

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

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Abstract: *The objective of the present study is to highlight different and marked approaches that have been developed regarding cultural diversity, without implying a "nummerus clausus" relationship, since cultural diversity approaches are broadened with the diverse realities of the countries of the entire world. The objective is to clarify the fundamental elements of the cultural diversity concept, considering that the intellectual debate on it has not yet reached a consensus and may never do so. The paper reviews the "evolution" of the concept through the theories of different institutional authors and documents, culminating in the recognition of cultural diversity as a right, guaranteed in binding international instruments.*

Keywords: cultural differences; cultural diversity; the theory of cultural relativism; Cultural identity.

I. INTRODUCTION

The reality highlights that nowadays, most countries are culturally diverse, according to recent estimates, the 184 independent states of the world containing more than 600 living language groups and 5,000 ethnic groups (Garreta 2000). There are few countries whose citizens share the same language or belong to the same national ethnic group.

Currently, in the era of globalization there is a paradox regarding the substitution of traditional societies by the modern social order (urban, industrial, capitalist ones). This aspect does not only suppress linguistic, religious, cultural differences and so on among the different societies, but on the contrary, it also increases them. In this respect, cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity ceases to be a specific feature of some particular societies (United States, Canada, Australia) to gradually extend to the whole planet.

We are immersed in a truly multicultural and interdependent world that presents the challenge of how to understand and interact, and this diversity

involves a series of important and potentially decisive issues.

Thus, majorities and minorities are increasingly confronted with issues such as linguistic rights, regional autonomy, political representation, territorial claims, immigration policy and citizenship. Finding ethically defensible and politically viable answers to these questions is the main challenge facing democracies today. And it is here, when facing the challenge of cultural diversity, that we find theoretical assumptions and concepts about cultural diversity located from different points of view, for example: citizenship, identity, linguistic theme, democracy or all the nuances or intermediate positions that may derive from it, often finding an abuse of the term "cultural diversity" by applying it in an undifferentiated way to phenomena of different natures.

II. CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Cultural identity is the process through which a social actor recognizes

itself and develops a meaning by virtues and above all of an attribute or set of specific cultural attributes, with the exclusion of a wider reference to other social structures. It is born from the awareness of difference, which does not necessarily mean inability to relate to other identities (Van Dyne 2015). "All societies are culturally heterogeneous while no culture develops without exchanges and cultural interactions." (Van Dyne 2015: 141).

Cultural identity, in the sense that arises from interactions with other cultures, would be a flexible and plural concept, which is not only marked by difference, but by complementarity with what is different. Thus, for example, a person can feel Catalan, Spanish, European, according to the relationship established, the circumstance and the scope in which this relationship is determined.

The understanding of space-time, the perception of physical and cultural distances, also alters the fundamental elements of the configuration of identity, such as feelings of similarity, closeness and belonging, transforming the sense of what is close or similar and of what is distant or not; of what is proper and what is improper. In this respect, globalization also confers a new character to cultural diversity (Gruenewald, Smith 2014: 102-105).

Bennett (2017) considers that the feeling of belonging that is limited to a single culture is much easier to manipulate, since one would have to ask: who is going to develop that specific cultural identity, which must one approach to be identified and accepted as a member of the community? What is the degree of difference that the community will allow before stigmatizing a person? It indicates that the conception of identity as multiple, diverse and flexible is a good antidote against manipulation. However, one forgets that many cultures were not given the option of multiplicity, but only the

option of assimilation and have survived and built their identity based on resistance to the dominant culture and the feeling of not belonging to it. This is the case of the ethnic minority groups that have suffered the imposition of national states.

What is clear is that identity is not a unitary aspect, because it needs another reference, nor is it stable and fixed, above time, because all identity evolves with history and context. Identity is formed by a dynamic of interrelations and correlations, where ultimately only the subjective consciousness of being different is an irreplaceable element; and in order to understand and value identities, there should be contextualized each case and it should not be extrapolate into different times or places.

