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The retreat of multiculturalism in the liberal state: theory and policy[1]

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Abstract

This article discusses a recent retreat of multiculturalism in the liberal state. This retreat has occurred both at the level of theory and policy. With the help of some recent liberal critiques of multiculturalism, the first part maps out some short-comings of the notion of minority integration through cultural recognition, particularly with respect to immigrants. The second part discusses a retreat from multiculturalism policies in three states that had been prominently committed to them: Australia, the Netherlands, and Britain. This practical retreat of multiculturalism is due to a variety of factors, their importance differing across cases: the chronic lack of public support for multiculturalism policies; inherent deficits and failures of multiculturalism policies, especially in socio-economic respect; and a new assertiveness of the liberal state to impose liberal principles.

Keywords: Multiculturalism; ethnic minorities; immigration; state policies; western Europe; Australia

Will Kymlicka (1999: 113) has recently claimed that 'multiculturalists have won the day' in making their case for a difference-conscious notion of justice and concomitant laws and policies in the liberal state. One liberal theorist dryly responded that 'those who do not take this position tend not to write about it' (Barry 2001: 6). In fact, just when Kymlicka gave out his victory sign, a number of recent works by liberal political theorists have radically questioned the basic premises and assumptions of multiculturalism, contesting in particular the alliance between multiculturalism and liberalism that Kymlicka claims to have established.

The centre-piece of the emergent liberal critique of multiculturalism is Brian Barry's furious treatise *Culture and Equality* (2001). Underneath the polemic and the diatribe, this is a compelling defense of the old 'strategy of

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privatization' for resolving cultural conflict, which once had given birth to liberalism itself. Privatization, argues Barry, creates identical 'choice sets' or rules of the game to people, within which they can follow their particular inclinations as they see fit. Exemption from these rules, the least controversial (because costless) and most widely practiced form of multicultural accommodation, may be a matter of prudence but mostly not of justice: 'Usually . . . either the case for the law . . . is strong enough to rule out exemptions, or the case that can be made for exemptions is strong enough to suggest that there should be no law anyway' (Barry 2001: 39).

If Barry recalls the virtues of liberalism's old private-public distinction, Giovanni Sartori, in his thinner but no less provocative treatise *Pluralismo, multiculturalismo e estranei* (2000), shows that 'pluralism' in the political realm – next to difference-blind laws and institutions the second of liberalism's historical inventions – is emphatically *not* multiculturalism. Pluralism requires voluntary group memberships, multiple affiliations in the context of cross-cutting cleavages, and 'a reciprocal recognition' between conflict parties. These conditions are systematically denied by multicultural politics, as it evokes and mobilizes around involuntary and mutually exclusive statuses, and tends to render 'recognition' a one-sided act by the majority society only. Much like Barry, Sartori reinstates the discarded notions of universal citizenship and state neutrality: '(C)itizenship requires the postulate of neutrality . . . of the state vis à vis the cultural or ethnic identity of its demos' (Sartori 2000: 87).

Finally, Jacob Levy (2000) has argued that, if multiculturalism can be defended at all, then it is not as a hopeful 'multiculturalism of rights' or 'recognition' but only as a realistic 'multiculturalism of fear'. Recalling Judith Skhlar's notion of a 'liberalism of fear', Levy suggests taking diversity as an inevitable fact of life, not as a goal to be furthered by means of state policy. Difference-conscious policies may still be the best way to deal with a culturally and ethnically diverse reality, but it depends on the circumstances. A programme of 'recognizing' difference as a matter of right, rather than dealing with it pragmatically, would not only contradict the public-order-oriented way in which states have actually accommodated most such claims; it would also be theoretically inconsistent, as it is premised on 'the (hardly respectful) assumption that one's pre-existing culture includes the resources for judging all others in the world' (Levy 2000: 32).[2]

With the help of these recent liberal critiques of multiculturalism, the first part of this paper further scrutinizes multiculturalism's central claim: that the integration of (immigrant) minorities should proceed by means of 'recognizing' the 'culture' that constitutes a minority as a distinct group. The second part moves from the theory to the practice of multiculturalism, discussing a retreat from official multiculturalism policies in some states that had been

previously committed to a version of them: Australia, the Netherlands, and Britain.

The scope of this critical review of multiculturalism in theory and policy is doubly restricted. First, it applies only to multiculturalism as a doctrine of immigrant integration. National minorities, indigenous groups, or life-style groups, which are often included in multiculturalism theories and policies, are outside the purview of this paper. While this is a limited view, multicultural-ism debates in Europe and most English-speaking settler states (especially Canada and Australia) have prominently been debates about coping with migration-based ethnicity. There is an irony in this, because particularly liberal defenders of multiculturalism, like Kymlicka (1995), have conceded that 'vol-untary' immigrants have the weakest claim to cultural protection, at least if compared with national minorities or indigenous groups. Secondly, no claim is made that the theoretical and practical retreats of multiculturalism are causally related, in whatever causal direction (from theory to policy or from policy to theory). Because social science is always driven by the 'moving light' of the cultural problems of the day (classically formulated by Max Weber), there is naturally a convergence between theoretical and practical themes and considerations. But both developments are also driven by their own domain-specific logics and dynamics. Yes, one can understand recent policy changes without having read Barry or Sartori – otherwise one would be overly opti-mistic about the practical import of academic discourse; but a pairing of theoretical and political developments reveals interesting parallels and refractions that a narrowly theory- or policy-focused discussion would miss.

