

DOI: 10.24234/wisdom.v20i4.545

Volodymyr BEKH,
Viktor VASHKEVYCH,
Alla KRAVCHENKO,
Nataliia HUSIEVA,
Alla YAROSHENKO

SOCIAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL ASPECTS OF THE GENESIS OF THE DISCOURSE OF MULTICULTURALISM

Abstract

Definitions of multiculturalism are inconsistent and often contradictory, but common to its definitions is the demographic observation of the existence of several cultures in most societies. Multiculturalism as a theoretical concept is one of the most controversial discourses of our time, formed because of particular historical circumstances. The first mention of the concept under study tended to a cosmopolitan interpretation, meaning mixing nationalities and the expansion of identities. Later, the term “multiculturalism” was understood as a variety of languages and cultures. Later, this term was used to describe the demographic fact of megacities inhabited by people of different cultural and ethnic origins. The principal purpose of the article is to highlight the social and philosophical aspects of the genesis of the discourse of multiculturalism. The article uses the methods of formal-logical, systemic, structural and institutional analysis in order to highlight the social and philosophical aspects of multiculturalism.

Keywords: philosophy, social aspects, philosophical aspects, genesis, multiculturalism.

Introduction

Modern cultural and civilizational processes are accompanied by growing cultural diversity, deepening interaction, and intercultural communications, which will only intensify in the future. In the context of complicating the orientations of the spiritual life of society, intensifying transnational movements and inter-ethnic contacts, changing ideological and political vectors of development, intercultural interactions gain a new quality. As a result of mass migration processes, more and more “mosaic” communities are formed, differing in ethnic, cultural, and religious parameters. Therefore, the relevance of harmonizing the interests of representatives of different cultures and building a stable, non-conflict society is increasing. The problem of multiculturalism manifests the real acuteness and complexity of

the socio-political, economic and socio-cultural conditions prevailing in the modern world. As shown by European and world experience, the implementation of multicultural policy in practice causes several problems, barriers, stigmatization and exclusion from public life of representatives of cultural minorities.

Today, politicians and scientists and ordinary citizens are becoming critical of the possibility of “dialogue of cultures” and “unity in diversity”. The rhetoric of “the collapse of “multiculturalism” is becoming popular among some politicians, public figures and scientists. Other researchers state the failure of not multiculturalism as such, but only its “old version”, and talk about the need for transformation into other forms of intercultural interaction.

Multiculturalism is a somewhat contradictory social phenomenon that includes ideological,

philosophical, political, social, cultural and other aspects and is reflected in the categories of anthropology, sociology, political science, economics, historiography, pedagogy and, finally, philosophy (Modood, 2013; Van Norden, 2017).

All this actualizes research devoted to the socio-philosophical analysis of multiculturalism discourse. In addition, theoretical discussions of their initial deployment were catching up with the already existing set of political practices, interpreting actual cases of multicultural placement and politics.

Multiculturalism is one of the most controversial discourses of our time. Discussions raised in the media and academic literature often give the impression that multiculturalism, attacked by critics, does not coincide with the multiculturalism that its proponents advocate. The term “multiculturalism” is usually used to describe cultural diversity. However, it is difficult to clearly define it since the meaning can vary in different contexts.

Multiculturalism is a popular research topic across numerous academic disciplines. If we analyze the definitions of various researchers, it turns out that each of them puts its own meaning into it. As a consequence, this concept is not clearly agreed upon and unified.

Multiculturalism is identified both with the ethnic, confessional, and linguistic differentiation of society and with a set of specific political means used by the state in order to maintain cultural diversity. In parallel, there are numerous approaches to such definitions. In order to clearly define what is meant by “multiculturalism”, it seems productive to start by clarifying when the term originated and how its meaning has changed over time. Multiculturalism was formed in response to reality, which changed due to certain historical circumstances and is their natural result.

