The Issue Of Multiculturalism And The Politics Of Recognition In Charles Taylor's Thought

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Abstract:

Multiculturalism is one of the most significant features of the postmodern world, a world dominated by ethnicities, nationalities, and tribal affiliations. This contrasts with the modern era, which focused extensively on the unity of the nation-state, its culture, economy, and institutions. Until the 1970s, the prevailing notion was that all cultures would eventually fade away due to economic prosperity and the application of fundamental civil human rights. However, in practice, the 1980s saw the resurgence and re-emergence of cultures within Western nations themselves. In this context, multiculturalism has become one of the most controversial theories, as it seeks to transform the philosophical structure of the nation-state, making it a reflection of cultural diversity. The issue of multiculturalism and minorities is closely linked to the demand for recognition, a demand that has become increasingly urgent and cannot be ignored. This demand is particularly emphasized by various social groups and political movements, such as feminist movements, indigenous black communities, and linguistic and religious minorities. This paper seeks to explore these issues from the perspective of the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor. The problem addressed in this study can be defined through several questions, which will be clarified later.

Keywords: Charles Taylor, Multiculturalism, Politics of Recognition, Identity.

1. Introduction:

Contemporary philosophy has opened new horizons for philosophical thought, moving beyond knowledge to explore values. It has revisited numerous issues that had not been previously addressed in history. In our era, characterized by increasing cultural diversity and individual and collective challenges, recognition becomes essential. Multiculturalism, initially a liberal theory centered on individual freedom, faces criticism for being biased toward specific cultures. Communitarian critics, in particular, argue that recognizing diverse cultures is a fundamental demand, emphasizing identity politics and advocating against marginalizing minority cultures or denying them their rights.

One of the foremost philosophers to address these topics is Charles Taylor, the contemporary Canadian philosopher (born November 5, 1931), who has contributed significantly to the development of ethical thought and the understanding of principles and values. Taylor has presented numerous ideas that enrich philosophical discussions about society and political life. He articulated his vision of the good life and the standards individuals should follow in their perceptions and choices, addressing topics spanning political, cultural, and social philosophy. Taylor is particularly renowned

472 | Dr. Chahida Lamouri In Charles Taylor's Thought The Issue Of Multiculturalism And The Politics Of Recognition

for his theory on recognition and multiculturalism, which forms the basis of this study.

Taylor's theory is set within the framework of multiculturalism policies, ultimately concluding in his ethical-political philosophy that the absence of recognition constitutes a form of cultural injustice. This theory is among the most prominent of our time, as it emphasizes the importance of recognizing individual and collective identities and minority groups to achieve human unity within a framework of respect for diversity and difference. Taylor's philosophy of recognition highlights the moral dimensions and their role in building a just and cohesive society. It focuses on the ethics of authenticity and respect, enabling individuals to express their personal identities, respect others, and achieve mutual benefit for the entire community.

Therefore, the concept of the politics of recognition stands as one of the most significant contemporary philosophical notions, closely associated with Charles Taylor and tied to the major challenges of the 21st century, particularly cultural differences and the explosion of sub-identities. This raises the following questions: How did Charles Taylor conceptualize the theory of recognition? And what is its relation to multiculturalism?

First: Study Concepts:

1. The Concept of the Politics of Recognition and Its Philosophical Foundation

The concept of recognition is commonly used in Western contexts, referring to the range of political conflicts arising from the increasing challenges of this era. These conflicts are linked to demands for freedom of expression, equality, and respect for migrants, refugees, and minority groups.

Charles Taylor offers a distinctive approach to addressing these conflicts and challenges through the politics of recognition. He is one of the most prominent thinkers in this field, exploring issues stemming from cultural differences within societies. Taylor proposed the politics of recognition to ensure acknowledgment of others and minority groups who have historically suffered due to various nationalist political movements. For Taylor, recognition is an urgent demand to maintain equality, freedom, mutual dignity, and acknowledgment of others.

In essence, Taylor's concept of recognition is about acknowledging others and minority cultures. It is a political recognition aimed at legitimizing certain collective rights. The purpose of this theory is to achieve general recognition of identities to maintain stability between culture and social conditions. Taylor bases recognition on two main ideas:

The first idea is that humans are social beings; thus, identities are connected to social interaction rather than isolation, as well as to dialogue and communication. Through these, individuals discover their sense of self and their inherent goodness. A self that is reconciled and sincerely coexists with others respects individual differences and diversity, while upholding the principles of equality and fairness. An individual's position within their environment is determined through the process of self-discovery and recognition by others.