Liberal critique of multiculturalism

A notorious confusion surrounding the notion of multiculturalism is its simul-taneous reference to a 'state of affairs' and a 'political programme' (Barry 2001: 22), and its users do not always distinguish in what sense they wish to use it. This has fed the propensity for 'an unargued move from fact to norm' (ibid.). But why – and this is the first problem with the notion of minority inte-gration through cultural recognition – should the *description* of a multi-cultural or -ethnic reality result in the *prescription* that the state has to duplicate or even to further this reality in its laws and policies? However subtly (that is, mediated by 'justice' considerations) the linkage between empirical and normative multiculturalism may be drawn, one could argue exactly the opposite, that a centrifugal society requires centripetal state policies to keep it together. Historically the liberal, difference-blind state with its universal cit-izenship, which is now found fault with, had exactly emerged as a peacemaker to a hyper-diverse society torn by religious wars in seventeenth century

Europe. No convincing explanation has as yet been offered why *this* solution, which Barry calls the 'strategy of privatization', no longer works.

Barry's plea for the privatization of cultural conflict certainly hinges on the possibility of neutral 'choice sets'. Ayelet Shachar (2001a: 280f) sought to rebut this in a clever but flawed thought experiment. She invites us to imagine a hot and sun-drenched (Arabic?) country, in which the law of the land prescribes the complete veiling of the body ('from head to toe'), but where the parliamentary records will justify this in neutral 'public health' terms only (to reduce the risk of skin cancer). Wouldn't the Westerner sojourning there gasp for exemption from what is surely an oppressive restriction of personal freedoms, which moreover, and hardly by accident, corresponds to the official religion and particularistic mores of this land? While it is no doubt legitimate to question the neutrality of *some* 'choice sets', Shachar's thought experiment will not do to question, as is her concrete target, the neutrality of British road laws that prescribe the wearing of crash helmets on motorcycles (with a famous exemption for turbaned Sikhs, which is prominently discussed – and rejected – by Barry 2001: 44–50): unlike the Oriental wardrobe in Shachar's thought experiment, crash helmets are not known to have an Occidental cultural pedigree or to be prescribed by religious (Christian) dogma; not to mention that in the imagined sun-drenched land there is always sun-cream as a 'public health' alternative to prescribed wardrobe. A radical questioning of the possibility of neutral choicesets, into which Shachar boxes herself in order to rebut Barry's plea for privatization, even undermines her own 'internal' critique of multiculturalism (presented in Shachar 2001b), which appositely focuses on the intra-group oppressions (especially of women) that are sometimes a result of multiculturalism policies, but which is premised on the possibility that *some* 'choice sets' are neutral and universalistic.

Kymlicka's (1995: 198) related objection to privatization is that the state cannot differentiate itself from ethnicity and nationality in the same way that it has once differentiated itself from religion. Try as it might, the state has to have a public language, holidays, and certain particularisms that inevitably bear the mark of a majority group. For these impositions, he claims, there has to be some form of remedy – exemptions or even pro-active measures that affirm the equal status of the groups that do not see themselves in terms of these particularisms. To this one must respond that the hard cultural conflicts, at least with respect to migrants and their offspring, tend to be religious conflicts.[3] And liberal states have learned to accommodate these conflicts long before 'multiculturalism' had arrived – in fact, this is precisely what has made them 'liberal' in the first place. The institutional solutions vary between the poles of giving minority religions the same public status that majority religions already enjoy (the German–English model) or driving *all* of them out of the public sphere (the French–American model). Freedom of religion and creedal neutrality are principles that, in different ways, are respected and

institutionalized in all liberal states. As a result, non-Christian religions have to be dealt with in just the same way as established religions; the liberal state cannot force the Hindu or the Muslim to give up her religion. Even states that violate the neutrality principle in having a state church or granting public status to the majority religions are not exempt from this logic, and interestingly they often have the better track record of accommodating new religions through simply absorbing them into existing practices. As four observers describe the Dutch situation

> (S)ociety has (little power) to oppose the establishment of Islamic institutions, even if it wanted to. The fact is that Muslims are only exercising common and hence universally valid constitutional rights – including freedom of religion and the principle of equality – which are rightly held to be of the highest importance in the Netherlands. (Rath et al. 1999: 67)

This is not to deny that not *all* religions are equally amenable to be 'privatized', and the real problem is with those that do not acknowledge the private–public distinction. However, even strong defenders of multiculturalism have agreed that here is the penultimate limit to multicultural accommodation, and the moment in which liberalism is turned into a 'fighting creed' (Taylor 1992: 62).

Even if the differentiation between state and nationality may not be possible to the same degree that the differentiation between state and religion has been possible, one has to consider that non-religious impositions are always less exacting on the individual – they don't violate a script and ultimate commands to be kept, but challenge mere conventions or customs. Moreover, as I will briefly show in the end, even these less exacting particularisms are growing thin in liberal states; with the exception of public language use, particularisms are no longer officially enforced in these states' immigrant integration policies. And, as Zolberg and Long (1999: 21) pointed out, language differs from religion in that one can (in public education even is expected to) master more than one language, whereas the mark of religious affiliation is to be exclusive.

Opting for privatization is not to say that the liberal state should remain at all costs and in all respects blind to difference. A pragmatic case, though in most cases not a rights-based, principled case, can be made for the state *sometimes* taking cultural differences into account in its policies. In this more realistic scenario cultural difference figures as an 'is' condition for state policy, but not as a goal to be furthered by it. Jacob Levy (2000) has called this a 'multiculturalism of fear', which he contrasts with the dominant notion of a 'multiculturalism of rights and recognition'. What does it look like? Take the notorious example of hard, religiously-based multicultural conflict: female circumcision. If a mild and sane form of this can be practiced in an American hospital (as it actually was debated – and rejected – in Seattle in 1996) (see

Coleman 1998), this may be preferable to having the young Muslim girls subjected to a far more brutal and dangerous form of genital mutilation back home in Somalia. The liberal disapproval of this meant a 'sacrifice of the real interests of real girls' (Levy 2000: 57), but approving it for pragmatic reasons is also less than 'recognizing' it as a cultural practice that we deem of equal value to our own cultural practices (which grant the autonomy to women that female circumcision precisely wants to deny).

