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INTERCULTURALITY: A RESPONSE TO CONFLICTS AND VIOLENCE IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETIES?

L'INTERCULTURALITÉ: UNE RÉPONSE AUX CONFLITS ET À LA VIOLENCE DANS LES SOCIÉTÉS CONTEMPORAINES?

Claudio Bolzman*

This article questions the ways in which contemporary societies deal with their growing cultural diversity. Using Max Weber's ideal-typical method, the author distinguishes three major models of dealing with cultural diversity in European societies: the assimilationist, the multicultural and the intercultural. On the basis of an analysis grid, these models are presented in broad terms. While not neglecting the limits of the intercultural model, the author argues that this model is particularly interesting for democratic societies, due to the dynamic and open nature of its conception of culture on the one hand, and the recognition of the Other as a partner and co-builder of society on the other hand.

Cet article s'interroge sur les manières dont les sociétés contemporaines gèrent leur diversité culturelle croissante. En recourant à la méthode idéal-typique de Max Weber, il distingue trois grands modèles de gestion de la diversité culturelle dans les sociétés européennes: l'assimilationniste, le multiculturel et l'interculturel. Sur la base d'une grille d'analyse, ces modèles sont présentés dans leurs grands traits. Tout en ne négligeant pas les limites du modèle interculturel, l'auteur conclut à l'intérêt de ce modèle pour les sociétés démocratiques, du fait du caractère dynamique et ouvert de sa conception de la culture d'une part, de la reconnaissance de l'Autre comme partenaire et co-constructeur de la société d'autre part.

Keywords: cultural diversity, interculturality, assimilationism, multiculturalism, conflict management, ideal-typical method

Mot-clé: diversité culturelle, interculturalité, assimilationnisme, multiculturalisme, gestion de conflits, méthode idéale-typique

1. Introduction

Cultural diversity is one of the main characteristics of contemporary societies. With globalization this trend has intensified and we live in increasingly plural societies,

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to the point that some authors evoke the emergence of a situation of superdiversity¹. In any society, cultural diversity, but also diversity of interests, inequalities, discrimination and political differences can lead to the emergence of tensions and conflicts. One of the challenges is to prevent these tensions and conflicts, which are part of life in society, from escalating into forms of hatred and violence². The challenge is to deal peacefully with these conflicts and to increase rights, empowerment, freedom, equality and recognition for each member of society.

However, in recent years the management of differences in all kinds of areas seems more problematic and gives rise to forms of violence in daily life. There are many definitions of violence. Here I will refer to Michaud³ who considers that it exists when “one or more actors act directly or indirectly, harming one or more people to varying degrees, either in their physical integrity, either in their mental integrity, or in their possessions, or in their symbolic and cultural participations.” In the case of inter-ethnic, inter-religious or racist violence, the people targeted are not considered as individuals but as representatives of a general category on which the violence is focused. For example, a trivial dispute between pupils at school can lead to a violent escalation between communities, if the two pupils belong to two different ethnic communities and if the context is already tense between these communities. Additionally, violence can take even more brutal forms if the victims are dehumanized, in such a way that their lives are considered of less value than those of their offenders.

In order to try to prevent these risks of explosion, contemporary European societies have adopted three major models for managing conflicts and tensions linked to cultural diversity in order to try to prevent violence: the assimilationist, the multicultural, the intercultural. In this article, I will try to show the main characteristics of these models and the specificity of interculturalism compared to the other two.

Many questions arise concerning the place of cultural diversity in European societies, including practical issues related to daily life. These questions concern, for example, tolerance to noise, differentiated relationships to time and space, gender relationships, meals in school canteens, wearing of distinctive religious symbols in public spaces, ways of dressing during sporting activities, days off in professional life, the place given to diversity in cemeteries, etc. The answers provided by the assimilationist, multicultural and intercultural models to these questions are different. Here it is a question of presenting these models, of understanding their differences in relation to these very concrete questions in order to better illuminate their scope and their limits.

In order to encourage comparison between these models, I established an analytical grid which includes the following elements: a definition of culture, an analysis of the contributions and problems linked to diversity, the tasks to be accomplished in order to deal with possible conflicts that can arise, a conception of social integration, the role of professionals (teachers, social workers, nurses, etc.) who intervene in these conflicts, the possible interest of each model for the actors concerned and for society as a whole, the limits of each model with regard to the actors concerned

¹ D. Geldof (2016), *Superdiversity in the Heart of Europe*, Leuven & The Hague, Acco; S. Vertovec (2007), *Super-diversity and its implications*, in «Ethnic and Racial Studies», 2007, XXX, n.6, pp. 1024-1054.

