CULTURAL IDENTITY IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION: CHALLENGES FOR OPENNESS AND HOPES FOR GLOBAL IDENTITY

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Abstract

The cultural identity has undergone a transformation throughout time, in which it moved from hybridity to purity in order to satisfy the political powers and their interests that seek to spread influence over the world, considering the division that would preserve its existence. Cultural differences can determine the status of the ego versus the Other, because the existence of the Other is necessary to know oneself. However, this purgatory quickly lost its effect, especially after the emergence of the so-called liberation movements against colonialism and the latter's cultural influence on minds and souls of colonized peoples. Western globalization also played a major role in the transition to cultural hybrid which has become a lone bet against all fissures of cultural relations driven by race, language and religion. Globalization reduced the possibility of a pure culture of a society to be affected by other cultures, as globalization has broken all barriers that preserve cultural privacy and thus became an area where all cultures meet. The universal openness of cultures, created by globalization, led contemporary man to reconsider many issues related to culture, especially the question of privacy of culture, which is perceived as inherited. Openness to the Other has contributed to the creation of a diverse cultural space. It rejects intolerance and cultural bias of a particular culture because such elements stand as barriers. Openness can only be achieved if there is a desire to widely accept the Other who is religiously, linguistically and culturally different. Difference must be recognized as an inevitable imperative and a reason for tolerance and coexistence. Therefore, how can we explain the cultural privacy that contributed to the identity of people? Is it possible for a cultural hybrid to establish another form of identity that transforms into a cosmopolitan culture characterized by cultural diversity?

Keywords: identity, culture, privacy, hybrid, universality.

INTRODUCTION

Today, culture is a fertile field for many researchers, as it is seen as the only bet in man's hand for reconciliation and coexistence among civilizations in light of the rifts and splits caused by political imperialism in the first place. Culture served as a supportive tool for every political desire to dominate the Other. This influence extends even to the educational aspects where the idea that presents culture as identity is graved in people's minds and that it expresses one of the characteristics of non-infringement, and therefore must be preserved and maintained. By the beginning of the twentieth century and with the development of science and technology, the ideological and the narcissistic vision that the West has shaped about culture started to disappear and thus culture became no longer sacred and invulnerable. It became open to multidimensional perspectives and exposed to a large range of cultural forms. In fact, globalization has played a major role in providing a new definition and perspective to the concept of culture, changed one of the main old and fanatical characteristics of it which is privacy.

Globalization has made the possibility of a pure culture of a society that is not affected by other cultures very low, because globalization has broken all barriers that preserve cultural privacy and thus became an area where all cultures meet away from all the political influences that created the so-called cultural privacy. The universal openness of cultures created by globalization led contemporary man to reconsider many issues, especially the question of privacy of culture, the latter was highly perceived as inherited and untouchable. This particular characteristic stood as a barrier in the face of exchanging cultures between peoples of different parts of the world. However, in their formation, cultures did not witness any fanaticism to their privacy, as there has always been a sort of sharing between cultures.

The belief in the existence of a particular pure culture led to the creation of many crises in the world where every civilization is defined by its culture and classified on this basis. As a result, many wars and cultural discriminations and clashes between civilizations existed. Worth mentioning, globalization deleted cultural specificity; it is no longer recognized by many postmodern philosophers who had a wide interest in culture as a fundamental determinant of identity. Most of them supported the idea of multiculturalism and considered it as a bet for coexistence between peoples and civilizations. But the questions that arise in this case is:

- How was the so-called cultural privacy established?

- Does openness to the Other threaten this privacy?

 - To what extent can we rely on multiculturalism as a solution to overcome conflicts towards the possibility of accepting the Other?

1. POLITICS' IMPACT ON CULTURAL PRIVACY

Man's choice to live in human groups evolved until the emergence of what is now known as the city and the state. This helped him to build particular customs and traditions and adopt beliefs that distinguish his group from other groups physically and morally. All these productions that accompanied him throughout history have become the defining identities and affiliations, which are called today "culture". This is confirmed by Edward Tylor in his definition of the concept. He sees culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (1). Therefore, we find that each society is confined within its culture where people of a certain group or a place see their culture as unique and pure if compared to other cultures, and look at the others' cultures as inferior. Moreover, there are some societies that give a kind of sacredness to their cultures and consider that the cultural contact with others would defile that "holy" culture. The Chinese civilization is a good example of this. China has built what is known as the Great Wall of China in order to avoid any mixing with other peoples that are considered as inferior to it.

