CRITICAL MULTICULTURALISM AND DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY:

OPENING SPACES FOR MORE INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION

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Abstract

The discredit of multiculturalism in contemporary discussions about cultural diversity and democracy is problematic since allegations of multiculturalism's failure and undemocratic consequences are used to justify a (re)turn to assimilation throughout Western societies. Rejecting assimilationism as either desirable or inevitable, this article challenges the alleged incompatibility between multiculturalism and democracy. It makes the case for a (re)conceptualisation of both multiculturalism and democracy in ways that can provide the foundations for inclusive communication. To this end, the article endorses, first, a specific kind of multiculturalism, namely, *critical* multiculturalism. Critical multiculturalism defines culture in structural and relational terms, underscoring the superficiality with which multiculturalism has been deployed in Western societies. Secondly, the article examines the constraints that liberal and republican models of democracy impose on a fair politics of cultural diversity. It argues that, largely due to its communication emphasis, Habermas's deliberative democracy is particularly receptive to the demands of critical multiculturalism.

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39 javnost–the public Vol.18 (2011), No. 3, pp. 39-54

Introduction

Despite the diversity of ways in which multicultural principles and policies have been conceived and deployed, pronouncements over multiculturalism's retreat are heard across Western societies (see Brubaker 2001; Joppke 2004; Koppmans et al. 2005; Turner 2006; Vervotec and Wessendorf 2010). Most recently, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and British Prime Minister David Cameron made headlines around the world as they pronounced the failure of multiculturalism. What Germany and the UK need, each head of state argued, is to strengthen their national identity and make sure that immigrants adopt the official language and culture. While Merkel and Cameron focused on their countries, the latter – whose speech was aimed at addressing the threat of terrorism – explicitly referred to the UK case as an example of how Europe in generally "needs to wake up" to defend its "open societies" (Cameron 2011).

Cameron's and Merkel's disapproval of multiculturalism is neither exceptional nor surprising. In fact, their arguments have become commonplace in both political and academic debates, among the political left and right, where multiculturalism is seen as encouraging "ethnic" interests, which conflict with national interests, and as overplaying particularities, contributing to the political, social, and economic segregation of minority groups (see Bloemraad et al. 2008; Philips and Saharso 2008; Vervotec and Wessendorf 2010). In short, multiculturalism is seen as a source of divisiveness and exclusion. It is accused of harming not only minority groups, but also democracy itself.

Taking the accusations against multiculturalism seriously forces us to consider alternative ways to conceptualise the role of cultural diversity in democratic societies. One possibility is to discard multiculturalism altogether. Given that multiculturalism developed mainly as a critique to assimilation (Kymlicka 1995; Joppke 1996), discarding multiculturalism would imply accepting the "return of assimilation" (Brubaker 2001). Indeed, assimilationist models of citizenship are gaining terrain in various Western societies previously characterised as multicultural. Even if under the less conspicuous label of "integration" (Philips and Saharso 2008), post-multiculturalism discourses and policies demand minorities' adaptation to the dominant culture as a condition for social inclusion.

This paper rejects the acceptance of assimilationism as either desirable or inevitable. It argues, instead, for the strengthening of a specific kind of multiculturalism, namely, critical multiculturalism. Part I explains what is specific of critical multiculturalism, its advantages for social inclusion, and how critical multiculturalism responds to the main criticisms raised against multiculturalism in general. Part II revisits the alleged incompatibility between multiculturalism and democracy. Instead of discarding critical multiculturalism for its misfit within traditional liberal and republican models of democracy, the paper endorses a third democratic model, one based on Habermas' deliberative democracy. This model of democracy, it is argued, is particularly receptive to the demands of inclusive communication in culturally diverse societies.

Critical Multiculturalism

Notwithstanding the ease with which the word has been used in contemporary discussions, "multiculturalism" is not a concept that can be taken for granted. Far

from being a centralised program for reform, it is rather a series of propositions – "some so mild that they would probably be acceptable to those who see themselves as the fiercest critics of multiculturalism" (Glazer 1997, 10). Benhabib (1996, 17) argues that multiculturalism has been used to refer to such a wide range of phenomena that it "has practically lost meaning." As a result, some progressive scholars have given up the term "multiculturalism" altogether to defend a cultural politics under a different label, such as Young's (2000a) "politics of difference" and Fraser's (1998) "transformative politics of recognition."