This leads to a second problem with the model of minority integration through cultural recognition: it is logically impossible to recognize all cultures as equal. This is because cultures have, as Brian Barry (2001: 270) put it, 'propositional content': they distinguish between true and false, right and wrong, beautiful and ugly. These judgments cannot all be simultaneously confirmed. We can at best tolerate other cultures, but their equal recognition is impossible.[4] This is precisely why Jacob Levy (2000) has suggested a negative 'multiculturalism of fear' in lieu of a positive 'multiculturalism of rights and recognition'

> Non-cruelty, non-humiliation, and genuine tolerance are possible if not always easy. Public affirmation of respect and recognition, though, cannot be available to all cultures simultaneously . . . To recognize what a group values in its own culture is to accept a standard by which some other groups fail to be worthy of respect. (Levy 2000: 32)

Giovanni Sartori (2000: 69) put it in similar terms: 'To attribute "equal value" to all cultures . . . destroys the very notion of value. If everything is of value, nothing is of value: the value loses its content'.

In particular Sartori (2000) has addressed a third problem with cultural recognition: its unilaterality. Usually the demand is for the state and majority society to 'recognize' the minority group, while undeniably less attention is paid to a reciprocal obligation of the minority to 'recognize' the ways of the majority. Certainly, Kymlicka (1995) concedes that for immigrants the overall goal is 'integration' into the culture of the majority society, which at least implies some recognition on the part of immigrants too; and Parekh (2000: 272) goes even further than this, demanding that in case of a clash with the 'operative public values' of majority society the controversial immigrant custom has to retreat. However, in no theory of multiculturalism is the explicit act of 'recognition' reciprocal, denoting instead an act that goes from the majority to the minority. This is the whole point of the 'politics of recognition' as first brought up by Taylor (1992). 'Recognition' thus differs from the classic notion of 'tolerance', which Sartori (2000: 38) at least presents as inherently reciprocal: '(I)n being tolerant toward others, we expect them in turn to be tolerant toward us'.

In this context it is interesting to note that the multicultural notion of recognition constitutes a reversal of the classic notion of recognition, as formulated

by Hegel (1973[1807]: 145–55). For Hegel, recognition was the stake of a struggle between initially equal conflict parties and, in an inherently unstable and deficient way, it was eventually forced by the winner ('master') upon the loser ('servant') of this 'struggle for recognition'. Accordingly, in the classic scenario the servant is forced to recognize the master (while – in a twist that Marx came to make much of – the servant finds *Ersatz* recognition in identifying with the products of his labour). In the multicultural scenario the relationship is the reverse: the winner is asked to recognize the loser, in what amounts to an act of reparation and restitution. One may well question this as psychologically naive, because isn't the badge of inferiority reaffirmed in the very attempt to get rid of it?[5] Multicultural recognition is perhaps an adequate demand for a domestic group that has been historically wronged (like indigenous groups or the descendants of African slaves in European settler societies), but hardly for voluntary immigrant groups in whatever country they happen to set their feet on. Kymlicka (1995) has conceded this, arguing that migrants have 'waived' the right to their culture. But then it is not clear why he includes them nevertheless in his theory of minority rights.

While part of the standard critique of multiculturalism, especially from the left (Barry 2001: 321f), a final problem with cultural recognition has to be reiterated, also because this has been partially driving the practical retreat from multiculturalism policies: the focus on culture takes attention away from other, perhaps more important sources of minority discrimination, most notably socio-economic inequities. Banting and Kymlicka (2003: 7f) are certainly right in principle to question the assumption of fixed resources in a zero-sum relationship that underlies what they call the 'crowding out' argument against multiculturalism. However flawed the connection may be in theory, the co-existence of 'recognition' policies with socio-economic malaise is nevertheless often found fault with in reality; in the Netherlands at least, this has been a major factor in a recent retreat from multiculturalism policies. 'Unemployment, poverty, school drop-out, and criminality are concentrated among the ethnic minorities' – this was the alarming diagnosis in Dutch analyst Paul Scheffer's influential treatise on the 'multicultural drama' in the Netherlands, which was particularly galling as it was allowed to happen in the very shadow of official multiculturalism.[6]

Policy retreat

In the following, I examine the retreat from official multiculturalism policies in states that had been prominently committed to a version of them, and their replacement (in Europe at least) by centrist policies of civic integration with respect to immigrants. A number of causes is responsible for this development, their relative weight differing across cases, and some (but not all) of them

resonating with the foregoing liberal critique of multiculturalism: (1) the lack of public support for official multiculturalism policies (a cause largely outside the liberal spectrum), (2) these policies' inherent shortcomings and failures, especially with respect to the socio-economic marginalization and self-segregation of migrants and their children, and (3) a new assertiveness of the liberal state in imposing the liberal minimum on its dissenters. As the following discussion of the cases of Australia, the Netherlands, and Britain will show, the first factor was especially at play in the *downscaling* of multiculturalism in Australia, while the second and third factors were more present in a wholesale *retreat* from multiculturalism in Europe. This comparison will also show that multiculturalism in settler societies (like Australia) is entangled with problems of national self-definition, which sets it apart from its counterparts in Europe and is also separate from the minority rights agenda of multiculturalism theorists. Most importantly, the national-identity dimension of settler-society multiculturalisms has helped shield them from their challengers (for the even more extreme case of Canada, see Kymlicka 2003).

Downscaling multiculturalism in Australia

In his defense of Canadian multiculturalism, Will Kymlicka (1998: 16) admitted that the latter was 'under attack today, more than ever', for the reasons that such programmes are under attack everywhere, especially a lingering perception that they feed 'separatism' and the 'ghettoization' of minorities. More in passing, he suggested that things were better in Australia, because here the government was allegedly keener at showing the 'limits' of multiculturalism. Are things better in Australia?

