

Multiculturalism: Politics of Difference, Education and Philosophy for Children

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In recent years, Multiculturalism has entered the arena of social debate. From public policy proposals to curriculum innovations, the United States is struggling to define and model a multiculturalist stance that is faithful to our form of liberal democracy and that can assist citizens in flourishing as human beings within our society. Within education, multiculturalism functions as both pedagogical method and curricular innovation. From elementary through collegiate programs, educators are urged to include multiculturalism, take a multicultural perspective and ‘celebrate diversity.’ Clashes occur within the political and educational arenas as we try to sort out the meanings and implications of multiculturalism. At the heart of the debate are the conflicting interpretations of this concept that short circuit the discourse among the supporters of multiculturalism. This paper will explore the varying concepts of ‘multiculturalism’ that function to govern education today. We will discover that there are a number of quite different viewpoints as to the nature and function of diversity in a classroom and society at large.

Congruent with this discovery is the crafting of a number of questions that invite our community of inquiry to explore the boundaries of the meanings and implications of this potent notion. Let us start with some beginning questions:

- What constitutes ‘multi-cultural’ perspectives?
- Does cultural identity conflict with personal identity?
- Does a political recognition of multiculturalism entail action in the public realm and if so, to what degree?
- Where do we locate multiculturalism within the educational system?
- Does the support of multiculturalism promote an unreflective relativism?
- Can it be used to isolate individuals into communities of sameness and thereby hinder the development of a heterogeneous group?
- Does this concept as promoted and practiced lead to a strengthening of individualism or a loss of self through definition by group affiliation?

As the reader can see, these questions range through the political and educational realms of discourse and action. To help articulate the issues and tease out solutions we shall invite a number of commentators into our ‘community.’ With respect to the political dimensions of this concept we shall consider the comments of Charles Taylor, Amy Gutmann, K. Anthony Appiah, as found in the text

Multiculturalism (1994). In the realm of education we shall explore the ideas of Howard Gardner, E.D. Hirsch, Jr., Neil Postman, Martha Nussbaum and Amy Gutmann. As we begin to consider the role for advocates of 'Philosophy for Children' in delineating problems and solutions, we shall borrow from Matthew Lipman, Ann Margaret Sharp, Laurance Splitter and Paul Bitting. In addition, I invite our community of NAACI to participate in the framing of the problems and the development of solutions that speak in the tradition of philosophical inquiry.

DIFFERENCES: DEFINING THE MEANING OF MULTICULTURALISM

When we speak of 'multiple cultures' we discover a wide range of categories that are subsumed under this heading. Differences that can be articulated as cultural are themselves problematic and our notions of what constitutes 'cultural differences' has evolved over the past decades. For example, the following characteristics or perspectives are commonly included within a working notion of multiculturalism:

Racial differences
 Gender
 Sexual orientation
 Ethnic backgrounds (language and customs)
 Religions
 Disabilities (including physical, emotional and learning differences)

Often what we mean by 'multicultural' is simply different from the mainstream. However, that rarely, if ever, includes Caucasians or the historically dominant European cultures and peoples. For example, a multicultural perspective in India would probably not consider the inclusion of a white European perspective as important or essential. In fact, quite the opposite is the case. Perhaps the broadest definition of 'multicultural' is to articulate what it is not: white, Anglo-Saxon English speaking natives. This may be a bit harsh since some non-Anglo countries do struggle with racial and ethnic minorities under the guise of the multicultural problem.¹ It should also be noted that the groups identified above do not share the same ontological status and even the very notion of 'group identity' will be questioned. Do we create groups as ways of sorting and excluding peoples? Race is now recognized as a constructed notion and some theorists suggest that gender might also be constructed.

From a political standpoint, 'multicultural' usually embraces non-mainstream language speakers, immigrants (foreigners) and some sub-cultures (for examples, the Amish or Mormons in the USA.) These groups are not included in the arena of political power through direct representation or are included in vastly limited numbers (e.g. African Americans in Congress.) Often the debate is framed in almost Piagetian terms as a conflict between assimilation and accommodation. Should those who are different be required to assimilate, to fit into the mainstream and accept its language and social customs and mores? Or should the mainstream be required to accommodate itself to this diversity? We will return to this tension below.

From an educational perspective the problems are multiple. One area of multiculturalism negotiates the practical issues of educating children from other cultures. Bilingual public education is a major but controversial response to the need to educate all children, regardless of familial cultural contexts. Should multiple languages be used as the instructional medium of education? Should we accommodate cultural differences in dress, religions, customs and family structures in our schools? The other area of

debate within education concerns the curriculum itself and the growing demand to adopt multicultural perspectives within it. We shall likewise return to this in a section below.

