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1. The Multiculturalist Ideology: A Critique

Introduction

In the past few years, multiculturalism has become a popular target for politicians. Everywhere in Europe, political leaders are calling for the bankruptcy of the multiculturalist model. British Prime Minister David Cameron stated in 2008 that “State multiculturalism is a wrong-headed doctrine that has had disastrous results”.²⁵ German Chancellor Angela Merkel held a speech in 2010 in which she stated that multiculturalism has “utterly failed”.²⁶ In 2011, then French president Nicholas Sarkozy responded to a voter on television: “Oui, c’est un échec”.²⁷ Former Spanish prime minister Jose Maria Aznar said “I’m against the idea of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism divides our societies, debilitates our societies, multiculturalism does not produce tolerance, nor integration.”²⁸

The fact that so many political leaders deemed it necessary to criticize the political ideology or public philosophy of “multiculturalism” is remarkable. Apparently, it is seen as an important perspective. It is experienced as a way of thinking with pernicious consequences; if not, all those important political leaders would not have thought it necessary to take such a stance. But what is also manifest from those reactions is that it is not clear *what* exactly they reject. None of those political voices spelled out clearly why they reacted so vehemently. Do they all reject the same thing? The word “multiculturalism” has many meanings. There are many interpretations of multiculturalism,²⁹ and the term has become a “buzzword, a

²⁵ Sparrow, Andrew, ‘Cameron Attacks “State Multiculturalism”’, *The Guardian* 26 February 2008, <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2008/feb/26/conservatives.race>>

²⁶ Weaver, Matthew, ‘Angela Merkel: German Multiculturalism Has “Utterly Failed,”’ *The Guardian* 17 October 2010, <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/oct/17/angela-merkel-german-Multiculturalism-failed>>

²⁷ (“Yes, it’s a failure.”) Agence France-Presse, ‘Multiculturalism Has Failed, Says French President’, *Daily Motion* 11 February 2011 < http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xgzqs8_Multiculturalism-has-failed-says-french-president_news>.

²⁸ ‘Multiculturalism ‘a big failure: Spain’s ex-prime minister Aznar’, 27 October 2006, via <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1726950/posts>

²⁹ And many there are, Steven Vertovec and Susanne Wessendorf mention varieties within multiculturalism: “as represented for instance by Charles Taylor (1992), Will Kymlicka (1995), Bhikhu Parekh (2000), Brian Barry

crusade, and a gigantic mystification”.³⁰ Some use it to indicate no more than cultural variety. So “multiculturalism” is prevalent in e.g. Sydney, if that city is home to many people from different cultural backgrounds. Others use the word “multiculturalism” to indicate a *positive attitude* towards cultural plurality. So you are deemed to be a “multiculturalist” if you believe that a multitude of cultures in one society is something that deserves to be cherished. There is a bewildering variety of uses of the word and a concomitant variety of associations people have with it.

Will Kymlicka, Canadian political philosopher who is best known for his work on multiculturalism,³¹ discerns three patterns of multiculturalism. Firstly, there is state recognition – he labels it ‘empowerment’ – of *indigenous people*, such as the Maori, Aboriginals or Inuit. Secondly, there are forms of granting autonomy to *sub-state national groups*, such as Scots in Britain, Frisians in the Netherlands, and Germans in South Tyrol. Lastly, there are forms of multiculturalist recognition for *immigrant groups*.³² Kymlicka, as well as other Canadian multiculturalist philosophers such as Charles Taylor, drew inspiration for their theories from Indian minorities in Canada. Yet, their work transcends that early focus on indigenous groups into modern multiculturalism as we know it in contemporary Western-Europe regarding Islamic immigrants and subcultures. It is this variant that this thesis centers around.

(2001) (who takes a critical stance), Tariq Modood (2007) and Anne Phillips (2007).) A divergent set of civic programs might be labeled as 'radical Multiculturalism' or 'polycentric Multiculturalism' (Shohat and Stam 1994), 'insurgent Multiculturalism' (Giroux 1994), 'public space Multiculturalism' (Vertovec 1996), 'difference Multiculturalism' (Turner 1993), 'critical Multiculturalism' (Chicago Cultural Studies Group 1994) 'weak' or 'strong' Multiculturalism (Grillo 2005). Indeed, Steven Vertovec (1998) has pointed to at least eight different kinds of Multiculturalism while Garard Delanty (2003) suggests another list with nine types of Multiculturalism.” See: Vertovec, Steven and Wessendorf, Susanne, ‘Introduction. Assessing the backlash against Multiculturalism in Europe’, pp. 1-31 (2), in: Vertovec, Steven and Wessendorf, Susanne (eds.), *The Multiculturalism Backlash: European discourses, policies and practices*, London: Routledge 2010.

³⁰ Higham, John, “Multiculturalism and universalism: A history and critique”, *American Quarterly* 1993, pp. 195-219 (208).

³¹ See: Kymlicka, Will, *Multiculturalist Citizenship. A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1995. See also: Parekh, Bhikhu, *A New Politics of Identity: Political Principles for an Interdependent World*, Palgrave MacMillan, Houndmills 2008; Parekh, Bhikhu, *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory*, Macmillan Press, Houndmills/London 2000; Taylor, Charles, “The Politics of Recognition”, in: Taylor, Charles, *Multiculturalism. Examining the Politics of Recognition*, Edited and introduced by Amy Gutman, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey 1994, pp. 25-75.

³² Kymlicka, Will, ‘The rise and fall of Multiculturalism? New debates on inclusion and accommodation in diverse societies’, *International Social Science Journal* 2010, pp. 97–112 (101).

This chapter will outline the origins of the ideology that is multiculturalism, analyse this ideology and critique it. With the ideology of multiculturalism I refer to a *normative* stance. Multiculturalism in that sense does not *describe* anything but *prescribes* a course of action, a way states and society have to deal with religious and cultural differences. I will break down the definition and evaluate its underlying assumptions. I propose to use the widest definition: “multiculturalism refers to a broad array of theories, attitudes, beliefs, norms, practices, laws and policies that seek to provide public recognition of and support for accommodation of non-dominant ethnocultural/religious groups.”³³ The definition of multiculturalism falls into two categories; 1) theory and moral attitudes, including political viewpoints, and 2) laws, practices and policies derived from theory and corresponding attitudes.³⁴ I will focus on the first branch. So, whereas political leaders are now denouncing multiculturalism as state practice, its underlying ideology is very much alive today.

“Multiculturalism is a social-intellectual movement that promotes the value of diversity as a core principle and insists that all cultural groups be treated with respect and as equals,” as psychologists Fowers and Richardson contend in *Why is Multiculturalism Good?* (1996). Moreover, it is a moral movement that intends to enhance the dignity, rights and recognized worth of marginalized groups. It is “[...] inspired primarily by a moral perspective on human life that values diversity, tolerance, human rights, and authenticity.”³⁵ American-Israeli professor of Law Amos Guiora states that multiculturalism is – philosophically, morally and practically – “an

³³ Ivison, Duncan, ‘Introduction: Multiculturalism as a Public Ideal’, p. 2, in: Ivison, Duncan (ed.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Multiculturalism*, Surrey: Ashgate 2010. This definition is borrowed from Ivison, yet is expanded by the incorporation of the elements ‘laws’ and ‘religion’, so that the definition of Multiculturalism refers to ‘non-dominant ethnocultural/religious groups’ and ‘practices, laws and policies’.

³⁴ Regarding laws, practices and policies, according to Kymlicka, multiculturalist citizenship for immigrant groups includes a combination of the following policies: “constitutional, legislative or parliamentary affirmation of Multiculturalism at central, regional and municipal levels; the adoption of Multiculturalism in school curriculum; the inclusion of ethnic representation and sensitivity in the mandate of public media or media licensing; exemptions from dress codes, Sunday closing legislation and so on (either by statute or by court cases); allowed dual citizenship; the funding of ethnic group organisations to support cultural activities; the funding of bilingual education or mother-tongue instruction; and affirmative action for disadvantaged immigrant groups”. See: Kymlicka 2010, p. 101.

³⁵ Fowers, Blaine, and Richardson, Frank, “Why is Multiculturalism good?”, *American Psychologist* 1996, pp. 609-621 (609-610).

embrace, or at least, 'understanding', by society of different communities, ethnicities and religions living in the nation-state".³⁶ Importantly, it is a social-intellectual movement lifted to the status of a political ideology, which has consequences for citizens.

One of the most important and well-known critiques on multiculturalism is put forward by Susan Moller Okin, who questioned the compatibility of multiculturalism and feminism. Until the past few decades, Okin writes, minority groups – both immigrants and indigenous peoples – were expected to assimilate into majority cultures. That expectation is now considered to be oppressive, and Western countries have shifted to devising policies that are more responsive to persistent cultural differences. Yet, one issue which recurs across all contexts had gone virtually unnoticed in current – at the time of Okin's publication in the 1990s – debates: "what should be done when the claims of minority cultures or religions clash with the norm of gender equality that is at least formally endorsed by liberal states (however much they continue to violate it in practices)?"³⁷ She lists several clashing practices, such as the wearing of the traditional Muslim head scarves and full face veils, polygamy, female genital mutilation, child marriage or marriages that are otherwise coerced.

But the multiculturalist debate is not limited to feminist issues. Other real and pressing issues concern, inter alia, home-grown Islamist terrorism, practical limits on free speech (for instance the Danish cartoon crisis, the murder of Charlie Hebdo cartoonists), legal plurality in the form of sharia councils, a rise in anti-Semitism (including the murder of Jews) and violence against homosexuals, and segregated neighborhoods where Sharia patrols enforce Sharia law. Among Islam-rooted immigrants and later generations we see a high level of adherence to Islamic fundamentalism and increased radicalization. We read about fundamentalist Imams,

³⁶ Guiora, Amos, *Tolerating extremism. To what extent should intolerance be tolerated?*, dissertation Leiden University 2014, p. 74 (available via < <https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/handle/1887/21977>>).

³⁷ Okin, Susan Moller, "Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?", pp. 7-24 (9), in: Cohen, Joshua, Howard, Matthew and Nussbaum, Martha (eds.), *Is Multiculturalism Bad For Women?*, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1999.

the influx of Saudi funds for mosques and education, and young Muslims joining IS to fight a holy war, where they commit murder, torture and rape.

Yet, these issues do not address the critique on multiculturalism from an *analytical* angle, but more so from a *practical* point of view. Multiculturalism is thus criticized mostly because of the practical problems connected to the ideal. But let us start at the basis, instead. It is fundamentally important to question the *focus on culture* itself, first, and question why culture is considered as something that is worthy of our respect as such, second. Then I consequently discuss identity theory and the ‘politics of difference’. The second part of this chapter is an analysis of the propositions and conclusions that form the basis of the multiculturalist ideology. To make the analysis livelier, I have added a fictitious case of minorities struggling with tradition, modernity and harmful practices in the country of Sealandistan.

Why focus on culture?

Let us see if we can trace the origins of the focus on culture. That requires a definition of culture. Multiculturalists have a different interpretation of culture than anthropologists.³⁸ Needless to say, definitions range widely within any scientific discipline, and cultural anthropology is no different. I will here present some widely-used and overarching definitions of culture. To start with the online Oxford Dictionary which refers to culture as 1) The arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively, e.g. ‘20th century popular culture’; 2) refined understanding or appreciation of this, e.g. ‘men of culture’; 3) The customs, arts, social institutions, and achievements of a particular nation, people, or other social group, e.g. ‘Caribbean culture’ ‘people from many different cultures’; 4) The attitudes and behavior characteristic of a particular social group, e.g. ‘the emerging drug culture’.³⁹ It is this last one which is relevant to this study.

³⁸ See also: Turner, Terence, ‘Anthropology and Multiculturalism: what is anthropology that multiculturalists should be mindful of it?’, *Cultural Anthropology* 1993, pp. 411-429 (412).

³⁹ http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/culture.

Nineteenth century anthropologist Sir Edward Burnett Tylor (1832-1917) wrote “Culture or civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, laws, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society”.⁴⁰ This definition, which Tylor launched in his 1871 book *Primitive Cultures*, is taken at the moment the term culture came into play the way we are used to nowadays.⁴¹ Later, anthropologists included *shared values* in the definition of culture. A value is “[...] an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence.”⁴² Values are said to be acquired early in life, through family, surrounding environments and school. “They provide us with fundamental values and assumptions about how things are. Once a value is learned, it becomes integrated into an organized system of values where each value has a relative priority. This value system is relatively stable in nature but can change over time reflecting changes in culture as well as personal experience. Therefore, individuals based on their unique experiences not only differ in their value systems but also in the relative stability of these value systems.”⁴³ Most anthropologists would nowadays define culture as “[...] the shared set of (implicit and explicit) values, ideas, concepts, and rules of behaviour that allow a social group to function and perpetuate itself. Rather than simply the presence or absence of a particular attribute, culture is understood as the dynamic and evolving socially constructed reality that exists in the minds of social group members. It is the ‘normative glue’ that allows group members to communicate and work effectively together.”⁴⁴ It is the task of anthropologists to identify a group’s

⁴⁰ Tylor, Edward, *Primitive Culture*, London: John Murray, Albemarle Street 1871, p. 1.

⁴¹ Straub, Detmar (et al.), “Toward a theory-based measurement of culture”, *Journal of Global Information Management* 2002, pp. 13-23 (14).

⁴² See Rokeach, Milton, *The Nature of Human Values*, New York, NY: Free Press 1973, p. 5, quoted in: Straub 2002, p. 14-15.

⁴³ Straub 2002, p. 15.

⁴⁴ Hudelson, Patricia, ‘Culture and quality: an anthropological perspective’, *International Journal for Quality in Health Care* 2004, pp. 345-346 (345).

culture – to sketch out an ethnography – in order to understand how one’s culture influences the way the world is perceived.

This field of science thus studies culture and tries to define the concept of culture, and describes various cultures. In itself that is a *descriptive* act. Description is an end in itself, and has no normative basis, no emancipation agenda, and no political goals, nor aim for social change or cultural transformation.⁴⁵ The choice for anthropologists to study culture needs no explanation, just as biologists do not need to explain why they study flora and fauna. The focus on culture stems from an interest researchers have for this particular phenomenon, just as historians like to study history.

But why do *political philosophers* focus on culture? What is it about culture that it triggers this special attention? One could say humans are intimately bound together by their culture and various group loyalties. Culture is inextricably linked to human nature. Try to think of an individual without culture: it is impossible. We are all raised with values, norms, practices, traditions, language, a sense of common history, and more. Yet, I wonder, if culture is inescapable – like breathing, why not *assume* it instead of *emphasize* it? We assume our inner organs work in a certain way, but we do not uplift these bodily functions to a special status. Friendship and love influence our lives. Yet, friendship and love is not the focus of a field of research which leads to ideological thinking. Why is culture ‘the chosen one’, out of everything that forms and influences individual experience? Is it really that self-evident as multiculturalist philosophers tend to present us? There are several ways to address this question. One can *trace back* the origins of singling out culture, and consequentially one can *justify* the focus on culture.

⁴⁵ See also: Turner 1993, p. 412.

Identity theory

The idea of the unique value of cultures stems from the ideal of authenticity, which in turn is strongly influenced by the 18th century German Romantic philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744 –1803).⁴⁶ While earlier philosophers had tried to explain the phenomenon of difference, Herder was the one who accepted, and celebrated, diversity.⁴⁷ Bhikhu Parekh (1935), Indian-born British political theorist, writes on this:

“For Herder, the influence of culture permeated the individual’s ways of thinking, feeling and judging, food, clothes, bodily gestures, way of talking, manner of holding himself or herself together, pleasures, pains, values, ideal, dreams, nightmares, forms of imagination, and aesthetic and moral sensibilities. Human beings felt at home and realized their potential only within their own culture and were awkward and profoundly disoriented outside of it, which is why Europeans, who displayed great civic virtues at home, often behaved with uncharacteristic brutality when travelling or living abroad. Not surprisingly every community ‘holds firmly’ to its culture and seeks to transmit it across generations ‘without any break’. Its commitment to its culture was based not on rational conviction or utilitarian considerations but ‘prejudice’, an unquestioning and grateful acceptance of its inheritance accompanied by pride and confidence in its value. Prejudice ‘returns people to their centre [and] attaches them more solidly to their roots’. Since no man could be human outside his cultural community, membership of it was a basic human need just as much as food and psychical security.

All Cultures, for Herder, were unique expressions of the human

⁴⁶ There are of course many more writers of influence (such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712 – 1778), but Herder, who is taken as one of the founding fathers of nationalism, is considered the most important one.

⁴⁷ Malik, Kenan, *Strange Fruit: Why Both Sides are Wrong in the Race Debate*, Oxford: Oneworld 2008 (2009), p. 123.

spirit, incommensurable and, like flowers in the garden, beautifully complementing each other and adding to the richness of the world.”⁴⁸

Herder believed that individuals could only be ‘truly human’ if they were ‘true to themselves’. “All peoples must be allowed to unfold toward their unique destinies, which requires resisting external pressure and other inducements to mimic and thereby become derivatives of another culture.” His rejection of the ideal of individual equality has been a guiding principle for the development of group identity.⁴⁹

Identity theory is a result from that Herderian ‘ideal of authenticity’. Freud formulated identity as a link an individual has with the unique values which are fostered by a unique history of a people (he referred to Judaism). He mentioned it only loosely and did not tie it to any specific race or religion. Freud’s disciple, German born American Erik Erikson (1902 – 1994) wrote on this: “It is this identity of something in the individual’s core with an essential aspect of a group’s inner coherence which is under consideration here: for the young individual must learn to be most himself where he means most to others – those others, to be sure, who have come to mean most to him. The term identity expresses such a mutual relation in that it connotes both a persistent sameness within oneself (self-sameness) and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others.”⁵⁰ Erikson combined Freud’s focus on the internal psyche (‘personal identity’) with a sociological approach (‘social identity’). (The psychoanalyst wrote this in the 1950s in the United States, at the time of the civil rights movement.) American researcher Seth Schwartz summarizes these ‘Eriksonian’ concepts: “[p]ersonal identity [is] the set of goals, values, and beliefs that one shows to the world. Personal identity includes career goals, dating preferences, word choices, and other aspects of self that identify an individual as someone in particular and that help to distinguish him or her from other

⁴⁸ Parekh 2000, p. 69.

⁴⁹ See also: Fowers & Richardson 1996, p. 613.