The second idea is that humans are moral beings, defined by the standards of mutual respect. (1) According to Taylor, ethics is not merely about avoiding harm to others and respecting their rights; it goes beyond that to include giving life meaning through solidarity, freedom, respect, justice, and equality. These values contribute to shaping and forming identities, and individuals must embody them within the moral sphere (2).

Charles Taylor views recognition as a necessary and urgent need, not only on the national level but also on a global scale. Recognition plays a critical role in forming an individual's identity and shaping

the self. The absence of recognition, or distorted (negative) recognition, harms the individuals involved and can be considered an injustice or even a form of oppression.

For example, women in European societies often have a distorted image of themselves and their identities. This distorted image persists in their minds to the extent that even when external barriers to their freedom are removed, internal obstacles remain, preventing them from achieving full liberation. This is what is referred to as the lack of recognition. Distorted recognition implies that, even if external barriers are lifted, internal barriers continue to hinder the formation of identity or self, leaving it incomplete.

In such cases, the victim may grow to dislike herself and her identity. Thus, recognition becomes a vital human need. Protection must also extend to individuals who have faced adverse circumstances and are unable to realize their potential in the usual way. Consequently, Taylor's theory aims to shape the identity of individuals both as individuals and as part of a culture, emphasizing the need to respect this potential (3).

The politics of recognition is considered one of the fundamental concepts for renewing the discourse of Western modernity, especially as its aim is to move beyond liberal monism toward a dialogical model of human identity. Undoubtedly, the true recognition emphasized by Taylor is the kind that leads to integration and blending, based on openness and dialogue.

As for the philosophical foundation of the politics of recognition, Charles Taylor has a clear approach to addressing cultural diversity through this policy. He historically grounded his discussion by drawing on the philosophical heritage to establish a philosophical vision of recognition, particularly as the topic had not been previously explored in philosophical work.

When discussing the concept of recognition, Hegel inevitably comes to mind. However, according to Taylor's perspective, the issue goes beyond that. He sought even earlier foundations, as he emphasized by stating, "The Hegelian presence comes to mind through the master-slave dialectic, which is an important stage, but we need to go a bit further back." (4).

According to Charles Taylor, there is a necessity to establish a new understanding of the politics of recognition based on a philosophical foundation. With Jean-Jacques Rousseau, we find the nucleus of the idea of citizen dignity and recognition, even if specific terms were not yet defined. Rousseau is considered a serious critic of inequality, particularly when it emerges as a pivotal moment leading society toward corruption and injustice. At this point, people begin to prioritize dignity within a republican society where everyone can participate in light of the common good (5).

Thus, Charles Taylor believed that Rousseau could be viewed as one of the founders of the discourse on recognition—not because he used the term, but because he reflected on the importance of respect, which is indispensable for freedom (6).

Based on this perspective, it becomes evident that the concept of recognition is closely linked to other notions such as political and social equality, respect, freedom, authenticity, and dignity. These are all concepts necessitated by the condition of injustice, the lack of recognition of the other, the denial of their social and political rights, and the condescending and distorted view of their culture and, consequently, their identity.

Through this, it is evident that Charles Taylor built his philosophy of recognition on a unique interpretation of Hegel, whose work he analyzed in Hegel and Modern Society. Taylor relied on Hegel's distinction between objective ethics and subjective ethics: objective ethics being the shared values of a community, and subjective ethics referring to the individual morals followed by an individual. From this, Taylor concluded that self-identity cannot be constructed outside a moral and social system.

He translated this distinction into the realm of identity, which is formed through the process of self-discovery and self-recognition by others within a social and cultural environment. This is akin to what Rousseau called "the feeling of existence." Taylor used this concept as a foundation for his exploration of identity. However, he did not limit his foundation to Hegel's philosophy alone. He also turned to other sources, such as Rousseau's ideas on dignity and Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), with whom he found the basis for the authenticity of the self. This served as a stepping stone for Taylor's effort to establish recognition of the collective.

2. The concept of multiculturalism:

emerged in the contemporary era due to the pressing need brought about by social and political changes, the rise of various forms of violence, and the fight for human rights. This is a result of the migration of nations and tribes to other regions, such as Asians, Britons, and groups with separate territories, as well as the case of the indigenous people of Canada. In these instances, there is a demand for political recognition, including the recognition of certain religious groups in the United States. The reasons for migration include the search for a better place to live, some people fleeing from degrading injustice and leaving their homeland, while others may be forced by colonizers to leave their country and migrate to another.