² A. Karkun – E. Jovelin (édité par) (2023), *Vers une paix durable? Une perspective interculturelle*, Editions du Cygne, Paris.

³ Y. Michaud (1996), *La violence*, Que sais-je, Paris.

and the resolution of conflicts, the criticism that can be made to each of these models⁴. Finally, the aim will be to illustrate, using concrete examples, the functioning of each model based on observations made mainly in the Swiss context. However, I will also discuss specific examples from other Western European societies. Obviously, the presentation of each model will be ideal-typical, in the Weberian sense, in order to better understand the operating logic of these models, while knowing that the empirical reality is much more nuanced and complex. I will conclude by discussing the evolution of these models throughout recent history and their implications for democratic societies.

2. The assimilationist model

The assimilationist model has been the classic way of managing cultural diversity in European societies. According to this model, each nation-state is considered a homogeneous cultural unit. Therefore, cultural diversity can threaten social cohesion, because it introduces a questioning of common rules and common ways of thinking, feeling and acting. However, society needs common standards and values to function. Ultimately, it would be possible to tolerate a certain variability, but people “who do not differ as they should”⁵ must be educated to respect common norms and values. Among them, racialised minorities and migrants are seen primarily as having problems and as causing problems because of their challenging cultural difference. The more important this difference appears to be, the more these people would be marginalized. The Swiss sociologist Hoffmann-Nowotny⁶ supported this thesis in a report on “The chances and risks of a multicultural society”. For him, these problematic visible minorities and migrants come from societies with a “mainly agrarian and often semi-feudal or feudal structure... Which from an internal point of view are still strongly oriented towards the tribe or clan, and can be the bearer of religions which have not yet experienced the Reformation and the Enlightenment”⁷.

Intervention is thus considered from a restorative perspective: families to care for, to educate, to emancipate, or to modernize⁸. They should be helped to overcome their deficits so that they can catch on to the train of progress. The idea is to strengthen their resources (linguistic, academic, cultural) so that they can make up the distance that separates them from the normality embodied by the mainstream institutions. The emphasis is therefore placed on learning about the majority culture, on school as a place for children to socialize. Indeed, a particular effort should be made on the younger generations in order to put them back on “the right path”. These young people need to be supported in order to overcome their deficits, adhere to the path planned for them and make up the distance that separates them from “normality”, thanks in particular to the

⁴ C. Bolzman (2009), *Modèles de travail social en lien avec les populations migrantes: enjeux et défis pour les pratiques professionnelles*, in «Pensée Plurielle», 2009, n. 21, pp. 41-51.

⁵ E. Jovelin (édité par) (2002), *Le travail social face à l'interculturalité. Comprendre les différences dans les pratiques d'accompagnement social*, L'Harmattan, Paris.

⁶ H.J. Hoffmann-Nowotny (1992), *Chancen und Risiken multikultureller Einwanderungsgesellschaften*, Conseil Suisse de la science, Berne, FER-Bericht, n. 119, p. 74.

⁷ Ibidem.

⁸ M. Vatz Laaroussi (2001), *Le familial au coeur de l'immigration. Les stratégies de citoyenneté des familles immigrantes au Québec et en France*, L'Harmattan, Paris.

educational institution. Furthermore, sanctions must be provided for those who do not respect the rules. Thus, in this model, the conflict can be resolved by forcing those who deviate from the dominant norm to submit to it. Members of minorities must become like members of the majority. It is therefore up to them to try hard, take a step towards the majority to deserve their place in a society that is supposed to function well. As can be observed, the dominant group presents its norms and values as universal and indisputable. It is up to minorities to comply with them to obtain a legitimate place in society⁹.

From this perspective, the professionals (teachers, social workers, nurses, etc.), are perceived as agents of normalization of minorities. They know what is good for them. They embody the standard and are responsible for enforcing it. They are agents of pacification who seek to instill dominant norms in those who have deviated from them.