⁵⁰ Erikson, Erik, ‘The Problem of Ego Identity’, *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 1956, pp. 56-121 (56-57).

people. [...] [S]ocial identity was identified as a sense of inner solidarity with a group's ideals, the consolidation of elements that have been integrated into one's sense of self from groups to which one belongs. [...] Aspects of self, such as native language, country of origin, and racial background would fall under the heading of group identity."⁵¹

'Identity theory' was developing at the time of the American Civil Rights movement and has been significant for the ideology of multiculturalism. From the 1890s onward African Americans had been challenging 'Jim Crow laws' – state laws which were devised to segregate blacks and whites when using public facilities, such as housing, medical care, public transport and schools. In a 1896 landmark United States Supreme Court decision of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the court confirmed the 'separate but equal' doctrine, which meant that under the Fourteenth Amendment, which addresses citizenship rights and equal protection of the laws, states may uphold segregation along the lines of race, provided that the quality of each group's public facilities was equal. In the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case, Homer Plessy challenged his arrest after he refused to give up his seat to a white man on a train in New Orleans, as the Louisiana state law required from him. The Supreme Court denied his appeal, and stated that: "The object of the (Fourteenth) amendment was undoubtedly to enforce the equality of the two races before the law, but in the nature of things it could not have been intended to abolish distinctions based upon color, or to endorse social, as distinguished from political, equality. . . . If one race be inferior to the other socially, the Constitution of the United States cannot put them upon the same plane."⁵² Social inequality thus justified legal and political segregation.

It wasn't until the second half of the twentieth century that success was achieved. One of the major achievements of African American emancipation efforts is *Brown v. Board of Education*, when the US Supreme Court ruled in 1954 that laws

⁵¹ Schwartz, Seth, 'The Evolution of Eriksonian and Neo-Eriksonian Identity Theory and Research: A Review and Integration', *Identity: an international journal of theory and research* 2001, pp. 7–58 (10).

⁵² "History of Brown v. Board of Education", <http://www.uscourts.gov/educational-resources/get-involved/federal-court-activities/brown-board-education-re-enactment/history.aspx>.

that enabled race segregation in schools were unconstitutional. Those laws violated the 'equal protection clause' of the Fourteenth Amendment and did away with the 'separate but equal' doctrine. Following the spirit of the *Brown v. Board of Education* judgment, racial integration was now not merely *legally* required, but much more considered *morally* required, even though it took decades more of legal proceedings to fight Jim Crow laws. Yet, finally separatism was deemed incompatible with the innate equality of individuals.⁵³

A year after *Brown*, an up to now unidentified speaker delivered an address at America's oldest and then most influential black history organization, the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, stating that *real* integration "[...] required changed minds as well as changed laws. "Legal gains and favorable court decisions [...] cannot complete the work that must be done," he declared, "The spirit of legal justice must permeate the undercurrents of community life."⁵⁴

An illustration of African Americans demanding equal status is found in the 'textbook' problem. In the 1960s, 'pro-Black' activists lamented the content of educational material, either portraying coloured people as silly, ignorant individuals, or excluding African Americans and black history altogether. Just as segregated classrooms, racist textbooks were considered to injure "[...] Black self-concept, Black self-identification, and especially Black self-esteem." If textbooks did not provide a positive image for African Americans, the children would continue to suffer from a sense of racial inferiority.⁵⁵ The campaign was successful; racist slurs were removed and new material about African Americans was added. Some activists even demanded the insertion of historical material that celebrated the 'gifts' of ethnic groups, and sometimes pressed for the inclusion of positive misrepresentations in the curriculum. This had the unintended consequence that some white conservatives demanded that negative material about their own past causing harm to *their* mental

⁵³ See also: Wilkinson III, Harvie J., 'The Law of Civil Rights and the Dangers of Separatism in Multiculturalist America', *Stanford Law Review* 1995, pp. 993-1026 (994-995).

⁵⁴ Quote taken from Zimmerman, Jonathan, 'Brown-ing the American Textbook: History, Psychology, and the Origins of Modern Multiculturalism', *History of Education Quarterly* 2004, pp. 46-69 (59).

⁵⁵ Zimmerman 2004, pp. 47-48.

health, be excluded.⁵⁶ “So did every other racial and ethnic group, each seeking its own immaculate stripe in the multiculturalist rainbow. The result was a curriculum that celebrated “race” and “diversity” but downplayed racism.”⁵⁷ This ‘textbook revolution’ aimed to create and protect African American nascent identity, and this new form of ‘identity politics’ was deeply rooted in the belief that public problems should be defined in terms of individual mental health: “Prefiguring many multiculturalists today, textbook activists defined their politics along racial or ethnic lines in order to make each individual feel fixed, grounded, and proud.”⁵⁸

The idea of an extolled Black identity was fueled by intellectuals and community leaders, for example author and activist W.E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963), who inspired African Americans to embrace their African heritage. And, of course, by Martin Luther King and the Black Panthers. The idea that African Americans would not find equality with white Americans until a separate black community had been successfully built was elevated by Malcolm X and others. “Black power” became a new political agenda, and even though originally founded on the negative identity of cruel chattel slavery and racist violence, new phrases were adopted, such as “Black is beautiful” and “soul brother”. Black power (a phrase originally coined by activist Stokely Carmichael (1941-1998)) was defined as “a call for black people in this country to unite, to recognize their heritage, and to build a sense of community.” To become “[...] an effective political force in the United States, [...] blacks must achieve “self-identity” and “self-determination” as a group, not as individuals. The result would be a rising black consciousness, “an attitude of brotherly, communal responsibility among all black people for one another.”⁵⁹ Thus, where *Brown* was founded on the conviction that skin colour and ethnicity were *irrelevant* in making public or private decisions, now racial status was back on the agenda. It was more and more used to *justify* public and private preferences in favor of African Americans, such as

⁵⁶ “If every individual retained the right to a “positive image,” after all, no text could introduce a negative truth about anyone – including White people.”, see: Zimmerman 2004, p. 68.

⁵⁷ Zimmerman 2004, p. 50.

⁵⁸ Zimmerman 2004, p. 68.

⁵⁹ Herman, Arthur, *The Idea of Decline in Western History*, New York: The Free Press 1997, pp. 376-377.

affirmative action, e.g. different university admission standards or hiring and tenure procedures.⁶⁰ This was a paradoxical development, to be sure. Also, this ‘identity politics’ was not merely reserved for black Americans, as Native Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans and other groups appealed for inclusion within civil rights discourse as well. By using group identity discourse, community leaders established a sense of shared cultural values based on history, descent, and ethnicity. Membership of these separate subgroups led to certain entitlements, such as ‘recognition’ in a wider sense, and changes in laws, policies and judicial decisions.⁶¹ More so, social transformation itself was part of the political agenda. In *Strange Fruit: Why Both Sides are Wrong in the Race Debate*, British author Kenan Malik (1960) writes:

“Soon not just blacks but everyone had an identity that was uniquely theirs and separated them not only from the white man but from every other kind of man, too, and indeed from Man in general. Using the template established by Black Power activists, Native Americans, Puerto Ricans, Chicanos, Chinese Americans, not to mention myriad white ethnics, set up their separate cultural organisations. Women and gays became surrogate ethnics, each with their own particular cultures, identities and ways of thinking. ‘The demand is not for the inclusion within the fold of “universal humankind” on the basis of shared human attributes; nor is it respect “in spite of one’s differences”, [...]. ‘Rather, what is demanded is respect for oneself *as* different.’ At the heart of the new politics of identity was the claim that one’s political beliefs and ways of thinking should be derived from the fact of one’s birth, sex or ethnic origins, a claim that, historically radicals would have regarded as highly reactionary and that lay at the heart of racial

⁶⁰ Wilkinson III 1995, p. 1015.

⁶¹ Glazer, Nathan, *We Are All Multiculturalists Now*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1998, pp. 51-52.

ideology. Yet, by the end of the 1960s, it was not the expression of identity but the language of commonality that [...] ‘came to be perceived by the new movements as a colonialist smothering – an ideology to rationalise white dominance’.⁶²

American sociologist Nathan Glazer (1923), author of *We Are All Multiculturalists Now* (1998), locates the abandonment of the ideal of assimilation in the failure of integration of blacks in American society, making them the ‘storm troops’ of the battles of multiculturalism in the United States.⁶³ It is the *lack of integration* that has inspired multiculturalism as a political doctrine. The idea is: if, in practice, minorities do not fit in, we can at least praise them in words.

Writing at the time of the civil rights movement, psychoanalyst Erikson warned against the development of a negative *group* identity, chosen for by young people who feel socially or personally marginalized within religious, ethnic and economic structures. He believed that the theory of identity could be useful when dealing with youngsters turning their negative energy into becoming “[...] exactly what the careless and fearful community expects him to be [...]”.⁶⁴ This sounds familiar to us now. Regarding immigrants in modern day society, Canadian multiculturalist Will Kymlicka argues: “Without some proactive policies to promote mutual understanding and respect and to make immigrants feel comfortable in mainstream institutions, these factors could quickly lead to a situation of a racialised underclass, standing in permanent opposition to the larger society.”⁶⁵

The inescapability of culture becomes particularly salient when a group of people is confronted with another group’s different culture, and has to live together on a shared territory (hence *multiculture*). This is for instance the case with (mass)

⁶² Malik 2008 (2009), p. 186.

⁶³ Glazer 1998, p. 95 and 120. See also: Kristol, Irving, ‘The Tragedy of Multiculturalism’, in: Kristol, Irving, *Neo-conservatism*. Selected Essays 1949-1995, New York: The Free Press, pp. 50-53 (51).

⁶⁴ Erikson, Erik, ‘The Problem of Ego Identity’, *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 1956, pp. 56-121 (118-119).

⁶⁵ Kymlicka 2010, p. 109.

migration. Cultural diversity leads to a cultural awareness that would have been absent if it were a monoculture. Yet, one could still make a case for *integration* within the majority culture of the host society. Within multiculturalist thinking, however, this demands the unjustifiable sacrifice of one's cultural *identity*. In the aftermath of the American civil rights movement, the West gradually embraced the concept of minority identity and its consequential entitlements as something that could just not be denied. 'Recognition' of one's separate identity based on non-chosen factors, such as sex, sexuality, heritage, or ethnicity, and even *chosen* factors, such as religion, has become a *moral imperative*.

From identity theory to a 'politics of difference'

The American civil rights movement and subsequent legislation (e.g. affirmative action) was 'identity politics in action'. The moral imperative of 'accommodating difference' entered the legal and political sphere. Charles Taylor (1931), a Canadian political philosopher known for his work on multiculturalism, emphasizes the importance of recognition of culture for one's well-being.⁶⁶ In the opening lines of his widely acclaimed essay 'The Politics of Recognition' (1994), he states

"The thesis is that our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the *mis*recognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being."⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Who in turn was inspired by German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831). Hegel emphasized that recognition be the foundation of human conduct. See Fennema, Meindert, *Van Thomas Jefferson tot Pim Fortuyn. Balans van de Democratie* (From Thomas Jefferson to Pim Fortuyn. Democracy's Balance), Apeldoorn: Spinhuis Uitgevers 2012, p. 98, 265.

⁶⁷ Taylor 1994, p. 25. Italics in original.

This idea is grounded in the conviction that minority groups are authentic and unique, and have a right to non-interference on their unique path to development. Individual members of these subgroups living in a nation with a dominant majority should be free from the imposition of majority norms and standards.

By now, we have identified two powerful moral foundations of multiculturalism. First, resulting from the civil rights movement, there is the ideal of opposing racism, discrimination and oppression endured by members of – perceived as weak – minority groups caused by a dominant majority. (For instance, Jewish and Mormon minorities are not perceived as weak.) Second, we have the notion of recognition of the uniqueness of individuals and cultures, and the right to follow one’s unique path to self-realization within that particular culture. These two moral foundations are tied together in the multiculturalist aim of *reducing suffering*. ‘Celebrating difference’ should be the norm, rather than ignoring difference. That implies exalting and exaggerating personal traits that do not belong to the domain of the majority American-European, white, heterosexual, (male) culture. This approval is considered vital for one’s self-realization. But even beyond the realm of discrimination, ‘misrecognition’ of one’s identity in itself “[...] shows not just a lack of due respect. It can inflict a grievous wound, saddling its victims with a crippling self-hatred. Due recognition is not just a courtesy we owe people. It is a vital human need”,⁶⁸ Charles Taylor tells us, and “[e]veryone should be recognized for his or her unique identity.”⁶⁹

Everyone’s uniqueness logically implies difference between individuals, or groups of individuals, and assimilation to or being ignored by a dominant or majority identity is “[...] the cardinal sin against the ideal of authenticity.”⁷⁰ This uniqueness, it follows, should not merely be recognized, but also politically and institutionally accommodated through a *politics of difference*. Multiculturalist philosopher Bhikhu Parekh writes in *A New Politics of Identity* (2008), that he believes that “marginalized

⁶⁸ Taylor 1994, p. 26.

⁶⁹ Taylor 1994, p. 38. Italics in original.

⁷⁰ Ibid. Italics in original. Herder was actually blind to *individual* uniqueness. He espoused the idea of the diversity of cultures, not of diversity *within* cultures. See: Parekh 2000, p. 73.

or denigrated groups” have poor self-respect and sometimes even suffer from self-hatred. It is not enough to merely enjoy equal rights, opportunities and access to requisite resources. Individuals “[...] need a sense of self-worth and self-respect if they are going to overcome the passivity and self-doubt generated by crippling self-images.”⁷¹ And, Parekh continues, “[a]s Charles Taylor correctly observes, social recognition is central to the individual’s identity and self-worth and misrecognition can gravely damage both. [...] Misrecognition, therefore, can only be countered by undertaking *a rigorous critique of the dominant culture* and radically restructuring the prevailing inequalities of economic and political power.”⁷²

This lifts multiculturalism to the level of political ideology. Not injuring self-respect is a wider social and political goal in itself and one’s self-respect is taken to depend on the opinions held by a nation’s majority of Euro-American culture bearers. Taylor is aware that while a *politics of equal dignity* – the other end of the pole, one could say – requires non-discrimination in the form of difference-blindness, the politics of difference actually defines non-discrimination as something that requires making individual and group distinctions the basis of *differential* treatment.⁷³ An example is affirmative action. This emancipatory program is for people whose heritage used to mount to discrimination, and instead provides them with advantages on, for instance, the job market or educational access. Taylor is also aware that the second model (the politics of difference) could be taken to violate the principle of non-discrimination. But, the author continues, the politics of equal dignity “[...] negates identity by forcing people in a homogenous mold that is untrue to them.” But it is considered even more adverse that the mold is not a “neutral set of difference-blind principles”, but a representation of the hegemonic culture. In reality, in a politics of equal dignity only minority or suppressed cultures are forced to adapt to its

⁷¹ Parekh 2008, pp. 48-49.

⁷² Parekh, Bhikhu, ‘What is Multiculturalism?’ Seminar Contribution (Multiculturalism: a symposium on democracy in culturally diverse societies, December 1999 via <<http://www.india-seminar.com/1999/484/484%20parekh.htm>> [italics added].

⁷³ Taylor 1994, p. 39.

structure – multiculturalists believe.⁷⁴ Taylor claims that such a difference-blind basis is inhospitable to difference and that a uniform treatment should make place for a system that acknowledges the demand of recognition of the equal value of all cultures: “[...] that we not only let them survive, but acknowledge their *worth*.”⁷⁵ Multiculturalism, Taylor claims, extends the principles that the ‘politics of equal respect’ already established: “Just as all must have equal civil rights, and equal voting rights, regardless of race or culture, so all should enjoy the presumption that their traditional culture has value.”⁷⁶ Parekh agrees that that value of a collective identity manifests itself in self-worth and social standing, in the sense of common belonging and the collective empowerment, a moral anchor, and concludes that “[a] theory of politics that ignores this has only a limited appeal”.⁷⁷ From the perspective of five constitutional models that offer a way to deal with state and religion, it becomes clear that Parekh and Taylor believe that the state should play an active role in acknowledging the worth of minority identity, rather than remaining agnostic towards it.

Culture is thus a source of the *good*, and even when it encompasses bad practices, ‘culture’ deserves our respect as an abstract concept. Not just ‘culture’, cultures (plural), and the many different lifestyles that different cultures offer humans, need to be respected. Bhikhu Parekh denounces the idea of ‘moral and cultural monism’ as well, in his acclaimed book *Rethinking Multiculturalism* (2000). Monism, he claims, promises there is “[...] only one correct or best way to understand human existence and lead the good life.”⁷⁸ Parekh explains the notion of cultural monism:

“The idea that different ways of life can be graded is equally untenable.

It presupposes that a way of life can be reduced to a single value or

⁷⁴ Taylor 1994, p. 43.

⁷⁵ Taylor 1994, p. 63-64. Italics in original.

⁷⁶ Taylor 1994, p. 68.

⁷⁷ Parekh 2008, p. 50. Although he does pay attention to the dangers of collective identity, such as “essentializing” identity and imposing a unity of views that is not shared by “all women, gay people, black people and Muslims”, see p. 35.

⁷⁸ Parekh 2000, p. 47.

principle, that all such values or principles can in turn be reduced to, and measured in terms of, a single master value or principle, and that the good can be defined and determined independently of the agents involved. No way of life can be based on one value alone.⁷⁹ It necessarily involves a plurality of values, which cannot be reduced to any one of them and which can be combined in several different ways. Furthermore, the values realized by different ways of life are often too disparate to be translated into a common and culturally neutral moral language, let alone measured on a single scale.”⁸⁰

This excerpt against the idea of cultural monism, or “monoculturalism”, shows that culture is not merely considered a source of *good*, it can also not be seen other than in terms of its manifold manifestations. In other words: all cultures are different and cannot be measured in terms of better and worse. This leads to the conclusions that all cultures are good, all cultures are different, and all cultures are equal (for, if one cannot judge, every culture is equal). This stance is commonly called “cultural relativism”.⁸¹ Johann Gottfried von Herder did not think all cultures were equal in terms of equally good, but equal because culture was *equally important for all its members*.⁸² Bhikhu Parekh does not subscribe to this classic multiculturalist trio of ‘good, different, equal’. He states that, yes, different cultures present their members with different systems of meaning and visions of the good life. Nevertheless, he believes that from that does not follow that cultures cannot be compared and judged, nor that each culture is equally good for its members, nor does it mean that all

⁷⁹ The idea that such was possible was criticized by Isaiah Berlin in: Berlin, Isaiah, *Four Essays on Liberty*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1975 (1969).

⁸⁰ Parekh 2000, p. 48. Parekh quotes Walzer, Michael, *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality*, New York: Basic Books 1983, p. 312f.