A closer look suggests that they are not. To the degree that Australian multiculturalism had originally aimed at 'cultural maintenance' and institutionalizing ethnic differences, it met with the same strong public disapproval that such programmes meet everywhere.[7] In response, repeated reformulations have stressed that Australian multiculturalism was no property of ethnic minorities, especially of the activists that purported to speak for them, but an identity option for *all* Australians. This was not even a forced or new interpretation, because the notion of multiculturalism was born in the very moment that Australia's old identity as 'white' and 'British' had fallen into disrepute, in the early 1970s. This national-identity dimension of multiculturalism has nothing in common with the minority-focused 'politics of recognition' of Taylor, Kymlicka, or Iris Marion Young.

A robust sense that multiculturalism was a matter for 'all Australians' had already been present in Australian multiculturalism's first codification in 1978, in the so-called Galbally Report, which otherwise became known for its focus on special migrant services and programmes: '(T)he development of a multicultural society will benefit all Australians' (Galbally 1978: 10). The

nation-building function of multiculturalism was then further visible in a document entitled *Multiculturalism for All Australians: Our Developing Nationhood*, which was issued by the Australian Council on Population and Ethnic Affairs (ACPEA) in 1982. In an astonishing feat of euphemism, even White Australia was refashioned here as 'our multicultural past': 'Community concern prompted official action . . . to seek to avoid inter-group conflict by excluding migrant groups that might be the focus of . . . conflict' (ACPEA 1982: 8). This was a rather friendly way of referring to Asian exclusion in the context of the White Australia policy. And if today there were 'clashes' between 'core culture' and minority cultures, 'the Council would envisage the rejection of the offending element of the inconsistent culture' (ACPEA 1982: 30). Given this robust sense of a 'primary loyalty to Australia' (ACPEA 1982: 25) in multiculturalism's earliest formulations, it is puzzling that more recent formulations would all start on the premise that multiculturalism was still waiting to be liberated form the stranglehold of ethnic groups and to be turned into something for 'all' Australians (Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) 1989; National Multicultural Advisory Council (NMAC) 1999).

In the sense of providing an identity option for an Anglo-Saxon settler society without an own founding myth, Australian multiculturalism has never been officially rejected – as in Canada, the dimension of national self-definition has helped immunize multiculturalism from its challengers. However, under this national umbrella, which is separate from the problem of minority accommodation,[8] multiculturalism has still received subtly different interpretations. And one can observe that even as a national identity option for all Australians, multiculturalism has been scaled back over the years.[9] For the protagonists of multiculturalism on the left, the nation was identical to multiculturalism: '(W)e must be multicultural to be national' (Castles et al. 1988: 5). Or as the old champion of Australian multiculturalism, Al Grassby, phrased it negatively, 'Take away multicultural Australia and you have nothing left' (in Betts 1999: 322). This equation of 'multicultural' with 'national' had two problems. First, Australia's predominantly British heritage disappeared in it, even though this was precisely the intent of the south-east European ethnics furthering the notion that 'all persons living in Australia are "ethnic"' (ACPEA 1982: 2). But more importantly, within this equation of multicultural with national one could not formulate that this multiculturalism was in Australia and not elsewhere – the added value of 'Australia' disappeared. In response to these two problems, a slightly different version of multiculturalism emerged outside the political left and the ethnic activist circles, according to which Australia was certainly 'multicultural', but other things too. It was this weaker version that won the day.

The downscaling of multiculturalism was kicked off by the government-commissioned Fitzgerald Report of 1988, which also laid the switches for Australia's current emphasis on recruiting highly-skilled immigrants

(especially from White Australia's old *bête noire*, Asia). The report thus fore-shadowed the current situation in Europe, in which a salient opening to new immigration is likewise framed by a distancing from the multicultural elite rhetoric of old. The bottom-line of the report was that public support for immigration depended on separating the latter from 'multiculturalism', which was widely rejected for its association with ethnic activism. Authored by an Asia-experienced career diplomat, Stephen Fitzgerald, someone who was described by two sympathetic observers as an 'ethnic Australian' (Birrell and Betts 1988: 266), the Fitzgerald Report reduced 'multicultural' to one of several adjectives of Australia, like 'democratic', all of which were peripheral to its identity

> Just as Australia is a democracy but has its own identity, so also is it multi-cultural, but nonetheless identifiably Australian. It is the Australian identity that matters most in Australia. (Fitzgerald 1988: 10)

What then constituted the 'identifiably Australian' beyond these generic adjectives that no immigration of whatever origins was allowed to put in question? The answer may reflect the Irish (and thus latently anti-British) background of the report's author

> A society which is open, easy going and relaxed, dedicated more to the enjoyment of what life can offer than to fiercely competitive pursuit of what may be necessary to improve it. (Fitzgerald 1988: 5)

This downscaling responded to the logical necessity that an Australian core had to be defined separately from multiculturalism – otherwise Australia could not be distinguished, for instance, from Canada, where a similar multicultural self-description took hold almost simultaneously. Without a separate Australian core, all talk of a 'primary loyalty to Australia' that had permeated Australian multiculturalism statements since the early 1980s had to remain hollow.

The *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia* of 1989, the key government statement on multiculturalism for the rest of the millennium, chose a slightly different way to explicate what Australia was in addition to multiculturalism: a society of British heritage. 'Our British heritage is extremely important to us. It helps to define us as Australian . . . It is a large part of what makes Australia attractive to immigrants and visitors . . .' (OMA 1989: 50). This added value was again necessary for the possibility of 'limits' to multiculturalism, which the *National Agenda* defined – on its front page – as the obligation of an 'overriding and unifying commitment to Australia'. Issued shortly after the Fitzgerald Report, and an obvious attempt to placate the ethnic critics who had wanted a stronger affirmation of multiculturalism, the *National Agenda* still promoted the same weakened version of a multiculturalism that did not exhaust what it means to be Australian.