Whelan (2016) analyzes the power of identity in the current information society, which he calls the network society, characterized by the globalization of economic activities, by its form of organization in networks, by the flexibility and instability of work and its individualization, by a culture of real virtuality built through a system of omnipresent aspects, interconnected and diversified media, and by the transformation of the material foundations of life, space and time.

Differentiating three types of identities, one would observe (Whelan 2016: 114-120):

- Legitimizing identity, which is introduced by the dominant institutions of society to perform and rationalize their domination towards social actors.
- Identity of resistance, which is held by those actors who are in devalued or stigmatized positions by the logic of the society domination.
- Project identity, which occurs when social actors build a new identity, based on available cultural materials. In addition to this act, they not only redefine their position in society, but also seek the transformation of the social structure.

Thus, in the current situation

"subjects when they are built, no longer do so based on civil societies, which are in the process of disintegration, but as an extension of communal resistance" (Whelan, 2016: 34). Therefore, there is a reaction against globalization that blurs identities. In this respect, while the legitimating identity seems to have entered into a crisis, the identities of resistance are the current forms of identity construction, although they may derive towards project identities.

It is precisely because they are the product of relationships between self-identified human groups that cultures cannot be identities that live in stillness. Subjected to a set of shocks and instabilities, they modify their nature, change their appearance and strategy whenever necessary. Their evolution is often chaotic and unpredictable. Identities must not only permanently negotiate the relationships they maintain with each other, but also those relations with themselves (Bennett 2017: 99).

Among the main elements of the right to cultural identity, one should first highlight the consideration of that cultural identity as a prerequisite of rights, in the sense that without it other rights could not be exercised. Such doctrine is formulated, for example, by Kymilcka (1996), when he speaks of culture as a collective public context from which the individual makes choices as a prerequisite for the effective recognition of individual rights. In other words, the legal recognition of cultural groups will not be satisfied only through references to individual rights, ignoring unequivocally collective dimensions, of which the clearest way is the cultural identity.

The diversity related to indigenous peoples refers to a plurality of individuals, and not just groups, with specific social, cultural and political configurations that present cultural features, social institutions, worldviews, linguistic forms and specific political organizations. According to Hall and Fenelon (2015), "indigenous peoples

are considered as such because they descend from populations that lived in the country or in a geographical region that belongs to the country at the time of the conquest, colonization or establishment of current state borders and they conserve all their social, economic, cultural and political institutions or part of them".

The identities of these peoples are organized and focus much more strongly on a collective identity, rather than on an individual one; in this respect, one would observe why they recognized collective rights together with individual rights. Also, this collective identity is not formed with the shared possession of fixed objective features, but by a continuous dynamic of interrelationships and correlations that are changing, as for any process of identity formation, where ultimately only the self-recognition of being Indigenous peoples and of having a collective identity is the constituent element (Hall and Fenelon 2015: 388). In this respect, they are not frozen in time, as exotic vision that most people have of them, as their traditions and ancestral institutions are changing and evolving, without losing their status as indigenous.

III. CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The term "cultural diversity" has been charged with different interpretations and changes sometimes derived from history, such as colonialism and linguistic or semantic subtleties. As Parekh considers (2001: 113), "any attempt to write a summary of the history of the cultural diversity debate cannot begin without the recognition of the existence of multiple definitions of the term. The lack of a single definition or of a diversity of definitions represents the biggest obstacle in identifying the most important instruments and forums that in the past have dealt with issues of cultural diversity."

It is possible to distinguish two general approaches to cultural diversity: diversity "within" states and diversity "between" states. In the large western cities, the question of internal diversity is indisputably linked to the phenomenon of immigration, although internal cultural diversity can be independent of this phenomenon as it is in countries where cultural diversity is connected to the ethnic minorities that have remained over the years in these territories. This approach looks at individuals as potential holders of multiple identities and heterogeneous cultural characteristics that jointly build a nation or another form of identity. This approach can also be understood as "multiculturalism", and although recently it was discussed and talked about multicultural societies, the first multicultural legislation in the world was adopted in 1988 in Canada, which recognized in its "Multiculturalism Act" that cultural diversity was a fundamental characteristic of their society and created a series of policies and government programs to protect and enhance it (Banks 1988: 68-72).