Recent events in the US and worldwide² have precipitated intense examination of the spectrum of multicultural methods and programs and have sharpened our focus on the immediate need to protect the concept of diversity while we still negotiate its limits.

As we can see the very notion of 'cultural differences' is problematic and we shall revisit these issues. Sections IV and V will focus on some of the conversation that has been going on concerning the political realm of social obligation with respect to multiculturalism and the educational realm of the curriculum debates.

CONCEPTUAL TOOLBOX

In beginning to think about the concept of multiculturalism we find that we need to detail some ideas that appear repeated throughout the literature and that serve to guide our thinking. I suggest that we briefly consider the following four ideas:

Recognition

The act of recognition has an ethical as well as cognitive dimensions. Its basic meaning is to recognize something or something. That is, to acknowledge that one has already known or is familiar with the subject at hand. In our context of multiculturalism, however, it means an act of acknowledgement. I recognize that someone or some group exists and, by extension, demands some type of ethical response on my part. Do I accept them, opening my arms to bring them into the community or do I mark them as negatively different, to be ostracized? In the discourse around multiculturalism, the implied position is the former. I recognize the status of women, African-Americans, Hispanics, homosexuals as in some fundamental way equal to my own status as a member of the dominant community or political force. Implicit is an ethical obligation not only to acknowledge cognitively but to recognize in the sense of giving credit to, to seeing as honorable participants in some general plan of communal living. Here recognition implies the related notion of acceptance.

Tolerance

We are taught early on to be tolerant and this notion is central to any discourse on multiculturalism. One of the most appealing aspects of ethical relativism is its injunction that we ought to be tolerant of those who differ from us: 'live and let live.' Although this stipulation can be used to question the very argument of relativism,³ let us pass that by for now and look carefully at the meaning of tolerance. This term too suggests levels of acknowledgement and acceptance. For example consider the following claims:

The dog tolerated the puppy's nibbling at his ear. benign neglect

He does not tolerate

fools gladly. put up with

In the Middle Ages the Christians

tolerated the Yews as lenders

accepted as a necessary evil

As we can see, the type of acceptance that seems operative here involves either disinterest or suffering/putting up with. When we engage in discussions around multiculturalism we usually wish to move the level of tolerance beyond a mere nod that 'there they are' to an affirmative nod which somehow conveys a warmer regard, an embrace of some sort. Is it enough to simply accept that differences are there and then go about our business trying to ignore them or not let them bother us, or impinge upon us? I think not. This brings us to our next concept, respect.

Respect

Respect connotes acceptance, as we have seen above, but also a declaration both cognitive and emotive of equality, a shared sense of differences that are real but that can be 'celebrated,' to use that popular term. Respect acknowledges an ethical obligation of recognition between the two parties involved. Respect is given first and foremost to persons as persons, but can also be extending to living things and perhaps the earth as a whole. Of course, some types of respect must be earned and are not simply granted as such. But within multiculturalism, respect demands that I treat others carefully, that is 'with care,' and that I do not mock or denigrate their beliefs, customs and very selves as a matter of principle. Respect is more than mere tolerance and recognition and seems to engage acceptance at the level of the heart as well as the head. It entails some sort of relationship between individuals and/or groups and as such it seems to call forth an interchange. This response can often take the form of support.

Support

When we speak of multiculturalism within political circles, the focus is upon the concept of support. It is all well and good to acknowledge that groups do exist and have a right to exist and exercise their way of living as they choose, but often the real agenda is the need for support within the larger community. Often these groups suffer disadvantages when pitted against 'mainstream' groups. These disadvantages often translate as economic ones but they can also be cultural ones. Clashes occur when the minority group wishes to exercise its rights and finds resistance or simply an unavailability of opportunity. Therefore, multiculturalism often involves language of support. In the US this can center around affirmative action and equal opportunity in the workplace, education and in local communities. In Canada, Charles Taylor tells the story⁴ of Quebec seeking to establish its own laws which not only recognize its French roots but nurture them and strive to protect them against the onslaught of the larger Anglophile culture in Canada. Within education, we look to curricular and pedagogical innovations that specifically strive to support and strengthen the multiculturalism agenda.

As we progress through our topic, these concepts will come to the fore as important tools in shaping and honing the discourse on multiculturalism.