This paper, however, joins those who refuse to allow the cooptation of multiculturalism's potential for cultural intervention and who endorse, instead, a critical definition of multiculturalism. As Palumbo-Liu (2002, 117) explains, the appropriation of multiculturalism by neoliberal interests underscores the need to reclaim it, "to constantly struggle to define multiculturalism's terms and values against such takeovers." In line with this undertaking, anthropologist Terece Turner (1993, 413) contends that to narrow the gap between his discipline and multiculturalism, "one must specify *which* multiculturalism an anthropologist might want to contribute to." The response from Turner (1993) – as well as from other scholars in anthropology and elsewhere – is "critical multiculturalism" (Chicago Cultural Studies Group 1992; Estrada and McLaren 1993; Palumbo-Liu 1995).

What *critical* multiculturalism *criticises* are "the ideological apparatuses that distribute power and resources unevenly among the different constituencies of a multicultural society" (Palumbo-Liu 1995, 2). Accordingly, Lugones and Price (1995) call it "structural multiculturalism." The core of critical multiculturalism is a structural conception of culture, based on the deconstruction of two seeming dichotomies: a dichotomy between structure and culture and a dichotomy between the interests of cultural groups and a "common interest." For critical multiculturalism, it is particularly important to problematise the apparent tension between each of these pairs. To assume that structure is disconnected from culture and that group interests threaten common interests leads to a problematic understanding of culture and cultural differences, which, in turn, suggests an inescapable conflict between equality (in both political and economic terms) and cultural difference. Critical multiculturalism's structural and non-essentialist approach to culture, in contrast, enables a democratic appreciation of cultural difference.

Redistribution versus Recognition?

While critics from the right worry about the preservation of a national culture and accuse minorities of threatening it, critics from the left recognise the disempowered position of minority groups. They criticise multiculturalism for focusing too much on cultural or ethnic differences while failing to provide socio-economic equality. As Paul Scheffer (2000) has said with respect to the Netherlands, "[t]he energetic approach to social divisions adopted in the past is matched only by the hesitancy now shown in dealing with the multicultural fiasco taking place before our eyes."

Underlying the leftist critique of multiculturalism is a tension between socio-economic equality and cultural rights, which Fraser (1998; 2003) calls the "redistribution-recognition dilemma." Redistribution and recognition, Fraser explains, appear to be two conflicting aims of justice. Redistribution defines collectivities

economically, that is, on the basis of class. Recognition, in turn, is based on a socio-cultural definition of groups. *Maldistribution*, then, is rooted in relations of production; *misrecognition,* in "social patterns of representation, interpretation, and communication" (Fraser 2003, 13). While redistribution promotes equality in order to repair socioeconomic injustices, recognition promotes differentiation in order to repair symbolic injustice. The dilemma between the two, in brief, is one between equality and difference.

While Fraser's diagnosis of the apparent contradiction between cultural and economic injustice is useful for developing an understanding of critical multiculturalism, the way in which she resolves this apparent contradiction is not. Fraser acknowledges a politically relevant overlap between economic maldistribution and cultural misrecognition, but upholds the distinction between these two kinds of injustices. In this way, she "reproduces the division that locates certain oppressions as part of political economy and relegates others to the exclusively cultural sphere" (Butler 1997, 270-1). Endorsing the dichotomy between recognition and redistribution leads Fraser "to misrepresent feminist, anti-racist and gay liberation movements as calling for recognition as an end in itself, when they are better understood as conceiving cultural recognition as a means to economic and political justice" (Young 1998, 51). In a dichotomous model as the one advanced by Fraser, that is, any social group whose politics involves both claims for the recognition of difference and for economic equality – be it African Americans or Latinas/os in the United States; Muslims in Europe; queer and indigenous peoples in large parts of the world – seems torn between contradictory goals.

A more constructive approach to the apparent dilemma between redistribution and recognition can be found in Butler's (1997) and Young's (1990; 2000a) proposals for cultural materialism. Both authors criticise Fraser and other leftist critics for dismissing the cultural focus of current social movements by relegating culture to a secondary sphere with respect to material (i.e., "real") life. As Butler (1997, 268) puts it,

> *The charge that new social movements are "merely cultural," that a unified and progressive Marxism must return to a materialism based in an objective analysis of class, itself presupposes that the distinction between material and cultural life is a stable one. And this recourse to an apparently stable distinction between material and cultural life marks the resurgence of a theoretical anachronism.*

What Butler calls a "theoretical anachronism" is the theoretical insistence on the decoupling of culture and structure. To reject this decoupling and articulate a cultural materialist approach, critical multiculturalism relies on the theoretical legacies of post-structuralism. In particular, it draws on the notion of overdetermination. As Williams (1977) reminds us, structure *determines* culture not in that the first gets mirrored in the latter, but in that structure *sets limits* and *exerts pressures* on cultural processes. Moreover, structure itself is always culturally mediated. Representation and reality, "language and signification [are] indissoluble elements of the material social process itself, involved all the time both in production and reproduction" (Williams 1977, 99).