The *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia* also added a new dimension that was seen as crucial in making multiculturalism policy acceptable to 'all' Australians, yet that in effect further weakened its value as a national-identity option: its 'economic efficiency'. Initially, this meant to better integrate non-English-speaking newcomers into the workforce, for the sake of a more efficient use of 'human resources'. However, economic efficiency became quickly reinterpreted and upgraded as the notion that a diverse workforce and its diversity-sensitive management could be an asset in a globalizing economy, and even be sellable abroad as 'world best practice for the management of workplace diversity' (Australian Government 1999: 25). This is encapsulated in the concept of 'productive diversity', which the Office of Multicultural Affairs has busily propagated since 1992. Two protagonists defined 'productive diversity' as 'stressing the positive market value of diversity rather than attempting to define and right wrongs, and dealing with diversity as a central management issue rather than as a kind of remedial action to incorporate marginalized groups' (Cope and Kalantzis 2001: 818). This utilitarian version of multiculturalism, in which all previous references to either minority integration or national identity option are cut, is also the one that the current centre-right coalition government of John Howard, who had earlier made himself a name as a fierce critic of multiculturalism, has warmed up to (see NMAC 1999).

Beyond multiculturalism in Europe

In the few European societies that have waged official multiculturalism policies the retreat from them has even been more pronounced. In contrast to Canada or Australia, where multiculturalism is entrenched as an identity option for society as a whole (and – what could not be discussed here – is additionally linked up with the accommodation of national minorities and indigenous groups), European multiculturalisms have always been for immigrants only. Accordingly, European multiculturalisms are less nationally rooted than their trans-oceanic precursors, and there is less nostalgia here about policies and labels that are now widely perceived as having run their course. Consider recent developments in two previous standard-bearers of European multiculturalism, the Netherlands and Britain.

Already in the mid-1990s, that is, before the meteoric rise of populist Pim Fortuyn and liberal publicist Paul Scheffer's widely noted article on the Dutch 'multicultural drama', a left-liberal government had abandoned the previous 'ethnic minorities' policy', and turned instead to a policy of civic integration (see Entzinger 2003; also Vermeulen and Penninx 2000: 20–2).[10] This move was motivated by several problems with the old minorities' policy. First, the vastly expanded number of source countries, as well as an internal diversification of migrant groups, made it difficult to maintain a policy that was based on

singling out a limited number of clearly demarcated 'ethnic minorities' for special treatment. Secondly, the whole approach of 'emancipating' these designated minorities as 'groups' within their own parallel institutions had detrimental effects, fuelling their segregation and separation from mainstream society. Most importantly, the ethnic minorities' policy was incapable of remedying the most pressing problem among immigrants and their offspring, unemployment and economic marginalization. Under the shadow of official multiculturalism, an 'ethnic underclass' had been allowed to emerge, consisting of 'people who do not feel attached to Dutch culture and society and who are unwilling and unable to integrate' (Entzinger quoting and paraphrasing Paul Scheffer, 2003: 78). The new 'integration' policy, which came to replace the 'ethnic minorities' policy', focuses on the previously neglected socio-economic dimension of immigrant integration, taking immigrants as 'individuals' who had to be funneled into mainstream society rather than to be kept separate as 'groups' in parallel institutions.

A novelty within the Dutch 'integration' policy is to expect more of migrants in the process of integration. That immigrant integration has to be a 'two-way street' has been a mantra for many years, but previously it had really meant that mostly the receiving society had to change while 'no questions' were asked of the immigrants.[11] Now the connotation is the reverse. Consider this statement by the Dutch Minister for Urban and Integration Policy, Roger van Boxtel

> Members of ethnic minorities can be expected to do their utmost in order to acquire an independent position in our country as soon as possible. This requires them to opt for this society and to take responsibility for making use of the many facilities that our country offers to its new compatriots. Mastering the Dutch language is a crucial aspect of this. (Quoted in Entzinger 2003: 74)

The most visible expression of the new propensity to 'ask questions' is the 1998 Law on Civic Integration for Newcomers, which obliges non-European newcomers to take 600 hours of language and civics lessons.

The obligatory nature of the Dutch civic integration programme surely raises eyebrows from a liberal perspective, and it has been a bone of contention in the European countries whose governments (left or right) quickly sought to institute similar programmes (including all Scandinavian countries [except Sweden], Belgium, Austria, and Germany). However, in an interesting parallel with contemporary 'workfare' programmes, the flip-side to obligation is the provision of resources, in this case language training programmes whose positive function for immigrant integration is incontrovertible.[12] The question of the compatibility of obligatory integration with liberal principles critically hinges on how soft or hard the penalties for non-compliance are – are they only monetary, or is legal residence itself made contingent on passing these

courses? In the Dutch case at least the penalties are decidedly on the 'soft' side; but it is by no means certain that it will stay this way as the civic integration policy proliferates across Europe.

The turn from multiculturalism to civic integration reflects a seismic shift not just in the Netherlands, but in other European societies as well, 'from the neglect to the affirmation of one's own culture'.[13] This theme has certainly been aggravated by the rise of right-wing populism across Europe. However, its impact should not be exaggerated. As noted, the Dutch turn to civic integration had occurred *before* Pim Fortuyn's sudden appearance in national politics, and it was masterminded by impeccable liberals.[14] Moreover, the Fortuyn phenomenon shows that the distemper with multiculturalism is more complex than the tired label 'right-wing populism' suggests. Rather, in this particular case it is a liberal distemper. As I shall further elaborate in the final section, the majority 'culture' that is affirmed here is not a nationally parochial one, but a Western culture in which gays or women proudly take their place. Only when provoked by a prominent Dutch-Moroccan Imam's statement that homosexuality was a 'disease', did Fortuyn retaliate that Islam was a 'backward culture'. And when asked whether he ever 'speaks' to 'backward' Muslims, the iconic response was: 'Have I spoken to Muslims? I even go to bed with them'.[15] This was 'populism' of a peculiar kind. It was not permeated by nostalgia for the monoculture of old (gays were repressed by this too); instead, it asked for civic adjustments on the part of immigrants, which had been dodged under the reign of official multiculturalism.