⁸¹ I will return to this later in this chapter. See: Gensler, Harry, *Ethics. A Contemporary Introduction*, London: Routledge 2011., pp. 8-16; Nielsen, Kai, ‘Ethical Relativism and the Facts of Cultural Relativity’, in: *Social Research* 33 (4) 1966, pp. 531-551.

⁸² See: Parekh 2000, p. 70.

cultural differences need to be valued. Culture can be best changed from within, as well as through a process of 'cultural dialogue' or 'intercultural dialogue'.⁸³

Will Kymlicka, who is just like Charles Taylor a renowned Canadian multiculturalist philosopher, agrees with the foundations of the theory as espoused in Taylor's essay 'The Politics of Recognition'. Like Taylor, Kymlicka's work starts off with a focus on indigenous peoples; previously self-governing, territorially concentrated cultures such as Indians in Canada. Notwithstanding, the propositions he uses for indigenous peoples later develop into a multiculturalist ideology that fits immigrant minority cultures as well. In his book *Multiculturalist Citizenship* (1996), he laments traditional human rights thinking with its foundation of difference-blindness:

"Some liberals, particularly on the right, think it is counterproductive to pursue a 'colour-blind' society through policies that 'count by race'. Affirmative action, they argue, exacerbates the very problem it was intended to solve, by making people more conscious of group differences, and more resentful of other groups. This dispute amongst liberals over the need for remedial affirmative action programmes is a familiar one in many liberal democracies. But what most post-war liberals on both the right and left continue to reject is the idea of permanent differentiation in the rights or status of the members of certain groups. In particular, they reject the claim that group-specific rights are needed to accommodate enduring cultural differences, rather than remedy historical discrimination."⁸⁴

⁸³ See: Parekh 2000, pp. 336-337. One of many definitions and purposes of international dialogue is given by the United Nations: 'Equitable exchange and dialogue among civilizations, cultures and peoples, based on mutual understanding and respect and the equal dignity of all cultures is the essential prerequisite for constructing social cohesion, reconciliation among peoples and peace among nations.' See: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/dialogue/intercultural-dialogue/>. The idea that culture is best changed "from within" (and not by "outsiders") stands firm among multiculturalists. Yet, it is odd that attention to cultural "dissidents" is seldom brought forward by these thinkers.

⁸⁴ Kymlicka 1995, p. 4.

Kymlicka opposes post-war liberals who do not agree with the notion that specific ethnic or national groups should be given a permanent political identity or an adjusted (legal) status. He believes that majoritarian decision-making renders cultural minorities vulnerable to significant injustice at the hands of the majority, which will exacerbate ethnocultural conflict.⁸⁵ A larger political, institutionalized, structure is needed to *preserve* minority culture and protect it against the homogenizing forces of the majority culture within a state. Besides peaceful co-existence as a multiculturalist goal, it is the importance of cultural membership for developing and sustaining self-identity, as well as individual well-being, that is the driving force behind Kymlicka's reasoning. In *Liberalism, Community and Culture* (1989), he writes that individuals make life choices from a spectrum of alternatives offered to us through a cultural framework. "People make choices about the social practices around them, based on their beliefs about the value of these practices (beliefs which, I have noted, may be wrong⁸⁶). And to have a belief about the value of a practice is, in the first instance, a matter of understanding the meanings attached to it by our culture."⁸⁷ Each individual needs to feel a sense of security from the cultural framework(s) from which he makes his choices, Kymlicka argues.⁸⁸ Practically, this implies that immigrants who wish to stay inside their own culture, should be granted that space through non-discrimination policies and anti-prejudice measures, such as positive portrayals in textbooks and government materials. They are also morally entitled to legal exemptions, such as Sunday-closing exemptions for Jews and Muslims and exemption from restrictive helmet legislations for Sikhs.⁸⁹ Regarding language development, Kymlicka is convinced that a unilingual focus – a focus on adopting the native language of the state – is harmful to members of minority cultures, "cutting

⁸⁵ Kymlicka 1995, pp. 4-5.

⁸⁶ This is also part of Kymlicka's quote.

⁸⁷ Kymlicka 1995, p. 83.

⁸⁸ Kymlicka, Will, *Liberalism, Community and Culture*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1989, p. 169, in: Waldron, Jeremy, 'Minority cultures and the cosmopolitan alternative', *University of Michigan Journal of Law Reform* 1991, pp. 751-793 (786). See also Taylor, Charles, *Sources of the Self. The Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1989.

⁸⁹ Kymlicka 1995, pp. 96-97.

them off unnecessarily from their heritage”. It is also counterproductive integration-wise, as well as bordering on racism.⁹⁰ The old-fashioned approach to minority rights – meaning the lack of them:

“[...] has often been guilty of ethnocentric assumptions, or of over-generalizing particular cases, or of conflating contingent political strategy with enduring moral principle. This is reflected in the wide range of policies liberal states have historically adopted regarding ethnic and national groups, ranging from coercive assimilation to coercive segregation, from conquest and colonization to federalism and self-government. The result has often been grave injustices against the ethnic and national minorities in many Western democracies. But the failure to develop a consistent and principled approach to minority rights may have even greater costs in the newly emerging democracies. At present, the fate of ethnic and national groups around the world is in the hand of xenophobic nationalists, religious extremists, and military dictators.”⁹¹

Respecting minority cultures is thus not merely the proper way to go about, as ‘a moral right to authenticity’ in order for people to become their selves (self-realisation), but it also serves a purpose, namely not endangering the lives of minority individuals under majority rule. Bhikhu Parekh, like Kymlicka, highlights several civil wars in the final pages of his book to illustrate the importance of multiculturalist citizenship.⁹²

To summarize. Earlier, I asked the question ‘*Why* focus on culture’? The answer is not difficult: culture is presumed to be *good*. Herder had an important influence on

⁹⁰ “Moreover, there is an undercurrent of racism in the traditional attitude towards immigrant languages.” See: Kymlicka 1995, p. 97.

⁹¹ Kymlicka 1995, p. 195.

⁹² Parekh 2000, p. 343.

the idea that we should value and celebrate cultural uniqueness. Freudian psychological theory – also from the Romantic era – established the notion of identity and argued it is ‘important’, making it a marker within psychology. Political philosopher Charles Taylor said on culture: “[O]ne could argue that it is reasonable to suppose that cultures that have provided the horizon of meaning for large numbers of human beings, of diverse characters and temperaments, over a long period of time – that have, in other words, articulated their sense of the good, the holy, the admirable – are almost certain to have something that deserves our admiration and respect, even if it is accompanied by much that we have to abhor and reject.”⁹³ Thus, “[p]eople cannot flourish, the argument for multiculturalism runs, unless they can become who they truly and fully are. They – we – are not isolated atoms, each complete by himself or herself. We belong to larger communities, each with its customs, accomplishments, memories of what was, and images of what should be. For people to realize their full worth, they must appreciate the worth of their collective identity; still more, the majority-culture bearers they live in must recognize the full worth of their collective identity”.⁹⁴ Individuals have a moral right to authenticity, and not being able to live your life according to the practices and beliefs of one’s own (minority) culture, is considered harmful to one’s well-being. That is multiculturalism from a psychological perspective. From a political and societal point of view, it is the multiculturalist objective to avoid a social division between first and second class citizens, a division which is the result from misrecognition of minority cultures. Multiculturalism is an emancipatory project, aimed to relieve minorities from the interference or dominance of the majority culture of the host society. And, ultimately, multiculturalism should deter the majority from persecuting minorities, to keep them out of the hands of malignant leaders.

⁹³ Taylor 1994, pp. 72-73.

⁹⁴ As researchers Sniderman and Hagendoorn summarize Taylor’s argument in Sniderman, Paul, and Hagendoorn, Aloysius, *When Ways of Life Collide: Multiculturalism and its Discontents in the Netherlands*, Princeton: Princeton University Press 2007, p. 5.

The multiculturalist political ideology gained formal currency as academia took it up, as governments began to formalise its ideas in programs, and the “chattering classes” adopted its views as Islam and Muslims became more salient in western nations. It is important we take it seriously, and analyse and critique it.

Breaking down multiculturalism

In his article ‘Why respect culture?’ (2000), political scientist James Johnson wonders why particularistic claims of cultural communities are given special *normative* weight in our political judgments and deliberation. He argues that many political philosophers, such as Charles Taylor, Bhikhu Parekh and Will Kymlicka, urge to respect culture up to the extent of pursuing policies and designing institutions that actively promote and protect cultural commitments. Yet, as Johnson states, these and other multiculturalist philosophers – and their discussants – simply presume that we should do so, without providing *convincing* arguments what the moral reasons are for respecting culture in any direct sense.⁹⁵ I subscribe to that judgment, and I would like to add that the works of these authors not seldom demonstrate a lack of clarity and coherence. Claims are posed and one sentence later mitigated to a degree they basically counter the prior claims. Take for instance Kymlicka’s view on the need for immigrants to integrate into the host society:

“The expectation of integration is not unjust, I believe, so long as immigrants had the option to stay in their original culture. Given the connection between choice and culture which I sketched earlier, people should be able to live and work in their own culture. But like any other right, this right can be waived, and immigration is one way of waiving one's right. In deciding to uproot

⁹⁵ Johnson, James, ‘Why respect culture?’, *American Journal of Political Science* 2000, pp. 405-418 (405).

themselves, immigrants voluntarily relinquish some of the rights that go along with their original national membership.”⁹⁶

We can distill claim 1: Immigrants should be able to stay in their own culture. Claim 2: Immigrants’ rights to stay in their own culture can be waived. How should the reader decide what’s best according to the author? To echo philosopher Jeremy Waldron (1953): let us see “[...] how much substance there would be if various *determinate* communitarian claims were taken one by one, and their proponents were forced to abandon any reliance on vagueness and equivocation. In the end, that is the best way to evaluate the array of different meanings that are evoked in this literature.”⁹⁷

I will trace back and evaluate the line of multiculturalist reasoning. The objections to the foundation of multiculturalism can be made more easily when the theory is broken down into propositions and conclusions. Inspired by “practical ethics”⁹⁸, I present the reader with the fictitious case of the Blueskins and Greenskins living in Sealandistan, who want to peacefully co-exist.

The propositions and conclusions are primarily based on the theories of Charles Taylor, Will Kymlicka, and Bhikhu Parekh, who I take to be exemplary for multiculturalist thinking. They are part of a much larger socio-intellectual movement and political ideology that is multiculturalism. The following analysis on the doctrine of multiculturalism thus goes beyond these three thinkers. Like every comprehensive political ideology, its adherents and contributors occasionally differ in opinion,

⁹⁶ Kymlicka 1995, p. 96.

⁹⁷ Waldron 1991, p. 757.

⁹⁸ “Instead of relying on an abstract theory to systematize and clarify these perceptions in practical deliberations, Aristotle recommends using a variety of less technical approaches to moral inquiry. For instance, in the *Rhetoric* he extols the power of well crafted narratives to engage our cognitive and affective sensibilities in a way that links the morally relevant features of a particular case to our existing moral commitments. He also extols the power of examples and analogies to highlight the way that appearances of value that emerge in one context are relevant to more controversial cases in which their presence or significance may not be as readily evident.” See London, Alex John, “The independence of practical ethics”, *Theoretical Medicine and Bioethics* 2001, pp. 87-105 (101-102).

demonstrate nuances and can even mutually disagree. Yet, in general, this is the basis of multiculturalism:

The propositions:

- 1) Who someone authentically is, is given by his (ethno/religious) cultural identity;
- 2) Nonrecognition of cultural identity constitutes psychological harm.

The conclusions tied to these propositions are:

- 1) Culture is good;
- 2) Cultures are equal;
- 3) Cultural differences are either good, but if not, they should at least be tolerated;
- 4) Minority cultures must not be criticized by the dominant culture which has the positive obligation to preserve minority cultures.

The propositions

Although multiculturalist proponents, I would say, 'of course', nuance the abovementioned claims, this is the foundation from which they build their political ideology. Let us start with evaluating the propositions.

1. Who someone authentically is, is given by his (ethno/religious) cultural identity

To begin with proposition 1: Who someone authentically is, is given by his (ethno/religious) cultural identity. Charles Taylor stresses that every individual is unique. Whether that is true depends on one's definition of uniqueness. From the perspective of DNA, yes, every individual is unique. No human is exactly the same, therefore we can ascribe a certain 'uniqueness' to each and every one of us. But I

doubt this is what Taylor means by uniqueness when we tie it to the need for recognition. I suppose no individual is waiting to be recognized for his or her unique DNA structure. There must be something more the author is hinting at. But, why is it actually important for the author to state that all individuals are unique?

That is because Taylor believes it is morally wrong not to recognize particularities. The uniqueness of individuals is presented as *self-evident*. Thus, according to Taylor, claiming all human beings are equal is both *factually* wrong – considering individual differences – and *morally* wrong, as not respecting difference is considered harmful. Posing a statement as self-evident is not necessarily problematic, but it does become so when the opposite of that statement is actually more in line with what the author proposes. To explain: suppose we instead take the position that ‘Every individual is *not* unique’. Would this not correspond better with the statement that group memberships are important for people’s well-being, for the sake of coherence?

Taylor pleads for a politics of accommodating difference. He ascertains the need for state measures and a shift in attitude that shows respect for minority *groups*. From the multiculturalist perspective, a state should not have to let go of its universal affirmation of equality to accommodate *random wishes* of *randomly dispersed individuals* within a territory (John from Arkansas would like this, Mary from New York would like that). The founding principle of multiculturalism is that humans flock together based on a shared culture. If all individuals are unique, how would they know which group to belong to? Claiming *individual* authenticity is fundamentally at odds with the presumed needs for *group* recognition. Cultural groups consist of individuals who are deemed alike. If multiculturalists wish to make the argument for respecting culture, they should abstain from making statements on the individual distinctiveness of human beings.

This brings us back to the proposition that who someone truly (authentically) is, is dependent on his *identity*. Freud’s disciple Erikson described personal identity as “[...] the set of goals, values, and beliefs that one shows to the world. *Personal*

identity includes career goals, dating preferences, word choices, and other aspects of self that identify an individual as someone in particular and that help to distinguish him or her from other people.”⁹⁹ But, it is not personal identity that multiculturalists need in order to structure their argument. It is group identity.

The ‘unique person’ that one is today, is created within, and by, a culture. One can agree, but also because ‘culture’ is an abstract term without a specific substance. It cannot be refuted that we are all products of a, or ‘our’, culture. And if culture changes, so do we, as we are the ones who are the agents capable of changing culture. So, no matter *how* we act or *what* we believe, *that* what we do and think *is our culture*. Stating that individuals develop a cultural identity within a larger cultural framework is like saying ‘humans breath oxygen’ and may be an interesting field for psychologists (hence Freud and Erikson), but is in itself an empty statement. It does not logically lead to a *particular* political theory of any kind. Ascribing anything to the empty category that is culture is rather vague. Thus, cultural diversity is a fact, yes, but it is unclear what the justification is for making it a political goal of moral importance that needs to be furthered.¹⁰⁰

Individuals have a cultural identity no matter what, as long as they are part of a social group – and not living as hermits from birth. This is what Erikson would have labelled as *social* identity: “[S]ocial identity was identified as a sense of inner solidarity with a group’s ideals, the consolidation of elements that have been integrated into one’s sense of self from groups to which one belongs. [...] Aspects of self, such as native language, country of origin, and racial background would fall under the heading of group identity.”¹⁰¹ Personal and social identity are thus joined together into a concept of ‘cultural identity’, a ‘group identity’. As Parekh states: “People value their collective identity for various reasons: it is the basis of their sense of self-worth and social standing; it bonds them to those sharing it, and generates a

⁹⁹ Schwartz 2001, p. 10. [Italics added]

¹⁰⁰ See also Levy, Jacob, *The Multiculturalism of Fear*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000, p. 7: “[...] the preservation or perpetuation of any one cultural identity is not, by itself, a political goal of high moral importance.”

¹⁰¹ Schwartz 2001, p. 10.

sense of common belonging and the collective empowerment that accompanies it; and gives them a moral anchor, a sense of direction, and a body of ideals and values.”¹⁰²

Thus, under a multiculturalist regime people are entitled – and morally encouraged (“you are good the way you are”, “become who you are”, as well as politically stimulated (subsidized, exempted from laws) – to live out this ‘authentic’ cultural group identity. Yet, culture and identity as concepts within political theory are difficult. For instance, ‘culture’ is always there. For example, if a state decides to rid society of all religion, religion might go away. But ‘culture’ will still be there, just in a different form, namely, a culture without religion. ‘Culture’ in itself is a meaningless term. The same goes for ‘identity’. Why then the need to single cultural group identity out, lift it up and aim to preserve it *in abstracto*?

A helpful course now would be to make “cultural identity” less abstract. So I ask: *which* culture? Which cultural aspect within our identities warrants extra attention? People are ‘members’ of all sorts of ‘communities’. For instance, we align ourselves based on shared professions (scholars, bakers, teachers), sports, sexual orientation, neighborhoods, age group, educational level, arts, regional culture and so forth. In a lifetime, we can switch identities and for instance go from a vegan Marxist to a fur wearing capitalist (or from fur wearing Marxist to vegan capitalist). Yet, multiculturalists ignore most of these self-chosen allegiances and are merely concerned with *ethno/religious*-culture.¹⁰³ The community culture that multiculturalists take to be important for one’s self-realization is thus always an *ethnic* and/or *religious*

¹⁰² Parekh 2008, p. 50. Again, as mentioned in a previous footnote, he does pay attention to the dangers of collective identity, such as “essentializing” identity and imposing a unity of views that is not shared by “all women, gay people, black people and Muslims”, see p. 35.

¹⁰³ See also: Blum, Lawrence, “Recognition, value, and equality: a critique of Charles Taylor’s and Nancy Fraser’s accounts of Multiculturalism”, *Constellations* 1998, pp. 51-68 (53) and Waldron 1991, p. 777. Amartya Sen also wonders how multiculturalists see human beings: “Should they be characterized in terms of inherited traditions, particularly the inherited religion, of the community in which they happen to be born, taken that unchosen identity to have automatic priority over other affiliations involving politics, profession, class, gender, language, literature, social involvements, and many other connections?” See: Sen, Amartya, *Identity and Violence. The Illusion of Destiny*, London: Allen Lane 2006, p. 150. See for another essay on the need for cultural criticism and individualism rather than religious communitarianism: Verhofstadt, Dirk, *De Derde Feministische Golf* (The Third Feminist Wave), Antwerp: Houtekiet 2006.

cultural identity. No multiculturalist calls attention to the importance of a Rotterdam identity to citizens of Rotterdam.