Following the logic of overdetermination, critical multiculturalism conceptualises "issues of justice involving recognition and identity as having inevitable

material economic sources and consequences" (Young 1998, 53). Social unity, that is, cannot rely on the bracketing of cultural differences and conflict. As Butler (1997, 269) explains, "for a politics of 'inclusion' to mean something more than the redomestication and resubordination of such differences, it will have to develop a sense of alliance in the course of a new form of conflictual encounter." Such a politics of inclusion must be based on "*a mode of sustaining conflict in politically productive ways*" (Butler 1997, 269, emphasis in the original), a mode that recognises differences without excluding or subordinating some differences to others.

Young's and Butler's cultural materialist approach, in sum, understands culture in relation to the material conditions in which it is situated. By recognising that cultural injustice is always also economic injustice, this approach dissolves the apparent contradiction between claims of recognition and claims of redistribution. It argues that since "needs are conceptualised in political struggle over who gets to define whose needs for what purpose" (Young 1998, 59), it is also necessary to pay attention to the conditions under which certain needs are articulated and recognised as valid. And since to recognise the needs of culturally silenced groups is to make them visible, recognition is never simply symbolic, or "merely cultural," to use Butler's (1997) words.

Cultural versus Common Interests?

As mentioned earlier, multiculturalism is commonly accused of being divisive. With different emphases, this accusation comes from the political right and left. Both sides see the interests of minority groups as a social threat. The threat, according to right-wing critics, is against a given notion of "the good" (Bloom 1987), "the Anglo-Protestant culture" (Huntington 2004), or simply "our values" (Cameron 2011). By defending minority interests, then, multiculturalism would be endorsing "cultural relativism" and undermining the stability of the nation. D'Souza's (1991) in the United States goes as far as blaming multiculturalism for neglecting, and thus perpetuating, cultural *pathologies.*

While admittedly less conservative, the leftist critique follows a similar logic and is thus subject to a similar response from critical multiculturalism. In this case, it is not necessarily a specific national identity and way of life that needs to be protected, but a political community more generally. In its defense of "identitarian sects," the leftist argument goes, multiculturalism opposes "common ideals and goals, a sense of a common history, a common set of values, a common language, and even a universal mode of rationality" (Butler 1997, 265). Put as a conflict between the particular interests of cultural groups and the "general interest" of the nation, this is basically another version of the dilemma of equality versus difference presented by Fraser above and is thus addressed by critical multiculturalism in a similar way. Drawing once more on cultural materialism, critical multiculturalism's response replaces cultural essentialism with a relational definition of culture and cultural difference.

The cultural essentialism that underlies both the right-wing and left-wing critique of minority interests conceptualises "social groups as fixed and bounded entities separate from others in basic interests and goals" (Young 2000b, 151). To essentialise culture is to draw clear lines between those who belong and do not belong to a group, on the basis of a set of given – "shared" – attributes; and to conceive

the group itself as a homogeneous and rigid organism that has to be preserved. Understood *relationally,* in contrast, cultural groups "emerge from the way people interact. The attributes by which some individuals are classed together in the 'same' group appear as similar enough to do so only by the emergent comparison with others who appear more different in that respect" (Young 2000a, 90). What distinguishes members of a particular group is a relative social position, a position within social structures of knowledge and power. Individuals who share a social position may differ in interests and opinions, but they are united in what Young calls "social perspective." A social perspective is shaped by individuals' "experience, history, and social knowledge derived from that positioning" (Young 2000a, 136). That different social perspectives have partial and particular views of the social world does not mean that they are necessarily opposed, or in competition, to one another.

This relational definition of cultural difference enables us to think of minority groups in novel and politically productive ways. To focus on a concrete example, an essentialist perspective circumscribes U.S. Latinas/os to people of "brown" skin color, with a Spanish-sounding last name, whose country of ancestry is somewhere south of the U.S.-Mexican border, and who follow a certain pattern of practices: they probably eat tortillas, enchiladas, and tacos, speak Spanish, and listen to rancheras or salsa. More importantly, a Latina/o politics would be seen as an attempt to defend and preserve these practices in opposition to alternative cultural practices as well as to an overarching *U.S. culture*. Likewise, essentialism identifies Muslim communities in Europe with a limited set of cultural practices and their interests are more or less equated with the preservation of such practices. A relational understanding of cultural difference, in contrast, sees U.S. Latinas/os—like the Moroccan-Dutch or the Pakistani-British communities – as occupying a specific structural position in society. As Young (2000a, 95) explains with respect to U.S. Latinas/os, cultural difference "often implies predictable status in law, educational possibility, occupation, access to resources, political power, and prestige" (Young 2000a, 95). Thus, the politics of minority groups should not be equated to the promotion of a minority language, food, religion, and music; their interests cannot be reduced to an aggregation of individual preferences, nor to the mere demand for cultural preservation. What is in the interest of Latinas/os in the US, of the Moroccan-Dutch in the Netherlands or the Pakistani-British in the UK is the advancement of structural changes that would allow them to speak the language they speak – whether it is Spanish, Urdu, Arabic, Berber, English, Dutch or a combination, – eat the food they want to eat and listen to the music they want to hear – either the same recipes and songs their grandparents ate and listened to or newer ones marked by innumerable processes of cultural syncretism – and, *at the same time*, be fully enfranchised with respect to the law, as well as to educational, occupational, material, and political resources.