Cultural diversity "between" states or nations focuses on the need for a balanced cultural exchange of goods and services between states and / or cultures. This approach is characterized by the development of the relationship between culture and commerce, or culture and economy; as well as the capacity of the states to "intervene" in cultural markets in order to sustain their "local" or "national" production by assuring them a space in the markets, respectively with a balanced exchange between cultures. And it is translated as the right of a state to develop, preserve and implement the public policies necessary for the preservation and promotion of its cultural diversity (Banks 2000).

Traditionally, cultural diversity was approached by anthropology, where it was also an ambiguous concept, between relativism and the sub-alternization of

diverse (Neulfeld 2006). In that historical era and in the context of anthropology, one referred to and even refers to radically different types of social formations (ethnic groups, indigenous tribes). Some of them still exist today and conserve many of their traditional institutions, which do not mean in any way anachronisms, or testimonies of evolutionary backwardness but simply other ways of conceiving the world.

One of the arguments that currently highlights the value of cultural diversity is that it creates a more interesting world, and because other cultures have alternative models of social organization that can be useful to adapt to new circumstances. This is often mentioned in relation to indigenous peoples, whose traditional lifestyles provide a model of sustainable relationship with the environment. It is increasingly accepted that Western attitudes towards nature are unsustainable and self-destructive, so that indigenous peoples "can provide models, inspiration and guidance for the essential task of redefining a new world order" (Kymilcka 1996: 171).

It is important to emphasize that cultural diversity cannot be seen only as a differentiation (something that is defined in relation to something else). Diversity manifests itself in concrete situations and needs to be contextualized, since the historical meaning of "differences" redefines its own symbolic meaning.

Nor should we forget that we live in contexts of cultural diversity, and that these contexts, in so far as they involve diversity, are simultaneously constituted by relations of domination / subordination: the status of immigrants, the connotations attributed to the places of origin, the languages that are declared to be official or the jobs they are allowed to access, build unequal relationships or power relations. In this respect, it is important to understand how those power relations are developed and when the discourse on

diversity hides issues such as inequality (Van Dyne 2015).

IV. THE THEORY OF CULTURAL RELATIVISM

Faced with the thesis of cultural diversity, the theory of cultural relativism was opposed: the primacy of the particular over the universal (Spenser, Valery, Sebrel 2000). It is pointed out that cultural diversity gives philosophical reasons to nationalisms, fundamentalisms, primitivisms and various forms of anti-Westernism. The thesis mainly maintains that beyond cultures and diverse historical circumstances there is an essential identity in all men: all people get to understand each other and experience analogous emotional, volitional and intellectual states before the basic situations of life, expressive means are also repeated, as well as sometimes the rituals, rules, codes, taboos, prejudices and ideologies of different cultures. There is a common background in the forms of social organization, work and artistic creation, and even the different languages probably have derived from a simple original language in the Neolithic age (Sebrel 1992: 73-75).

Diversification of human experience is attributed to cultural diversity and therefore they oppose it. Herder, in his *Philosophy of History for the Education of Humanity* (1774), was the first to use the word "cultures" in plural, distinguishing them from civilization. For Herder, the human experience was not uniform but diversified and the historical process was not extensive to all humanity, but was limited to particular peoples and strains, denouncing the invalidity of the general characteristics and any general concept was considered to be only an abstraction. Even human happiness was a heritage of peoples, ethnic groups, races, nations, the sense of happiness being

peculiar to each culture and non-transferable to another. "Even the image of happiness varies with each state and latitude, because what else is happiness, but the sum of satisfactions, of desires, of realizations of ends and that sweet overcoming of the needs that all depend on the country, the time and place? Who can compare the different satisfaction of different senses of different worlds? "