This model is therefore above all built on the idea of allowing better social adaptation of young people from minorities, who should thus be able to benefit from social promotion compared to their parents' generation. The latter are indeed perceived, to a large extent, as a generation sacrificed for the good of their descendants. The problem is that this perspective risks accentuating the gap between generations, encouraging children's disloyalty towards their family and their ethnic group of origin. The strict application of this model can thus lead to social disorientation and identity disorders among young people, but also to increased tensions with the majority as a reaction to what is experienced as a non-negotiable imposition, a non-recognition of certain values, quite important to the members of their group.

The main criticism that can be addressed to this model is that it is based on a form of constraint, built on a very asymmetrical and unequal relationship between professionals and individuals, families or minority groups, to the point that it can recall forms of neocolonialism. Minorities perspectives are in fact hardly considered in this type of relationship and their room for maneuver vis-à-vis professionals is almost non-existent in the event of disagreement with them.

An extreme example of this model is the one of an organization working with young people in Switzerland called Pro Juventute. Between the 1930s and the early 1970s, this institution forcibly removed the children of the Yenish minority (people of Swiss nationality with a nomadic lifestyle) from their families and placed them in collective homes or with host families. The main reason of this intervention was to prevent Yenish children from becoming marginalized like their parents and to prepare them for being well adapted to the dominant culture. The idea was, through these forced placements, to give these children a better chance in social and economic life. Nowadays the disastrous results of this policy of forced assimilation are well known: none of the stated objectives was achieved and produced lasting trauma among the people concerned¹⁰. Moreover, a few decades later, Pro Juventute presented a public apology to the parents and their descendants. However, the damage was done. The same policy of forced placement was implemented for children from families that were

⁹ C. Bolzman (2019a), *Quelle inclusion des minorités? Éléments de réflexion, modalités et exemples*, in A.F. Dequire - S. Toulotte (édité par), *Le travail social à l'épreuve des minorités en Europe*, L'Harmattan, Paris, pp. 47-56.

¹⁰ T. Huonker (2005), *Une tache sombre. La tentative de détruire une minorité suisse au moyen de l'oeuvre des enfants de la grande route*, in M. Eckmann - M. Fleury (édité par), *Racisme(s) et citoyenneté. Un outil pour la réflexion et l'action*, Les éditions ies, Genève, pp. 127-138.

considered “abnormal” until the early 1980s, particularly children from single-parent families. Young minors have also been subjected to administrative detention for the sole reason of having engaged in behavior considered deviant (going out late at night, not sleeping at home, for example) with the same traumatic effects as for Yeshivah children. A commission of historians showed the harmful consequences of this policy and the federal authorities again apologized for the damage and compensated the victims.

Nowadays, assimilationist interventions do not reach these extremes, however they are still present in many areas of social life. For instance, a research on child abuse in the canton of Geneva between 1980 and 2005 shows that immigrant parents from working-class backgrounds are more often accused of being “bad parents” either through negligence or excessive authoritarianism. Whatever they do, they are surveyed more than other parents¹¹. Of course, family-related issues are particularly sensitive and the authorities are under pressure. In this context, it is not easy to define appropriate interventions.

3. The multicultural model

The assimilationist model is opposed to the multicultural model as a form of dealing with cultural diversity in European societies. According to this model, cultural diversity is part of contemporary societies and cannot be erased by legal or administrative impositions that would go against individual freedom or the cultural rights of individuals and groups. Thus, according to this model, each individual and each group has the right to live in accordance with their values and beliefs, as long as these do not threaten the basic foundation of democratic societies. This is a model strongly anchored in a liberal ideology and is more present, but not exclusively, in Anglo-Saxon societies¹².

In this sense, individuals and groups can enjoy cultural rights, such as freedom of belief, to organize themselves into ethnic communities to practice and transmit their language and customs. They can also benefit from state support to implement their rights. For example, they can go to school or work dressed according to the recommendations of their religious or ethnic community, they can benefit from exemptions not to go to school or work on certain holidays of their religion. They can also create and manage their own institutions, such as schools or cemeteries. They should be welcomed while taking their differences into account when they contact administrations or seek treatment in hospitals. From this perspective, minorities therefore have their place in the dominant society with their culture, their religion. They are recognized in their various affiliations and are not under pressure to cut ties with their ethnic or religious community.