As these examples show, when cultural difference is defined relationally, difference and equality are not at odds with each other. Group interests do not necessarily conflict with the interests of the broader community. On the contrary, to the extent that a group's claims are targeted against structural inequalities, they are claims of justice and, as such, they may become interests shared by the community at large.

The point here is not to say that all group-based politics fit into a structural justice-oriented model, but that – in its critical form – multiculturalism is concerned with cultural claims that are actually tied to structure and are fundamentally jus-

tice-oriented. Young's (2000a) distinction between *politics of difference* and *politics of identity* is instructive in this respect. While, most group-based claims across the lines of gender, race, ethnicity, and class are questions of social justice and should thus have a privileged place in the broader political agenda, Young argues, there are also groups that, following a rather essentialist logic, aim at the protection of a certain cultural wealth and the recognition of their distinctiveness. The first kind of claims correspond to a *politics of difference*; the second, to a *politics of identity.* Reducing the first to the latter is a common mistake of those who oppose minority rights arguing that these rights would erode society.

Young's distinction between a politics of difference and a politics of identity underscores the specificity of critical multiculturalism. Indeed, the basic criteria to distinguish between a politics of difference and a politics of identity is the first's structural, as opposed to a "merely cultural," approach to social groups and its relational, as opposed to essentialist, conception of culture. Independently of whether one adopts Young's terminology or not, the differentiation between a structural-relational and a *merely cultural*-essentialist politics of culture has at least three important implications for understanding and responding to the alleged demise of multiculturalism.

The first advantage of critical multiculturalism's understanding of cultural differences is its potential for political alliances and social unity. To the extent that cultural interests are not grounded on fixed heritages, but on social perspectives and that each social perspective does not absorb a person's full identity, fruitful alliances based on common (even if not fully overlapping) social positionings become possible. Moreover, in appealing to justice, cultural claims are generalisable proposals. While originating in a specific social perspective, that is, they may become legitimate norms for society as a whole. Their success then is not defined by the defeat of competing claims, but by the advancement of new social agreements. This appreciation for justice-driven agreements is precisely what leads critical multiculturalism to oppose imposed norms and models of unity that bracket or silence differences. Proponents of critical multiculturalism seek solidarity across differences, convinced that "solidarity does not mean that everyone thinks in the same way, it begins when people have the confidence to disagree over issues of fundamental importance precisely because they 'care' about constructing common ground" (Mercer 1990, 68).

A structural-relational view of cultural difference is relevant, secondly, because it acknowledges that some multiculturalist enterprises, regardless of their social value, may not necessarily fit in the agenda of critical multiculturalism (conceived here as a "politics of difference"). This would be the case with a conservative cultural politics, such as the politics of identity, described by Young. More importantly, though, critical multiculturalism rejects neoliberal efforts to co-opt diversity (Melamed 2006), which reduce culture to "ornament," or to what the Chicago Cultural Studies Group (1992, 531) illustratively calls "the Benetton effect." In other words, an understanding of multiculturalism in its critical form underscores the problem of corporate or ornamental approaches that welcome a variety of "ethnic" restaurants "or places of entertainment where the music, art, and literature of different cultures is showcased," while securing that "the many cultures are inactive in informing the personality, character, beliefs, and values of workers/citizens and

the structure of the economic and political system" (Lugones and Price 1995, 103, 105; see also Estrada and McLaren 1993).

Finally, while accounts about the crisis of multiculturalism commonly assume that it went too far, critical multiculturalism suggests that the problem has rather been the opposite: It underscores the superficiality of multicultural policies in Western democracies. German chancellor Angela Merkel's take on multiculturalism provides an example of this. "For a while, we kidded ourselves into believing that they wouldn't stay and would leave. Naturally, the notion that we would become 'multiculti,' that we would live next to one another and be happy about one another, failed," argued Merkel (Karnitschnig 2010). Merkel's view of multiculturalism – one grounded on a "we" that excludes minority groups and on the notion that these groups (*they*) "would leave" – is at odds with the critical definition of multiculturalism discussed above. Not surprisingly, Merkel concluded that Germany needs an assimilationist solution in the form of new policies to secure minority groups' adoption of the German language and culture (Eddy 2010).