POLITICAL REALM: PROBLEMS AND STRATEGIES

In *Multiculturalism* Amy Gutmann sets up the problem as a conflict between the demands of non-dominant cultural groups for recognition, acceptance and support and the body politic. In the public sphere, wherein lies a democratic society's obligations to support individual sub-group differences over and beyond what binds us together in common? One solution as charted by Gutmann opts to focus upon the 'neutrality of the public sphere' in preserving our 'freedom and equality as citizens.'⁵ In this viewpoint, society is all about what connects us, what we share as human beings and as citizens of a particular community. The opposing response points out that one's specific cultural context plays a large and significant role in determining who we are within the larger community. To help each of us realize our own view of the good life the state must acknowledge and support each group in its particularity as well as its commonality. Gutmann goes on to question the extent of social support and acceptance in the face of cultures with destructive or hateful outlook upon others. However, she really wishes to introduce the reader to the thinking of Charles Taylor whose essay 'The Politics of Difference' forms the center of this volume.

Taylor offers us an historical analysis of the development of the contemporary concept of the recognition of the individual as having its source in the French Revolution in which the common man rose up to demand acknowledgement and account. Prior to this, only the rich and politically powerful expected or received recognition as valued individuals. In premodern times, people didn't speak of 'identity' and 'recognition' not because people didn't have (what we call) identities, or because these didn't depend on recognition, but rather because these were then too unproblematic to be thematized as such.⁶ However, despite the role of writers like Rousseau in offering a philosophical argument for the importance of the common man, we find in Taylor's reading of Rousseau the revelation that he demanded a type of uniformity and anti-individualism not un-akin to what had existed in the era of 'honor' and privilege in which one's individual reality was defined by social position.⁷ What is the proper nature of a person as individual and as citizen? We are left with a tension between the individual as atomistically disconnected from and other than the larger societal unit and the discounting of the individual differences as irrelevant to that society. Taylor goes on to remind us that a 'crucial feature of human life is its fundamentally dialogic character.'⁸ This social aspect of personal identity serves to connect and make vital to the community the nature of the individual and his/her cultural differences. Neither the reduction of a person to citizen nor the elevation of the individual as transcendent of culture satisfies.

After exploring this historical background and teasing out links of individual differences and shared commonalities among citizens, Taylor moves on to explore what a politics of differences means in the public sphere. As he details it, we find two movements: a politics of universalism in the delineating of rights and entitlements and a politics of difference which emphasizes the non-universal aspects of persons:

Where the politics of universal dignity fought for forms of nondiscrimination that were quite eblind' to the ways in which citizens differ, the politics of differences often redefines nondiscrimination as requiring that we make these distinctions the basis of differential treatment⁹

Unfortunately this can lead to conflict in that the 'universalists' claim that special treatment militates against human equality (perhaps based on a model like that of Kant's: rational autonomy) while the supporters of a politics of difference berate the former for trying to insist on a homogeneity and thereby denying individual choice as exemplified through cultural identity. Using Rousseau and Kant, Taylor continues to trace through the influence each had on the articulation of such notions as individuality, dignity, value, and rights. He then goes on to cite as a case example the conflict within Canada where Quebec wanted to supercede the Canadian constitution and insist upon preserving its own Francophile culture through limiting the role of English within its provincial borders. Laws were proposed to govern the use of French in education and business by stipulating it as the required language of interchange. The goal was preservation of the Quebecian culture through state support and the privileged status given it by the law which would supercede aspects of freedom as found in the Canadian constitution. Taylor is sympathetic to the Quebec cause and advocates a form of liberalism which distinguishes between certain universal rights that must be preserved for all and those rights which might be allowed more idiosyncratic interpretations, at least with regard to the support of distinct cultural identities. The dilemma that remains is astutely noted by Taylor: liberalism itself is a philosophical position that is not accepted as either a substantial nor procedural universal throughout the world.¹⁰

However, Taylor shifts his attention now to the more common focus of the multiculturalism debate today, that which involves an ethical injunction for cultural identity as a given value. Here the issue is not so much the acknowledgement of cultural survival as a worthwhile goal (as detailed in the section on Quebec) but that 'we all recognize the equal value of different cultures; that we not only let them survive, but acknowledge their worth.'¹¹ As an explicit acknowledgement we also see a 'struggle for a 'changed self-image, which takes place both within the subjugated and against the dominator.'¹² This takes us directly to education, the locus of much debate on this problem of multiculturalism. Here we are urged to expand or revamp the curriculum, not simply to broaden our view of the world and its diversity, but to legitimize the individuals representative of the diverse groups. Multiculturalism becomes a form of self-identity acknowledgement and affirmation. Behind the demands for inclusion of multiculturalism is the implicit premise that all cultures are equally worthy of respect. This is an important assumption that must be carefully deconstructed. Taylor ends his article which just such an exploration.