So, multiculturalists elevate one's personal identity to the status of group identity, and group identity = *ethno/religious*-identity. If we consider the contemporary origins of multiculturalism, namely, the civil rights movement, it makes sense. One cannot change one's ethnic roots, and *thus* ethnicity is lifted (but only for minorities). Ethnicity is "authentic", and authenticity is good.

An important point of critique is that this perspective confines or guides individuals to a culture they were born into, and not one which they have chosen for after more options became available at a later stage in life. The act of "hypostatization" or "reification" (to ascribe substance or real existence to mental constructs or concepts) actually *limits* individuals in what Kymlicka labels making life choices:

"In deciding how to lead our lives, we do not start *de novo*, but rather we examine "definite ideals and forms of life that have been developed and tested by innumerable individuals, sometimes for generations." The decision about how to lead our lives must ultimately be ours alone, but this decision is always a matter of selecting what we believe to be most valuable from the various options available, selecting from a context of choice which provides us with different ways of life."¹⁰⁴

The selection of what is deemed best in terms of life options is, if multiculturalist ideology be accepted, constituted by the 'heritage' of those stemming from one's "own" ethnicity and religion. For, if multiculturalists would encourage Redskin Indians to learn about family values from 8th century Hanbali Muslims, and would stimulate Mexican Jews to check out Mongolian musical history, that would debase the idea

¹⁰⁴ Kymlicka 1989, p. 164, in: Waldron, Jeremy, 'Minority cultures and the cosmopolitan alternative', *University of Michigan Journal of Law Reform* 1991, pp. 751-793 (782-783).

that group identity is formed by a distinctive, and traceable to one's own, culture. Kymlicka does not stimulate humans to choose from options out of *general human history*. If that were the case, there would not be a need for focusing on preserving *multiculture*.

Out of all the options one has when composing a lifestyle, ethnicity is one element that is not optional. Yet, individuals still have the option to *carry out* that part of their genetic make-up into their sense of self. Individuals with a non-white ethnicity in a majority white society do not have to lift their ethnicity as an important marker of their identity. But if we go along with multiculturalist thinking, members of minorities should be *encouraged* to highlight this part of themselves, because cultural authenticity is valued. This downplays the viable option to *not* make one's heritage a vital part one's life. It also assumes a cohesiveness in ethnical or religious heritage, as well as a group cohesiveness, that is not always there.¹⁰⁵

Moreover, it negates the reality of culture as an ever-changing phenomenon. A focus on a return to ethnicity (including a religious heritage) stresses continuity, community survival and links throughout the generations.¹⁰⁶ Imagine the lives of our grandparents, or even our parents, and see the changes in lifestyles and mentality. It makes no sense to state that, with the ideal of authenticity in the back of our minds, we should be encouraged to be inspired by the lifestyles of our ancestors without asking ourselves whether that lifestyle is conform modern standards. And even individuals who share the exact same heritage often diverge from one another significantly: siblings do not seldom have different preferences and conceptions of the good life. But even beyond generational change, individuals do not seldom chose to 'leave their community' and are not looking for a sense of belonging to a collection of individuals sharing their heritage, and do not define themselves in terms of their "given" cultural identity.

¹⁰⁵ Higham 1993, p. 205.

¹⁰⁶ Higham 1993, pp. 213-214. Even though multiculturalist philosopher Bhikhu Parekh does not justify the idea of a static view of culture and calls preservation of culture in a more or less intact fashion, a mistake, see: Parekh 2000, p. 77.

As Jeremy Waldron points out, “[...] Kymlicka is guilty of something like the fallacy of composition.”¹⁰⁷ The multiculturalist philosopher establishes that life choices are made in a cultural context, and the options have culturally defined meanings. However, from that it does not follow that there must be a *particular* cultural framework, nor that membership in a culture is of a particular relevance.¹⁰⁸ The question remains: *which* culture? Which aspects of our cultural identity make us who we truly are? The answer: “those which are deemed important” is circular and has no meaning.

Moreover, the tragedy for multiculturalists seems to be that blacks have much less culture in common with other blacks, and whites with other whites, than is necessary for upholding their multiculturalist ideology. Their tragedy is that some whites like Tolstoy and some blacks like Tolstoy; some whites like Bach and some blacks like Bach. The idea of a common culture for some ethnic groups or religious groups is increasingly a myth. So this common culture has to be “invented”, “imagined”. Their assertions about that common culture often exude a sort of desperate and categorical tone. There is much more ‘cross-cultural dialogue’ and understanding than is compatible with multiculturalist premises. Secularist Paul Cliteur (born in the Netherlands) feels intellectually comfortable around Afshin Ellian (from Iran) and Ayaan Hirsi Ali (from Somalia), although he shares his cultural heritage with Ian Buruma (Dutch writer who believes in the notion of Enlightenment fundamentalism¹⁰⁹) and Maurits Berger (Dutch Arabist who endorses Sharia councils).

These cross-cultural understandings are very difficult to understand on the basis of the multiculturalist philosophy. That also explains the aggressive commentary on Hirsi Ali when she formulates criticism of – supposedly – her own religion: Islam.¹¹⁰ If she apostatizes she is assumed to be manipulated by angry

¹⁰⁷ Waldron, 1991, p. 783.

¹⁰⁸ Waldron 1991, pp. 783-784.

¹⁰⁹ Buruma, Ian, *Murder in Amsterdam*, London: Penguin Books 2006.

¹¹⁰ See: Berman, Paul, *The Flight of the Intellectuals*, New York: Melville House 2010.

white men. You are supposed to stick to the faith in which you are born, because this is “multiculturalist proof” that culture is valued by its members. As Hirsi Ali found her way out of her imposed cultural identity, she was labeled a “dissident” who “did not represent Muslim women”, and was found unqualified to voice her critiques on minority issues and religion. That someone who is Muslim can decide to become atheist and deliver cultural criticism is beyond multiculturalist understanding. Multiculturalists do not like or stimulate cultural change.¹¹¹ In that respect, in their attempt not to offend Muslims when formulating critiques, undeservedly understood as stereotyping, “[...] Westerners may condescendingly think of other human beings “as eternally sealed within their own cultural totalities and/or permanently condemned to live their lives within the confines of their ‘most authentic’ systems of beliefs and values,” wrote the Syrian-born academic Sadiq Jalal Al-Azm (1934).¹¹²

To conclude. Proposition number 1 is: Who someone truly (authentically) is, is given by his cultural identity. Multiculturalists focus on groups, not on individuals.

Individuals cannot be seen apart from their group culture, a group identity is vital to their sense of self. I expressed the view that a focus on “cultural identity” is so broad it becomes meaningless. Multiculturalists thus cannot maintain a completely abstract view on “cultural identity”, but ultimately must focus on ethno-religious group identity. Other allegiances, such as profession or age, do not matter to multiculturalists. The act of focusing on a shared ethno-religious identity as something important becomes part of a balancing act in remaining vague on what that identity entails. For: the moment abstraction is exchanged for concreteness, factual group cohesion comes under pressure which diminishes the idea of a group identity.

I do not deny that (large) groups of individuals do flock together. Orthodox Jews do so in Antwerp, and the Amish do so in Ohio. But some of those group

¹¹¹ See also Chervel, Thierry, and Anja Seeliger, *Islam in Europa. Eine internationale Debatte*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag 2007.

¹¹² Al-Azm, Sadi Jalal, ‘The Importance of Being Earnest about Salman Rushdie’, *Die Welt des Islams* 1991, quoted in: Mayer, Ann Elizabeth, ‘Universal versus Islamic Human Rights: A Clash of Cultures or Clash with a Construct’, *Michigan Journal of International Law* 1994, pp. 307-404 (386).

members leave their community and do not want to be defined in terms of that particular group identity. The question remains: why does group identity call for a particularly *positive* assessment, rather than merely establishing ethno-religious communities as sociological practicalities? Or leave thoughts about cultural identity to the psychologists? For that, multiculturalists use proposition number 2.

2. Nonrecognition of cultural identity constitutes psychological harm

Proposition number 2 is: *Nonrecognition of cultural identity constitutes psychological harm*. Crucial to multiculturalist thinking is taking one's identity to be of vital importance to the concept of self-respect, a form of a permanent psychological condition which should not be damaged (e.g. by critique), but respected (in word and (legal) action) and in some ways extolled, and secondly, that this identity is based on the group to which you belong to. From this perspective, one's identity is not chosen, but assigned at birth, that is, it is based on an ethno-religious, cultural, background.

In *Why Respect Culture?*, James Johnson suggests two justifications. One, we might respect culture because we consider it valuable, because individuals value culture. Or, two, we might respect culture on consequentialist grounds, meaning it contributes to the well-being of individuals or a group or perhaps avoid civil war.¹¹³ The first one reads, culture is important, because it is important. We just have to assume its intrinsic value. That is difficult, because 'culture' in itself is neither good or bad. It is a collection of beliefs and practices of which parts change over time, and each facet needs to be evaluated on the basis of its (de)merits. Charles Taylor accentuates an instrumentalist justification for multiculturalist theory, viz. avoiding psychological harm, even to the extent of avoiding a 'crippling self-hatred'. He has not described how recognition should be bestowed on the recipient, nor made explicit what constitutes interference at being what one truly is. He defines the importance of recognition by means of the *via negativa*: it not so much important to receive

¹¹³ Johnson 2000, p. 407.

recognition, but to be free from *non*-recognition or *mis*recognition. The latter two are presumed to constitute psychological harm. It even goes so far that the claims to identity are taken to be non-negotiable. "One says: 'I can give up many things for the social good, but I will not give up my identity. I should not be required to sacrifice who I am for the sake of the benefit to others.'"¹¹⁴ Accommodating someone in their personal preferences which are presented as culturally originating, is crucial to showing respect, at least, that is the idea. The emphasis lies on perceived weak minorities, on those who are viewed to suffer from a critical attitude towards their way of life. This presumed suffering is presented as self-evident.

The ultimate foundation of Taylor's (and Kymlicka's and Parekh's) theory is: "people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves"¹¹⁵. It *sounds* plausible. But is it *true*? Is it true that misrecognition is a form of psychological harm? Would no longer being confirmed as a member of a particular community by outsiders constitute *harm*? Multiculturalist philosophers do not offer sufficient viable reasons why this should be the case. It is also not consistent with the accusation that members of the cultural hegemony exclude minority members. It seems to me that emphasizing one's different position as member of a minority culture is not very "inclusive".

This assumption of harm could be considered as an attempt to project emotions unto others. This also becomes clear when we ask the question: *who* should recognize *who*? Parekh writes:

"This feeling of being full citizens and yet outsiders is difficult to analyse and explain, but it can be deep and real and seriously damage the quality of their citizenship and their commitment to the political community. It is caused by, among other things, the narrow and

¹¹⁴ Quote from: Waldron, Jeremy, 'Cultural identity and civic responsibility', pp. 155-174 (158), in: Kymlicka, Will and Norman, Wayne (eds.), *Citizenship in Diverse Societies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000 (2003).

¹¹⁵ Taylor 1994, p. 25. See also: Parekh 2000, p. 343.

exclusive manner in which wider society defines the common good, the demeaning ways in which it talks about some of its members, and the dismissive or patronizing ways in which it behaves towards them. Although such individuals are free in principle to participate in its collective life, they often stay away or ghettoize themselves for fear of rejection or out a deep sense of alienation.”¹¹⁶

Interestingly, what this also exposes is that there is no *general* moral duty to respect individuals for whom they truly are, as nonrecognition causes harm. I will explain. Take, for example, “John”. John is an Iraqi-born Muslim living in Birmingham. He disapproves of people who do not follow his religion. In fact, an important part of who John truly is, is expressed through his dismissive attitude towards non-believers. He wishes not to recognize a non-believer for whom that person truly is, and prefers to be critical or even dismissive of western values. If we were to follow multiculturalist theory, we respect John’s true nature. We should not even criticize John for criticizing other people’s life choices. John has the right to believe whatever he wishes, and we should be respectful and tolerant of his position. So far so good. But now we change John a little bit. This time, John is a white male citizen living in Liverpool. John does not recognize Muslims for who they truly are, in fact, he is quite dismissive of Islam. He regularly unfolds his critique on life choices inspired by that religion, stating that Islam is detrimental to individual well-being. He questions the merits of Islam-inspired practices, such as veiling and praying five times a day. Now, multiculturalists would label this lack of recognition as a form of causing psychological harm, as well as arrogant, condescending and eurocentric, possibly even racist and discriminatory. The moral duty of not *not* recognizing an individual for who he truly, is thus a one-way street.¹¹⁷ That is what I mean with the fact that for multiculturalists there is no *general* moral duty to respect individuals for whom they truly are. As we will see at a

¹¹⁶ Parekh 2000, p. 342.

¹¹⁷ See on recognition as a one-sided act by the majority society only also: Joppke, Christian, ‘The retreat of Multiculturalism in the liberal state: theory and policy’, *The British Journal of Sociology* (2004): 237-257 (238).

later stage in conclusion 4: minority cultures must not be criticized *by the dominant culture* which has the positive obligation to preserve minority cultures. Multiculturalist philosophers do not focus on the need for recognition of Inuit by a minority of Pakistani Shiite Muslims. Or recognition of Caribbean Africans by the Pennsylvania Dutch. Recognition should be bestowed on minority groups by white Euro-American culture bearers. It assumes that members of the cultural hegemony have an enormous power and influence on the mental well-being of minority members, a power the latter does not have on the majority. It assumes that white Euro-Americans are psychologically immune to critique from minorities (even to the accusation of being inherently racist) – and if not immune, at least they are considered adults who should be able to deal with it. Minority members, on the other hand, are considered dependent on the approval of white Euro-Americans for a sense of self-worth. Where does that idea come from?

In *The Tyranny of Guilt. An Essay on Western Masochism* (2010), French philosopher Pascal Bruckner (1948) dissects the idea that members of minorities suffer under misrecognition by a dominant European, white majority culture. The fixation some multiculturalists have on the duty to ensure the mental wellbeing of minority group members comes from a strong sense of *guilt*. He writes:

“Since 1945 our continent has been obsessed by torments of repentance. Ruminating on its past abominations – wars, religious persecutions, slavery, imperialism, fascism, communism – it views history as nothing more than a long series of massacres and sackings that led to two world wars, that is, to an enthusiastic suicide. Unparalleled horrors, the industrialization of death on a grand scale in the Nazi and Soviet camps, the promotion of bloodthirsty clowns to the rank of mass idols, and the experience of radical evil transformed into bureaucratic routine: that is what we have achieved.”¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ Bruckner, Pascal, *The Tyranny of Guilt*, Princeton: Princeton University Press 2010, p. 6.

Bruckner formulates the consequence: “[t]hus we Euro-Americans are supposed to have only one obligation: endlessly atoning for what we have inflicted on other parts of humanity.”¹¹⁹ And this is often adopted by multiculturalists. For instance, Will Kymlicka’s *Multiculturalist Citizenship* (1995) ends with the passage that “the fate of ethnic and national groups around the world is in the hand of xenophobic nationalists, religious extremists, and military dictators.”¹²⁰ And not in the hands of members of minority groups themselves, we must conclude, who are docilely awaiting their fate. The history of slavery, colonialism and genocide is the proof that Euro-Americans are (potential or actual) perpetrators by default, capable of racism, discrimination and persecution. Members of minorities, on the other hand, are vulnerable and innocent by default, in need of protection by the majority, yet awaiting their destiny of marginalisation by that same majority, a destiny only the majority can control. This is the psychological underpinning of the perceived relationship between majority and minority individuals. Bruckner asks:

“How can we fail to see that this leads us to live off self-denunciation while taking a strange pride in being the worst? Self-denigration is all too clearly a form of indirect self-glorification. Evil can come only from us; other people are motivated by sympathy, good will, candor. This is the paternalism of the guilty conscience: seeing ourselves as the kind of infamy is still a way of staying on the crest of history. Since Freud we know that masochism is only a reversed sadism, a passion for domination turned against oneself. Europe is still messianic, exporting humility and wisdom. Its obvious scorn for itself does not conceal a very great infatuation. Barbarity is Europe’s great pride, which it acknowledges

¹¹⁹ Bruckner 2010, p. 34.

¹²⁰ Kymlicka 1995, p. 195.

only in itself; it denies that others are barbarous, finding attenuating circumstances for them (which is a way of denying them all responsibility).”¹²¹

The Euro-American majority has the moral duty to make sure minority individuals do not suffer psychological harm from nonrecognition or misrecognition of the worthiness of their cultures.

Consider the assumption that “Nonrecognition of cultural identity constitutes psychological harm”. It has to be said that, again, it is presented as self-evident. That does not have to be problematic, our political system is founded on self-evident notions, such as that human beings prefer freedom over oppression, and equal opportunity over discrimination.¹²² These ideas do not require to be evidenced in every treatise. However, the indication that minority members are victims of unbearable psychological harm (“crippling”) through the act of non-recognition or misrecognition, does require some support. What is also missing, is a clear view of what recognition, or lack of non-recognition, entails. There appear to be two levels; the individual level and the institutional level.

Multiculturalist thinkers confuse the entities – the individual, the group or cultures themselves¹²³ – that warrant protection or recognition; the individual from a psychological need to belong or not to feel degraded, a group that deserves protection against discrimination or a culture that is in danger of going extinct. But a ‘group’ is not an entity which deserves protection or recognition from any analytical angle. Groups have no feelings. Groups fail as a unit to experience psychological harm. Or, as American author Ophelia Benson and British author Jeremy Stangroom describe:

¹²¹ Bruckner 2010, pp. 34-35.

¹²² Of course, one is reminded of the famous second sentence of the United States Declaration of Independence: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

¹²³ See also: Blum 1998, p. 53.

“But literally speaking, groups don’t value things. Groups can’t literally value anything, any more than nations or communities or families can, because groups don’t have minds. It is only people (and some animals) who can value cultural practices, because it is only people who have minds, and they have them in a singular, one at a time. Their thoughts can’t ever be added together to make a larger group thought, which then becomes ‘what the group thinks.’ Thoughts can’t be poured into a large bowl to make soup; they can only be added to a pile of distinct entities, with the entities remaining distinct. The thoughts of people never melt into each other, no matter how high the heat.”¹²⁴

The same goes for cultures. Humans contain culture, cultures on their own do not exist and have no interests whatsoever. Of course, in normal discourse, and for sociological and political reasons, we constantly refer to groups, as well as to the abstract notion of ‘culture’. But that does not defer to the fact that the only unit that actually values or needs something, is the individual. That is what makes it problematic to accept the notion that cultural identity is in need of recognition. One could raise the issue that under modernization and globalization, minority cultures are faced with much more ‘change’ than members of the majority culture and that this is a difficult psychological process unevenly distributed amongst citizens of a nation. But change can also be positive; there are great psychological *advantages* for members of minority cultures changing their culture under the influence of the dominant majority. More freedom, more liberty, more choices, greater wealth, peace, stability and many more of the plusses the West has which has caused immigration flows towards the Euro-American culture. Apparently, the monoculture from the “culture of origin” compelled immigrants to *move away in search of change*.