Deliberative Democracy

An endorsement of critical multiculturalism is an important, but insufficient step in defining the conditions for inclusive communication in culturally diverse democracies. In fact, this section shows that critical multiculturalism challenges traditional models of democracy and finds a better fit in Habermas' deliberative politics. This discussion starts by examining liberalism and republicanism, the two alternative views of democracy from which Habermas differentiates his. Admittedly, liberalism and republicanism have served as the brand name for too many and too diverse political frameworks. The aim here is not to account for all these "liberal" and "republican" frameworks, but rather to underscore the particularities and advantages of Habermas's deliberative model. With this in mind, the discussion focuses on two rather extreme interpretations within each tradition: interest-group pluralism in the case of liberalism, and communitarianism in the case of republicanism.

The Free Individual versus the Dialoging Community

Liberalism, put simply, "is a political theory of limited government, providing institutional guarantees for personal liberty (…) its central political thesis – the need to defend individuals and groups against the oppressive demands and intrusions of authority – is plain" (Rosenblum 1989, 5). In order to go beyond the apparent *plainness* of this definition, it is necessary to examine how liberalism conceives its core value, freedom, and its main threat, government; as well as the implications of this in terms of civic participation. Freedom, in the liberal sense, is usually qualified as "negative" because it is individuals' freedom *from* external constraints. Pettit (1997) calls it freedom as "non-interference." Habermas (1994, 112) refers to it as "private autonomy" and describes it in "the form of a legally protected autonomy that every person can use to realise his or her personal life project." The legitimacy of norms, in this model, is based on *the rule of law.* The underling principle is that of a social-contract individuals subscribe to in order to secure equal legal rights (Habermas 1996a).

Liberal government, accordingly, is expected to have minimal *interference* in citizens' autonomy. It must operate as an impartial arbiter to facilitate the free com-

petition among private interests and must be kept under close civic surveillance. The liberal citizen, as a result, is modeled as "the solitary individual" (Barber 1989, 54) who engages politically in the pursuit of self-regarding interests. Because this approach "interprets democracy as a process of aggregating the preferences of citizens in choosing public officials and policies" (Young 2000a, 19), it is also known as "an aggregative model" of democracy. And because of the way in which the aggregation of multiple and usually conflicting private preferences compete with one another, it is said to follow the logic of the marketplace (Habermas 1996b; Young 2000a; Baker 2002). As Young (2000a, 20) sums up, "On this understanding […] democracy is a mechanism for identifying and aggregating the preferences of citizens, in order to learn which are held in the greatest number or with the greatest intensity."

Republicanism, instead, sees democracy as the community's process of self-determination. This process involves all community members within a single and overarching public sphere in rational deliberation toward shared political purposes. "[T]he paradigm is not the market but dialogue" (Habermas 1996b, 23). Thus, although freedom and individual autonomy are also important in this model, their meaning is not the same as in liberalism. The kind of freedom privileged in a republican democracy is "positive" in the sense that it is a freedom *for* civic action or, as Taylor (1989, 170) puts it, "a citizen liberty, that of the active participant in public affairs." Those who participate in public affairs are autonomous citizens in the sense that they are persons who move freely from the private to the public realm and, free from domination, engage in democratic dialogue. In opposition to the "private autonomy" privileged by liberalism, Habermas (1994; 1996a) refers to this as "public autonomy." This kind of autonomy is republicanism's source of political legitimation. Norms, to be precise, are legitimate to the extent that they are based on *popular sovereignty*, a principle "expressed in rights of communication and participation that secure the public autonomy of citizens" (Habermas 1998, 258).

The two different notions of autonomy – private and public – lead to contrasting views of the citizen. While the liberal citizen is solitary and self-interested, the republican citizen is social in two fundamental ways: identity itself is constituted dialogically (Taylor 1994) and civic engagement is always oriented toward common understanding. Sandel (1984) captures this distinction in his characterisation of the liberal citizen as the "unencumbered self," for whom "what matters above all, what is most essential to our personhood, are not the ends we choose but our capacity to choose them" (1984, 86). While for the unencumbered self, to be autonomous is to be *free from* all aims and interests, the republican citizen is *free to* pursue certain aims and interests that define the self. In this sense, Sandel (1984, 87) explains, the republican community is *constitutive* rather than simply *cooperative:* It "engage[s] the identity as well as the interests of the participants, and so implicate[s] its members in a citizenship more thoroughgoing than the unencumbered self can know."