In the last two decades, human societies around the world have witnessed significant changes, and the calls for official recognition of cultural diversity and pluralism have increased. While there is acknowledgment of cultural diversity today, its recognition has appeared in various forms, leading to different viewpoints. Some see it as a reality that can yield many benefits, while others view it as a basis for demanding respect for their identity. (8)

It should be noted that, for Taylor, the concept of multiculturalism refers to ethnic and national diversity, that is, it pertains to races and nations. Undoubtedly, this concept, despite attempts at definition, remains somewhat ambiguous and varies depending on cultural and political contexts. It includes the multiplicity of nationalities, ethnicities, small cultural groups, and marginalized minorities. Taylor suggests here: "We must search for a language that allows for cultural diversity, which, in part, means finding a language capable of interpreting modernity in multiple ways, or finding a flexible understanding of modernity that allows for the expression of other conceptions beyond the Western perspective" (9).

The meaning of this is that the policy of recognition and multiculturalism does not aim to dismantle the project of Western modernity, but rather seeks to create new concepts capable of understanding diversity, pluralism, and difference. Multiculturalism reflects the fundamental differences between cultures and races, and it is a contemplation of diversity within the scope of the state. Will Kymlicka argues that Western Europe's focus on minority issues was not driven by a humanitarian need to stop the racial persecution minorities face, but rather contains an underlying fear of racial violence. Additionally, the West believes that respecting minorities contributes to the political maturity of states that have been able to overcome racial differences and thus include them within their scope as a form of containment. (10)

Multiculturalism has several definitions. Anthropology uses the concept of multiculturalism to refer to groups whose lifestyles differ significantly from one another, meaning that there are several groups with distinct ways of life. This diversity can be used to understand cultural and social differences between these groups. Anthropology helps in studying and understanding diverse cultures and explaining the factors that influence the formation of each group's way of life. (11)

In political science, multiculturalism refers to groups with noticeable differences and unique characteristics living in specific geographical areas. It highlights the cultural differences and unique features of these groups and how they are influenced by the geographical environment in which they live, in order to gain a deep understanding of the social, political, and cultural relations occurring within these groups and between them and other groups.

Multiculturalism emphasizes beliefs, values, and ways of life in creating a sense of self-worth for both individuals and groups, while avoiding domination or assimilation into a dominant culture. It grants recognition to distinct cultural characteristics.

Second: From Multiculturalism to the Politics of Recognition:

Charles Taylor begins his discussion of multiculturalism by critiquing the liberal rights approach adopted by the liberalism of democratic societies. This approach promotes the principle and policy of equal respect for some rights over others, such as the right to life, freedom of expression, and freedom of religion, but these are limited rights—such as the use of language. It does not allow minorities to use their language in any transactions, forcing them to conform to the official language of the state. This was seen in Quebec, where the government enforced the use of French as the common and public language for education, work, communication, trade, and all activities. (12)

However, Quebec in Canada has made positive efforts to reconcile ethnic and cultural diversity while maintaining social cohesion.

Taylor believes this perspective is unjust to the existence of cultural, linguistic, or religious diversity, explaining it by the dominance of the prevailing and hegemonic culture without respecting the cultural and religious differences that exist. Therefore, Taylor argues that the policy of equal respect is unjust and unsuitable given the actual differences. (13)

According to Taylor, the assumption of equal value for all cultures helps explain the foundation of multicultural demands based on the basic principles of the politics of equal respect. To affirm the equal value of cultures and the recognition of differences, Taylor advocates for the implementation of a policy of recognition as a serious political commitment towards all cultures. Therefore, he emphasizes the need to create a new model that can politically recognize the right of groups to diversity and difference. (14)

In this sense, Taylor calls for a solution that allows different cultures not only to survive but to be recognized for their equal value in language, religion, and culture. Thus, recognizing the value of a culture means recognizing the value of what that culture has accomplished.

Third: The Role of Recognition in Shaping Identity:

The discourse on the recognition of cultural, ethnic, and religious identities emerged in North America during the 1960s and 1970s as part of the struggle of minorities to gain their rights. (15) Recognition and dialogue play a crucial role in the formation of self-identity. Taylor highlights one of the most important points, which is the recognition of cultural diversity, and respecting others is an essential part of the process of building self-identity and recognizing individual identity, which enhances self-confidence. The policy of recognition represents equality, and on this basis, Taylor emphasizes that the denial of recognition is a form of oppression. (16) This is what is referred to as the identity crisis in the presence of negative recognition. Individuals may experience an identity crisis when their identity is ignored, leading to feelings of alienation and inadequacy, which negatively affect the development of personal identity.

