

Philosophy in Central Europe

The Limits of the Multicultural Society

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Introduction

The happenings in the past decade make it obvious: The Western Society needs to clarify its relationship with the Islam. This paper attempts to answer the question what concept the Euro- American Civilisation needs to apply when it is confronted with immigrants from foreign cultures. Is the prevalent multicultural society the suitable concept for Europe and America or might it even be self-destructing? In a first step I'm going to outline the key-concepts and thoughts which will be helpful for our analysis. In the second part of this paper I'm going to argue why Europe better replaces the multiculturalism by cultural pluralism.

Key Concepts and Inspiring Thoughts

In the following I outline the key concepts and explanations of recognized philosophers, which will be used in our criticism on the concept of the multicultural society.

Multiculturalism

The internet based encyclopaedia *Wikipedia* defines multiculturalism as a sociological- and culture-philosophical reasoning that claims clear instructions for the cultural policy of a country. Multiculturalism accepts the cultural differences in a pluralistic society originating from three principles: Every person has an ethnic origin (equality). Every culture earns respect (dignity). Cultural pluralism needs official support (community). Multiculturalism opposes the idea of a 'lead culture' as well as the idea of the 'melting pot' as the last mentioned seeks a becoming alike. The liberal version of multiculturalism claims a common political culture as a base of a functioning society, whereas the radical version of multiculturalism does not accept a common political culture. The identity of each culture is of essence and the exercising of each culture in the society has to be guaranteed.

Cultural Pluralism according to Bassam Tibi (1944)

Cultural Pluralism is an alternative to multiculturalism. It offers also diversity, but a diversity that is bound to norms and values that are valid for all members of the society, that is to say, for initial citizens as well as for immigrants. In particular he favours the norms and values of the embracing culture for the basis of the common society.

Georg Wilhelm Friederich Hegel (1770 -1831)

Hegel states that cultures develop from originally unconscious to conscious social structures. This idea roots in Aristoteles' idea that the development of things is determined by their essence. Things have essence in themselves and essence wants to materialize itself. Initially essence is not perceivable from the outside, that is to say, it is not materialized. However, as the essence develops itself it materializes and becomes thus manifest. In Hegel, the people initially act according to certain valid moral norms. They think of them as being given from god. Hence they are neither free nor on the level of autonomy, but bound to them (moral substance). However, people realize later that they can become the free creators of their legal norms. At this point of history the unconscious society becomes self-conscious in history and this progress leads to the destruction of all unconsciously created norms. At this stage people are (or could be) independent law makers.

Friedrich August von Hayek (1889 -1992)

In his Theory of Cultural Evolution Hayek describes the evolution of human culture. Starting point of evolution are several tribes, with their own developed goals and common detection patterns. At this stage instincts play an important rule and von Hayek calls them the moral rules of small groups (compare it to the moral substance in Hegel). In the stage of the tribe, individuals have to follow only a few rules. As the several tribes develop, so do their rules, until eventually modern civilisation is developed. However, these rules were not consciously adopted by individuals, but spread out, because some practices had favoured certain groups over others, argues von Hayek. The latest developed rules form a thin layer of consciously designed rules and follow a specific goal. So, what is important for our purpose is the idea, that civilizations have different origins,

which cause different and lasting rules and that civilisations need to undergo certain steps in their development. Hence we can assume not all societies are on the same level development today or at any other qualifying date.

Why Europe needs cultural Pluralism

At the latest since September 11th the tolerant wonder how to deal with the intolerant, as the economist in its November 11 2004 edition questions it. Simultaneously it has become an often discussed and commented issue. The question at stake is whether the concept of the multicultural society is suitable in the present situation or whether it might endanger the achievements of the western culture. According to the multicultural ideology the values of all cultures have to be treated as equal. No culture may regard its own values as superior over the values of other cultures. But what, when in a society two cultures face each other and from these two one accepts this paradigm whereas the other doesn't? This is the situation Europe and North America is confronted with today. The portion of Islamic back grounded people has risen dramatically in the last one or two decades. A lot of them settled in the West in the hope to find a better life. However, to most of them it seems to be troublesome to cope with the western open, anything-goes mentality. Suffering from alienation, immigrants tend to refuge to their own known values, trying to find a halt in their identified culture. From own observation in my environment I can assume the most suffering refugees to be the children of immigrant families. In school being expected to cope with the anything-goes mentality, at home in the family being restricted to fundamental traditions. I image this difficult situation, if occurring to a huge mass, being a fertile ground for an anti western movement. Today this movement has evolved to a level where it has declared war against the open society.

How shall Europeans assimilate the rejection of our openness? To do so and in order to find a remedy, we must understand the other and ourselves, too. I want to do so with the help of the *Hegel's* and *von Hayek's* theory on how cultures develop. Both argue that culture evolves from a state where people unconsciously adopt norms and later on become the masters of their own rules.

Von Hayek stresses the point that the several cultures evolve out of different tribes. For our purposes it is not important to understand which cultures persist and evolve. Nevertheless, crucial to understand are the facts, that cultures have different roots, develop from a stage where they take norms as given to where they, for the most part, only accept rules that were created self-consciously, and finally, not all cultures need to be in the same phase of development. Crucial is how a culture develops and creates rules. Today the European culture clearly only adopts consciously developed norms. Rules need to have a worldly reason. Objective scientific results are often the basis for new rules. Moreover, the rules must be accepted by at least the majority of the people or by their representatives in order to become valid. Hence people want to understand the logic of the rules and norms. Otherwise they won't be accepted by the people. On the other hand, the Islamic culture is mainly rooted in countries where people accept rules that were not evolved consciously, where people blindly follow exogenously given rules. Hence those people don't have the need to ask why some law or another norm must hold. The given norms are being regarded as correct. Thus the validity and understanding of the other than the own rules given is excluded. Therefore the understanding of the functioning of another culture than the own one is excluded as well. Here we are at a crucial point. Since such a culture is not able to understand another culture it is also very unlikely to accept it. However, multiculturalism functions only if all the cultures of a society agree to at least the paradigm of not treating one's own values as superior to other's values. Since the Islamic culture is not ready yet for this, Europe has to be aware of their incapability to do so and hence treat them accordingly. In other words, Europe needs to force its immigrants to accept this paradigm through proper integration. Since integration works best if it doesn't have to be applied to huge masses I suggest Europe, not to let too many immigrants from cultures, which are struggling with the understanding of the functioning of other civilisations, in at once, but only so many that can be made ready for the multicultural society at a time. Yet, the question is whether Europeans understand themselves, the concept of their own society as well as the different levels of development of the apparently clashing cultures, well enough? If Europeans don't see the need to make the immigrants to agree to at least some basic values, like respect for the values of others, the achievements

of the own culture are in danger. The western society needs to apply a culture-concept which is able to incur cultures from several developed stages in order to not endanger its own achievements. Cultural pluralism offers space for diversity, but claims the keeping of the basic values of the accommodating society. This is the concept Europe has to apply.