In fact, the vision of a pure culture is further reinforced by the emergence of religion as a spiritual phenomenon that has social values in the first place. It is the mainstay of culture; subject to it an essential component of it. This makes religion an essential pillar in building cultures. In Europe, we find that Christianity has become involved in all areas of life, in a way that made the European culture locked in the Christian religion as well as identity, which led to a clear distinction between people based on religious belonging. In this vein, we say: this is a Jew and that is a Christian and the other is a Muslim. This idea is noticed in the writings of the American scholar Samuel Huntington, author of "Clash of Civilizations". He sees that religion is the main component of culture and that all the rifts in human relations were culturally distinct, because religion has a powerful influence on people and that they were always willing to sacrifice for their religion. He adds that in the modern world, religion is a central force, perhaps the central force that motivates and mobilizes people. "People define themselves in terms of ancestry, religion, language, history, values, customs, and institutions. They identify with cultural groups: tribes, ethnic groups, religious communities, nations, and, at the broadest level, civilizations. People use politics not just to advance their interests but also to define their identity". He confirms by saying that what matters to people in the end is neither political ideology nor economic interest. What people identify themselves with are religious convictions, family and creeds (29).

The Medieval period contributed to the formation of European culture and gave it a religious character. Unfortunately, this increased the feeling of fanaticism of the West towards their culture which is, in their opinion, a source of their identity. Therefore, they looked at the identity of other peoples as inferior and considered their own culture as the culture of civilization. These Western views of that time had spread in the world, and were reflected in the Crusades that were aimed at spreading Christianity in the world and making it the religion of all peoples. These different campaigns were supported politically, religiously and culturally by many pragmatic scholars, demonstrating the pride of the West in their culture through the emergence of national identity. By the early 18th century, the West started the establishment of the "Nation State" to

confirm their identity. Thus, the world enhanced the value of national harmony and unity and strengthened centralization with its implications (qtd. in Ting 468)

The rapid scientific development resulting from the emancipation of science from ecclesiastical dominance and the emergence of many technologies have all given rise to globalization as a means by which the West has sought to increase its influence in the world. But, this placed Westerners in a direct cultural confrontation with other peoples, since they wanted to alienate other societies culturally and impose their culture to serve their political and economic interests.

Globalization is usually defined as the "Americanization of the world". Through it, all countries have to submit and follow the one-way direction drawn by America. This is what Francis Fukuyama emphasized when he noticed that with the end of the Cold War, the world moved in one direction: the liberal capitalist direction created by America as a system. It is not only a political and economic system, but more importantly a cultural one, because culture has a great potential to cause conflict in the world. The mitigation of cultural fanaticism will be the beginning of controlling people by since what each European society needs is to invent an open form of national identity similar to the American creed, an identity that is accessible to newcomers regardless of ethnicity or religion ("Europe vs. Radical Islam").

Globalization is also considered as a reason to lessen the cultural sense of the masses. In fact, the American Western culture is prevailing; not only in knowledge and science, but also in customs and traditions, which led underdeveloped societies to enter in the so-called identity crisis, because everything that ravages culture threatens the identity of people and their existence. Globalization is a space where all cultures meet. However, coexistence between these cultures has not been reached yet. A dominant culture emerged and created this space and then produced many fundamentalist movements all demanding a return to origins.

These movements were aware of the danger of cultural invasion through globalization. Yet, it was too late since the renaissance of the Arabs did not occur until the end of the nineteenth century when they became aware of the effects of globalization on the cultures of their societies. By the end of the twentieth century, however, many philosophers raised multiple philosophical approaches to the question of culture. They addressed the question of culture from a global and universal perspective, transcending that narrow view of culture, which is related to geographical space. They encouraged openness to the Other culturally and civilizationally, where this "Other" becomes an existential entity sharing coexistence in the world and forcing the ego to accept him/her with all what s/he bears as cultural and identity differences, because coexistence between the ego and the Other can only be achieved in an atmosphere of tolerance, mutual knowledge and dialogue. This latter is an exchange of views between multiple cultures that enforces mutual respect, creating a diverse cultural space.