A similar move from multiculturalism to civic integration has recently occurred in Britain. Britain of course differs from the Netherlands, in that its brand of official multiculturalism had always been more laissez-faire and de-centred, firmly instituted in some branches of the state (especially at local level) but repudiated or at least ignored by others (such as the central government under Thatcher). As in the Netherlands, it would be misleading to claim that right-wing populism has been responsible for a similar retreat of multiculturalism in Britain, because this country has always been marked by the very absence of a politically significant extreme right.

Before it suddenly came under fire, the British multicultural orthodoxy was affirmed as late as 2000, in a report by the Runnymede Trust, *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain*, chaired and masterminded by Britain's 'race relations' eminence, Bhikhu Parekh. 'Britishness', goes the single-most quoted line of the report, 'has systematic, largely unspoken, racial connotations' (Runnymede Trust 2000: 38).[16] Accordingly, there was a need to move toward a 'multicultural post-nation', in which Britain would be a 'community of communities'. Because of the racial disfiguring of Britishness, the 'liberal' model of integrating a diverse society was flawed. In this model there was a 'single political culture in the public sphere' and diversity was relegated to the 'private lives of individuals and communities'. Instead, one had to move toward a

'plural' model, in which the 'recognition of cultural diversity' happened in the public sphere (Runnymede Trust 2000: 48ff). One wonders: when Robin Cook, Britain's Foreign Minister under the first Blair government, declared that 'chicken tikka masala' now rivaled 'fish and chips' as the Britons' favourite dish, wasn't this a sign that the 'plural' model had already arrived? The public–private dualism, as negatively invoked by the multiculturalists (especially Galeotti 2002), has always been a bit of a straw-man; the 'liberal' reality of deracinated 'citizens' never was because it is always fleshly agents with interests and identities that people the public sphere, and Parekh after all sits now as Lord in Britain's Upper House, a place foreclosed to most but very 'public' nevertheless. As if sensing that a reassertion of orthodox multiculturalism had the smell of yester-year, Parekh quickly withdrew a bit, pleading for a 'synthesis' of the 'liberal' and 'plural' models, according to which 'Britain is both a community of citizens and a community of communities' (Runnymede Trust 2000: 47).

This reassertion of orthodox multiculturalism proved rather short-lived. Britain's most serious race riots in two decades, which occurred in the spring and early summer of 2001 in various north-English cities, threw an altogether different light on Britain's multicultural reality. A government commissioned investigation into the origins of the riots, chaired by a seasoned urban councillor, Ted Cantle, and a group of politicians, social workers, and local government experts with strong 'minority' credentials, observed

> Whilst the physical segregation of housing estates and inner city areas came as no surprise, the team was particularly struck by the depth of polarisation of our towns and cities . . . Separate educational arrangements, community and voluntary bodies, employment, places of worship, language, social and cultural networks, means that many communities operate on the basis of a series of parallel lives. These lives often do not seem to touch at any point, let alone overlap and promote any meaningful interchanges. (Cantle Report 2001: 9)

Moreover, the investigation deplored 'the lack of an honest and robust debate, as people "tiptoe around" the sensitive issues of race, religion and culture' (Cantle Report 2001: 9). Finally, rather than representing and pursuing the interests of their 'communities', local minority councillors were depicted as owing their selection 'more to familial and other inappropriate connections', and as being mired in 'politics from back home' and 'sweetheart deals' (Cantle Report 2001: 23). The 'multi-ethnic Britain' described in this report was certainly one of 'communities', yet one without a meta-'community' in the singular to tie them all together.

Interestingly, twenty years earlier, after the Brixton riots of 1981, a Tory government had prescribed more 'positive action' and multiculturalism as a way

out of failing minority integration (see Joppke 1999: 231f). In 2001, a Labour government found that it was time to move 'beyond multiculturalism'.[17] In its recommendations, the Cantle Report struck an entirely new chord: there had to be a 'greater sense of citizenship' (2001: 10), 'common elements of "nationhood"' had to be agreed upon (2001: 19), the 'use of the English language' had to be strengthened in the minority communities, and overall 'the non-white community (had) to develop a greater acceptance of, and engagement with, the principal national institutions'. At the same time, the report stressed that this was not a flight into the pre-multicultural past: '(W)e are never going to turn the clock back to what was perceived to be a dominant or monoculturalist view of nationality' (2001: 18).

Britain's move 'beyond multiculturalism' is rigorously pursued by Labour Home Secretary David Blunkett, who in his first years in office has broken virtually all the taboos that had sealed Britain's etiquette-conscious race relations scene from the 'honest and robust debate' asked for in the Cantle Report. 'We have norms of acceptability and those who come into our home – for that is what it is – should accept those norms', he said on the eve of publishing the Cantle Report.[18] Certain minority practices, on which, so far, no one had dared to comment, have now become subjected to public scrutiny as never before. The notorious example is that of arranged marriage, which, to an alarming degree, seems to be forced marriage. It is widespread practice in Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities for parents to import marriage partners for their sons or daughters from back home – in part, one must assume, because a British visa yields a significant dowry. This practice is doubly problematic, as especially young women are often forced into such unions (see Home Office 2000), and as the offspring of such unions are exposed to at least one parent who is completely unfamiliar with English language and society, assuring the continuously renewed marginalization and segregation of minorities across immigrant generations. The number of such arranged marriages has more than doubled between 1996 and 2000, reaching 18,000 in 2000.

Here was a real 'multicultural' problem where 'recognition' was less the solution than part of the problem itself, because it clashed with the liberal notion that marriage was 'a choice by right'. Never mincing his words, Home Secretary Blunkett went to the heart of the matter: 'We also believe that there is a discussion to be had within those communities that continue the practice of arranged marriages as to whether more of these could be undertaken within the settled community here.'[19] To which a minority activist predictably responded,

(t)elling established British communities whom they should or should not marry is quite abhorrent. This would send exactly the wrong signal to these predominantly Asian communities that they are not part of the British norm.[20]

This response itself invokes a liberal norm: that the state should not intervene in an individual's marriage choice. In fact, arranged marriage presents the liberal state with the dilemma that it cannot do much about its own principles being violated if it wants to honour its tenet of not intervening in the private sphere.