To the extent that liberalism relies on the free flow of competing interests, it assumes a "realistic" definition of democracy and of its outcomes. That is, liberalism lacks normative principles with which to evaluate the justice of the decisions that succeed in the marketplace of interests. Justice, in liberalism, is defined by a procedure that is fair because it is equal to all. Liberal citizens, each of whom is free to have a different conception of the good, share a common legal system that enables them to negotiate their interests but not a sense of common ethos, nor an

orientation toward common understanding. In such a *proceduralist* model of democracy, strictly based on private autonomy, there is no space for the question of what kind of democracy we want and what kinds of decisions we need to take in order to achieve that democracy.

The republican agenda, in contrast, places these normative questions at its core. As stressed by Habermas (1996a, 279), republicanism "understands citizenship not primarily in *legal* but in *ethical* terms. According to this classical view, in the political public sphere, citizens join together in seeking what is best for them as members of a particular collectivity at a given point of time." This collective pursuit of a common goal corresponds to the "patriotic identification," which, from the republican perspective is "the essential condition for a free (nondepostic) regime" (Taylor 1989, 170). Republicans believe that a viable political project cannot be based on the mere aggregation of individual interests (even if following a single procedure), but requires either the imposition of certain interests over others or, as they propose, a superior or *patriotic* interest, shared by all.

Equality and Cultural Differences

For critical multiculturalism, it is particularly important to examine how equality fits into the liberal and republican models of democracy. Republicanism defends a broad understanding of social equality as a condition for freedom. Equality, in this sense, enables citizens' civic participation. It justifies redistributive programs, that is, the public investment of private funds to support schools, housing, health, and media systems to guarantee equal access to education, housing, health, and communication for those who, without such programs would remain "less equal." Liberalism, in contrast, limits equality to a matter of compatibility among individuals' rights: everyone has equal rights to the extent that one's freedom of action is legally limited by the freedom of action of the others. Thus, liberalism has a hard time justifying – and usually ends up minimising – redistributive politics and other equalising measures, which are seen as governmental interference on individual autonomy. This does not mean that liberalism dismisses equality altogether, but that it tends to relegate it to legality while *substantial* inequalities persist. In sum, the liberal understanding of freedom conflicts with an extended notion of social equality, while republicanism sees social equality as essential to the very idea of citizenship.

However, the question of equality gets significantly more complicated, for both republicanism and liberalism, when the social differences under consideration are not overtly undesirable ones – such as differentiated access to education, health, housing, and communications—but cultural differences related to gender and sex, age, race, and ethnicity. These differences and the associated demands for recognition are unsettling in new and complex ways.

> *For one, the principle of equal respect requires that we treat people in a different-blind fashion. The fundamental intuition that humans command this respect focuses on what is the same for all. For the other, we have to recognise and even foster particularity. The reproach the first makes to the second is just that it violates the principle of non-discrimination. The reproach the second makes to the first is that it negates identity by forcing people into a homogeneous mold that is untrue to them* (Taylor 1994, 43).

Equal treatment, as Taylor explains, clashes with cultural recognition understood here as the freedom to be oneself. Additionally, in the case of republicanism, cultural differences threaten disinterested civic dialogue because bonds created around particular cultural identities allegedly conflict with the nation's common interest. Cultural specificity, in brief, runs counter to the republican understanding of universal citizenship. The republican model responds by relegating culture, together with all other "self-interests," to the sphere of the private. However, as suggested by Taylor in the passage just quoted, this solution is far from satisfactory for those who see themselves as culturally different. Paradoxically, the latter see discrimination and exclusion in policies designed under what Taylor calls "the principle of equal respect."

By giving priority to individual freedom and defending governmental neutrality with respect to citizens' diversity of interests, liberalism initially appears to be a better host for cultural differences. Indeed, its devotion to the free competition of interests supposedly goes as far as *encouraging* society's varied array of cultural possibilities. After more careful scrutiny, however, liberalism proves to be unreceptive to cultural differences in at least two important ways. First, these differences have a collective rather than an individual basis. Thus, from the liberal perspective, they limit individual autonomy. The "unencumbered self" must be free from ties to ancestry, social status, gender, or sexual preferences in order to command personal interests. Liberal freedom, in other words, is always "suspicious of collective goals" (Taylor 1994, 60) either if they are the goals of the nation, or those of an ethnic, racial, or sexual community. The second difficulty liberalism has in hosting cultural differences is that marketplace competition offers little possibility for effective participation. Not only does this competition follow a predetermined set of procedures, which participants have to accept uncritically, but these procedures privilege the most powerful or "competitive" interests. Since liberal freedom conflicts with policies to guarantee everyone's access to sufficient material and cultural conditions for democratic participation, that is, different cultural interests do not have equal opportunities to be heard.