In this respect, according to the theorists who oppose diversity, cultural relativism is reached, being considered an inevitable consequence of particularism. According to Sebrel (1992), the diversification of cultures was a relatively late evolution of a common humanity in the stage of *homo sapiens* as a consequence of the migrations of the last glacial cycle. The racial differences would be, according to this hypothesis, a simple expression of the adaptability to diverse environmental conditions, of temperature, light, humidity, pressure and solar radiation. He gives as an example the discovery of America, where civilizations were discovered that totally isolated from the rest of the world repeated forms similar to those experienced in other continents many centuries ago. In this respect, leaving human groups enough time, will probably pass through evolutionary stages similar to that of other groups. There is no absolute originality of a single human group, there are always similarities, either by diffusion, by influence or by coincidences and it can be demonstrated historically that all peoples have followed approximately the same successive steps.

V. CULTURAL IDENTITY

The report "*Creative arts*" written by L. Egri in 1946 stated that "art transcends documentation by interpretation, and helps to give people and nations an intimate knowledge of each of the human beings within different conditions, but in close relationship with

human experience, which is essential for the achievement of world peace" (Egri 1946: 123). "In the human family, each country and region has its own characteristics and values, and each one makes this distinction a contribution to the common treasure of culture" (Egri 1946:124). The arts, the concrete product of culture, are then the means of exchange and mutual understanding: "art is the key to understanding our culture and that of our neighbors" (Egri 1946: 6), and diversity is understood as a source of wealth and not of conflict. The Report echoes the constitution formula of the organization: "knowledge, understanding and peace".

However, the Director General's Report of 1947 (written by Sir Julian Huxley) pointed out that this variety of human experiences could lead to conflict. Given this possibility, Huxley pushed a middle ground between standardization and incomprehension, captured in the now familiar motto: "unity in diversity" (p.47) and, although noble, this phrase did not go beyond rhetoric, as it did not count with a clarified content yet.

Likewise, the project "*General History of Civilizations*" written by A.H. Dani (2005) pointed out that there were multiple civilizations, not a single category that adequately involved all human experience. This idea, the emphasis on particularity rather than universality, was reinforced in the observation that differentiated cultural diversity from science whose ultimate goal is the unity of even uniformity. Diversity could be based on the idea of endogenous development as the development trajectory that presents to people their "unique culture", rather than uniformity or a formula of trajectory prescribed by the dictates of science; which did not imply isolating it. The potential for "empowerment" contained in this diversity was motivated by the goal of preventing smaller nations from being dominated by the propaganda of

politically more powerful nations, a message clearly related to the cold war context that was emerging.

In this respect, two important issues emerged in the platform of UNESCO, linked together, and contain at the same time a certain internal tension, if not a contradiction: first, the mutual concessions between unity and difference, the idea that the first could be achieved without sacrificing the second; and second, the idea of individual development trajectories, with the advantages of a balanced "empowerment" against the potential dangers of excessive isolation.

Previously, following the titles of the reports of the General Director, one could see how "culture" was perceived and defended as cultural activities. In this respect, it seemed to occupy an autonomous sphere separate from the social sciences. In 1951, however, Sub Section 4E of the category of cultural activities dealt with "action in the service of human rights", establishing a relationship between culture and rights, which represented an important step in bringing culture closer to society as a central line of politics, making it constitutive of individual and group identity and independence (and not simply expressive or as a product). For that reason in 1952 the Economic and Social Committee was specifically responsible for: "fight against discriminatory measures and the protection of minorities", which reflected again that the realization of culture could not be limited to the definition of artistic production.

VI. CONCLUSION

Cultural diversity is not a closed concept, on the contrary, it constantly evolves according to its own dynamic and flexible nature, the result of the constant

interaction between different cultures. It must be recognized that there are multiple definitions of the term related to its various aspects: identity, own languages, immigration, citizenship, indigenous peoples, cultural expressions, development; that beyond confusing us, it can help us to better understand the concept of cultural diversity in which we are all immersed today and which we must face in a creative and solidary way.