Another question that needs answering, is *how* the act of recognition, or absence of non- or misrecognition should be bestowed upon people. We have

¹²⁴ Benson, Ophelia and Stangroom, Jeremy, *Does God Hate Women?*, London: Continuum 2009, p. 99.

answered the question *who* should recognize *whom* (members of the majority should recognize members of the minority), but *how* does one recognize another human being?

Taylor writes that minorities should not have to be confronted with demeaning images of themselves. Though, not being degraded does not require being seen as equal, nor does it demand acknowledgement of one's cultural distinctiveness.¹²⁵ Abolishing discriminatory laws is not the same as legislating affirmative action. This vagueness of how to go about the practice of avoiding non-recognition does not help Taylor's argument. Should a white, Euro-American male approach a black American-Haitian, and say: "I recognize your Haitian heritage. (Now, let's do business together)." Or should the white man merely *think* that inside his head? Or is simply *not degrading* a fellow human based on his skin color enough? Or does not abolishing harmful cultural traditional practices – for instance ritual slaughter – suffice for recognizing a cultural *group*?¹²⁶ But where to draw the line of tolerating harmful practices? To quote Jeremy Waldron: "I suspect that the popularity of modern communitarianism has depended on *not* giving unequivocal answers to these questions."¹²⁷

The conclusions following the propositions

I would now like to evaluate the conclusions that multiculturalists connect to the propositions that 1) Who someone truly (authentically) is, is given by his ethno/religious cultural identity, and that 2) nonrecognition of cultural identity

¹²⁵ Blum 1998, p. 60.

¹²⁶ Taylor does at a given point somewhat specify *where* the act of recognition should take place: in the educational system. As Blum summarizes: "Valuing the recognition of ethnocultural difference provides an obvious underpinning for educational Multiculturalism. Educational institutions should recognize the ethno-cultural (and ethno-racial) identities of their students. This recognition can take curricular form, as when the historical experiences and contributions of ethno-cultural groups are studied. But recognition can take other forms as well – for example, school assemblies for cultural presentation, or teachers' informal acknowledgement inside and outside of class of their students' ethno-cultural identities." See: Blum, Lawrence, "Recognition and Multiculturalism in education", *Journal of philosophy of education* 2001, pp. 539-559 (540).

¹²⁷ Waldron 1991, p. 756.

constitutes psychological harm. This set of 'givens' leads to the conclusion that 1) 'culture is good', 2) cultures are equal; 3) Cultural differences are either good, but if not, they should at least be tolerated; and 4) Minority cultures must not be criticized by the dominant culture which has the positive obligation to preserve minority cultures.

In order to illustrate the critique more clearly, I present the fictitious case of Sealandistan:

In the beautiful country of Sealandistan live two cultural communities: the Blueskins and the Greenskins. Blueskins value animal welfare. In fact they take great pride in it, and are hurt, shocked and offended when others don't. Therefore, all Blueskins treat all animals with great care. The Blueskins are also very satisfied with their loving attitude toward the elderly: traditionally, citizens over the age of 90 are administered a pill ending their lives. This way, the elderly will not grow any older stuck with bodily malfunctioning, worries about their upcoming death and being left to reminisce about the days which were, feeling lonely. They share their nation with the Greenskins. The Greenskins value life like nothing else, and are very much disturbed by the way the Blueskins, as they see it, "murder" their elderly and are frightened they will be required to follow that practice in the future. Luckily, they can relax a bit during their "feast of animal kicking". This festivity takes place every third Saturday of the month, when Greenskins assemble animals on village squares. Under the tunes of folklore music and the company of friends and family, they take turns kicking animals until the creatures die. The Greenskins take great pride in participating at the feast of animal kicking. It confirms their heritage, from which they draw cultural pride and a sense of belonging. Most would be hurt, shocked and offended if the Blueskins would make them abandon this practice.

We will come back to Sealandistan in a short bit and return to the ideology of multiculturalism.

1. Culture is good

First of all, let us discuss *conclusion number 1: "culture is good"*. Interestingly, none of the multiculturalist philosophers claim that culture is purely 'good'. Culture is important as multiculturalists consider it to define one's identity – that is, if you are a member of a cultural minority. Culture is thus important to people, therefore, culture is good, the justification goes. The word "important" has some vagueness to it which many authors fail to analyse adequately. Does it mean "inevitable"? Does it mean "favourable"? This ought to be made clear. All that "important" means, is that people hold beliefs and act in a certain matter, because they want to. This is a form of circular reasoning: why do people act in a certain way? Because they want to. Why do people want to act in a certain way? Because it is important to them. Why is it important to them? Because they want to. But some people also want to kill their daughter for having a non-Muslim boyfriend. Or value their membership of the Ku Klux Klan. That individuals want to, value, or find something important for their identity is not decisive when answering the question whether something deserves respect, recognition or toleration.

That culture encompasses reprehensible practices as well is widely accepted. However, according to them, that acknowledgement does not affect the conclusion that *overall* culture is important to its members, and *therefore* good. Especially "traditional" cultures have value. Taylor claims: "Just as all must have equal civil rights, and equal voting rights, regardless of race or culture, so all should enjoy the presumption that their traditional culture has value."¹²⁸ Because culture is the source of identity, and living one's identity is crucially important to one's well-being, cultural membership is good, and culture is thus a source of good. I have stated under

¹²⁸ See: Taylor 1994, p. 68.

proposition number 1 (identity is given by one's culture) that 'culture' is a catch-all term for the aggregate of individual human thought, creation and behaviour. Yet, multiculturalists take culture to be good, because individuals *value* culture. And even when a collection of individuals demonstrate 'bad' or 'abhorrent' practices – e.g. child marriage or animal abuse, we should not draw the conclusion that culture is bad, because even the bad practices are valued (otherwise they would logically abandon these practices). That those practices are harmful to the victims is not recognized in the same way as non-recognition of the culture is conceived to be harmful to the perpetrators.

Community cultures can have a negative effect on individual well-being.¹²⁹ Interests between community members do not seldom conflict. Take for instance, the relatively high suicide rate among south-east Asian girls in the United Kingdom: male members value their culture of protecting modesty by means of restricting the girls' freedom to choose how they want to live.¹³⁰ This causes tremendous (and lethal) depressions among these women. In this sense, culture is not valued, not by these women. Now, a multiculturalist can say that this is merely a part of South-East Asian culture and that *in general*, their culture provides a meaningful framework for making life choices. But, that is revolting if that framework entails prompting suicide. Yes, specific practices are part of a culture, such as ritual slaughter, child marriage, drug use, consensual sex, promoting higher education and dodge ball. The sum of all practices, at best, asks for *description*, not *prescription*.

Multiculturalists, do acknowledge the fact that cultural frameworks can cause harm to members, and it would be a misrepresentation of multiculturalism to say that such acknowledgments do not exist. However, the general statement of, and the focus on, the value of culture as something good and worthy of our respect, stands. But valuing a 'good' practice does not cancel out a 'bad' practice for the sake of

¹²⁹ This brings us to the "minorities within minorities-debate", see Spinner-Halev, Jeff, and Eisenberg, Avigail (eds.), *Minorities within Minorities. Equality, Rights and Diversity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2005.

¹³⁰ Hasan, Romy, 'Critical remarks on cultural aspects of Asian ghettos in modern Britain', *Capital & Class* 2003, pp. 103-134 (106).

maintaining coherence within the abstract concept of 'culture'. Culture is not good, nor is it bad, specific practices and beliefs are good or bad. Love, good; anti-Semitism, bad. Criminalising rape, good; pillaging, bad, and so forth.

Back to Sealandistan. If we follow multiculturalists we must conclude that both Blue- and Greenskin culture are good, because it offers the individual members a sense of belonging, it enables them to live according to their authentic heritage, creating an identity from which they make their life choices. Yet, not every member is happy. Some elderly Blueskins are unsatisfied and Greenskin animal rights activists are unhappy with their monthly feast of animal kicking. Moreover, both Green- and Blueskins are not convinced the *other* culture is good. In fact, generally speaking, both communities believe they themselves have a refined and joyous culture and that the other culture brings forth a malicious practice. (By the way, internal dissent is not appreciated, either.) They interchange debate with gnashing of teeth, wondering how to solve ethno-cultural tensions. Who is right? Who should change? And as the tension builds, more and more elderly and animals have an early meeting with their creator. A multiculturalist would not be able to help. Both cultures are merely considered good, a valuable framework for one's identity, a moral anchor. But perhaps we are judging multiculturalism too soon. I will continue the analysis.

2. Cultures are equal

We now arrive at multiculturalist *conclusion number 2: Cultures are equal*. That is, cultures are not *factually* equal, but they are *morally* equal in the sense that cultures provide its bearers with equal value. No one's culture is better than anyone else's. In 1996, for example, the Dutch cabinet send out the message that "the debate over multiculturalism must be conducted from the starting principle that cultures are of equal value".¹³¹

¹³¹ See also Caldwell, Christopher, *Reflections on the revolution in Europe: can Europe be the same with different people in it?*, London: Allen Lane 2009, p. 70.

In *Culture and Equality: An Egalitarian Critique Of Multiculturalism* (2001), philosopher Brian Barry (1936-2009) states it is logically impossible to recognize all cultures as equal. This is because cultures have, as he phrases it, 'propositional content': "It is an inevitable aspect of any culture that it will include some ideas to the effect that some beliefs are true and some false, and that some things are right and others wrong. The demand for cultural equality runs into conceptual problems of a kind that are not inherent in the demand that we should find equal value (or any value at all) in every cultural artefact such as a painting. This is, indeed, an absurdly inappropriate demand. But the reason is simply that, unless discriminations are made, ascribing value to something ceases to have any point."¹³² Barry believes affirming everybody's culture simultaneously is as tenable as stating: "everybody has won, and *all* must have prices."¹³³ Or as Italian political scientist Giovanni Sartori (1924) explains: "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".¹³⁴

Truly, even multiculturalists draw the line of equality and value somewhere: the value of culture for minorities should be duly recognized by members of the majority; not doing so is a *bad cultural trait* and should be changed. Imposition of majority norms at the cost of authentic minority culture is *bad*. Being from a white majority and not or not rightly recognizing someone's non-white minority identity is *bad*. It is arrogant, condescending, intolerant, and bordering on racist and discriminatory. Interestingly, this bad, or to some abhorrent, practice of non-recognition is part of a culture, a culture which – if we assume the Herderian philosophy underlying multiculturalism to be correct – is important to its members, and is thus a source of *good*. This contradiction makes it difficult, if not impossible to found multiculturalism as a worthwhile ideology. That is, if non-recognition of minority culture is an inherent part of the (dominant) culture, why should we not respect *that*?

¹³² Barry, Brian, *Culture and equality: An egalitarian critique of Multiculturalism*, Cambridge: Polity Press 2001, p. 270.

¹³³ Barry 2001, pp. 270-271.

¹³⁴ Sartori, Giovanni, *Pluralismo, multiculturalismo e estranei*, Milano: Rizzoli 2000, in: Joppke 2004, p. 242.

Is multiculturalist theory in that sense not *self-defeating*? In a sense it is. If all cultures are different yet equal and are entitled to recognition, then the phenomenon of culturally-based nonrecognition of minorities should be respected. Because – the theory goes – even if it is accompanied by an abhorrent practice, culture deserves our admiration and respect. We should admire and respect the dominant culture, even though it supposedly imposes psychological harm on others by not naturally recognizing the worth of their minority cultures.

This contradiction might be lifted, if we adjust the maxim: members of *minority* cultures should be respected by members of the *majority* culture.¹³⁵ Multiculturalist theory is about restoring a power imbalance which aims to contribute to peaceful coexistence of a plurality of peoples in one nation. Although *formally* multiculturalists state that all cultures are equal – or of equal value, the focus on respect *for minority, by majority* actually leads to the conclusion that “some cultures are more equal than others”. In no theory of multiculturalism is the act of recognition reciprocal.¹³⁶ Members of a majority culture, who are in a more powerful position (at least, that is the assumption), are not presented as individuals who may claim authenticity, but as humans who are expected to be able to do away with some of their cultural beliefs (e.g. reject the belief that refusing to shake a woman’s hand is unacceptable) and practices (e.g. giving leeway to the violation of animal rights in the case of ritual slaughter) in order to accommodate those for minority cultures. It also means that multiculturalist theorists present their audience with the moral instruction to hold their own culture against the light, while members of minority cultures have the moral right to keep their culture intact. The Euro-American dominant majority confronts their “own group” with a cultural critique (e.g. “you are descendants of slave owners/colonists/bystanders during the Nazi regime”), a critique which is not deemed to cause psychological damage. It is only members of minority cultures which are

¹³⁵ Or respected by ‘the state’, but that is backed by the idea that ‘the state’ is made up out of individuals from the dominant culture.

¹³⁶ As Joppke formulates it: “[...] the winner is asked to recognize the loser, in what amounts to an act of reparation and restitution.”, see: Joppke 2004, p. 243.

allegedly susceptible to getting hurt. That conclusion, probably unintentionally, demonstrates the implicit superiority of the dominant culture; the power to change for the good and to show benevolence to members of minority groups, as Bruckner argues.

A cultural hegemony owes respect to minorities. This notion is incompatible with the notion of equality of cultures. The problem is that multiculturalists conflate equal worth with *some* worth.¹³⁷ If cultures are considered equal, because they are equally valuable to its members, then all members of all cultures should be respected and cleared from interference. This also means that minority cultures may not adversely impact majority culture. That the content of culture, viz. the aggregate of individual member's thought, creation and actions, is factually unequal, is unimportant to multiculturalists. It would make more sense if the claim would be: good culture is good, bad culture is bad, or even better: good practices are good, bad practices are bad, and some cultures have more good practices than others. Yet, if culture is good in general and all cultures are equal, then there can be no moral apartheid between cultures. That also means the end of the idea that members from one culture are expected to perform the act of accommodating, while others are entitled to receive cultural accommodation.

In Sealandistan, unfortunately, even though there is a degree of intermarriage and both groups are interspersed throughout the territory, both members of the Greenskins as the Blueskins encounter intercultural rivalry and suspicion. In other words, they are dealing with incompatible, or, at least, opposing visions of the good life and a good society, leaving both communities with the feeling of an environment in danger of existence.¹³⁸ This is not uncommon. American political scientist Robert Putnam found that ethnic diversity tends to reduce social solidarity and social capital.¹³⁹ This effect of several cultures co-existing with the feeling of an

¹³⁷ See also: Blum, 1998, p. 59.

¹³⁸ See on opposition and authenticity also: Waldron 1991, p. 761.

¹³⁹ Putnam, Robert, "E pluribus unum: Diversity and community in the twenty-first century" (the 2006 Johan Skytte Prize Lecture), *Scandinavian Political Studies* 2007, pp. 137-174 (137). Koopmans and Veit confirmed

environment in danger of existence is of the utmost importance to multiculturalists. Softening the feeling of cultural endangerment is even more important than the well-being of the elderly or animal welfare. Multiculturalists are not likely to dive into ethical discussions on specific cultural practices, but call for *respecting difference*.

3. Cultural differences are either good, but if not, they should at least be tolerated

This leads us to *conclusion number 3: Cultural differences are either good, but if not, they should at least be tolerated*.¹⁴⁰ Every society recognizes difference. We socially recognize the young apart from the old, men apart from women, we notice skin colour, the successful, the beautiful, the ugly, the rich, the poor, and the psychically and mentally handicapped. Societies acknowledge relationships of marriage and kinship, and work with the difference between employer and employee status. Living a life means encountering *differences galore*. Sometimes we wish to exacerbate those differences, for instance by investing in an education, writing literature, train for a sports career, aiming to achieve something that will make us stand out (and be less equal to others). British philosopher Brian Barry argues that the fact of difference is universal and so is its social recognition. Yet, despite its universality, especially in contemporary western societies does differentiation tend to be more complex and more 'optional' than in traditional societies. Barry attributes this to our consumer ethic and the whole concept of lifestyle.¹⁴¹ For example, in *Why the West is Best: A Muslim Apostate's Defense of Liberal Democracy* (2011), author Ibn Warraq tells about the day he took an Iraqi colleague to an American bookstore in New York to show him thousands and thousands of different magazines covering all different fields of

Putnam's thesis for Berlin, Germany, See Koopmans, Ruud and Veit, Susanne, 'Cooperation in Ethnically Diverse Neighborhoods: A Lost-Letter Experiment', *Political Psychology* 2014, pp. 379–400.

¹⁴⁰ As exemplary, Bhikhu Parekh writes: "The third important constituent of a global ethics is the principle of respect for difference or plurality." Parekh 2008, p. 226.

¹⁴¹ See: Barry 2001, p. 19.

interest for the consumer.¹⁴² Individuals in modern societies can choose from a plethora of ideological convictions and can switch during their lifetime. The presence of so many options makes the act of choosing worthy of study itself.

Ethno-religious culture is one of many sources of differentiation. The analytical issue at stake is that multiculturalists embraced the fallacious reasoning of the *is/ought* problem: there *is* cultural pluralism, therefore there *ought to be* cultural pluralism, they believe. There *is* (descriptive) indeed a plurality of cultures within a nation, but that does not logically lead to the multiculturalist doctrine which *prescribes* a plurality of cultures.¹⁴³ In fact, Kymlicka believes that “of course, the whole point of multiculturalism is to normalize diversity”,¹⁴⁴ and other multiculturalists invoke cultural pluralism as their founding principle.¹⁴⁵ Multiculturalist thinkers believe it is not enough to merely establish that something is different, but that it is *good* that there is plurality, whatever the content may be. In popular culture we notice that difference should be celebrated; we get told “if we were all the same the world would be a dull place” (imagine those poor monocultural African tribes not mixed with Asian homosexuals and Inuit).

The focus on plurality is actually an odd one in itself. The festive embrace of difference often regards cosmopolitan manifestations of culture. One can think of music festivals celebrating African music, enjoying an Indian curry, incorporating sarongs in one’s wardrobe. The celebration of difference in this sense is limited to music, food, dress and art. When members of cultural minorities, on the other hand, turn to practices *beyond* what can be “celebrated”, multiculturalists call for tolerance (or “an intercultural dialogue”¹⁴⁶, which I consider a form of extended tolerance). An example is the Islamic call for prayer, the ‘muezzin’ calling from the top of a minaret

¹⁴² Ibn Warraq, *Why the West is Best. A Muslim Apostate’s Defense of Liberal Democracy*, New York: Encounter Books 2011, p. 36-37. Ibn Warraq is the pen name of a Pakistani born American writer. He uses a pseudonym for safety reasons.