He argues that we do need to presume value for any culture which has 'animated whole societies over considerable stretch of time'¹³ but that this presumption is a starting point for examination, not a finishing conclusion. An automatic assertion of value can be as insulting as an immediate dismissal. The assumption that all cultures are equally valuable seems to depend upon the selfsame standard found in one's own culture, thereby negating the potential for varying criteria of excellence as crafted by alien cultures. This glib acceptance transforms a genuine recognition of difference into a formulaic homogenization of the other. However, borrowing a term from Gadamer, Taylor claims that what we really need is a 'fusion of cultures'¹⁴ through which

*We learn to move in a broader horizon, within which what we have formerly taken for granted as the background to valuation can be situated as one possibility alongside the different background of the formerly unfamiliar culture. The efusion of horizons' operates through our developing new vocabularies of comparison, by means of which we can articulate these contrasts. So that if and when we ultimately find substantive support for our initial presumption, it is not the basis of an understanding of what constitutes worth that we couldn't possibly have had at the beginning. We have reached the judgment partly through transforming our standards.*¹⁵

This presumption of value offers us a working access into the culture but the process may reveal a culture of lesser or no value as well as yield a transformation of value. We cannot be expected to yield automatic or a priori approval of the culture under consideration. We need not assume a stance of uncritical relativism to engage in multiculturalistic learning. Taylor quickly dismisses a post-modern or neo-Nietzschean viewpoint that reads all judgments as power statements. Surely such a position itself becomes irrelevant as a mere statement of power and can thus be dismissed as quickly and efficiently as we are asked to dismiss a Western or a particular religious perspective. Taylor ends his thoughtful essay by claiming 'There must be something midway between the inauthenticity and homogenizing demand for recognition of equal worth, on the one hand, and the self-immurement within ethnocentric standards, on the other.'¹⁶

Where Taylor has taken us is through the question of political recognition of culture towards the educational venue of the debate. How can we make a place for diversity and still hold onto a meaningful notion of universality? How can we make room for multiculturalism and treat it with enough respect so as to also judge it? And finally, how can we develop open criteria for judgment which do not assume the dominant model as the ultimate criterion for all value judgments but at the same time retain some continuity of questioning and valuation? To continue our investigation, let us now move into the educational realm to explore how we might begin to address these questions.

EDUCATION REALM: THE CURRICULUM WARS AS EMBLEMATIC

One important locale of multicultural debates is found within education. One arena of discussion handles the political issues of diverse languages of immigrants and sub-cultures within the mainstream, instruction methodologies and the recognition of different learning styles and the need to accommodate differences as detailed with the area of special education. Another major area for this debate centers on curriculum and the argued need to expand and revamp the traditional curriculum into avenues that explore and support a diverse perspective. This leads us into the recent curriculum wars over the 'Canon.' To what extent do we need to redefine the scope and content of knowledge to include non-Western or non-traditional material? While this war seems most volatile at the university level, we are finding more and more stipulations at the elementary and secondary levels to include multicultural materials and an urging to move away from a Eurocentric perspective. The players in this debate are numerous. We will introduce a small subset of them so as to review the arguments for and against multiculturalism within education.

E.D. Hirsch, Jr. comes across as one of the most staunch defenders of the traditional methods and contents of education. It would be a mistake, however, to pigeon-hole him as a shrill conservative for his arguments are nuanced and carefully constructed to avoid the traditional-for-its-own-sake ap-

proach. Hirsch carves out a space for multicultural education but insists that it must be done carefully and well. If so, then it 'recognizes achievement, supports self-esteem and general respect'¹⁷ of members of diverse cultures. However, he clearly rejects a move towards balkanizing schools and districts which allow children to learn only their own language and culture. He notes that in today's world, English is the lingua franca of commerce and international exchange, and while that does not excuse American' gross ignorance of other languages, it does serve to remind educators that we fail our children if we do not prepare them to function well within the international business world. A genuine cosmopolitan stance will insist upon a thorough exposure to and mastery of diverse ways of thinking, acting and living but at the same time will uphold the need for a common¹⁸ curriculum across differences. Hirsch argues for a rigorous content- and skill-rich curriculum that he offers as the best antidote to the failure experienced by so many minorities and the poor in the United States.