Methodology

The article uses the methods of formal-logi-

cal, systemic, structural and institutional analysis in order to highlight the social and philosophical aspects of multiculturalism. Also, the methods of general analysis and synthesis were applied, the generalization of the results to the approximation of theoretical and practical literature, abstraction and analogy to draw the appropriate conclusions in the study. Also, a clarification method was used to explain certain elements in the article.

Research Results and Discussions

The concept of “multiculturalism” is not unambiguous. Therefore, quite often, it can be understood as opposite things. Therefore, it is appropriate to focus on the essence of the concept and the prerequisites for the emergence of the normative discourse of multiculturalism. Perhaps the most understandable thing about the public debate about multiculturalism is that its permissible definition is difficult to define precisely. However, a common feature common to all definitions of multiculturalism is the fact that there is cultural diversity and the corresponding consequences of the coexistence of different cultures within one society. The very same cultural diversity in modern society can take many forms.

The term “multicultural society” can refer to a society in which there are all three forms of diversity and only one-third. The first two forms are found in most societies throughout history; therefore, the peaceful coexistence of these differences has long been developed and implemented to regulate their interaction.

“Social diversity” (the third form) is very different from the first two forms and raises unique questions that become the object of research in the second half of the twentieth century. Therefore, most researchers of multiculturalism use precisely a narrow meaning, that is, the third form of diversity, to characterize society as multicultural. Although feminism, sex minority rights movements, environmental movements, etc., in a certain way intersect with the requirements of “social diversity”, but their main prob-

lems are different. The narrow use of the concept of “multicultural society” first appeared in states faced with the inability or unwillingness of various cultural groups to assimilate into the dominant culture and whose presence threatened with new problems (Joppke, 2004; Wright, 2011; Kymlicka, 2010).

In the socio-economic sphere, cultural diversity in Western societies is enhanced by immigration and globalization. The rate of migration to Western liberal democracies as a whole increased significantly after World War II. The main reasons for this population movement are displacement caused by war, economic migration after decolonization, movement of people in the context of economic and technological globalization. Many immigrants come from developing countries and belong to cultures and religions with values different from those of most of their new homelands (e.g. Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists).

At first glance, it seems that the supposedly liberal states should easily accept these differences since one of the basic values of liberal democracy is tolerance for different religious views and an excellent way of life. However, reality shows that until recently, Western states had to deal only with religious diversity among Christian denominations and the presence of Jewish communities, and this turned out to be not easy. Although Jewish communities were tolerated for centuries, the Christian majority perceived their presence with a warning that arose from negative ethnic stereotypes. However, the new post-war diversity has generated significantly more cultural differences in Western societies than those that existed before.

This “excessive diversity” affects the status of nation-states. Possible cultural homogeneity of Western European societies before the post-war period of migration was the invention of nation-building in the 19th century. In the second half of the 20th century, many nation-states have become more susceptible to minority distrust, such as the Scots, Welsh, Basques and Bretons in Europe

and indigenous peoples in North America, Australia, and New Zealand. Many new groups of immigrants have also come forward with demands that their identity be recognized and that old norms of assimilation – abandoned. Thus, a multicultural society is caused by specific historical, economic, political, and social conditions (Rorty, 2007; Guo, 2011; Tones, 1998).

The phenomena of diversity and group difference are characteristic of almost all but the most isolated, modern political societies. All modern states face the problems of multiculturalism, even if they do not recognize it as a political agenda or official ideology. Sometimes in academic discourse, one can find the identification of the concepts of “multicultural society” (as a society with a complex ethnocultural composition) and “multiculturalism” itself (understanding by it the descriptive term of the demographic state of the society reflects the fact of cultural pluralism). Despite this, it seems necessary to still distinguish between these concepts.

It is also necessary to characterize the levels of functioning and perception of multiculturalism:

1. superficial (or not political), when we listen to country music with pleasure, take Chinese food, practice Indian yoga, without delving into ethnic issues;
2. political, when the issues of the rights and freedoms of minorities, the harmonization of their cultural practices with liberal values and issues related to migration and the relevant policies that regulate these relations come to the fore.

