rights, but on Canadian traditions of negotiating on how to live together. He takes his model on some of the relations between English Canadians and French Canadians, and between the British Crown and Aboriginals – which he shows continued side by side with attempts at assimilation. Multiculturalism, like other forms of group difference, is not about rights; it is about the responsibility of groups to lead continuous political negotiations with other cultural groups, since individuals matter politically through the groups to which they belong (be it consciously or not). There is a duty for all groups to maintain these negotiations open to renegotiation, and it is in a sense unavoidable, because individuals ceaselessly transform cultures through inter-cultural contacts (186).

V. A First Step toward Reconfiguring the Debate: Tully on Discussion

Of course, other positions are possible and have been defined since the 1990s – although the later debate is outside of the range of this essay. One of them consists in a combination of the different elements already present in other positions. Another is to define an antagonistic position outside of the debate and show the limitations of the debate. A soft antagonism would consist in incorporating some elements of the debate and answering at least some of the main questions; a hard antagonism would consist in refusing the questions that structure the field at a specific point – to, in effect, incorporate one field into another, or intervene from a different philosophical tradition altogether. Gerald Kernerman refuses the question of Canadian identity as central to multiculturalism, and refers to the French post-structural debate – indicating the possibility of drawing inspiration from Deleuze – instead of the various forms of liberalism. His antagonism to the philosophers central to the field is soft, however, as he both rejects and incorporates elements of Kymlicka and Taylor.

James Tully presents a harder antagonism by referring not only to a different political position, but also to a different philosophical tradition, both drawn from Canadian First Nations. He names his position a “constitutionalism,” which might lead to some confusion unless we understand constitutions as “chains of continual intercultural negotiations and agreements in accord with, and violation of the conventions of mutual recognition, continuity and consent.” (1995: 184) Each culture must accommodate cultural diversity, but do so from the point of view

of all cultures at play, rather than only from that of the majority culture. In this manner, he also differs from the other positions in the debate insofar as he de-centres the debate from the majority English Canadian liberal culture, to the fabric of all intertwined cultures.

Tully outlines three conventions that make a renewed, contemporary constitutionalism possible and just. First, mutual recognition allows for different sets of laws to exist in a parallel manner and to coexist through treaties, written or oral and always practical. Negotiators listen to the manner in which their counterparts describe themselves and seek out the resemblances between political organizations and cultures that can be used as bridging points. Following Wittgenstein, Tully impresses the need to recognize that other cultures might speak a different language, but also a difference political language, whose concepts are not necessarily translatable without paying the price of subordination: “each negotiator participates in his or her language, mode of speaking and listening, form of reaching agreement, and way of representing the people, or peoples, for whom they speak.” (129) Norms about how negotiations take place do not need to be shared. In fact, because of the diversity of any nation, they never really are, and full symmetry and understanding are not necessarily possible: each must listen. (133)

Second, continuity takes the longer history of all parties into account and respects customs and forms of coexistence and government in the creation of a common constitution – and each group remains sovereign once an agreement is reached. Such a convention is already present in Western culture: “The convention of the continuity of a people’s customary ways and forms of government into new forms of constitutional associations with others is the oldest in Western jurisprudence.” (125) Third, consent must be sought – hence the idea of treaties and negotiations; it touches on the very basic principle, central to democracy as well, that “what touches all should be agreed by all.” (122)

In this manner, the impossibility of translation and the desire not to colonize other political traditions means that the claims of other groups are not translated, but rather that they will be understood as closely as possible, in their own terms, based on what elements are common to both political traditions and languages, and actions will follow on the basis of the bridges and gaps in this mutual understanding. What matters then are not what values are held by each side and what choices each individual wishes to make, but rather what actions can be undertaken together to further this mutual relationship.

Conclusion

There are two problems with the positions developed by three of the Canadian philosophers of multiculturalism. First, they are speaking from a position of power, as members of the English Canadian majority. While they are not repeating Richard Gwyn’s position, who laments the loss of British-English Canadianness (which Ryan, 2010, calls multiculphobic), they frame the question around the attempt to incorporate nations and ethnocultural groups into Canadian institutions as they see them, from their own point of view. Second, they are speaking from a liberal position and in a philosophical space both defined by Isaiah Berlin, which understands cultures in terms of sets of values and liberty in terms of freedom of choice, which can only be individualistic. Because they also maintain his pluralist position, they attempt to incorporate other, non-liberal cultures. These positions depend on a distinction between ethnicity and nationality and on an understanding of cultures in terms of individual values and freedom of choice. Ethnicity ought not to play a role in politics; only, if laws and customs keep individuals

from pursuing their own ends, as defined by themselves or by their ethnocultural group, they must be changed to accommodate diversity. Nationalism, understood as the political expression of a cultural reality, is acceptable if it is civic and defined in terms of individual agency. However, nationalism tends to express itself in radically collectivist terms, asking for rights that only apply to a group, such as self-government. Kymlicka goes the furthest in accepting a form of group-differentiated citizenship, giving rights to individuals to accommodate some forms of nationalism, but admitting that nations might not always be able to coexist.

Tully, on the other hand, impresses the need for Western philosophy to interact with other philosophies – specifically with Aboriginal philosophies. Indeed, major philosophical and political changes must and will occur as a result of an extended discussion based on the recognition that cultures speak in different political languages, and based on the willingness of philosophers and politicians to have interactions with other cultures and let these interactions transform how they think. Tully's main point of divergence is the de-centring of the agents he advocates, both in relation to their culture and in relation to those of others. No one is central to the politics of the country, and if there can be no claim to centrality, culture is not a given, a tradition, a context, it is not present in politics solely through claims but as a general style which emerges out of the conflicts and negotiations within a group and between equal groups. There is then no position from which to justifiably operate a difference between ethno-cultural and national groups (as opposed to those of number, history, or property), the members of each culture living at once side by side, with its own language and political language, with ties to different parts of the country and of the world. Tully's position thus allows him to give fuller recognition to all cultures present.

The political question to be answered is that of the creation of other, common languages, cultures, and identities through interactions and negotiations. In a state that remains multinational and polyethnic, the members of cultural minorities will already be seen as part of a common culture in development. Issues of justice and social justice might then have to do with the institutions of this common culture, and whether they include or exclude certain parts of the population (nations, other members of the supranational entity, established or recent ethnic groups, women, and linguistic minorities). From this viewpoint, the issue of migration from Latin America into the southern United States, and from Northern Africa and the Middle East into Western Europe, also takes on a new meaning, once the distinctions between nations are relativized. The question is then no longer: how can Canada integrate immigrants and minority nations; but rather: what Canada can be made out of all the cultures present on the territory of the Canadian state?

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