Neil Postman has also written about the need to revitalize our schools and he looks at multiculturalism as having a positive and negative form. To the extent that multiculturalism advocates separateness and a glorification of differences, Postman sees this as leading to dangerous divisions. 'The idea of a public education depends on the existence of shared narratives and the exclusion of narratives that lead to alienation and divisiveness.'¹⁹ If multiculturalism is used as a kind of self-aggrandizement based on group membership, Postman sees it as promoting a kind of tribalism and separatism that often defines the white/Eurocentric culture as an evil or destructive one. However, he applauds a version of multiculturalism similar to the one detailed by Taylor in which all are invited to engage in perspective sharing and exploration of different cultures. In *The End of Education*, he creates a number of models for a revisionary education, two of which are called 'The American Experiment' and 'The Law of Diversity.' In the former he points to the diversity that is inherent in the building of America as worthy of careful exploration and problematizing: how do we become one from many? In the latter model he directly offers his version of multiculturalism where the centerpiece of the curriculum is a sustained study of diversity - in languages, customs, religion, art and artifacts. Such a study helps us craft a meaningful notion of tolerance as 'imaginative empathy.'²⁰ He claims that our human diversity as exemplified in art 'offers the best evidence we have of the unity and continuity of human experience.'²¹

One of the most recognized commentators on education today is Howard Gardner. Most known²² for his theory of multiple intelligences²³, he has also written extensively on education reform and faces off against E.D. Hirsch, Jr. as an antagonist. In *The Disciplined Mind*²⁴, he expresses deep sympathy for diversity and enjoys using non-Western cultural practices as fruitful sources for new ideas for education. While he argues for the centrality of the classical concepts of goodness, truth and beauty, he quickly acknowledges that no one culture, time period or certainly individual has a corner on the meanings and instantiations of these formal notions that play so important a role in our experiences as human beings. He advises an imaginative widening of the traditional canon but still wishes to hold onto a sense of standards, some meaning to the process of evaluation and judgment. He ends up rejecting a simple universalist point of view that elevates any given model to the top as the standard that must be used for all but he also clearly chooses to avoid an isolationist position that would leave each group alone in cultural uniqueness that would foreclose cross-comparisons as well as fertilization. Ultimately the multicultural debate is secondary to his interest in revising education to achieve deep and sustained investigation accompanied by some type of apprenticeship or practicing model of engagement in learning.

Perhaps Martha Nussbaum offers the most thoroughly constructed critique and support of multiculturalism in her work *Cultivating Humanity*²⁵. Here she advocates a return to Western classical studies at the same time she argues for extensive encounters with multiculturalism. One of the dangers that she details in her study is the simplification and thereby misreading of other cultures. She uses some helpful terminology to clarify these themes. 'Descriptive Chauvinism' involves seeing the foreign as really identical to us; we do not see or we choose to ignore differences, thereby defining them away. 'Descriptive Romanticism' involves another type of error in which we are still blind to other cultures but here we romanticize them to be mysteriously delightful and utterly different from our mundane home culture. Nussbaum rejects simplistic rejection and embracing of other cultures and argues for a study of cultures which acknowledges them as internally pluralistic, historical, and contentious. When it comes to evaluating cultures Nussbaum likewise warns against three common errors²⁶:

1. **normative chauvinism** - where my culture is taken as the standard by which all else is to be judged.
2. **normative arcadianism** - where other cultures are viewed as idyllic and perfect as compared to the home culture which is viewed as decadent. This often appears as an uncritical 'celebration of differences.'
3. **normative skepticism** - this results in a refusal to judge or critique; she reads this position as patronizing. Here she echoes the analysis of Taylor in rejecting a facile refusal to judge at all and the assumption of equality.

Instead of these mistaken positions regarding multiculturalism, Nussbaum argues in the rest of her book for a careful, sustained learning about one's own cultures and those of others as essential for functioning within a diverse but still connected humanity.

Where do these commentators leave us? How can we negotiate a meaningful place for multiculturalism within society and education? What should our model of recognition be? How can we retain standards of judgment and yet also be open to expanding our views of experience through the encountering and recognition of other cultures as alternative ways of viewing and living in the world?