Multiculturalism begins with a multicultural situation - demographic observation, most modern societies are “multicultural”. Although some researchers define multiculturalism as a descriptive fact of the existing diversity in society, it is not “multiculturalism itself” but only a multicultural situation in which such “-ism” can arise.

Multiculturalists react to the fact of cultural diversity as one that needs approval and not

opposition in the form of assimilation or exclusion from social and political life. Unlike the politics of assimilation or exclusion from social and political life, multiculturalism reacts favourably to the fact of cultural diversity. Multiculturalists argue that the plurality of cultures within one society should be positively recognized, contributing to the preservation of cultural identities. However, the clear focus and boundaries of public acceptance remain unresolved and how and to what extent recognition is justified. To these questions, different normative theories of multiculturalism correspond in their own way. Therefore, it is appropriate to define multiculturalism precisely as a discourse whose structure includes various theories of justifying the preservation of group cultural identity and ensuring integration into the host society, recognizing the need to grant special rights to various cultural groups, as well as the structural component of this. Discourse is also a criticism of multiculturalism.

For the convenience of socio-philosophical analysis, multicultural discourse is proposed to be schematically considered within the framework of the author's periodization:

1. Proto-multiculturalist stage (formation of the theoretical-philosophical basis of the concepts of multiculturalism): substantiation of the "pluralism of values" and liberal communitarian discourse (the late 70s – the late 80s of the twentieth century). Unlike monism (the realization of an objective universal human good) and relativism (denial of the existence of objective goods), pluralism, denying the universal ideal, demonstrates the presence of a number of objective human values. Since there are many different human goods, the various combinations of these can be expected to represent a multitude of truly valuable lifestyles worthy of social recognition. Therefore, according to a pluralistic vision, there are likely to be many cultures and cultural practices within a single society. However, the emphasis on certain universal values limits this cultural diversity. Therefore, I. Berlin's pluralism values and promotes the presence of different cultures in society, which are subject to the basic principles of liberalism.
2. The stage of the traditional discourse of multiculturalism (the design of the first philosophical theories of multiculturalism) contains the following periods: 1) communitarian (the late 80s – the early 90s of the twentieth century). The main topics addressed were: defining the value of cultural identity and justifying individual cultural rights in order to protect the "survival of cultural groups"; the formation of a "policy of recognition" and "a policy of distinction"; 2) liberal (the beginning of the 90s - the second half of the 90s of the 20th century). Main topics: recognition of the value of cultural identity from a liberal perspective; substantiation of the liberal theory of differentiated rights; debates within liberal multiculturalism on the admissibility of state intervention in illiberal cultural groups; 3) liberal-egalitarian and feminist criticism of multiculturalism (second half of the 90s - early 2000s) (Vertovec & Wessendorf, 2010). Multiculturalism is accused of: promoting illiberal practices and negatively affecting women, in betrayal of the ideals of equality, in obstruction of the traditional economic concept of social justice, and in undermining redistributive policies that damage national unity. Critics insist that liberalism and its basic principles (freedom, equal treatment and neutrality) provide a dignified treatment for cultural minorities, so theories of multiculturalism are simply superfluous.

Discussions between liberals and communitarians (the 70s – 80s of the twentieth century) were conducted regarding different views regarding the priority of individual freedom, understanding of justice, and how society should be structured for its harmonious functioning and development. Liberals believed that, by default, people should be free to live their lives following their own