Therefore, the policy of recognition aims to provide a framework that ensures respect and

appreciation for identity diversity in a multicultural society. This expression of diversity is defined according to the demands of identities. Taylor emphasizes that every ethical and political identity that cannot coexist with modernity becomes in conflict with the policy of recognition. (17)

Here, we include what Taylor said about the necessity of recognizing cultural diversity, stating: "We must seek a language that allows for recognition of cultural diversity, which in part means finding a language capable of considering modernity as open to multiple interpretations and different ways, or creating a flexible understanding of modernity that allows for expressions of other conceptions beyond the Western view." (18) This means that modernity must adapt to everything that is diverse and different.

Thus, when identities interact with the values of modernity, such as tolerance, social justice, equality, and freedom, they can actively participate in society and gain the recognition they deserve, which enhances cultural diversity in communities. Recognition has many manifestations, one of which is the struggle for recognition. It becomes clear that this struggle is not a new phenomenon, as in the past, these struggles took the form of conflicts over religious and ethnic majorities. Today, however, the struggle is primarily seen in the context of ethnic and religious minorities, women's movements, and marginalized groups, who are the active elements.

Thus, recognition has become an urgent demand and a condition for human existence. In this context, Taylor starts with the principle that identity is closely linked to forms of recognition. He believes that in societies with cultural diversity, recognition becomes a necessary need, and he connects recognition with identity.

Taylor explains that mutual recognition plays a crucial role in developing the sense of self and belonging. When an individual's value and dignity are recognized by others, this positively impacts personal identity. On the other hand, a lack of recognition, neglect, or humiliation leads to the deterioration of self-esteem and the marginalization of identity. From this, Taylor concludes that modern identity is formed in a dialogical manner.

In this context, Taylor's philosophy relies on the idea that personal identity is formed through expressing our inner feelings and thoughts and interacting with them in the external world. This process is not merely the projection of emotions but is part of self-formation and affirmation. True self-understanding requires continuous interaction between the inner and the outer, where external experiences contribute to shaping personal identity and self-awareness. He suggests that the selfhood is inseparable from the ethical issues and identities we carry. Identity is not just an internal reflection but is shaped through the relationships and values we adopt in our daily lives. Thus, he affirms that every individual has an inner essence, which consists of their feelings, thoughts, and deep values. This essence is not fixed but is shaped and developed through life experiences and social interactions. The internal essence of an individual needs recognition to thrive and develop healthily, and this projection leads us to feel that we have selves.(19)

From here, we see that the dangers threatening identity are the lack of recognition, which leads to feelings of humiliation and contempt. Therefore, Taylor strives to build a democratic, pluralistic society where all cultural and social identities are recognized equally and universally. This ensures that every individual is respected and valued by society(20). Hence, recognition is one of the fundamental factors in shaping identity, both on an individual and collective level. Through recognition, an individual feels valued and respected, which strengthens the formation of stable and authentic identities.

It is noticeable that the presence of an individual within a group implies the possibility of shaping their identity according to that group, while emphasizing the authenticity of the self. The formation

of this identity begins within the family, and even the conflict with the different others will have an impact on the formation of the self's identity, as it represents a form of dialogue. This conflict does not disappear with the disappearance of those with whom the individual engages, as it becomes part of their identity. Dialogue is expressed through mutual disclosure, and this understanding is also connected to a shift in the perspective on understanding identity. Therefore, dialogue plays a role in understanding the self and in the formation of identity, which remains open to any new changes.

Based on this perspective, it can be said that recognition contributes to the formation of the self's identity, and that dialogue is considered a form of this recognition within the group. The research can also shift from the recognition of the individual to the recognition of the group. The identity of the individual is shaped by recognition, and similarly, the identity of the group is shaped by recognition. This applies to dialogue as well, which represents recognition. Through this, the possibility of reshaping identity according to new changes is realized. However, in the case of a lack of recognition, it leads to a stubborn attachment to an identity that becomes closed off due to contempt and marginalization.

Today, many democratic societies are witnessing strong and significant demands for the recognition of identities in their various forms, including religious, racial, ethnic, linguistic, intellectual, and others. Recognition is one of the key concepts in multiculturalism, whose formulation can be attributed to Charles Taylor. In this context, he emphasizes the idea that in societies with cultural diversity, recognition becomes a necessary need, given the relationship between recognition and identity. This leads to the recognition of the rights of minorities to protect their distinct cultures from the majority and others.