WEAVING A REFLECTIVE MODEL OF MULTICULTURALISM AND PHILOSOPHY FOR CHILDREN

In the aforementioned volume, *Multiculturalism*, K. Anthony Appiah offers the final commentary²⁷ on the Taylor piece. While sympathetic to Taylor's analysis, he extends the discussion into a careful exploration of the tension between group identity and individual authenticity. He acknowledges the importance, the centrality, of our collective identities (such as religion, ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality) in the forging of a self but at the same time he cautions us against the homogenizing of such identities. To concretize the homosexual or black identity can foreclose the individual from realizing that aspect of those identities in unique and self-chosen ways. He is also suspicious of rhetoric that takes one's minority identity (examples above) and sets it apart from the mainstream culture in which one is born and raised. We cannot deny the importance of recognition and acceptance by that dominant culture and attempts to segregate ourselves and deny its importance will fail. That is, we cannot so easily deny the role that the dominant culture plays in shaping who we are, regardless of our status as different: 'Dialogue shapes the identity I develop as I grow up, but the very material out of which I form it is provided, in part, by my society...' ²⁸. Any view of 'authenticity' that denies this connection or that takes one's membership in a

group collectively described as 'multicultural' will fail to capture the nuances and individuality of the person crafting a self from the matrix of society, cultural peculiarities, family and choice.

Appiah questions the wisdom of allowing one generation to insist upon their cultural formulation for future ones as exemplified in the Quebecian argument for cultural preservation. However, since he denies any substantive model of the self that would claim that children have an internal nugget of selfhood that should simply be left alone to develop on its own, he does allow that education should shape the environment of the child and offer it cultural models in which to craft the child's developing self. Adults must offer visions of the good life that include particular cultural expressions. As such, 'collective identities, in short, provide what we might call scripts: narratives that people can use in shaping their life plans and in telling their life stories.'²⁹ Since many cultural identities have been silenced and denigrated in our Western societies, there is a place and perhaps a desperate need for glorifying and promoting multiculturalism as a 'form of healing.'³⁰ By doing this we encourage young people, and all people, to see their heritage in positive and life-affirming ways which can counteract the negative imagery of the dominant culture, suspicious of differences. Yet Appiah still worries that we will then constrict the individual into homogenous models of being black or homosexual or female that preclude an individual's working out of self-identity on their own terms. The personal can too easily become the political.

What can we learn from Appiah's careful analysis? We must avoid glib and formulaic bows to multiculturalism that create one-dimensional notions of cultures and impose them upon participants. We must be careful that children, and adults, do not take their cultural identities to be who they are in their totality. We must be sensitive to the need for future generations to mold their cultures as living expressions of their experiences, not adopt them as museum artifacts to be preserved intact. In short, we must retain room for recognition of the individual even as we move towards a far more open recognition of multiculturalism. Here we can find some potent models in the thinking of practitioners in Philosophy for Children.

In Matthew Lipman's model of philosophy for children we find the key notion of a 'community of inquiry.' As developed by p4c practitioners³¹ in the past two decades this idea receives a rich unpacking. The philosophical community of inquiry in the classroom offers a safe haven for diversity that is both encouraged and nurtured and also caringly examined. The very nature of philosophy as problematic includes within it the seeds for recognizing and nurturing plural viewpoints. A plurality of perspectives is welcomed as a potent source for new, creative ways of considering problematic issues. As the reigning atmosphere is one of mutual respect among participants, we find a wonderful matrix for the cultivation of multiculturalism on a broader societal scale. In a functioning community of inquiry we find many of the themes introduced above with regard to multiculturalism. By considering their meaning within a philosophical community of inquiry we can also better understand ways to map out productive and nuanced responses to the call for multiculturalism, both within education and the larger political community:

Recognition: of ideas and persons. In P4C we encourage children and adults to engage in reflective exploration of the problematic in their experiences. This entails a recognition, an acknowledgement, of the presence of questions and issues that matter to the participants. We recognize the children as think-

ers and questioners and they are empowered by that act of recognition to hone their skills as such. Their self-esteem is directly affected in positive ways. Respect: for individuals and viewpoints. Above all the community of inquiry functions as a 'safety net'³² for the participants in which they can risk offering unusual, unpopular or simply as yet unvoiced ideas and opinions and will not only be tolerated but respected as reflective persons collaborating within the group towards crafting better ideas. No name calling nor *a priori* dismissal on the basis of my personal cultural background nor my voiced opinions is allowed nor ultimately desired by the participants themselves.

Tolerance: is re-envisioned to include not simply the notion of being 'merely tolerant' but expanded as the paradigm of a proactive form of caring tolerance. Diversity is seen as an important value for the community of inquiry to enhance its internal functioning and as such is nurtured and celebrated but as a consciously chosen value, not as a specious slogan.