¹⁴³ See: Barry 2001, p. 22.

¹⁴⁴ Kymlicka, Will, “Testing the liberal multiculturalist hypothesis: Normative theories and social science evidence”, *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 2010, pp. 257-271 (265).

¹⁴⁵ Higham 1993, p. 205.

¹⁴⁶ For instance, Parekh 2008, p. 226.

in neighbourhoods in European cities. This can be quite an intrusive sound, even annoying to some. Yet, multiculturalist thinking warrants people to be tolerant. Thus, when the practice under scrutiny or group reputation turns non-celebratory, it is *respect for diversity* that is required. When a practice performed by a minority is not appreciated by the “cultural hegemony”, multiculturalists call out on the *value* the practice has for those practicing it, for the sake of difference and in the name of equality. Multiculturalists lift the status of ethnical and/or religious minorities, and single its members out for their distinctness. It reminds us of the segregation of the races in the United States before the Supreme Court ruled *Brown v. The Board of Education*: ‘separate but equal’, but this time with a modern twist: ‘different, but equal’. American historian John Higham (1920 – 2003) finds praising plurality curious: “On the surface, one would think that the goal of equality would not be well served by highlighting or increasing differences among people. At least, we are entitled to some explanation of how an emphasis on differences of endowment will advance equality. To my knowledge none has been suggested by our multiculturalists.”¹⁴⁷

Instead, it would be better if the concept of respecting culture would be replaced entirely by the ideal of keeping and improving good practices and getting rid of bad practices. This would of course require a *standard* of what we consider to be good and what we consider to be bad practices. Unfortunately, the chances of carrying out such a standard are frustrated by the multiculturalist embrace of diversity (non-intervention) and respect (attributing a positive connotation), often regardless of what that practice entails. Or, as British author Patrick West writes in *The Poverty of Multiculturalism* (2005): “We are commanded to respect all difference and anyone who disagrees shall be shouted down, silenced or slandered a racist. Everyone must be tolerant. And that’s an order.”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ Higham, 1993, p. 213.

¹⁴⁸ West, Patrick, *The Poverty of Multiculturalism*, London: Civitas 2005, p. 35.

What Patrick West is trying to convey is that there is intolerance towards those who are assumed to be intolerant. Here we enter the realm of *political correctness*. Political correctness is defined as: “agreeing with the idea that people should be careful to not use language or behave in a way that could offend a particular group of people”, or “conforming to a belief that language and practices which could offend political sensibilities (as in matters of sex or race) should be eliminated”, according to dictionary Merriam Webster.¹⁴⁹ It is considered a contentious term, and generally the label of being politically correct is imposed on people by their (political) opponents.¹⁵⁰

Not doing or saying anything that another group might find offensive is not new. Every day and age in the world’s history has known issues that were silenced. Take for instance the Victorians, who were prudish about sex. Or any topic that seemed related to socialism in the fifties in the United States due to the threat of communism. However, as American sociologist Stan Gaede explains in *When Tolerance is No Virtue* (1993), today’s “PC” *has no substance*: it is intolerance itself that should not be tolerated: “Thus, although the politically correct would have a great deal of difficulty agreeing on what constitutes goodness and truth, they have no trouble at all agreeing that intolerance itself is wrong. Why? Because no one deserves to be offended.”¹⁵¹ Obviously, this position is logically untenable. As Gaede puts it: “If you are intolerant of someone who is intolerant, then you have necessarily violated your own principle. But if you tolerate those who are intolerant, you keep your principle but sacrifice your responsibility to the principle.”¹⁵² Nevertheless, tolerance can be a convenient norm in a society that is characterized by a plurality of norms and behaviour. In fact, tolerance would be redundant in a society where all humans act and believe the same.

¹⁴⁹ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/politically%20correct..> See also: Aufderheide, Patricia (ed.), *Beyond PC. Toward a Politics of Understanding*, Minnesota: Graywolf Press 1992 and Browne, Anthony, *The Retreat of Reason. Political Correctness and the Corruption of the Public Debate in Modern Britain*, London: Civitas 2006.

¹⁵⁰ Fairclough, Norman, “Political correctness’: The politics of culture and language”, *Discourse & Society* 2003, pp. 17-28 (21).

¹⁵¹ Gaede, Stan, *When Tolerance is No Virtue*. Political Correctness, Multiculturalism & the Future of Truth & Justice”, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press 1993, p. 23.

¹⁵² Gaede 1993, p. 23.

But is the definition of tolerance used correctly and consistently? I believe not. There has been a mix-up. Tolerance is not the same as approval. Nor is it indifference; there is an important distinction. For instance, one could not be bothered by a Hare Krishna neighbour. This is not “tolerating” another man’s religion; it merely means a person does not have any offsetting thoughts or emotions on the topic. Or, as American philosopher Brian Leiter (1963) formulates:

“For there to be a *practice* of toleration, one group must deem another differing group’s beliefs or practices “wrong, mistaken, or undesirable” and yet “put up” with them nonetheless. That means that toleration is not at issue in cases where one group is simply *indifferent* to another. I do not “tolerate” my neighbors who are non-White or who are gay, because I am *indifferent* as to the race or sexual orientation of those in my community. “Toleration,” as an ideal, can only matter when one group *actively* concerns itself with what the other is doing, believing, or “being.”¹⁵³

The act of toleration is thus accompanied by the conviction that some belief or practice is *wrong*. The underlying premise of supporting the idea of tolerance is quite simple: many of the arguments trade, at bottom, on a simple idea: namely, that “[...] *being able to choose what to believe and how to live* [...] makes for a better life. Being told *what you must believe* and *how you must live*, conversely, make lives worse.”¹⁵⁴

Multiculturalism has departed from tolerance. Originally, tolerance is about not banning or outlawing a practice. Under multiculturalism, it has become about withholding judgement. It considers rejection, negative judgment or a lack of respect

¹⁵³ Leiter, Brian, “Why tolerate religion?”, *Constitutional Commentary* 2008, pp. 1-27 (2-3). We can distinguish between state tolerance and tolerance in interpersonal relations, even though the issues are often the same (p. 5).

¹⁵⁴ Leiter calls this the “Private Space Argument.” Human well-being is maximized if (within certain limits) individuals have a “private space” in which they can freely choose what to believe and how to live. See: Leiter 2008, pp. 7-8.

as *intolerance*. To illustrate, take for example Parekh, who writes on whether minority cultures should conform to fundamental liberal values: “This amounts to saying that minority cultures should be respected only if they become liberal, an extreme form of intolerance that shows scant respect for their identity.”¹⁵⁵ If we take the concepts of tolerance and intolerance correctly, however, rejecting – yet not interfering – a minority culture on the basis of being illiberal is a form of tolerance. Under tolerance, it is perfectly possible to not interfere in behaviour, for example the veiling of women in Islam, yet have an outspoken negative opinion on it: “I agree you have the right to demonstrate this behaviour, yet I advise against it and I hope you will choose otherwise.” This is not an act of intolerance, although multiculturalists would label it as such. Intolerance would entail taking steps to ban the practice, such as introducing legal penalties. Voicing disagreement while allowing a custom to carry on is, in fact, *tolerance*. If one does not disagree with a custom, we have to label non-interference as approval or indifference, which tolerance empathically is not.

A problem arises when a cultural practice limits a person’s space to make choices. It is a classic problem that one’s freedom can limit another’s. One should think of John Stuart Mill’s famous Harm Principle. Considering both physical force in the form of legal penalties, as well as the moral coercion of public opinion, Mill writes that “the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others.”¹⁵⁶ Toleration should end there where freedom is exerted to effectively cause harm to another individual. Thus, while the idea of tolerance is in essence laudable, it is not the obvious means when a practice is not merely perceived by outsiders as wrong, but also by those individuals undergoing it. Female genital mutilation and forced marriage are examples that illustrate the limits of the desirability of tolerance quite well. Interestingly, toleration also implies a power relationship. As Paul Cliteur states: “Tolerance is about putting up with something that people can also refuse to put up

¹⁵⁵ Parekh, Bhikhu, ‘A varied modern world’, pp. 69-75 (72), in: Cohen et al. 1999.

¹⁵⁶ Mill, John Stuart, *On Liberty*, (1859) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003, p. 13.

with. That means that tolerance always implies the superior power of the tolerant one over the one whose practice is tolerated.”¹⁵⁷

In her book *Infidel* (2006), Somali-born Dutch political scientist Ayaan Hirsi Ali describes multiculturalism and tolerance in action. In their attempts not to come across as intolerant people, the Dutch offered Muslims to maintain their communal identity by granting them Islamic schools, subsidies for Muslim organizations, all according to the general ‘live and let live’ principle. The idea behind this was that immigrants needed self-respect and that that was to be found in a strong feeling of communal belonging. Forcing Muslims to integrate Dutch norms and values was considered to be in breach of precisely those Dutch norms and values; in short, people should be granted the freedom to believe and act the way they pleased. The Dutch took on this mentality because they wanted to be *good* people. Like Pascal Bruckner, she finds that there was a sense of guilt stemming from the colonial past in Indonesia and from the way they looked away when the Nazi’s brought a relatively large percentage of Jews to death compared to elsewhere in Europe. But also, as Hirsi Ali argues, because enabling immigrants to live a separate lifestyle would enable the Dutch to not actually having to have to live with immigrants. Charity bought the ability to look away. “Paying and looking the other side – that is the current definition of tolerance.” The result was that immigrants did live separated from the Dutch, went to school separated, and led separated lives. There were no children of Dutch descent in Muslim schools. The little girls were veiled and separated from the boys during prayers and gym classes. The children were not encouraged to ask questions or to be creative. They were taught to be obedient and keep a distance from unbelievers. This political empathy with immigrants allowed cruelty to continue. Thousands of Dutch Muslim women and children were systematically abused – there was no denying in that. Little girls were genitally mutilated on kitchen tables, and young women who fell in love with someone of their

¹⁵⁷ See: Cliteur, Paul, *Moderne Papoea’s – Dilemma’s van een Multiculturele Samenleving* (Modern Papuans – Dilemmas of a Multicultural Society), Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers 2002, p. 138.

own liking were beaten half to death or even murdered.¹⁵⁸ The suffering of these women was indescribable, Hirsi Ali writes. She observes that the Dutch are sympathetic to the fate of those suffering all over the world, are active in the United Nations and collect money and goods for global charity. Yet, they refuse to acknowledge the silent suffering of those women and children living in their own streets. Hirsi Ali concludes that this multiculturalism, that is respecting the ways of immigrants from other cultures, simply did not work. It meant the denial of basic rights for women and children. There were many people who refused to learn the Dutch language, and who consciously refuted Dutch values of tolerance and personal liberty. They married people from the villages they came from and continued living in their own world while living in the Netherlands.¹⁵⁹ The Dutch hope was that if Muslims would be allowed to live according to their own customs, segregated from the rest, they would integrate best.¹⁶⁰

We must conclude that, apparently, multiculturalists do not consider it their *métier* to answer the question where to draw the line between tolerable and intolerable practices, and what moral and pragmatic standard should be used in deciding.

Problematic is that the moral conviction that *intolerance* is deemed as morally suspect as racism and discrimination (according to a multiculturalists the *worst* beliefs and behaviour, more abject than bad cultural practices causing harm to fellow community members). This coheres with a third option when dealing with difference. Next to celebration and tolerance, is *non-judgmentalism*. When members of multiculturalist minorities demonstrate behaviour that is flat out harmful and

¹⁵⁸ In her time as politician, she had the greatest trouble to get a bill passed through the House of Representatives which enabled the police to track the number of victims of honor-based violence. Finally, it was agreed that a 'pilot' would be conducted. The results were shocking: during a period of seven months eleven Muslim girls had been murdered by their families, and that covered only two regions (Ayaan Hirsi Ali, *Mijn Vrijheid (Infidel)*, Amsterdam: Augustus 2006, p. p. 380).

¹⁵⁹ Ali 2006, pp. 298-300.

¹⁶⁰ Ali 2006,, p. 339.

dangerous (in academic literature referred to by the euphemist 'illiberal') to other members, such as honour-based violence, multiculturalists turn silent.¹⁶¹

Rumy Hasan points to the multiculturalists' (laudable) goal of fighting racism. That is why, he states, there is a belief that cultural differences are deemed to be respected, and, unfortunately and erroneously leads to downplaying any problems within a minority culture. The fear is that criticising aspects can accentuate negative stereotyping and "[...] give the green light to further racist slanders and attacks."¹⁶²

Thus, multiculturalists maintain that culture is *good*. When it becomes painfully obvious it is not, proponents of the multiculturalist ideology are analytically challenged. Does the tension perhaps exist because multiculturalism "by definition makes a fetish of cultures?", Ophelia Benson and Jeremy Stangroom wonder in *Does God Hate Women?* (2009). In order to maintain an overly positive attitude towards culture one must treat a culture as monolithic. "As soon as you admit that cultures have internal dissent and disagreement and nonconformity, the whole idea of protecting or deferring to particular 'cultures' breaks into incoherence", Benson and Stangroom say.¹⁶³ It makes sense. The idea of protecting and thereby perpetuating minority cultures stems from the assumption that the individuals who form the group share that wish. If there is internal dissent, multiculturalists regress into vagueness, and demonstrate the inability to take sides. The best multiculturalists have on offer is making general statements that cultural practices should be in accordance with human rights.

When invited to "pass a verdict" if confronted with a "different" custom, it is not uncommon for multiculturalists to fall prey to *relativism*. Relativism is best defined by listing the following claims taken from James Rachels' *The Elements of Moral*

¹⁶¹ Violent family members are a problem cross-culture and religion. However, the specific *planning* of murdering often young women is typical of Islam-rooted communities. Worldwide, 58 per cent of the victims were murdered for being "too Western" and/or for resisting or disobeying cultural and religious expectations. Moreover, major religious and political leaders in developing Muslim countries keep silent and it is mostly Islamic communities that maintain an enforced silence on all matters of religious, cultural, or communal "sensitivity", thereby perpetuating violence. See: Chesler, Phyllis, 'Worldwide Trends in Honor Killings', *Middle East Quarterly* Spring 2010, pp. 3-11.

¹⁶² Hasan 2003, p. 104.

¹⁶³ Benson & Stangroom 2009, p. 101.

Philosophy (2003). It is originally based on the anthropologists' line of approach. First, relativists claim that different societies have different moral codes. Second, that what is right within a society is determined by the moral code of that society. That means that if the moral code of a society says that a certain action is right, then that action *is* right, at least within that society. Third, there is no objective standard we can resort to to judge the moral code of one society better or worse than another's. Fourth, our own society's moral code is merely one among many, it has no special status. Fifth, there is no such thing as a "universal truth" in ethics. By that is meant that there are no moral truths that hold for all people at all times. Lastly, trying to judge the conduct of other peoples is an act of mere arrogance, an act of "cultural chauvinism". We should therefore adopt an attitude of tolerance when we consider the practices of other cultures.¹⁶⁴ Cultural relativism is tied to *moral* relativism. That can be *descriptive*: "some human beings have fundamentally different moral standards and values". There is also *normative* moral relativism: "For individuals or groups with divergent moral frameworks, when their moral differences cannot be rationally resolved they should not judge the moral behavior of each other nor act toward each other in such a way as to attempt to bring one side into conformity with the standards of the other."¹⁶⁵ Not good, not bad, but different. This is the category that multiculturalists embrace.

The consequences of accepting the doctrine of cultural relativism is that we can no longer state that the practices of another society are inferior (or superior) to our own. We can also no longer criticize our own culture, as there is no universal standard to judge our practices with. We can merely establish the fact that certain practices occur in our society and that things are done differently elsewhere, as there is no universal standard to decide what is right and what is wrong. And thus differences are good, or should at least be tolerated.

¹⁶⁴ Rachels, James, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, New York: McGraw-Hill 2003, pp. 18-19.

¹⁶⁵ Miller, Christian, 'Moral Relativism and Moral Psychology', pp. 346-367 (346-347), in: Hales, Steven (ed), *A Companion to Relativism*, Chicester: Wiley-Blackwell 2011.

Connected to relativism is post-modernism, an intellectual trend still not abandoned by academics, nor by other intellectual or media elites, and a trend which has seeped through in wide popular convictions. Haideh Moghissi (1994), who authored *Feminism and Islamic Fundamentalism: The Limits of Postmodern Analysis* (1999), lists the characteristics of postmodernism. I cite her list in its entirety:

- “The disenchantment with the foundation of modern social thought, with Western modernity, and the demystification of scientific objectivity and objective knowledge;
- The emphasis on narratives and the rejection of metanarratives and grand theories;
- Suspicion of classical notions of reason, truth, universal progress, and the rejection of the idea of the existence of a hidden essential meaning and direction in history, with the emphasis, instead on discontinuity, difference and the celebration of the ‘local’;
- The concern over representations of the ‘Other’, both imagined and real, and over the process of marginalization of Others;
- An absorption with language and the study of discourse as ways of thinking and speaking which reflect the distribution of power in society;
- An engagement with questions of sexuality as a historical construct and with sexual diversity and difference;
- A preoccupation with identity and with the notion of identity as a choice not a destiny;
- A mistrust of power;
- An awareness that the way things are and are done is not the only way and that all beliefs and knowledge are cultural constructs, and hence contingent and conversable.”¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ Moghissi, Haideh, *Feminism and Islamic Fundamentalism. The Limits of Postmodern Analysis*, London and New York: Zed Books 1999, pp. 50-51.

To give an idea what postmodern literature looks like, consider this example. Nick Cohen, British journalist and author of *What's Left* (2007), illustrates postmodernist writing (in an almost hilarious way), when he argues in favor of clearer writing. He cites one sentence written by Judith Butler, a famous feminist (“acclaimed by her fellow theorists as one of the most significant thinkers in America”). It goes like this:

“The move from a structuralist account in which capital is understood to structure social relations in relatively homologous ways to a view of hegemony in which power relations are subject to repetition, convergence and rearticulation brought to the question of temporality into the thinking of structure, and marked a shift from a form of Althusserian theory that takes structural totalities as theoretical objects to one in which the insights into the contingent possibility of structure inaugurate a renewed conception of hegemony as bound up with the contingent sites and strategies of the rearticulation of power.”¹⁶⁷

Emerita professor of psychology and women’s studies Phyllis Chesler formulates the problem of postmodernism as well in *The Death of Feminism* (2006): “For years now, academics have pretended that brilliance and originality can best be conveyed in a secret. Mandarin language that absolutely no one, including themselves, can possibly understand. In my view, this obfuscation of language has been employed to hide a considerable lack of brilliance and originality and to avoid the consequences of making oneself clear.”¹⁶⁸

Postmodernism, like cultural relativism, promotes a celebration of cultural difference and rejects an emphasis on universal human rights. Moghissi sees common ground between postmodernists and Islamic fundamentalists. Both share an “[...] unremitting hostility to the social, cultural and political processes of change and

¹⁶⁷ Cohen, Nick, *What's Left? How the Left Has Lost Its Way*, London: Harper Perennial 2007, p. 100.