ideas about the good, and any interference with this freedom needs to be justified. Accordingly, they viewed the individual as morally primary concerning society, which is significant only to the extent that it contributes to the well-being of individuals. If individuals no longer consider it worthy of supporting existing cultural practices, then society has no separate interest in preserving such practices, and therefore no right to prohibit changing or rejecting them. Communitarians rejected liberal ideas that people freely choose their values, hence the excessive liberal emphasis on freedom of choice and personal autonomy. According to the communitarian, liberals also overlook the importance of social influence on the formation of human identities and represent group practices as a product of the choice of individuals, while communitarians view the individual as a product of such socio-cultural practices. The attitude towards multiculturalism depended precisely on the position of philosophers in liberal-communitarian debates. It was believed that the liberals opposed multiculturalism because the latter was perceived as a departure from individualism. And according to the views of communitarianism, multiculturalism served as a legitimate way to protect communities from the destructive effects of individual autonomy and assert the value of the community (Potvin, 2010; Silj, 2010; Fabre, 2012).

3. The stage of post-multiculturalist discourse (the early 2000s – until now): arises in the framework of the Islamic terrorist threat and is characterized by the rhetoric of the “collapse of multiculturalism”. The main focus has been shifted from the issue of recognizing cultural differences to issues of integration in a landscape of deep, sometimes even hostile, diversity. There is a search for an alternative model of managing cultural pluralism. In particular, the concept of interculturalism” is substantiated. At the same time, supporters of multiculturalism are trying to revive the latter,

arguing that the alternatives are, in fact, only varieties of multiculturalism.

The traditional discourse of multiculturalism (the late 1980s – the late 1990s) was predominantly focused on assessing the fairness of the claims of minority groups regarding the recognition of their cultural differences and, accordingly, the granting of special rights. The end of this stage occurred in the late 90s - early 2000s, just before the wave of political statements that multiculturalism is “dead”, which gained momentum after the series of Islamic terrorism in 2001 and in the context of clearly failed Muslim integration, especially in the context of clearly failed Muslim integration, especially Europe. Of course, almost simultaneously with the emergence of multiculturalism in both politics and philosophical discourse, critical remarks to it appeared, especially from the liberal circles. Likewise, there was no shared vision among multiculturalists on some issues. However, on the whole, it was a discussion within the framework of the deployment of the discourse of multiculturalism.

The beginning of the 21st century is characterized by dramatic changes within the limits of discourse. The rhetoric of “retreat” or “collapse” of multiculturalism is gaining popularity among politicians and scholars, especially in the context of the problem of Islamic fundamentalism faced by Western democracies. According to several European politicians, it is the inability of Muslims to become part of the Western community that leads to the revival of racist and nationalist prejudices, the growth of extremist sentiments, social alienation and hostility. On this basis, representatives of Islamic culture are identified as potential carriers of the ideology of international terrorism. Therefore prejudices arise that this stratum is a priori not ready for integration into the social environment in which it is located.

In the minds of the population, a negative “brand of multicultural policy” is being formed, which is actively discussed both in the media and in scientific circles. Critics of multiculturalism,

relying on the negative statements of Western politicians, argue that the main mistake of the supporters of multiculturalism is that they allow the possibility of immigrants preserving their own values, allowing them not to change in order to adapt to the cultural environment of the country of arrival. Therefore, calls are increasingly heard to return to the “melting pot” policy because its restoration is seen as a solution to ethnocultural problems. Despite such claims, many scholars believe that the retreat from multiculturalism is only popular political rhetoric that has arisen against the backdrop of populism and flirting with the electorate since it is much easier to blame a policy of multiculturalism for the inability than to try to prevent terrorist attacks (Banks, J., & Banks, C., 2010; Kesler & Bloemraad, 2010; Koopmans, 2010).

The question “is multiculturalism a problem or is it a solution” - remains open. We can agree that it is too early to “bury” multiculturalism. Instead, we should talk about the transformation into other forms of cultural interaction or rethinking of multiculturalism in a new context, which, within the framework of our dissertation research, is defined as a stage of post-multiculturalist discourse (has been unfolding since the early 2000s and continues today).