With its new stress on civic integration, however, the liberal state is becoming more assertive about its liberal principles, and shows itself less willing to see them violated under the cloak of 'multicultural' toleration. If liberalism has always been marked by a tension between the countervailing imperatives of 'diversity' and 'autonomy' (see Galston 1995), one can interpret the new assertiveness as a shift of emphasis from diversity to autonomy, in whose optic liberalism itself appears as a distinct way of life that clashes with other, non-liberal ways of life. The reasons for the new assertiveness of the liberal state in Britain and beyond are complex. One reason, which predominated before the most recent concern about terrorism and security, is preparation for envisaged new large-scale immigration. Public consent for this is sought through the scaling-back of multiculturalism, both as social fact and political programme.

The connection between planned new immigration and reduced multiculturalism is perhaps the most striking feature of the British government's recent White Paper, *Secure Borders, Safe Haven* (Home Office 2002). Laying out a new agenda for managing immigration and integrating immigrants, this document resembles in interesting ways the Australian Fitzgerald Report of 1988, in which an economically motivated opening up for new immigration was likewise accompanied by a significant reduction of multicultural rhetoric. The message is clear: if the public is to tolerate new immigration, it has to be assured of its 'sense of belonging and identity'.[21] Moreover, the newcomers also have to 'develop a sense of belonging, an identity and shared mutual understanding, which can be passed from one generation to another' (Home Office 2002: 27). To assure this, the White Paper opens with a chapter on 'citizenship and nationality', which lays out the new civic integration agenda. While bowing, as is a general mark throughout the move 'beyond multiculturalism', to the tenet that 'our society is multi-cultural, and (is) shaped by its diverse peoples' (Home Office 2002: 29), this is an attempt to upgrade British citizenship, which has traditionally been a rather thin concept devoid of 'identity' implications. Concrete measures include the introduction of an oath to be sworn at American-style naturalization ceremonies, the toughening of the English language requirement when acquiring citizenship, and the introduction of mandatory 'citizenship and democracy' education at English schools. Underscoring the close connection between the opening-up for new immigration and the down-scaling of multiculturalism, Home Secretary Blunkett declared at the first public citizenship ceremony, held in late February 2004, that this 'will be the answer to those who fear difference, who fear the

diversity which comes with migration of people coming across the world to live in our community'.[22]

The turn to civic integration is perhaps most visible in Britain and The Netherlands, the two societies in Europe (if one excludes Sweden) that had so far been most committed to official multiculturalism. But more than that, it is a Europe-wide phenomenon. Everywhere there is the same tendency to take 'multiculturalism' as the description of a diverse society rather than as prescription for state policy. Instead, state policy now takes more a centrist, 'civic' direction. However, one might object, isn't this simply the rebirth of nationalism, or even of 'racism' (as suggested by Back et al. 2002)? The turn to civic integration is indeed driven by the attempt to commit and bind newcomers to the *particular* society that is receiving them, notionally making them familiar with the 'British' or 'Dutch' values and ways of doing things. But, if one looks closer, these particularisms are just different names for the universal creed of liberty and equality that marks *all* liberal societies – there is nothing particularly 'British' or 'Dutch' about the principles that immigrants are to be committed to and socialized into. When forced to spell out what the 'fundamental tenets' of British citizenship were, the recent White Paper could only say: '(T)hat we respect human rights and freedoms, uphold democratic values, observe laws faithfully and fulfill our duties and obligations' (Home Office 2002: 34). Similarly, in the 'common elements of "nationhood"' invoked in the Cantle Report there was nothing specifically British: '(A) more visible support for anti-discrimination measures, support for women's rights, a universal acceptance of the English language . . . and respect for both religious differences and secular views' (Cantle Report 2001: 19). Instead of being 'British', this was the universal, nationally anonymous creed of the liberal state.

In Germany, the conservative opposition party, Christian-Democratic Union (CDU), made the same experience when launching its ill-fated call for a 'German *Leitkultur*' (dominant culture) that was to be respected by newcomers. The German constellation is admittedly different, because here there never was an official multiculturalism as in Britain or the Netherlands. However, some government agencies, especially the Federal Commissioner for Foreigner Affairs, have long espoused the notion that Germany was a 'multicultural society' that had to be mirrored in the state's policies. Interestingly, before it became positively revalued by the conservative opposition, a variant of the notion of *Leitkultur* had first been launched in negative form by the Commissioner for Foreigner Affairs, in terms of the claim that there was no 'German monolithic culture' (*deutsche Einheitskultur*) that migrants could be expected to adopt.[23] The positive revaluation of this notion by the CDU constitutes an exact parallel to the civic integration campaigns in the Netherlands and Britain. Nevertheless, the concept had to be withdrawn because in Germany any reference to 'national' symbols and rhetoric is lastingly tainted by illiberal connotations. This is despite the fact that, when asked to spell out

what the German *Leitkultur* was, its proponents could only come up with things that could have been constitutive of a British or Dutch *Leitkultur* as well: the norms of the constitution, the 'European idea', equality of women, and German language. The only national particularism in this is language, but then 'the state necessarily engages in linguistic choices' (Zolberg and Long 1999: 21).

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion showed the narrow margin for asserting national particularisms in the recent turn to civic integration in Europe. More generally, liberal nation-states are marked by a thorough de-ethnicization, in which the various national labels are only different names for the same thing, the liberal creed of liberty and equality. Prominent expressions of this de-ethnicization are nondiscriminatory immigration policies, liberalized citizenship rules, and a general distancing from the old idea of 'assimilation' (Joppke 2004). The causes of this are beyond the scope of this article. But its effect is to remove the case for programmes of multicultural 'recognition' because there is no imposition above the liberal minimum that would call for a remedial act on part of the immigrant-receiving state. With the exception of language, the only explicit impositions on newcomers are liberal impositions, most notably a procedural commitment to liberal-democratic principles. Witness what the German (left-Green) government recently declared with respect to Muslim migrants

> The assimilation of migrants is not seriously considered by anyone. The Muslims living here don't have to abandon their cultural and religious identity. However, they are requested to adapt to the structures of a democratic legal state, (and) to accept the Basic Law unconditionally, especially the separation of state and religion . . . [24]

Accordingly, the new assertiveness with respect to 'one's own culture' are local versions of the liberal state becoming more serious than in the 'multicultural' past about the liberal minimum.