The issue of cultural diversity has a big echo in contemporary philosophical thought. The consideration of culture leads to a reconsideration of human relations and the identity of human beings in terms of similarity and difference. If similarity holds the possibility of coexistence, then difference can also achieve the goal of coexistence by building minds able to accept the difference and consider it a social and ontological imperative that must be adapted and accepted in order to absorb everything that would cause conflict within societies, because differences usually lead to rivalry and hostility. Within the social framework man is programmed for aversion to the Other who is different, though this Other is necessary for man's own existence and self-reconstruction (Khalil 451)

 With the scientific and technological development taking place today, people no longer believe in the idea of a single culture. This technology has put them in one constellation without giving any attention to the differences caused by certain ideologies that emerged throughout history. Geographical boundaries no longer have an impact because globalization as a Western production has broken these boundaries in order to build a new empire preserving, at the same time, its first origin. Although re-emerging in a more peaceful way, the objectives remain the same, and if the means changed, the purpose of all this stays to dominate peoples of the world culturally. People who are culturally controlled can also be subjects to other forms of hegemony. Therefore, the aim to be achieved is to transform colonialism from military colonization of lands to cultural invasion of minds. Thus, culture becomes a tool of control after it has been a tool of resistance that held the identity of peoples.

The idea of cultural privacy is primarily imperialistic in its sense created by political forces in order to maintain their influence in the world. This makes a particular culture a military means to create division in the world. It is clearly noticed that culture is the first cause of this division because discrimination between peoples is usually based on cultural standards; the self is determined by the Other through culture, and the

identity of the Other is judged from cultural perspective. This is confirmed by Tzvetan Todorov when he acknowledged that "Man has determinants that play a role in shaping his identity. They are structural features such as formation, customs and collective lifestyles. These characteristics do not constitute alone the identity; there should be an inclusion of the concept of cultural belonging and the multiple identities that overlap between each other" (qtd. in Chabou 437). Consequently, being included within a single culture greatly supports imperialism and develops in people's minds the idea of self-love and cultural superiority, and this increases the gap between peoples and makes the possibility of understanding with the Other ruled out. In their studies of peoples' cultural identity development, many postcolonial researchers concluded that cultural identity is an imperial invention as it is originally a hybrid. During their composition and formation, all cultures exchanged from each other and, thus, we cannot find a culture that was formed in isolation from other cultures.

Authors of the postcolonial theory, led by Homi Bhabha, the author of "The Location of Culture", believed that culture is a mixture of customs and traditions that human beings constructed in many different places. He also asserted that the formation of each culture is due to interactions and communication that accompanied man during his travel looking for better life conditions. Cultures also travel from one region to another, but the desire of man to dominate and control led him to consider his culture a sacred matter, and as a result he established a dogmatic fence around his culture, creating an identity that, he considered distinctive from other people's cultures. Therefore, the idea of cultural purity is new. It emerged with the European colonization of the Eastern countries in order to justify colonialism itself. As long as Western countries have a 'superior' culture, they have the right, if not the burden, to transfer this culture to the 'backward' peoples so as to civilize them. All this is just a justification that does not reveal the true essence of colonialism, which has for centuries alienated Eastern societies and reproduced their identity. It created an identity in a third space that belongs neither to the colonizer nor to the colonized. Bhabha claimed that «cultural statements and systems are constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation (54-55). As a result, the hierarchical claims to the innate originality or purity of cultures are invalid and illusive.

The western practices within the 'backward' societies have indirectly contributed to the creation of hybrid cultural identities. Their colonialism was not only of a military-political nature but also of a great cultural influence. It attacked the culture of the colonized peoples to obliterate and replace it with its own. It did not pay attention to the cultural effect of the colonized on the settlers who returned home with the culture of 'backward' societies; so, the influence was not only one-sided. This led to the emergence of what is known today, and more precisely in postcolonial studies, as cultural hybrid that proves the characteristics that form identity. Thus, "different groups can come together despite their differences which enable them to acquire an additional power. There is what distinguishes members of one identity at the same level of what unites it" (Khalil 455). Thus, hybrids or complex cultural characteristics have imposed themselves within the human relations. Moreover, the postcolonial man has become more open to the Other and has the ability to adapt with the Other. This is noticeable in the United States, especially in New York. In his description of city, Edward Said claimed that it is a space where all cultures meet and people coexist without paying much attention to racial discrimination and cultural differences, and everyone respects the other's culture. In fact, Edward Said calls for "studying the geography of identities, cultures and peoples to understand how they intersect despite differences. Identity is not restricted to firmness, uniqueness or related to a specific and immutable personality forever inevitable" (456). In other words Identity has, in its essence, the characteristic of changement, adjustment, and transformation rather than persistence and closure because cultures have blended throughout history.