Therefore, we are in the process of changing the socio-political paradigm, where most of the basic principles of multiculturalism remain. At the same time, there is a growing understanding that tolerance for non-liberal elements should be limited, and each case of demanding recognition of differences and granting special rights should be considered separately and checked if they are consistent with liberal principles. A new paradigm must be shaped mainly in terms of community cohesion and a new shared social culture based on diversity. The new paradigm of diversity management must be aware that not everything that comes from other cultures should be accepted without critical thinking. Interculturalism can become one of such paradigms.

Multicultural dialogue does not consider all

aspects of interculturalism because, within the framework of interculturalism, dialogue is viewed more as a sociological and socio-psychological phenomenon, not a question of justice. When multiculturalists portray “intercultural dialogue” as a way to justify the value of diversity, interculturalism promotes such dialogue only to increase social ties. Intercultural dialogue within the paradigm of interculturalism focuses on the issue of standard practices, the fact that people do things together, and they need to have common goals and spaces to communicate (e.g. education, jobs, safe neighbourhoods). This is not a dialogue in a multicultural sense, as the perception and recognition of other cultures. To create mutual identification, a sense of mutual belonging and trust, people do not need to fully and deeply understand each other, as it is necessary for them to perceive each other as a source of cultural enrichment. It may be enough for them to meet within certain “contact spaces” in order to facilitate interaction between different communities.

Given the above, a compromise approach can be proposed that views multiculturalism and interculturalism as different but complementary paradigms. Based on philosophical notions of justice, multiculturalism primarily provides for special rights and policies for minority groups. In a just society that recognizes different cultures, minorities are likely to feel welcome, and this will positively impact their integration into the majority of the society. For its part, interculturalism based on social psychology presupposes social desegregation and social mixing at the local level. Real contact and interaction between people can reduce prejudice and build mutual trust, leading to social cohesion. Accordingly, multiculturalism and interculturalism mutually reinforce, correct and compensate for possible negative consequences of each other.

So, the post-multiculturalist stage of discourse appears at the beginning of the XXI century, within the rhetoric of “the collapse of multiculturalism”. Since reality shows that a return to the

policy of assimilation is unlikely, there is a need to search for a new or revise the old paradigm of diversity management, which would combine a strong national identity with the official recognition of cultural diversity (Bevelander & Taras, 2013; Koopmans, Statham, Giugni, & Passy, 2005; Ceobanu & Escandell, 2010). Furthermore, within this paradigm, everything that comes from other cultures must be critically analyzed and compared with liberal principles. Within the framework of post-multiculturalist discourse, one of such options for managing diversity can be the paradigm of interculturalism.

While there is no shared vision as to whether interculturalism can be a viable alternative to multiculturalism, the former has its own unique advantages. Interculturalism can be seen as a balance between multiculturalism, which causes cultural fragmentation in society, and assimilation. Focusing on the social cohesion of society and denying the possibility of illiberal practices (assimilating aspect), at the same time, interculturalism positively recognizes cultural diversity (multiculturalist aspect). In addition, interculturalism and multiculturalism should be viewed as complementary paradigms that will compensate for the unwanted consequences of each other.

Conclusion

The idea of multiculturalism was formed in response to reality, changed due to certain historical circumstances, and is their natural result. The content that was invested in the understanding of the studied concept has changed throughout history.

There are a number of approaches in the definition of multiculturalism, which are inconsistent, and sometimes even contradict each other, focusing on various aspects of this concept, in particular, demographic, political, ideological. Multiculturalism necessarily confirms multiculturalism as an acceptable state and contributes to the preservation and recognition of cultural identity instead of the assimilation model. However,

the exact focus and boundaries of such social recognition of different cultural groups remain unresolved and how and to what extent recognition is warranted. Different normative theories of multiculturalism answer these questions in their own way. Therefore, taking into account the numerous directions of argumentation, it seems most appropriate to define multiculturalism not as a specific theory but as a discourse, the structure of which contains various theories of recognizing cultural identity and the desire to preserve it also criticism.