One would appreciate that there is a diversity "inside" of the same states produced by the different cultural groups that coexist in the territory (indigenous, indigenous or immigrants); and a diversity "between" states more related to the national cultural production and to the exchanges of products, goods, services and cultural activities between countries. There is also a new diversity that begins to encompass both: global, transnational cultural diversity, provided by those people who cannot be located in a single country, but who distribute their lives between two or more countries, but this is not yet a fact homogeneous to most countries, as if it is that national states are transforming into multicultural states.

As a limit to the concept, we must point out that cultural diversity cannot be seen only as a differentiation: something that is defined in relation to something else. But cultural diversity manifests itself when there is the "cultural element" that differentiates it in concrete situations; and that it needs to be contextualized because the historical sense of "differences" also defines its symbolic meaning or its cultural construction.

Many times the term "cultural diversity" has been abused by applying it in an undifferentiated way to phenomena of different natures, or generalizing the concept to all realities. Cultural diversity as a cultural approach or policy can and should be treated transversally in all areas and sectors of countries that recognize themselves as multicultural. But do not confuse the part with the whole, cultural

diversity is a part of the reality we live that can be recognized, guaranteed and promoted in all public and private spheres, but do not try to put everything within the concept of cultural diversity, as if this were a "catch-all".

The defence of cultural diversity is inseparable from respect for the dignity of the human person, it implies the commitment to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular the rights of people belonging to cultural minorities. In this sense, no one can invoke cultural diversity to violate human rights.

There is a certain criticism of the purpose and limitations of the Convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions, in the sense that it focuses on cultural industries, leaving aside historical and structural aspects of cultural diversity with which the UNESCO initiated its process and fought for its recognition. Despite some limitations, the Convention is an important step and serves as a basis for the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions, not only from developed countries, but especially from less favoured countries, so that they can participate in a more balanced in globalization and benefit from the diversity of its cultural expressions. This economic benefit of culture must be seen and worked as a factor of development, from the dynamics of cultural groups.

Likewise, the tools that allow promoting, protecting and prioritizing almost all important aspects of cultural diversity are present in the preamble of the Convention, which must be interpreted systemically and not in an isolated manner according to convenience. Reiterating that the Convention is an act complemented by human rights and fundamental freedoms that broaden the range of possibilities for a greater guarantee of it. In any case, the usefulness of the Convention in the protection and promotion of cultural diversity will be determined mainly by the number of ratifications, the responsibility

of the signatory countries in the execution of the Convention, as well as the follow-up work that must be performed by UNESCO.

It is very important to develop and implement the Convention, according to the realities and national contexts; as well as include references to the Convention in bilateral and multilateral cultural cooperation agreements, in the declarations and in the documents that arise from the meetings and the governmental and non-governmental conferences. It is equally important to continue the in-depth debate on issues of cultural diversity and its challenges among artists, professionals, policy makers and cultural academics. Only in this way will the Convention be a truly useful tool.

Nowadays, the economic importance of culture is an undeniable fact; that the culture generates income and employment opportunities is a fact that has been demonstrated by the defenders of a greater allocation of resources to the cultural sector. However, exaggerating this type of argument runs the risk of cultural objectives being subordinated to purely commercial objectives. Cultural expressions should not be dissociated from the identity of the cultural groups from which they emanate. Rather, the economic value must be an acknowledgment for the community to value its identity.

Without departing from the economic approach, the crucial role of culture in national and international development strategies and policies is increasingly highlighted. And the protection and promotion of cultural diversity is presented as a basis for the defence of sustainable development. Therefore, a new approach of cultural industries and creative potentials should be given as tools that serve sustainable global development, from their own development visions, unquestionably linked with their identity and culture.

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