¹⁶⁸ Chesler, Phyllis, *The Death of Feminism*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan 2006, p. 18.

knowledge and rationality, originating in the west, known as modernity.”¹⁶⁹

Multiculturalists share the postmodern reluctance for cultural change. That is why “differences” have to be “tolerated”, so that members from minority groups do not have to succumb to the “imposition” of majority norms and practices. This leads us to the fourth conclusion.

4. Minority cultures must not be criticized by the dominant culture which has the positive obligation to preserve minority cultures.

Haideh Moghissi writes that some scholars are suffering from the “Lawrence of Arabia syndrome”. They hold on to lower moral expectations when analyzing “simpler societies”. This leads to a situation where intellectuals rise to defend practices, even when activists and intellectuals in are crying out in countries elsewhere. “The condition of “the Lawrence of Arabia syndrome” leads Western scholars to leap to the defense of any and all aspects of the foreign cultures they study, especially third-world societies, even if this means defending conduct they would never tolerate in their own country and even if it means ignoring or criticizing intellectuals from the societies they study who condemn the very things they defend.”¹⁷⁰ For instance, in the multiculturalist debate, multiculturalist intelligentsia in the West craft an image of Muslim women with depicting them as “[...] empowered, militant, and dignified citizens with a firmly integrated sense of self.”¹⁷¹

Yet, Muslim women in Europe do not always have the “agency” that is projected upon them. Nor always the lack of it, either. But what matters here is that multiculturalists use the “agency-argument” to shelve their judgment. Instead of condemning acts that would never be allowed in the Euro-American culture, multiculturalists focus on the *liberty to choose*. A good example is Parekh’s defense of clitoridectomy (also known as female genital mutilation). Although the UK

¹⁶⁹ Moghissi 1999, p. 52.

¹⁷⁰ Moghissi 1999, p. vii.

¹⁷¹ Moghissi 1999, pp. 49-50.

government criminalized it in 1985, Parekh focuses on those adults freely undergoing it and the benefits it has for these women.¹⁷² But regardless of membership of a culture is coerced, maintained under pressure or freely chosen, it is very well possible to pass judgment nonetheless. To some, this seems like a wild statement, but it really is not. The point is that the fact that someone does something out of free will by no means implies we should forsake public judgment. Especially not if the debate concerns rites considered unacceptable for members of the majority culture and when members from the minority culture vehemently protest against it. Criticism and rejection is then perfectly warranted.

However, Charles Taylor writes: “[A]ll should enjoy the presumption that their *traditional* culture has value”,¹⁷³ and “cultures [...] are almost certain to have something that deserves our admiration and respect, even if it is accompanied by much that we have to abhor and reject.” That it is better to withhold negative judgment when it comes to bad ideas and practices is not explicated by multiculturalists *as such*. Yet, negative judgment logically falls under the header of non-recognition. Moreover, Parekh steers in that direction by stating that the basic concern underlying political correctness – which he would like to rename ‘political decency’ – is *valid*. “It represents a protest against stigmatization, intended or *unintended* humiliation, subtle and crude ways of keeping others in their place, triggering their painful personal and collective memories, and perpetuating inequalities of power and esteem. Forms of expression and modes of address are never politically and culturally innocent”.¹⁷⁴

Multiculturalist discourse consists of a subset of terminology. This discourse is identified through terms as equality, dignity, respect, recognition, difference, tolerance, agency, inclusion – all good. Insensitive, arrogance, superiority, oppression, racism, discrimination, dominance, supremacy, exclusion – all bad. Even

¹⁷² Among more, benefits Parekh lists are FGM as regulating women’s sexuality and that it allows them to remind them that they are primarily mothers rather than wives. See Parekh, p.71, in Cohen *et al* 1999.

¹⁷³ Taylor 1994, p. 68. Italics added.

¹⁷⁴ Parekh 2008, p. 55. [italics added]

unintended humiliation should be carefully avoided in order not to cripple people with self-hatred.

This principled intellectual 'laissez-faire' when it comes to abhorrent practices is connected to the ideal of multiculturalism. In his *Multiculturalism. Some Inconvenient Truths* (2010), British scholar Romy Hasan describes a 'soft' form of multiculturalism in the United Kingdom, which started to take shape in the 1980s. In the modern Western context multiculturalism is understood to mean the prevalence of 'minority' cultures – mainly the cultures of ethnic and racial minority settlers – alongside the culture of what Hasan labels the 'indigenous majority'. The key aspect is 'difference' from the dominant culture, "[...] and it is the tolerance and acceptance of this difference that lies at the core of multiculturalism's policy prescriptions." Paramount to this 'soft' multiculturalism is not so much legal exceptions or state subsidies, but instead a non-interventionist approach on behalf of local and national government.¹⁷⁵

Hasan identifies two groups of theorists, commentators and activists who endorse multiculturalism. Firstly, there are white liberals and progressives who oppose western imperialism, colonialism, and dominance over non-white peoples (amongst the most influential of these are Will Kymlicka, Charles Taylor, and others). Secondly, there are those originating from ethnic minorities, who Hasan collectively describes as 'cultural nationalists'. The most prominent ones are Bhikhu Parekh and Tariq Modood. What unites these groups is a commitment to anti-racism and anti-discrimination. Both groups fail to apply strong critiques against ethnic, religious and cultural minorities. The doctrine of "live and let live" is founded upon the notion of recognition of and respect for difference.¹⁷⁶ There is however, one exception. That is: relativists condemn judging. That means that if someone condemns a practice, a relativist would condemn that condemning. The act of condemning condemnation is not that overt. It usually entails stating that moral indignation is 'intolerant', even

¹⁷⁵ Hasan, Romy, *Multiculturalism. Some Inconvenient Truths*, London: Politico's Publishing 2010, pp. 10-11.

¹⁷⁶ Hasan 2010, pp. 13-14.

though, as shown above, moral indignation is constitutive of toleration. It also invokes all sorts of relativist arguments. Multiculturalists value difference as an asset in itself, rather than determining the merits and demerits of specific practices and behavior. It is unclear why the jump from factual difference needs to be made to appreciate factual difference. This attitude can only be maintained by *not being specific*.¹⁷⁷ That is because the moment a *specific* practice (e.g. full face veiling, ritual slaughter, radicalization of youths) needs to be evaluated, a *general* positive attitude is insufficient. Relativism calls the idea of moral progress into doubt.¹⁷⁸

Let us return to the case of Sealandistan. In Sealandistan, the two communities are equal in size. If we would alter the case a bit, making the Blueskins – where animals have a better future than the elderly – the hegemonic community. Traditionally, the elderly are fed a lethal pill by their relatives after their 90th birthday, to prevent suffering. People are free to criticize this custom and it is likely that the tradition will perish in the process of modernization. This is because change in a hegemonic community is either not considered to have adverse psychological effects, or people are just expected to deal with stress induced by change. On the other hand, the minority Greenskin feast of animal kicking must be respected, so the Blueskin intellectual elite believes. Even moral rejection of the practice is considered “intolerant”. A national debate on the (de)merits of this monthly happening might cause tension within the nation, the multiculturalists fear. Even more, those wanting to address the issue are consistently portrayed as racists, as “not *all* Greenskins celebrate the feast”. Even though some Greenskins themselves indeed fiercely oppose the practice – some even dispute that it is a part of their traditional cultural heritage, Blueskin multiculturalist philosophers have embraced the notion that for Greenskins it is important that their minority cultural identity is recognized. Moreover, those few Greenskin public intellectuals criticizing the practice have been shunned

¹⁷⁷ “I suspect that the popularity of modern communitarianism has depended on *not* giving unequivocal answers to these questions.” See Waldron 1991, p. 756.

¹⁷⁸ Rachels 2003, pp. 21-22 and Stace, W.T., *The Concept of Morals*, New York: The MacMillan Company 1962, p. viii.

from the community, and Blueskins therefore do not accept them as noteworthy representatives anymore. They do listen to Greenskin leaders who say that racism and discrimination are the underlying motives for critiquing the lack of animal welfare. The Parliament of Sealandistan has decided animal welfare laws do not apply to Greenskins and has agreed to subsidize the feast. Some Blueskins actually participate, as they want to celebrate diversity.¹⁷⁹ Nonetheless, for most – non-elite – Blueskins, this ‘feast’ is unacceptable. Every month, the squares of Sealandistan colour red with animal blood, new generations are continually indoctrinated with this horrible custom, and the police has difficulty controlling the protests of animal rights activists demanding that animals be replaced by piñata’s. However, the nation continues allowing the feast as Greenskins are considered to need their minority culture for a sense of self-worth and it is believed that their sense of belonging largely depends on the feast. Not intervening in the monthly animal kicking avoids societal tensions, the argument goes. Also, some are worried that abolishing the practice might drive the tradition underground, making it impossible to exert some control of the event at all.

Now we reverse the situation. This time Greenskins make up the dominant majority. Under the influence of modernity, the feast of animal kicking has been altered. Children now dress up as their favourite animal, and no kicking is involved. The Greenskins are proud of their ability to progress morally. Although, it did make some members of the older generation a bit grumpy. They feel Sealandistan was better in the old days, when people did not give up on their traditions under the pressure of something as futile as “animal welfare”. They miss the old days, hanging around with family and friends, kicking animals to death in happy harmony. Some are even a bit lonely, reminiscing about the days that were.

But, at least they do not have to worry about being slipped a lethal pill after the age of 90, a practice common under the Blueskins. This cultural minority traditionally “takes care” of its elderly in a way that revolts the Greenskins. The Blueskins,

¹⁷⁹ Some Blueskins even wear traditional Greenskin clothing, which Greenskins think looks a bit silly.

however, do not see anything wrong with this practice. They celebrate life passionately, and it helps them to know they will not be left to suffer, old and forgotten. Nope, ninety is a beautiful age. Who would want to be older than that, anyway? Moreover, the funerals are truly festive, with people coming together in beautiful traditional dress, singing old Blueskin songs. Blueskin community leaders state that the '90 Pill'-tradition is an "act of true love". However, not all Blueskins value the practice. Slowly, but surely, modernity is entering the community. More and more, elderly are coming forward saying they do not want other people deciding for them when to go. Parents and children are learning to make clear arrangements on the basis of mutual consent. But there is still a long way to go. Change takes time, and the (subsidized) community leaders are not willing to give up yet. In the meantime, Blueskin intellectuals hope to speed up the process of modernity by calling for legal penalties for this "act of murder" of their elderly. Because, as it is now, the '90 Pill'-tradition is exempted for murder from the Sealandistan penal code. These intellectuals, however, are in a double bind: not only are they loathed in their own community, they are also ignored by the Greenskin elite, as the latter see them as obnoxious troublemakers. In addition, the politically correct intelligentsia believe that it is important for the well-being of the minority of Blueskins to be respected and recognized in their cultural identity, even if that entails tolerating a practice they find revolting. Some even take great pride in not succumbing to the increasing pressure to abolish the '90 Pill'-tradition, and revere their broadmindedness. But others are willing to meet the critics halfway, and suggest to up the age to 95. They are concerned that banning the practice entirely might endanger the culture of Blueskins and will cause social tensions. Moreover, the Greenskins believe legislating against the practice is counterproductive, as they think it will frustrate the natural process of letting go of the tradition within the Blueskin community. This debate has been lingering for quite some time. In the meantime, many elderly are put to rest, even if they had many years to go still.

We return to reality. What this case obviously lacks, is the universalist position that kicking animals to death for fun or terminating the lives of healthy elderly without consent are practices one should judge as harmful and not to be tolerated. No matter what individuals state is valuable to their sense of communal belonging. From the doctrine of multiculturalism, however, there are three responses to the feast of animal kicking and the '90 Pill'-tradition: celebration, tolerance, and relativism (non-judgmentalism). This is because multiculturalists conclude from the idea that culture or cultural heritage is vital to one's identity (which, as I stated above, is not necessarily the case), that minority cultures need to be free from criticism and preserved. Kymlicka states that a larger and political, institutionalized structure is needed to preserve minority culture and protect it against the homogenizing forces of the majority culture within a state. He writes: "People make choices about the social practices around them, based on their beliefs about the value of these practices (beliefs which, I have noted, may be wrong)¹⁸⁰. And to have a belief about the value of a practice is, in the first instance, a matter of understanding the meanings attached to it by our culture."¹⁸¹ Each individual needs to feel a sense of security from the cultural framework(s) from which he makes his choices, Kymlicka argues.¹⁸²

An alternative to this "intellectual laissez-faire is provided by 19th century philosopher John Stuart Mill. In his article 'Mill and the Value of Moral Distress', Jeremy Waldron takes the position that moral distress is actually *positive*, and not a form of harm that Mill would not admit. This means that the feeling of being disturbed by the simple knowledge that lifestyles are practiced or opinions held which are taken to be immoral, is not harmful, but contributes to social progress.¹⁸³ Moral distress should thus not be suppressed, but ventilated. Mill's treatise involved, *inter alia*, the question what the limits of the power that can be legitimately exercised by society over the individual are. But even more so, it was an argument for free speech. Mill

¹⁸⁰ This is still part of Kymlicka's quote.

¹⁸¹ Kymlicka 1995, p. 83.

¹⁸² Kymlicka 1989, p. 169.

¹⁸³ Waldron, Jeremy, 'Mill and the value of moral distress', *Political studies* 1987, pp. 410-423 (410).

thought of free speech not merely as an end, but as a means for social and moral progress.

Now, one could easily argue that being disturbed by someone else's lifestyle is something that should be kept private and ignored. Mill, though, was convinced that when widespread moral distress is detectable in the community, then – other than taking it as a ground for interference – that is a positive and healthy sign that the processes of “ethical confrontation” are taking place.¹⁸⁴ Ethical confrontation, as Waldron defines it, is “[...] the open clash between earnestly-held ideals and opinions about the nature and basis of the good life. Ethical confrontation should be understood to include conflicts on all sorts of issues – moral, philosophical, political and religious – and to range from verbal debate on the one hand to the demonstration and flaunting of the substance of rival lifestyles on the other.”¹⁸⁵ If there is no ethical confrontation then that would be alarming evidence that we are failing in our task to keep our society progressive. How so? Because, first, it contributes to the emergence of new and better ideas: “[...] brand new ideas do not spring up ready-formed in the minds of their proponents; they emerge as it were phoenix-like from ‘the collision of adverse opinions’ in the antagonism of open debate and confrontation.”¹⁸⁶ The second argument does not relate to ideas themselves, Waldron continues, but to the way in which they are held.

“According to Mill, progress is empty and the truth about the good life not worth pursuing, if the views that result are not held in a lively and committed spirit with a full awareness of their meaning and significance for human life and action.

When ideas and lifestyles clash in open debate, each is put on its mettle, and its adherents are required continually to reassert and therefore to re-examine the content and grounds

¹⁸⁴ Waldron 1987, p. 417.

¹⁸⁵ Waldron 1987, p. 414.

¹⁸⁶ Waldron 1987, p. 415.

of their views. No view, however popular, can afford to take its pre-eminence for granted in an atmosphere of open controversy; each person will take his view seriously and be made acutely aware in the course of the debate of all its implications for his life and practice. So, if a given creed has anything to offer, ethical confrontation will bring it out; and if it has darker, hidden implications, those too in the course of earnest and committed debate about its desirability.”¹⁸⁷

Moreover, involvement in ethical confrontation, Mill believed, benefited humans both morally and intellectually. That is partly a matter of “[...] the development of a certain sort of open-mindedness – the open-mindedness that results when each man is intellectually alert to the possibility of criticism and cares passionately about its adequate rebuttal.” The existence of clashing opinions is the only explanation of the progressive character of western civilization.

If anything, Waldron submits, these arguments suggest the rethinking of moral offence and distress. Ethical confrontation stimulates progress and improves people morally and intellectually. But it is not a painless affair; if one takes its views seriously, it hurts to be contradicted and it distresses to see lifestyles that contradict one’s grounds. Colliding opinions naturally disturb people. However, “[i]f nobody is disturbed, distressed, or hurt in this way, that is a sign that ethical confrontation is not taking place, and that in turn, as we have seen, is a sign that the intellectual life and progress of our civilization may be grinding to a halt.”¹⁸⁸ So, if moral progress of humans and civilization at large depend on the collision and confrontation between opposing views of the good life, then the last thing that we should want is that individuals keep their opinions silent when it comes to opposing ideas and lifestyles. Mill is thus calling for a *public* confrontation between practicing adherents of rival

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Waldron 1987, pp. 416-417.

and antagonistic ethics. Otherwise, he believed, 'the calmer and more dispassionate bystander' will not be reached and the benefits to society will not be realized.¹⁸⁹ To conclude, a progressive person has no interest in avoiding the "distress occasioned by contradiction or the pain and shock of forceful debate".¹⁹⁰ From a Millian perspective, Blueskins and Greenskins must debate the issues at stake. The fact that that leads to distress and tension is uncomfortable, yes, but it is also a sign that there is a need for debate. Avoiding it wanting to alleviate tensions will not work.

A multiculturalist does not share this view. The idea is that 1) respect for the individual is held high, 2) the personality of the individual can only develop truly in terms of his cultural heritage, and that therefore respect for the cultures of differing cultural groups is equally important as respect for the individual. This conclusion is not sound. Ethno-cultural groups can very well *limit* the ability to "choose life options". A community of people sharing a heritage is not only a source of good, but can be forced to continue to exist by powerful community leaders. The value of the community is placed above all other value, crushing individual aspirations and freedoms.¹⁹¹ Some people leave such suffocating communities. These are people who have been raised into a group culture and decided later in life to choose a lifestyle diverting from the one they were born into. In fact, many people alter the 'culture' they grew up in, and every generation develops in a slightly different way from the one before.