Has the marriage between multiculturalism and liberalism, happily announced by Will Kymlicka (1995) less than a decade ago, come to a premature end? Yes and no. The ingredients of liberal societies, most importantly political pluralism, legal constitutionalism and markets, contain multicultural possibilities that are not affected by the changing rhetoric and policies of the day. And even at the level of rhetoric, there has been no change to the notion that 'we are all multiculturalists now' (Glazer 1997), in the sense that it is generally not considered the business of the state to force identities upon people. The homogenizing nation-building of old (see Scott 1998) has been shattered

by the logic of differentiated and pluralistic societies, at least in what used to be called the 'West'. What then is the 'retreat of multiculturalism'? Perhaps a growing sense that 'when in Rome, do as the Romans do' has not been out-lived as a maxim of immigrant integration, precisely because the contemporary 'Romes' are polyglot places in which the ties that bind are increasingly procedural and universalistic.

(Date accepted: February 2004)

Notes

1. This article was written while I was a Visiting Scholar at the Russell Sage Foundation, New York (2002/3). I would like to thank the RSF staff for excellent working conditions.

2. To group Levy (2000) along with Barry (2001) and Sartori (2000) as liberal critiques of multiculturalism is in some way questionable, because in the case-study part of his work Levy advocates a large set of multiculturalism policies. As Shachar (2001a: 273) rightly noted, there is a 'tension between the theory and the application of the "multiculturalism of fear"', the theory being restrictive but its application being expansive.

3. The religious dimension of many multicultural conflicts is increasingly becoming recognized in the literature (among the many recent contributions, see Gutmann 2003). The focus on religion certainly has to be nuanced, even with respect to immigrants, as in Zolberg and Long's (1999) interesting juxtaposition of language-based conflicts surrounding Hispanic immigrants in the USA and religiously based conflicts surrounding Muslim immigrants in Europe.

4. Nancy Fraser (2003) has proposed a 'deontological' notion of recognition, which works 'without recourse to ethical evaluation of the cultural and religious practices at issue'. However, this is only another word for traditional 'toleration'. Why call this 'recognition', except for bowing to the jargon of the day?

5. Minority group critics of US 'affirmative action' (which originated in a universalistic anti-discrimination policy but has taken on multicultural, group-recognizing features) have pointed this out (most lucidly Loury 1997).

6. Paul Scheffer, 'Das multikulturelle Drama', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 21 July 2001.

7. A 1993 Canadian public opinion poll found that almost 75 per-cent of respondents rejected the idea that Canada is a 'multicultural nation' (Barry 2001: 293). For similar responses in other countries, see Betts (1996: 13) and Hjerm (2000: 366).

8. But see Jupp (2002: ch. 5), who correctly points out that the mundane side of Australian multiculturalism has always focused on resettlement and integration aids for non-British immigrants. There obviously is a disjunction between the rhetoric and the content of Australian multiculturalism.

9. In this Australian multiculturalism differs from the Canadian one, which is arguably the most stable in the world. Among other factors, this stability has to do with Canada's perceived need to differentiate itself from its southern (in the Canadian optic: non-multicultural) neighbour. If the government promoted its 1988 Multiculturalism Act with the slogan 'Multiculturalism is being Canadian', this evidently worked only with the subtext that to be multicultural is *not* to be US American.

10. Kymlicka and Banting (2003: 22) commented on a previous version of this article that 'he (Joppke) does not cite any examples of multiculturalism policies that have been replaced or abolished in either the Netherlands or Britain'. This statement

is apparently incorrect with respect to the Netherlands, though it has a certain justification with respect to Britain (where multiculturalism policies have been situated more at local than at national level, and where my discussion focuses on recent national-level developments that do not necessarily touch upon locally entrenched multiculturalism).

11. Interview with Paul Scheffer, *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, 4 May 2002.

12. I owe this observation to a communication with Will Kymlicka.

13. Paul Scheffer, 'Das Scheitern eines Traums', *Die Zeit* 11 July 2002.

14. Such as sociologist Han Entzinger, who advised the Dutch government in this matter.

15. Sasha Polakow-Suransky and Giuliana Chamedes, 'Europe's New Crusade', *The American Prospect*, 26 August 2002.

16. This sentence has been quickly picked up, even by the liberal press (e.g., 'Don't mention the B-word', *The Economist*, 14 October 2000), to denounce the entire report and its main author. There is unfairness in this, first because Parekh's patriotic credentials are unquestionable, and secondly because in his theory he puts the 'operative public values of the wider society' (Parekh 2000: 272) above the minority beliefs and practices that are to be accommodated.

17. 'Connubial wrongs', *The Economist* 10 November 2001.

18. *Independent on Sunday*, 9 December 2001, p.1.

19. 'At last, a debate that will penetrate the racial fog', *Sunday Times*, 10 February 2002.

20. *Financial Times*, 8 February 2002, p.2.

21. From the foreword by David Blunkett (Home Office 2002).

22. 'Britain's First Citizenship Ceremony', *New York Times*, 26 February 2004.

23. Federal Commissioner for Foreigner Affairs, *Anstöesse zum Thema Integration*, Berlin, January 2000.

24. Quoted in the most recent *Bericht der Beauftragten der Bundesregierung für Ausländerfragen über die Lage der Ausländer in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, Berlin: Federal Commissioner for Foreigner Affairs, August 2002, p.249.

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