The political practice of multiculturalism was embodied much earlier than the substantiation of its philosophical concepts appeared. While the government's response to the growth of more and more diversity has emerged since the late 1960s, it took socio-philosophical theorists about twenty years to organize the appropriate scientific debate. It was not until the early 1990s that academic philosophers formulated the first normative theories of multiculturalism and explored how multicultural reality interacts with Western societies' liberal democratic values and principles.

The political practice of multiculturalism, which was embodied much earlier (from the late 1960s) than its first philosophical foundations appeared (late 80s - early 90s), gave rise to a precedent when theoretical discussions caught up with the already existing set of political practices, interpreting real cases of multicultural placement and politics.

The formation of philosophical theories of multiculturalism was also significantly influenced by discussions between groups of liberals and communitarians (the 70s – 80s of the XX century), which were conducted regarding different views around the priority of individual freedom, understanding of justice, as well as different visions of the projective structure of society for his harmonious functioning and development. Recognizing that people should be free to live in accordance with their own ideas about the good, and any interference with this freedom re-

quires justification, liberals considered the individual morally primary in relation to society. This approach aroused the indignation of communitarians, who defended the defining role of the “communal ideal” over individualism and human egoism. According to their views, an excessive liberal emphasis on freedom of choice and personal autonomy, the free choice of an individual’s values, underestimates the importance of social influence on forming identities.

References

- Banks, J., & Banks, C. (2010). *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives* (7th ed.). New York, NY: Wiley.
- Bevelander, P., & Taras, R. (2013). The twilight of multiculturalism?: Findings from across Europe. In R. Taras, *Challenging multiculturalism: European models of diversity* (pp. 3-24). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Ceobanu, A. M., & Escandell, X. (2010). Comparative analyses of public attitudes toward immigrants and immigration using multinational survey data: A review of theories and research. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 36, 309-328.
- Fabre, Ch. (2012, November 6). Multiculturalism in Europe and in the US, how is it going? *Nouvelle Europe*. Retrieved from <http://www.nouvelle-europe.eu/node/1579>
- Guo, Y. (2011). Perspectives of immigrant Muslim parents: Advocating for religious diversity in Canadian schools. *Multicultural Education*, 18, 55-60.
- Joppke, C. (2004). The retreat of multiculturalism in the liberal state: Theory and policy. *British Journal of Sociology*, 55(2), 237-257.
- Kesler, C., & Bloemraad, I. (2010). Does immigration erode social capital? The conditional effects of immigration-generated diversity on trust, membership, and participation across 19 countries, 1981-2000. *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 43(2), 319-347.
- Koopmans, R. (2010). Trade-offs between equality and difference: Immigrant integration, multiculturalism and the welfare state in cross-national perspective. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 36(1), 1-26.
- Koopmans, R., Statham, P., Giugni, M., & Passy, F. (2005). *Contested citizenship: Immigration and cultural diversity in Europe*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Kymlicka, W. (2010). *Testing the liberal multiculturalist hypothesis: Normative theories and social science evidence*. *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 43(2), 257-271.
- Modood, T. (2013). *Multiculturalism. A civic idea*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Potvin, M. (2010). Social and media discourse in the reasonable accommodations debate. *Our Diverse Cities*, 7, 78-83.
- Rorty, R. (2007). *Philosophy as cultural politics: Philosophical papers* (Vol. 4). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Silj, A (Ed.). (2010). In *Introduction to European multiculturalism revisited* (pp. 1-10). London: Zed Books.
- Tones, C. (1998). Democracy, education, and multiculturalism: dilemmas of citizenship in a global world. *Comparative Education Review*, 42, 421-447.
- Van Norden, B. W. (2017). *Taking back philosophy: A multicultural manifesto*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Vertovec, S., & Wessendorf, S. (Eds.) (2010). *The multicultural backlash: European discourses, policies and practices*. New York: Routledge.
- Wright, M. (2011). Policy regimes and normative conceptions of nationalism in mass public opinion. *Comparative Political Studies*, 44(5), 598-624.