Moreover, we should adopt a *critical* attitude towards *our own* personal identity and heritage. Besides, it is perfectly possible to respect an individual while questioning and criticizing his cultural heritage and wanting him to adopt certain norms, beliefs and practices. In fact, through art, literature, debate, education or mere conversation people address injustices and promote ideals. If we look back to our history, we notice the phenomenal, unprecedented, change in for instance

¹⁸⁹ Waldron 1987, p. 420.

¹⁹⁰ Waldron 1987, p. 423.

¹⁹¹ Benson & Stangroom 2009, p. 112.

technology, medicine, emancipation, literacy, equal access to institutions, and more, in just three generations. If there would have been an influential force imposing cultural stagnation throughout the past hundred years, we would still have census suffrage, common illiteracy, no women in public functions, and moreover, no I-phone, to name a few elements of the past. We would still believe homosexuality is a punishable sin and that women should be fired from their jobs the moment they are pregnant. Critiquing cultural beliefs and practices is a common everyday exercise. Wanting to improve society (and even being conservative is striving to improve society by stopping progressives) is even the primary goal of education and debate. It is why individuals create medicine, restore buildings, and vote for parliament. It is why people write and read books, give and go to lectures.

In short, even *if* we were to accept that culture is important for one's identity and that non-recognition constitutes psychological harm, then *still* it is not a logical conclusion that cultural practices and beliefs should be maintained through respect or tolerance. It is very well possible to acknowledge culture as an identity marker and that non-recognition causes distress, but still believe that all practices and beliefs are up for debate and change.

Let us bring back "John" to illustrate this. This time, John is an immigrant from Mali, from the Dogon people. He left his home country in exchange for Germany in hope of a better future. John is shocked when he encounters Germany and German culture. It is all about work, work, work and the people are so serious, and seriously dull. Also, the weather is horrible. Germans in general do not seem to have a particular interest in *his* culture. He becomes depressed, as he realizes fitting in will be harder than anything he could have ever imagined. Together with other Dogons, he retreats into his cultural roots. Now, we can easily give in to the idea that John's Dogon culture provides him with an identity, and that it depresses him nobody is interested in that (non-recognition caused him psychological harm). However, there is no indication that this should result in publically not-judging Dogon cultural beliefs and practices and that Dogon culture in Germany should be preserved (for instance

by granting subsidies or halting critiques). Especially since other Dogon individuals have made tremendous and successful efforts into integrating in Germany. John could have also invested in the German culture and language, and gradually become more accustomed. If for John, the culture shock is so big he is not able to recuperate, then still the logical consequence is not preserving his minority culture. At most, it means he should be *helped* through the process of integration, not screened from it. In other words, there are no strong arguments for praising a morale where the cultural hegemony is constantly testing its *own* values and practices and bringing them up to date, while at the same time ignoring minority practices and beliefs or stating those are fine just the way they are. It is not very respectful of the individual, to say the least.

Why then the call for preservation? One reason for the call for preservation is the concern that a given community may go *extinct*. This is not a form of genocide, but the idea that a group's distinct ethno-culture over the generations dissipates and disintegrates into mainstream culture. The loss of language, for instance, or intermarriage leads to extinction. In the world's history, many cultures have ceased to exist at a given point. One can think of the Ancient Greek, Romans, Inca's, and Maya's. But even nowadays cultures are going extinct, for instance, the Alyutors (25 members left), the Kamasins (2 members left) and the Kerek (4 members left), all peoples endangered with assimilation into the Russian population.¹⁹² Their children are more likely to feel in tune with a Russian identity than their grandparents. For multiculturalists who believe ethnicity is a defining marker of mental well-being, this process of going extinct must be stopped. As Dutch legal philosopher Paul Cliteur (1955 -) writes:

“Ethnic multiculturalists often complain about cultures vanishing without rendering account of *why* that has happened. Or rather: they suggest the disappearance has something to do with dark

¹⁹² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_extinct_indigenous_peoples_of_Russia.

machinations such as colonialism, imperialism or its sublimated version: universalism. But is it not possible that cultures vanish because people turn away from them – completely voluntary? Sometimes, humans simply leave an identity behind, like a snake losing its skin. Why should we not accept that as a fact of life?”¹⁹³

The position that it is not unacceptable that cultures go extinct is emphasized when we acknowledge that tight-knit communities *exert pressure* on individuals *not to integrate within the dominant culture*. One can think of gossip, social control, ostracizing, or violence, not excluding murder. Then, being a member of an ethno-cultural/religious minority is not beneficial to the freedom of choosing life options, but a restriction. Susan Moller Okin, author of the famous essay ‘Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?’ wrote: “In the case of a more patriarchal minority culture in the context of a less patriarchal majority culture, no argument can be made on the basis of self-respect or freedom that the female members of the culture have a clear interest in its preservation. Indeed, they *may* be much better off if the culture into which they were born were either to become extinct (so that its members would become integrated into the less sexist surrounding culture) or, preferably, to be encouraged to alter itself so as to reinforce the equality of women—at least to the degree to which this is upheld in the majority culture.”¹⁹⁴ But, as British scholar Romy Hasan correctly points out, boys and young men do not escape cultural and religious coercion: “[...] for they are also forced to pray, to wear 'traditional' forms of dress, for Muslims, to fast during the month of Ramzaan, for Sikhs to wear a turban, grow 'religious' beards, etc.”¹⁹⁵

Individuals who wish to make themselves loose from their heritage, are guided back by two forces: people from their own community (family members, neighbours, community elders) and multiculturalists, who maintain that one’s background

¹⁹³ Cliteur, Paul, ‘Van etnisch naar kosmopolitisch multiculturalisme’ (From ethnic to cosmopolitan Multiculturalism), pp. 61- 76 (73), in: Manen, N.F. van, *De multiculturele samenleving en het recht* (The Multicultural Society and the Law), Nijmegen: Ars Aequi Libri 2002.

¹⁹⁴ Okin 1999, pp. 22-23.

¹⁹⁵ Hasan 2003, p. 112, 122.

determines identity. To suggest a minority has the moral and legal right to be preserved – by not-judging, subsidizing, exempting from laws – and justifying that process by calling on a psychological need to belong to a minority community or ‘authenticity’, makes no sense. It also implies wanting to preserve a culture that is withering away because its members are in the process of relinquishing their heritage voluntarily. In addition, preserving a minority culture is an *artificial process*. The following will make that clear.

The question that arises when asking how to preserve a minority culture is: culture *at which stage*? Hypothetically, if we would want to preserve an Afghan minority culture in France, we have to ask which version. If we choose the Afghani 1970s, we can leave the burkas, as women wore mini-skirts and went to university. If we would like to preserve contemporary Afghan culture, we should subsidize a French Taliban. Preservation in the form of subsidies, but also halting debates on cultural beliefs or practices from the basis of “respecting differences” implies taking a “[...] favored ‘snapshot’ version of it, and insist that this version must persist at all costs, in its defined purity, irrespective of the surrounding social, economic, and political circumstances.”¹⁹⁶ Members of minority groups are subsequently encouraged, morally, politically and institutionally, to hold on to their traditional culture. But all cultures develop under the influence of globalization, international trade, consumerism, technology, Hollywood entertainment, internet, mass migration, in short: we live in a world of cultural exchange. Jeremy Waldron explains:

“In this context, to immerse oneself in the traditional practices of, say, an aboriginal culture might be a fascinating anthropological experiment, but it involves an artificial dislocation from what actually is going on in the world. That it is an artifice is evidenced by the fact that such immersion often requires special subsidization and extraordinary provision by those who live in the real world, where cultures and practices

¹⁹⁶ Waldron 1991, p. 788.

are not so sealed off from one another. The charge, in other words, is one of *inauthenticity*.

Let me state it provocatively. From a cosmopolitan point of view, immersion in the traditions of a particular community in the modern world is like living in Disneyland and thinking that one's surroundings epitomize what it is for a culture really to exist. Worse still, it is like demanding the funds to live in Disneyland and the protection of modern society for the boundaries of Disneyland, while still managing to convince oneself that what happens inside Disneyland is all there is to an adequate and fulfilling life. It is like thinking that what every person most deeply needs is for one of the Magic Kingdoms to provide a framework for her choices and her beliefs, completely neglecting the fact that the framework of Disneyland depends on commitments, structures, and infrastructures that far outstrip the character of any particular facade. It is to imagine that one could belong to Disneyland while professing complete indifference towards, or even disdain for, Los Angeles."¹⁹⁷

Multiculturalism is about maintaining the status quo, regardless of what that status at that moment is. It can be compared with sitting on a train which chooses its own destiny, describing the landscape as it passes by, stating at any given moment that that is the way the landscape should look like. But as the train passes, the landscape changes. This is not problematic when a traditional culture entails art, dress, language, food and dance, in other words, when one embraces a "[...] a sanitized conception of cultural identity, blind to the ways it can be illiberal, distorted by social relations of domination, exclusion, and misrecognition."¹⁹⁸ It does become a problem when harmful customs and beliefs are perpetuated, even though a part of the

¹⁹⁷ Waldron 1991, p. 763.

¹⁹⁸ Doppelt, Gerald, "Illiberal Cultures and Group Rights: A Critique of Multiculturalism in Kymlicka, Taylor, and Nussbaum", *Journal of Contemporary Legal Issues* 2001, pp. 661-692 (663).

community no longer subscribes to those. Then the train should be sent in another direction.

Whereas Charles Taylor, with his politics of difference, is steering in the direction of “the equivalent of an endangered species act for human beings”, in the words of American legal scholar Stanley Fish (1938), Parekh is open to cultural change.¹⁹⁹ Parekh addresses the problem of bad customs, yet believes that members of the cultural hegemony should not interfere: as I stated earlier, he believes that culture can be best changed from within, as well as through a process of “cultural dialogue” or “intercultural dialogue”.²⁰⁰ The ideal is that a sense of societal belonging is cultivated, without the pressure of assimilation, where legitimate cultural differences are protected, plural cultural identities are cherished, and the shared and precious identity of shared citizenship is not weakened.²⁰¹ Earlier, I added to Parekh’s statement that it is unclear what he understands to be *legitimate* cultural differences. It is rather vague what Parekh aims to do: he wishes to respect plurality, yet at the same time he encourages dialogue to promote change for the sake of shared citizenship, for a “sense of belonging”. It is as if saying: “We respect you for who you are, now change.” It is this and other inconsistencies that has prompted Fish to draw the conclusion that as a concept, multiculturalism is incoherent and cannot be meaningfully either affirmed or rejected.²⁰² He explains it like this. There are two sorts of multiculturalists, “boutique multiculturalists” and “strong multiculturalists”:

“Boutique multiculturalism is the multiculturalism of ethnic restaurants, weekend festivals, and high profile flirtations with the other in the manner satirized by Tom Wolfe under the rubric of “radical chic.” Boutique multiculturalism is characterized by its superficial or cosmetic relationship

¹⁹⁹ Fish, Stanley, ‘Boutique Multiculturalism, or why liberals are incapable of thinking about hate speech, *Critical Inquiry* 1997, pp. 378-395 (382).

²⁰⁰ Parekh 2000, pp. 336-337.

²⁰¹ Parekh 2000, p. 343.

²⁰² Fish 1997, p. 388.

to the objects of its affection. Boutique multiculturalists admire or appreciate or enjoy or sympathize with or (at the very least) “recognize the legitimacy of” the traditions of cultures other than their own; but boutique multiculturalists will always stop short of approving other cultures at a point where some value at their center generates an act that offends against the canons of civilized decency as they have been either declared or assumed.”²⁰³

The boutique multiculturalist will thus value culture, but only up to a certain degree. He holds its own culture as a standard to decide where that line is, and thus does not truly respect differences. Fish compares this with what he calls “strong multiculturalism”. A strong multiculturalist, such as Taylor, will avow a deep commitment to respecting cultures as pillars of identity and self-respect. Tolerance is the basic principle underlying his doctrine. However, Fish continues, the problem with tolerance as a foundation is that it is simply not possible to be faithful to it, because it is inevitable that sooner or later the culture whose core values you have been tolerating will reveal itself to be intolerant itself. We can illustrate his point. Let us bring back John. This time, John is an indigenous Briton. He believes Islam is a beautiful religion that has much to offer its followers. Last year, he travelled to Morocco, where he enjoyed the special foods and rode on camels. He has a small painting of a mosque hanging in his living room, reminding him of the beautiful time he had there. John lives in London. In the past twenty years, more and more Muslim immigrants and their descendants have moved into his neighbourhood. He enjoys the kebab and likes the way Muslim girls combine their headscarves with their outfits. John, however, is not so much captivated by Islam’s view on alcohol. He enjoys a drink, and feels more in line with the “keep them coming”- mentality than the Islamic one of temperance. He finds it all the more shocking that lately Muslim men are patrolling his neighbourhood, discouraging and even intimidating people who drink on

²⁰³ Fish 1997, p. 378.

the streets or sell alcohol.²⁰⁴ As a boutique multiculturalist, John can easily step in and join in on the critical debate and ask for police forces to intervene as these Muslim men overstep their boundaries. A strong multiculturalist, however, will not be able to remain consistent on his multiculturalist convictions. As a strong multiculturalist, he would have to a) accept that Islam is important for the Muslim's identity and that critiquing the Muslim men's behaviour would be harmful, and b) draw the conclusion that intimidating people into not drinking alcohol is a difference that should be tolerated, and that Islam as a minority culture should be protected and preserved against outsiders wishing to change it. This is impossible, as the following makes clear.

The distinctiveness of the culture that the strong multiculturalist has been valuing shows to work against moderation or integration into a larger whole. For, if you award minority groups with a special status, they will claim it. When the minority culture is confronted with the choice to either give up or moderate certain beliefs or practices for the sake of fitting in with a larger whole, a stressed culture will fight back as much as they can, whether it be with anti-discrimination legislation or violence, Fish argues. If John were a strong multiculturalist, he must make a decision: he either deepens his tolerance so that it also includes the intolerance at the heart of the Muslim men who no longer tolerate people drinking alcohol (and tolerance is no longer his guiding principle). Or he condemns the core intolerance, making him intolerant and not having respect for the culture anymore.²⁰⁵ The strong multiculturalist is actually a boutique multiculturalist, the difference being that the prior *in general* takes difference much more seriously than the latter, who embraces multiculturalism more as a cosmopolitan 'lifestyle shopping experience'. *In general*, because a strong multiculturalist cannot get involved in the realization of any *particular* difference. The moment he speaks on behalf of preserving a particular culture, he is no longer a multiculturalist. That is because one cannot honour diversity

²⁰⁴ 'Muslim Gangs Enforce Sharia Law in London', January 25, 2013 *Gatestone Institute*
<http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/3555/sharia-law-london> accessed on 5 September 2014.

²⁰⁵ Fish 1997, pp. 382-383.

in general and at the same time show allegiance to a culture that is not willing to return the favour. In other words, if John the strong multiculturalist would pick the side of the Muslim men deterring alcohol, the end result would be that there will no longer be alcohol in his neighbourhood, women in burkas, and no homosexuals holding hands: it will have become a Sharia controlled place where no plurality exists. John is now a *monoculturalist*. John's multiculturalist position can thus result in two positions: him stating there are limits, meaning he does not respect culture and cultural differences, or he is committed to respecting difference and must let go of the principle of tolerance and plurality.²⁰⁶

Wanting to preserve a culture within a wider nation is not a logical consequence of the notion that members of minority cultures value their identity (which in itself is not necessarily true). Even so, it is not possible to pinpoint which phase of a culture needs to be preserved, if at all. And lastly, preserving a culture is not desirable in the case of practical problems. Then culture needs to change. When deciding on when that should be the case, multiculturalism cannot be applied due to insurmountable logical inconsistency.

Conclusion

Analytically, the position of multiculturalism can only persist if there would never be a conflict of views. That would be the case if members of minority cultures would live segregated from members of the majority culture, and if there is no internal dissent calling for a moral or legal verdict. This is, however, never the case. Multiculturalism can only operate on general premises, vagueness and equivocation, and is not operable when a particular matter arises. That is why multiculturalist ideologists such as Taylor, Kymlicka and Parekh take no responsibility for the practice of plurality as it is unfolding in the western nations: it is not what they had envisioned, because there never was a vision to begin with. What they have done is take a random moment in

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

history (those moments in history when they were writing their books), described the landscape and decided that that snapshot of the landscape they took was the right one. But the landscape has changed. And the more it changes, the more we must question the validity of wanting to preserve the landscape in itself. That does not mean that change is part of some mysterious future we can only await, but it means that we have to decide which parts of the landscape we find beautiful, and which parts we do not. Multiculturalism lacks a vision of what it wants the country to become,²⁰⁷ whereas we should want to know and verbalise that sending the train to Tuscany is better than sending it to Iraq.

That also means that if we follow the multiculturalist doctrine, the future of Blueskins and Greenskins in Sealandistan is locked in the status quo. The two communities do not live in sealed boxes and there is both external and internal dissent on the harmful practices toward animals and the elderly. Those dissenting do not feel their life options should be mainly stemming from their cultural heritage and who they “truly” are is not given by their culture. Moreover, they believe more harm is done to animals and the elderly than they could ever experience from nonrecognition of their identity. The ‘90 pill-tradition’ and the ‘feast of kicking animals’ are practices that deserve condemnation, and cultural reformers do not conclude that these acts in general makes their culture good, nor equal, and they do not want these customs to be tolerated. There is no need for preserving that part of their culture, even if that would mean that the separate Greenskin and Blueskin cultures would go extinct and merge together. For this to happen, identity claims need to be substituted for arguments. Ethical confrontation should take place. As we have seen, multiculturalist’ reasoning of tolerance and respecting plurality is of no practical use when it is called in to judge on a particular issue.

Multiculturalists have a wrong *focus* when it comes to passing judgments. The content of a judgment of an idea or practice is deemed offensive for those *not* involved. “Not *all* Blueskins kill their parents”, “not *all* Greenskins kill animals for fun”,

²⁰⁷ See also Higham 1993, p. 214.

“not everyone is pressured into it, people choose freely” will be the most often heard objections when debating the limits of tolerance. That is because a multiculturalist is worried that negative critiques are projected upon “the innocent”, on those who are not part of the practice, but who are members of the community. Negative statements rub off negatively on them. The *focus* should have been on those who are not the culprits and are now suffering from harm from “guilt by association”. That is why, when invited to make a moral judgement, a multiculturalist who is not ready to give up on his convictions must resort to non-judgmentalism.

The question is now how this political ideology of multiculturalism plays out in the real world, outside of Sealandistan. In that real world, in the United Kingdom, there are special religious tribunals where minority members are faced with a sublegal regime. Religious leaders, together with multiculturalists, publically call for more recognition of these “Sharia councils”. Before we look into that, it is important to study the political ideology of the religious leaders behind these councils.