Support: Philosophy for children generates two perspectives on this fourth theme; firstly, we need to support diversity and a multicultural perspective so as to best realize the ideals of the community of inquiry and to strive for a richer, more comprehensive understanding of the issue at hand. We encourage and actively seek out heterogeneous groups. Thereby, we support different points of view as our best bet in increasing our comprehension of and appreciation *for* the problematic. But we also find an important second perspective on the concept of 'support.' As touched upon by so many of the commentators on multiculturalism as an essential caveat, the notion of a needed valuation is introduced here. We must support our ideas, our cultural perspectives and solutions to issues and problems. Ideas are not sacrosanct simply by virtue of attachment to some perspective, multicultural or mainstream. The community of inquiry demands of itself that reasons be given for viewpoints and proffered solutions.

Paul Bitting³³ has argued persuasively that there exists a natural affinity between a multicultural perspective and democracy, both in the political and educational realms which uses philosophical inquiry as the fulcrum around which the components balance. He depicts the essence of democracy as including the need for multiculturalism, plurality, as central for the flourishing of the democratic ideal. He recommends that multiculturalism function normatively as a 'social ideal.' This can occur only if two conditions are met: there is genuine interchange among the diverse constituents of the society and each culture is allowed to retain its uniqueness and not be subsumed or transformed into a caricature of itself³⁴ or the main culture. In this case 'everyone profits from a variety of groups expressing different structures of meaning.'³⁵

The avenue for success in this endeavor of developing democracy as an essential and flourishing multiculturalist form of life is education, an education in which the practice of philosophical inquiry takes center stage. He goes on to argue for the value of philosophy for the individual participant on both intrinsic and extrinsic grounds.

*Intrinsically it can provide some measure of philosophical understanding and enlightenment for those who study it and develop responsible, **disciplined methods** of philosophical thinking... Such understanding and enlightenment ... give depth to one's being. Without a philosophical understanding of the culture*

*within which we operate and a critical philosophical view of the world as knowable through it, we are enslaved by our culture and our uncritical assumptions about it and the world.*³⁶

Bitting continues by emphasizing an extrinsic value to philosophical inquiry as well in which it helps function as a therapy to cultural blindness and one-sidedness: 'It is through philosophy as cultural therapy that we are able to evaluate and assess our cultural assumptions and beliefs.'³⁷ While we stand by the assumption that cultural plurality yields a better view of reality and more open access to the complexities of the human heart and vision of experience, we need not abandon the notion of criteria of judgment of said cultures. Some cultures may indeed function more powerfully and meaningfully to assist us in living good lives but that realization is a produce of careful critique after open consideration, not a rigid rule which militates against multiculturalism as foreign, as other than the familiar and 'true.'

*Thus it is through philosophical inquiry that we therapeutically address the maladies, pitfalls and derangements of our self-defeating cultural and multicultural practices. And it is through the ideal environment of the multicultural community of inquiry that we enrich our philosophical understanding of the world.*³⁸

We are left with some conclusions to draw from the voices of our 'community of inquiry' as presented in this paper. For the sake of clarity, I number them below:

1. Multiculturalism must be construed in a open fashion, like a piece of cloth that allows the warp and woof to be distinct but woven together in ways that yield a strong 'fabric' for democracy.
2. Cultural identities must be recognized but not thrust upon individuals in ways which bind or limit their own self-definitions within the dialogic community of family, friends and society as a whole.
3. We must resist any simplistic dismissal of differences or uncritical embracing of them. The criteria for value judgments must be open to cross-cultural fertilization but still function to allow us to recognize some cultures as destructive or uncondusive of human flourishing. That is, we needn't abandon all standards in order to promote a multiculturalist stance.
4. Within education we need to craft thoughtful solutions to these larger political problems so that children, and their adults, can begin to forge genuine respect and understanding of others across differences.
5. Perhaps a tool that can best exemplify these goals is 'philosophy for children' as instantiated in a functioning community of inquiry. Here a pedagogical method of teaching critical, caring and creative thinking³⁹ takes on the life of a substantive goal of education in introducing children to a diversity of perspectives as found within their classrooms and, by extension, the world outside.

In all the readings we find an underlying current of recommendation: multiculturalism can only become meaningful and transformational if we move beyond sloganeering, beyond balkanization of diverse groups towards modalities of genuine interchange and respect for differences which have been weighed and found to offer valuable insights into the common human condition.