Postmodern philosophers also carried the idea of cultural diversity, which stands at the opposite side to the cultural specificity, where they took the responsibility of defending the diverseness of cultures and demonstrated that human relations are moving towards openness to the Other and to the universe, and that people's fanaticism to their culture has become unimportant to many. The true identity of man, regardless of religion, race and ethnicity, is humanity. Thus, there is no need for cultural boundaries that have been formed since the end of the 17th century when philosophers took racial and discrimination stands affected by colonial orientations. This could be noticed in the philosophical ideas of Pierre Bourdieu, Gilles Deleuze, and Edgar Morin who avoided the project of unification that the state embodies in power and authority, and were prudent that this would lead to closure, intolerance and rigidity (447).

2. OPENNESS AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Openness to the Other has contributed to the creation of a diverse cultural space. Openness rejects intolerance and cultural bias of a particular culture because such elements stand as barriers and make it impossible for openness to take place. Wherever there is intolerance, there is inevitably an aversion to the

Other and an inclosed ego which acts as an obstacle to the possibility of any dialogue or cultural exchange. Cultural openness also reduces the tension between civilizations caused by ideologies based on political and economic interests. Globalization has played an important role in guiding human cultures; it was the bearer of cultural openness and thus negated the political effect that has always sought to create cultural fission and civilizational division,

Some scholars look at globalization from a gloomy perspective; in its essence, according to Roger Garaudy, globalization is "a system that enables the powerful to impose inhuman dictatorships that allow the predation of the vulnerable under the pretext of free trade and exchange" (qtd.in Boubakar 396). Globalization in the eyes of Garaudy has been used as a ploy to dominate peoples especially in terms of culture. But it must be said that globalization was also the cause for the creation of a real cultural diversity, where this latter did not remain confined to technological devices and social networking sites; rather, it has become a living reality, more clearly noticed in Western societies due to immigration that goes hand in hand with globalization and colonialism playing an important role in the creation of cultural diversity.

According to Roger Garaudy, the idea of cultural diversity is an ancient one, but it has emerged at its best shape in Islamic civilization, especially in Andalusia, which represented the height of Islamic civilization. Andalusia witnessed a mixture of many cultures where the Arab-Islamic culture met with Western European culture without any cultural intolerance from the part of the Islamic civilization. Throughout history; 'powerful' civilization could impose its culture and force people to abandon theirs. However, the Islamic civilization followed a more civilized and tolerable path in its relations with others in general and with Europeans in particular. It was more open to the Other and did not attack their culture (s), but rather recognized them all, unlike the Western colonial powers which fought the culture (s) of the colonized peoples in order to extract them from their origins and cultural identity and spread the Western culture as a sublime one. "The dialogue of civilizations, shattered by six centuries of colonialism and contempt for non-Western cultures, was not resumed until the 20th century. The message of the 21st century is undoubtedly ... to move towards realization of a universal culture and art"(137).

Gilles Deleuze also argues that contemporary civilization must accept difference as an important step towards intercultural coexistence. Openness can only be achieved if there is a desire to widely accept the Other who is religiously, linguistically and culturally different. It is also what the French philosopher Jacques Derrida emphasizes on by calling for the recognition of the differences between people that must be recognized as an inevitable imperative because "the interaction of differences entails structures and referrals that prevent an intermediate element at any moment. Everything is not present or absent simply, difference is really erasing the origin of the presen"(qtd. in Khalil 450).

Therefore, the difference is a revolution against all what is usual and seeks to penetrate the present and overturn the criteria and reconsider everything that has been marginalized, especially the Other whose cultural and civilizational identity has always been created by the Europeans since the Enlightenment era. This latter carried a humanist tendency that raised only the European dignity. Edgar Morin says that the West "has made this humanist tendency confined to its subordinate, excluding other peoples whom the West regards as primitive and barbaric or as immature and backward"(25).

The Different Other has driven Jacques Derrida to talk about the issue of hospitality as a very important concept in contemporary societies, stressing that hospitality must be based on the idea of accepting the other cultural and civilizational differences and that hospitality forces the guest to respect the culture of the host, his customs and traditions. Following Derrida's path, Abdel-Ghani Bara describes hospitality as "a kind of art of listening to the Other, and his reception with his distinction and uniqueness, away from the illusions of conformity or assay. Hospitality is an acknowledgment of the Other foreigner, caring about him" (2). This is what makes the relationship based on dialogue and exchange and moves from aversion to attraction and openness.