In sum, the liberal and republican models, constrained by their understanding of freedom, equality, and citizenship, offer a similarly unsatisfactory answer to the question of how do cultural differences fit in democracy. Whatever space they seem to open for culture is definitely closed for a *politics* of culture. Culture, to be precise, is depoliticised either because it is relegated to the private realm in republicanism; or it is subjected to given structures of power in liberalism. The result, in both cases is a political system that may guarantee citizens' "formal" rights, but not their "substantive" rights of civic participation, to borrow a common distinction used in political theory (see Hall and Held 1990). While formal democratic rights are shared universally, substantive rights are the privilege of some. In the case of liberalism, of the economically powerful. In the case of republicanism, of the culturally dominant. If one keeps in mind the structural definition of culture developed earlier, however, the problem is basically the same: The universal norm of citizenship marginalises *the different,* forcing them to accommodate.

Proceduralism *and* Participation

Habermas's proposal for deliberative politics overcomes an important part of the limitations that liberalism and republicanism present for those concerned with

democracy and social justice under conditions of cultural diversity. A comparison between deliberative democracy and the other two democratic ideals underscores the advantages of the first in dealing with the apparent conflict between equality and cultural difference.

Deliberative democracy shares with liberalism a focus on procedure, and, with republicanism, a notion of citizenship rooted in community building through civic participation. A proceduralist *and* participatory democratic model challenges a basic assumption built into the other two democratic ideals: the idea that common deliberation and a common understanding are necessarily tied to a common ethos.

Deliberative democracy grounds its proceduralism on discourse ethics. This moral philosophy is meant to resolve conflicts of justice at a post-conventional level (where traditional forms of legitimation are not available), without resorting to violence or coercion. It does this by distinguishing between the realm of the good (ethics) and the realm of the right (morality), and confining itself to the latter. Discourse ethics is not oriented toward a predefined ethos, but follows, instead, a *just* or *deliberative* procedure. In Habermas's normative model of communication, to deliberate is to engage in society's reason-based dialogue, oriented toward common understanding, held among all citizens, and free from strategic action (i.e., from the influence of power and money). Proceduralism, in this sense, does not make deliberative democracy value-free. As Habermas (1996b, 26) explains, in this model "the normative content rises from the very structure of communicative actions."

The same reliance on civic participation that separates deliberative democracy from liberalism moves it closer to the republican model. Both the deliberative and the republican approaches are anchored on a common notion of the public sphere. They both understand "democracy in terms of the institutionalisation of a public use of reason jointly exercised by autonomous citizens" (Habermas, 1996b, 23). The two, as well, see in solidarity the fundamental source of social integration. Habermas, however, believes that republicanism's built-in assumption of a common idea of the good makes this model inoperable. Republicanism's "ethical overload," as he calls it (1996b, 21), restricts republican democracy to an agreement on value orientations and interests that does not exist under conditions of cultural diversity.

Instead of the common ethnic-cultural identity assumed by republicanism, deliberative democracy expects citizens to share a commitment to political discourse, the source of which Habermas (1996a; 1998) calls "constitutional patriotism." Constitutional patriotism resolves the problem of solidarity in deliberative politics by operating as a "functional equivalent" of nationalism (Habermas 1998, 117). Solidarity, in this case, does not rely on the idea of the nation – as a community of common descent – or of a common ethnicity, but on a "shared political culture." In this way, Habermas (1998, 118) separates citizens' *political* culture from the "subcultures and their prepolitical identities" and stresses how the viability of the first is necessarily tied to the respect for the latter. "A correctly understood theory of rights requires a politics of recognition that protects the integrity of the individual in the life contexts in which his or her identity is formed" (Habermas 1994, 112).

Private and Public Autonomy

Deliberative politics' theorisation of the link between differentiated life contexts and legality is particularly useful for critical multiculturalism. This link is

grounded on Habermas's argument on the "reciprocal relation" between private and public autonomy. Since the legitimacy of norms in the liberal and republican models derives from either one of these two kinds of autonomy – private autonomy guaranteed through the rule of law, in the case of liberalism; public autonomy guaranteed in the principle of popular sovereignty, in republicanism – they miss the interdependency of both sources of legitimation. They fail to see that "[t]he *democratic process* bears the entire burden of legitimation. It must simultaneously secure the private and the public autonomy of legal subjects" (Habermas 1996a, 450). The rule of law, in other words, does not simply guarantee private autonomy, but also enables citizens to participate in political deliberation. At the same time, in seeing themselves as "authors of just those rights which they are supposed to obey as addressees," citizens recognise the legitimacy of the rule of law (Habermas 1998, 258).