AN INVITATION FOR FURTHER QUESTIONS

As I end my review of the issues and problems with which I have been grappling concerning multiculturalism, I invite you to add your own questions, issues, pointed examples, challenges, distinctions, definitions, points of agreement... Let me extend the cache of original questions to include the following ones as possible opening discussion gambits:

- Is the very notion of multiculturalism a produce of Western thinking?

- How do we begin to craft criteria of value judgment that can embrace radically opposing views of the human condition?
- Are not the common elements really more important within a democracy than differences?
- Should all cultures be preserved?
- How can we create a community of inquiry if the participants and their cultures are dedicated to hating one another?
- Can we commit to substantive notions of truth and goodness if we have also committed to multiculturalism and diversity?

I end with a quote from Amy Gutmann which appears to summarize quite succinctly the themes in this paper:⁴⁰

Respectable moral disagreements... call for deliberation, not denunciation. Colleges and Universities⁴¹ can serve as models for deliberation, by encouraging rigorous, honest, open, and intense intellectual discussions, both inside and outside the classroom. The willingness and ability to deliberate about our respectable differences is also part of the democratic political ideal. Multicultural societies and communities that stand for the freedom and equality of all people rest upon mutual respect for reasonable intellectual, political and cultural differences. Mutual respect requires a widespread willingness and ability to articulate our disagreements, to defend them before people with whom we disagree, to discern the difference between respectable and disrespected disagreement, and to be open to changing our own minds when faced with well-reasoned criticism. The moral promise of multiculturalism depends on the exercise of these deliberative virtues.

We might add that the moral promise of multiculturalism might well lie in ‘philosophy for children.’

NOTES

1. France is currently engaged in this debate over immigration from Africa as is Austria with respect to immigration from the Balkan countries.

2. I refer, of course, to the aftermath of 9/11 with the tensions between Arab-Americans and Americans from other backgrounds, the world-wide tension between Muslim nations and other nations and the present conflicts in the Middle-East between the Palestinians and the Israelis.

3. See the arguments against moral relativism found in Louis Pojman and James Rachels.

4. See his paper ‘The Politics of Recognition’ in *Multiculturalism*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.

5. op cit., p. 4.

6. op. cit., 35

7. This is fully explored later in section III of his essay.

8. op. cit., p. 32

9. op. cit., p.39.

10. See Taylor’s analysis of liberalism on pages 61-63.

11. Op. cit, p. 64

12. op. cit., p. 65

13. *ibid.*, p. 66.

14. op. cit., p.67

15. op. cit., p.67

16. op. cit., p. 72

17. E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *The Schools We Need and Why We Do Not Have Them*, New York: Doubleday, 1996, p. 102.
18. For Hirsch, Jr. this means a standard national curriculum for the United States as a whole. He does not reject regional additions but eschews total local control over the content of what children should be learning.
19. Neil Postman, *The End of Education*, New York: Vintage Books, 1996, p.17.
20. *ibid.*, p. 156
21. *ibid.*, p. 163
22. and criticized as well, see Hirsch, *op. cit.*
23. This theory of multiple intelligences is a theory of diversity with respect to learning styles.
24. Howard Gardner, *The Disciplined Mind*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999. He also addresses a number of related issues in *The Unschooled Mind*.
25. Martha Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.
26. These terms are Nussbaum's and discussed at length in her book, pps. 131-138.
27. 'Identity, Authenticity, Survival: Multicultural Societies and Social Reproduction', pps. 149-163.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 154.
29. *Ibid.*, p.160.
30. *ibid.*, p. 161.
31. Many references are available on a global scale but consider one of the most recent textbooks aimed at introducing the principles of philosophy for children, Ann M. Sharp's and Laurance Splitter's *Teaching for Better Thinking*, ACER, 1995.
32. A term quoted from an interview with Matthew Lipman in the BBC video 'Socrates for Six year Olds.'
33. Paul Bitting, 'Philosophy in the Democratic Multicultural Community of Inquiry,' included in *Children, Philosophy and Democracy*, John Portelli and Ronald Reed (editors), Detselig Enterprises, 1995, pps. 179-190.
34. The 'Disneyfication' of cultures as found in movies and theme parks?
35. Paul Bitting, *op. cit.* p. 184
36. *Ibid.*, p. 186.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 187.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 189.
39. These three criteria as attached to 'thinking' serve to clarify how far-reaching our goals are in P4C and how it crosses the borders of reasoning into ethical responsiveness.
40. Amy Guttman, 'Introduction,' *Multiculturalism*, *op. cit.*, pps. 23-24.
41. Let us add, elementary and secondary schools.

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