In this model, conflicts between minorities and the majority are part of a multicultural society. They can be managed by allowing minorities to constitute a social space of their own and by respecting or strengthening their rights. Representatives of the majority can thus dialogue with representatives of minorities to jointly analyse the sources of conflict and try to find solutions to tensions. The majority must therefore be

¹¹ C. Delay – A. Frauenfelder (2005), *La maltraitance en tant que problème public et instrument d'encadrement des familles: analyse de l'émergence d'un nouveau régime éducatif de savoir-éduquer (1990-2005)*, in «Revue suisse de sociologie», 2005, XXXI, n. 2, pp. 383-406.

¹² I. Berlin (1973), *Trois essais sur la condition juive*, Calmann-Lévy, Paris.

careful not to abuse its dominant position and to facilitate channels of negotiation with representatives of groups defined as minorities.

According to this perspective, professionals mainly play the role of mediators who support minorities to form organized groups, to recognize and promote their collective identity, as well as to assert their rights and demands. They can thus be representatives of minorities to authorities and administrations and facilitate negotiations with them when necessary.

The limits of this model are found in the fact that it can encourage the creation of a fragmented society, a sort of mille-feuille made up of numerous superimposed layers, with little contact between them. Social cohesion would thus be restricted to each religious, ethnic, cultural group, but there would be low permeability between these groups, thus producing multiple barriers between them. This model would thus lead to a sort of 'indifference to differences', where individuals from different ethnic or religious communities tend to ignore each other or to dialogue with each other only when the limits of cohabitation become problematic and are likely to generate tensions.

Furthermore, this model risks contributing to an essentialization of culture, to make culture a sort of second nature ("that's how they are, it's their culture, it's their religion"). The crystallization of the identities of each person or group only reifies the identities of others persons or groups, thus leading to identity tensions which freeze and strain reciprocal relationships. The supposed homogeneity of each entity also creates an even greater imaginary distance between each other and makes the fluidity of social relations, communication between individuals from different communities and, more broadly, social cohesion more difficult.

In addition, tensions and conflicts between individuals from two communities perceived as culturally different can quickly lead to so-called intercommunity violence. Indeed, in this model individuals are not necessarily perceived in their singularity, but as representatives of a collective entity, and any tension with the member of another collective entity can be perceived as a problem which goes beyond the individuals concerned and involves all communities. Multiculturalism taken to the extreme would thus be a factor of tribalism and political disruption, ultimately negating any individual autonomy¹³. There is thus a risk of transforming inter-individual conflicts into inter-community conflicts.

A problematic example of multicultural management of tensions could be observed in certain working-class suburbs in France. In order to deal with the incivility and deviant behaviour of certain young people, municipal authorities have decided to instead hire "big brothers", namely older young people with ethnic origins similar to the majority of young people living in the neighbourhood, with the aim of easing tensions and pacifying social relations. The main legitimacy of these young people therefore did not come from their professional training (for example social work mediation, social education, psychology, etc.) but from their belonging to the same "ethnic group" or the same religious confession as the majority of young people in the neighbourhood. The authorities assumed that sharing the same origin or the same religion could thus facilitate the appeasement work of the "big brothers", regardless of their professional skills. They thus reinforced the logic of essentializing communities by creating a new

¹³ M. Wieviorka (1996), *Une société fragmentée ? Le multiculturalisme en débat*, La Découverte, Paris.

figure of pacification of conflicts in their municipality, while maintaining social distance between young people in the cities and other social actors¹⁴.

4. The intercultural model

The intercultural model is positioned critically both in relation to the assimilationist perspective and the multicultural perspective. In this model, culture is seen as a dynamic process of co-construction where the legacies of the past combine with the contributions that result from the present. Moreover, the intercultural model attempts to reconcile the right to be different with support for living together. Indeed, it starts from the presupposition that we live in plural, complex, diverse societies characterized by a wide variety of experiences, as well as normative and cultural referents. In this context, the inevitable misunderstandings, tensions and disputes that arise from cohabitation can nevertheless be resolved together¹⁵. In fact, it is about promoting living together by raising awareness of diverse lifestyles, and emphasizing similarities, aspirations and common objectives. Indeed, in this perspective, others are at the heart of social life. The core of the intervention is about doing things *with* others and not *for* others. While the assimilationist perspective intervenes “for the sake” of others, and the multicultural perspective tends to fade in front of others, the intercultural perspective aims to intervene *with* others. In the latter there is awareness about the fact that it is not possible to do for others, that their opinion counts. In this sense it is a perspective of recognition¹⁶. It is also a way of moving from a culture of suspicion of others to a culture of well-treatment¹⁷.