The pioneers of the Frankfurt School argued that human relations are based on difference and that there is not a single culture, but there is a group of cultures that vary in terms of spread and strength of civilization. The strongest imposes his civilization and this is what created cultural groups, including those who are in the center, like the Western culture, and those who are on the margin as is the case of many minorities in the world. Culture is the identity of people and their symbolic capital, so the world's minorities seek to elicit recognition from political, economic and social powers, so that they can ensure a noticeable presence in the world like other peoples. According to Axel Honneth, the issue of recognition is primarily an identity matter of a cultural dimension that minorities seek to establish their existence through it, defending the constituents of their culture. Recognition as a political, economic and social issue is a call for openness to the Other and acceptance of his differences, which are imposed by nature on human societies, because "mutual

recognition can put an end to social conflicts based on power and dominance and social injustice; thus individuals can prove themselves and their identities in the society" (qtd. in Boumenir 108).

Jürgen Habermas also stressed the importance of the Other's existence, rejecting, in this way, prejudice and marginalization, and establishing a culture of difference and Other's acceptance regardless of his cultural and social differences. This is to be achieved through calling for following the ethics of communication that allow the Other to interact and express his opinions in public spaces away from the feelings of contempt and inferiority that the ego may form towards the Other. Accordingly, Habermas defends the possibility of building a global or universal citizenship. He asserts that: "Communication has become the only voice capable of uniting a world that has lost all its references" (qtd. in Moussadak 141).

3 TOWARDS BUILDING GLOBAL IDENTITY

In light of the cultural diversity in the modern civilization, it is no longer important to talk about identity within its classical sense, since there is no longer a one identity, but a group of identities that simulate each other. The result of this is a new identity that is marked of being hybrid. Man today does not have one identity but rather several identities that he formed through communication, intermarriage, contact and openness to the Other. Today, we find a better adaptation between races of different cultures. This adaptation led to a mixture and an exchange of these cultures. This process in turn had a strong impact on identity; mixture of cultures leads, for sure, to the mixture of identities. Today, man is neither convinced with the idea of an identity of a pure cultural origin because this origin has never existed through history but was rather created by some powers that had some interests in the world.

In the philosophical thought, many approaches with a perspective dimension to the future of identity appeared. Therefore, they led to the emergence of several concepts that emphasize that identity is moving towards universality with humanity as an ultimate goal, regardless of race, ethnicity, sex, language or religion.Terry Eagleton believes that cultures are inherently partial, and can express themselves only, and they would disappear without differences. What constitutes my own self-identity is the self-identity of the human spirit. What makes me what I am my essence, which is the species to which I belong" (*The Idea of Culture 119*). Thus, the identity for Eagleton is manifested in humanity that emanates from and returns to it regardless of any cultural difference that constitutes identity.

The desire to go beyond identity in its narrow sense led to the emergence of concepts that directed identity from classical discourse to more open and universal concepts. One of these concepts is the concept of 'the complex identity' advocated by Edgar Morin, who saw that there is no pure identity. Many internal and external factors contribute in the formation of one identity, what makes it a complex of multiple cultures. A complex identity leads humanity towards openness to the universality and this " began after the exploration of America and other geographic discovery, where the universe has entered into a system of communication with which liberal ideas have developed, they were values produced by the European culture and expanded historically to take the global form" (441). The hybrid identity that the postcolonial scholars have come with largely embodied in the 'Holy Trinity' of Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha . All of these approaches recognize that identity is moving towards universality, and that human relations are no longer subject to political powers with their ideology.

The French philosopher Tzvetan Todorov stressed that human relations are directed towards universality in order to achieve the human condition in which all racial and ethnic differences are melted. All identities stem from multiculturalism. Thus, Todorov seeks to refute the existence of a pure identity due to the change and transformation that identity has been exposed to through history caused by human communication and the effects of political and social systems. Accordingly, he surpassed the Enlightenment argument that claims that the question of identity is moving towards the hybrid, which is considered as a deadlock which all different identities stop at and gather around. He is, in fact, tracing the impact of postcolonial cultural studies; and says: "individual identity results from the convergence of multiple collective identities within one single person" (54).

CONCLUSION

In fact, Cultural diversity is among the prevailing phenomena in contemporary societies, as the scientific and technological advances have contributed to lessen distances and facilitate communication with the Other. The main objective is to assure openness making the relationship between the ego and the Other based on dialogue and cultural exchange instead of conflict that has no purpose but self-proving and dominance over the Other. Although politics fragmented relations and confined them into opposing concepts in the form of pairs, cultural diversity became a bet against every policy and ideology that create differences in human

societies.

The existence of any civilization is linked to the culture it carries, because the latter expresses its entity and identity. The separation of identity from culture leads to its loss. Several factors such as colonization, globalization and immigration contributed to the creation of cultural diversity. This latter, in its turn, has made the cultural concept of identity a flexible concept. It is no longer seen as the unchangeable and unwavering essence, but has become an open field for gathering all identities with multiple cultures.

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