The reciprocal relation between public and private autonomy explains, in Habermas's view, the failure of measures of "welfare paternalism." Aimed at reducing socio-economic inequalities, these measures are imposed from above on the basis of predetermined notions of the law. "In this case, citizenship is reduced to a client's relationships to administration that provides security services, and benefits paternalistically" (Habermas 1996a, 78). It is worth noting that Habermas is not in a position to claim that the services and benefits resulting from this kind of welfare paternalism are good or bad; what he argues is that for them to be valid they would have to be authored by the people who are affected by them.

> *For in the final analysis, private legal subjects cannot enjoy even equal individual liberties if they themselves do not jointly exercise their civic autonomy in order to specify clearly which interests and standards are justified, and to agree on the relevant respects that determine when like cases should be treated alike and different cases differently* (Habermas 1998, 262).

Habermas's words make implicit reference to discourse ethics' principle of universality. Innerved into his theory of deliberative democracy, this principle underscores how justice is necessarily grounded on an open and inclusive debate that includes all citizens and, accordingly, all "life contexts." A recurrent example Habermas uses is the debate about gender equality and policies that have overlooked the perspective of women. Policies of this kind, in Habermas's (1996a; 1998) account, attack gender inequality as something that deserves the administrative execution of norms that are taken for granted. "[F]eminist critique has targeted not only the unredeemed demands, but also the ambivalent consequences of successfully implemented welfare programs […] It rightly insists that the appropriate interpretation of needs and criteria be a matter of public debate in the political public sphere" (1998, 263). It is through public debate, Habermas insists, that the demands of equality can be both defined and satisfied beyond *legal* or formal frameworks. Inclusive participatory debate, that is, can enable *actual* equality.

Conclusion: Deliberative Democracy's Communicative Advantages

Overall, what makes deliberative politics particularly appealing as the democratic platform for critical multiculturalism is its communicative core. While republi-

canism is similarly grounded on social dialogue, its conception of communication is not nearly as sophisticated and productive. The kind of communication that derives from Habermas's theorisation does not presuppose understanding and a common interest, but enables it. Likewise, one may argue – although Habermas is not always as clear in this respect[1] – that this kind of communication does not presuppose fixed norms of political participation, but understands all norms as imperfect and provisional, always subject to public deliberation. Since discourse ethics occurs at a post-conventional stage, it clashes against conformity and dogmatism. "The very perspectives that make consensus possible are now at issue" (Habermas 1990, 162). This means that all norms need to be morally justified through discourse. "The strong discourse-ethical notion of autonomy requires subjects to question even pregiven legitimating frameworks and authorities. Validity can then be redeemed only on the basis of the formal properties of argumentation" (Rehg 1994, 35).

Deliberative politics' communicative focus has at least two significant advantages for critical multiculturalism. First, understanding communication as the key instrument of political participation offers a promising platform for demanding cultural minorities' participatory representation. Because Habermas's notion of communication requires everyone's inclusion in a participatory process, it underscores the democratic significance of including all *voices* – not simply the *ears* of communication recipients. The requirement of inclusion of marginalised social groups, in other words, cannot be satisfied by *paternalistic* policies designed externally and through a naturalised logic that overlooks the life experiences and associated perspectives of those groups' members. Autonomy, it should be kept in mind, has to be understood as both freedom and effective access to communicative participation. Moreover, this double vision of autonomy also provides a useful response to the charges of social fragmentation raised by multiculturalism's opponents. Habermas's proposal for deliberative democracy cannot presuppose a common civic goal but offers a way to reach it. Predetermined commonality, it contends, not only neglects cultural differences but imposes some (culturally invisible) differences over others, intensifying structural inequality. Commonality reached *in* discourse, instead, must acknowledge and include cultural differences not as a way of distancing them further but of securing an equalitarian dialogue that could bring them closer.

Secondly, communication and the consequences of communication in the deliberative model cannot be separated from the structural conditions in which discourse occurs. Communication operates at all levels of social justice and arguing that a communicative approach is apolitical is misunderstanding this. According to Gouldner's (1976) early account of the reception of Habermas's writings, this is precisely what happened with the leftist critique of his work. The problem, Gouldner (1976, 147) argues, is that "language is not *easily* accessible as a lever of political intervention for emancipatory change." Language, Habermas's early critics assumed, is separated from structure, and thus focusing on the first distracts attention from the *real* issues of social inequality. Interestingly, this is the same assumption of those who criticise multicultural politics as "merely cultural," going back to Butler's (1997) expression. Like Habermas, Butler is convinced of the importance of language in actual (i.e., material) social change. Critical multiculturalism can thus find in deliberative politics "a mode of sustaining conflict in politically productive ways" (Butler 1997, 296).

Note:

1. Habermas's (1996a, 1998) notion of constitutional patriotism, for example, may not fit well with the principles of critical multiculturalism, due to its reliance on a clear-cut separation between "cultural assimilation" and "political assimilation."

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