If we look at it from the point of view of professional intervention, users are not considered as objects. They exist fully as subjects. Their views are to be taken seriously; these are not childish or aberrant perspectives. They have opinions, meaningful ideas that must be respected. Professionals need to develop an empathetic approach, to try to put themselves in the place of the others, if they want to understand the logic that drives them in the circumstances they experience. As professionals cannot be living encyclopedias, their method of intervention is decentering and dialogue¹⁸. Decentering means being able to distance oneself from one's common sense, from what is self-evident, from one's mental habits, from one's routines. It also means accepting a certain destabilization and directing one's mind towards greater openness and creativity, but also being able to distinguish between personal and professional points of reference¹⁹. Furthermore, professionals need to accept that people are the greatest experts in their lives, then they are the ones who can best inform professionals about their values, their beliefs, their vision of the world. They are their essential partners, the preferred source

¹⁴ M. Boucher – A. Vulbeau (édité par) (2003), *Emergences culturelles et jeunesse populaires: turbulences ou médiations ?*, L'Harmattan, Paris.

¹⁵ C. Bolzman (2009), *Modèles de travail social...*, cit.

¹⁶ E. Jovelin (2020), *Les mineurs isolés étrangers à la recherche de la reconnaissance*, in C. Bolzman - E. Jovelin - C. Montgomery (édité par), *Mineurs isolés. Mineurs migrants séparés de leurs parents*, L'Harmattan, Paris, pp. 67-104.

¹⁷ J.E. Dumas (2005), *La dynamique de la bienveillance. Contextes psychologiques, sociaux et culturels*, in H. Desmet - J.P. Pourtois (édité par), *Culture et bienveillance*, De Boeck, Bruxelles, pp. 61-80.

¹⁸ M. Cohen-Emerique (2015), *Pour une approche interculturelle en travail social. Théories et pratiques*, Presses de l'EHESP, Paris.

¹⁹ M. Abdallah-Preteceille (2004), *L'éducation interculturelle*, P.U.F, Paris.

of the information they seek. It's up to professionals to place themselves in a position of dialogue that allows them to ask the right questions, but also to reveal part of themselves. Indeed, to dialogue, to exchange, it takes two people, and to establish a relationship of mutual respect and trust. These ideas are quite developed in intercultural education.

This posture is the key to arriving at common constructions through negotiation. In a negotiation, the starting point is the idea that all the interlocutors have a respectable or legitimate point of view in an initial situation which can be tense. For example, in a relationship between users and professionals, users can defend interests and values that are important to them. On the other hand, professionals need to consider their legal framework, their mandates, their objectives, their points of view which they must make known and assert in a negotiation. The intercultural perspective is inspired by democratic principles by considering that both parties have legitimate perspectives and interests. The objective is to find solutions acceptable to all parties, or the least bad possible, when considering the context and the resources available²⁰. This means that interculturality is not always a smooth river. Indeed, a participatory, democratic approach almost necessarily involves moments of friction²¹, tensions and conflict. However, conflict, if it finds clear channels of expression and within the framework of well-defined rules, is the best path against accumulated resentment and frustration, as well as against violence.

Indeed, through negotiation, which can be more or less calm or conflictual, partners can build what in Quebec is called "reasonable accommodations", which make it possible to consider the particularities of certain minorities (for example clothing style, public holidays) in a spirit of interculturality and equal rights, while ensuring the maintenance of a common living environment for all residents. The idea of reasonable accommodation is precisely to adapt social practices to greater diversity, while limiting variability to what society considers possible, without jeopardizing its cohesion. Accommodation can mean adjusting a practice or a general operating rule or granting an exemption to persons who find themselves in a situation of discrimination²².

Reasonable accommodations can for instance be carried out within institutions such as schools, hospitals, nursing homes, school canteens which rethink their models of educating, caring or supporting and question the equation according to which equality is synonymous with uniformity²³.

An example of reasonable accommodation is the *Horizon Académique* program established by the universities of the canton of Geneva in Switzerland. Many people seeking asylum and having started university studies in their country of origin wanted to continue their studies in Switzerland, but they did not have the certificates from their country or the academic recognition procedure was too long. The universities of Geneva adapted to this demand and decided that it was necessary to give these exiles an opportunity by allowing them to follow a first year as auditors, while benefiting from

²⁰ C. Bolzman (2019b), *La figure de l'étranger et la perspective interculturelle: quelles articulations possibles?*, in T. Mekideche - F. Tanon (édité par), *L'interculturel, d'hier à demain. De la lente construction d'un champ épistémologique*, L'Harmattan, Paris, pp. 55-76.

²¹ A. Manço (2016), *Compétences interculturelles: entre droit à la diversité et nécessité de vivre ensemble*, in «Service social dans le Monde», 2016, n.3-4, pp. 135-143.

²² C. Bolzman (2019a), *Quelle inclusion des minorités...*, cit.

²³ M. Eckmann – C. Bolzman (2001-2002), *Quelle place pour l'interculturel dans la formation des travailleurs sociaux ?*, in «Ecart d'identité», 2001-2002, n. 98, pp. 37-41.

mentoring of other students, the support of social workers, of courses in French and academic orientation. If they successfully passed the exams at the end of the first year, they were eligible to enroll as regular students the following year. The program is already over five years old and has been very successful. Through this reasonable accommodation each party has made an effort to adapt to the other for the benefit of all partners.

However, without this institutional will of those in a position of power to seek reasonable accommodations, the risk is, however, that dialogue and negotiation cannot take place and that minoritized people are not heard and are neglected. This is the main limitation of the intercultural model. Because to find equitable solutions, adequate conditions that allow real negotiation are needed. Too great an asymmetry in power relations can in fact block dialogue, unless a third party can rebalance relations and push for mediation.

5. Discussion

Tensions and conflicts linked to cultural diversity, ethnic or religious affiliations are unfortunately not new in European societies, nor are the violence that can result from them. The European continent has a long history of wars, persecutions, massacres, genocides in the name of the “good” nation, the “good” religion, the “good” culture, the “good” ethnicity, the “good race”. After the end of the Second World War and its terrible atrocities, a new hope for the emergence of a more peaceful world was born. “Never again” was a key sentence. Both at the national and international level, political, legal and social mechanisms aimed at preventing the resurgence of old demons were built. However, colonization, racism and xenophobia did not disappear and led to new forms of violence against those who were designated as less human, less civilized, inferior, too different.

Historically, after the Second World War, assimilationism was the first response to the question of otherness. The idea was that if the Other could disappear in the aspects of his difference which made him an alien, it would be possible to coexist peacefully with him. Every society build forms of homogenization through various processes and mechanisms, often implicit and embedded in everyday life²⁴. However, this model goes further and practice a form of cultural anthropophagy²⁵. It’s about literally swallowing the Other, making them disappear in their most glaring differences, so that they can be perceived as similar. However, empirical evidence shows that there always remains a suspicion of otherness which makes assimilation impossible and relegates the Other to the margins. Furthermore, they are often object of discrimination in many areas of social life. Indeed, assimilationist model, in its most extreme version, became often universalist racism²⁶. If the others are not treated as equals, it is because they are criticized for not wanting to give up their particularities. The others then become the prisoners of a paradoxical logic: they are asked to become similar, but at the same time they are forbidden to become similar and they are blamed because they do not want to become similar. Thus, it is their fault if they are discriminated. Hence, all

²⁴ A. Schutz (1944), *The Stranger: An Essay in Social Psychology*, in «The American Journal of Sociology», 1944, 49, n. 6, pp. 499-507.

²⁵ E. Jovelin (édité par) (2002), *Le travail social face à l’interculturalité...*, cit.

²⁶ P.A. Taguieff (1988), *La force du préjugé. Essai sur le racisme et ses doubles*, La Découverte, Paris.

the ingredients are brought together for this impasse to lead to forms of violence in an attempt to overcome the resulting tensions.

Multiculturalism appears at first glance to be a model more open to otherness because it would not impose a hierarchy between different cultures. It even values their expression and recognition on the public stage. This recognition should make tensions less acute and society more peaceful. However, certain forms of multiculturalism can hide contempt for others in the name of the right to be different. They can also lead to a society organized in watertight silos where the freedom to free oneself from the norms of “one's” group and to invent new spaces is difficult to acquire. Such a rigid society can thus lead to forms of “inter-community” violence at the slightest spark.

The intercultural approach offers the prospect of trying to reconcile the recognition of plurality with the need to form a society with others, whoever they may be. This perspective better corresponds to the spirit of co-construction of democratic societies. Even if it is not free of tensions and obstacles, it offers a method to try to resolve the inevitable problems linked to living together and to try to free oneself from fears linked to the unknown.

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