For this reason, Taylor emphasizes that the rights and freedoms of individuals and communities must be guaranteed, as this promotes justice, cooperation, and achieves balance in comprehensive development and prosperity. Taylor stresses that cultural diversity should be an integral part of political concepts and citizenship, where countries and societies should approach cultural diversity positively and reward citizens with their rights and dignity. (21)

Charles Taylor links the concept of cultural diversity to the ethics of authenticity, as authenticity nourishes the differences that form cultural diversity in building positive relationships and coexistence among peoples and societies. The principle of individual identity strongly supports the principles of authenticity and dignity, allowing individuals to freely define their identity and values, which contributes to enhancing their respect and recognition as individuals deserving of dignity and respect in society. (22)

Charles Taylor adds that authenticity is best achieved when an individual has the freedom to express themselves without the strict constraints of fixed standards and a self-isolating nature. The critique of the rigid and isolating self lies in the adherence to fixed rules and standards. Taylor argues that the isolating self heavily relies on such rules, which encourage individuals to renew and innovate in expressing their identity and life. However, this leads to the loss of diversity and vitality in experiences and interactions with the world, ultimately freezing the identity. Therefore, Taylor believes that excessive reliance on the isolating self can lead to the freezing of a person's identity. This is why the ethics of authenticity criticizes the isolating self, which focuses on rational control that results in limitations on personal expression and diversity in behaviors and decisions. (23)

Thus, Taylor believes that recognizing cultural and social diversity contributes to enhancing authenticity, as individuals can interact with others and build genuine, diverse relationships. Recognition of oneself, others, and one's social and cultural environment are essential aspects in building authenticity and engaging constructively with the surrounding world. Ethics are what give

meaning to our lives and make them authentic. Authenticity is living according to the values of ethical modernity, which include freedom, justice, equality, and liberation from authority. (24)

What we conclude is that authenticity means living intimately with others according to ethical values. If recognition is the foundation for achieving ethics and authenticity in social life, then attention to ethics is an essential part of striving for an authentic and meaningful life.

As for the concept of equality between individuals and groups, Taylor emphasizes the need to replace it with the notion of justice and fairness, which aligns and responds to multicultural societies. He explains why he adopts the concept of justice, as it ensures balance among members of society by encouraging dialogue and understanding between different cultures. Justice alone is not ethically sufficient, and another principle must replace it: the principle of fairness, which considers specific situations and contexts. It aims to achieve balance among society's members by promoting dialogue and understanding between various cultures. This principle is essential for ensuring peaceful, balanced coexistence and achieving justice and equality among individuals in society. (25)

The meaning here is that fairness and justice, as ethical values, practically contribute to establishing the foundations of societal balance, ensuring coexistence, communication, and understanding among culturally diverse social groups, resulting in living in peace and security.

Fourth: Critique of Taylor's Recognition Policy:

Despite the value and appreciation that the recognition policy receives, it has faced numerous objections and criticisms. One of the main critics is the socialist left, which is an intellectual and political movement focused on social justice, equality, and workers' rights. The socialist left has criticized Taylor's theory on several points. As mentioned earlier, Taylor emphasizes the necessity of recognizing diversity and respecting the rights of minorities worldwide. However, socialist critics argue that the recognition policy is ineffective and leads to the conclusion that cultures can be measured and defined, which contradicts the inherent differences between diverse and unequal cultures.

They also point out that treating various cultures on the basis of equal respect assumes the ability to make comparisons between cultures, which is impossible, as cultural values are not measurable or evaluable. According to them, such policies suffer from contradictions and difficulties in implementation, leading to anxiety and tension, especially among minority cultural groups. (26)

On the other hand, the British philosopher Brian Barry (1936–2009) offers a critique of Taylor's concept of recognition, arguing that it leads to the politicization or political activation of groups and their demands. He contends that Taylor's focus on granting specific rights to each culture is problematic, as culture is not a kind of entity to which rights can properly be attributed. This, according to Barry, results in divisions and tensions within society. He argues that culture is an unsuitable entity to grant political rights and emphasizes individual rights, viewing individuals as equal citizens within a single legal system, where all individuals enjoy equal rights regardless of their collective identities. (27)

Among the critics of the recognition of diverse and multiple cultures is the Canadian Philosopher Will Kymlicka, who argues that the cultural diversity of modern societies requires the state to remain neutral regarding the development and support of the idea of the good. (28)

As for the American thinker Nancy Fraser, she strongly emphasizes that the policy of recognition is ineffective, as it cannot address the reality of injustice, marginalization, and deprivation experienced by people. She refers here to two types of injustice: cultural or symbolic injustice, as well as economic injustice. (29)

Despite the criticisms and objections directed at the policy of recognition, it remains a political and ethical call to preserve different cultures and maintain cultural communication and civilizational continuity through all that is ethical and authentic. It ensures the preservation of self-identity, avoiding cultural isolation while promoting cultural interaction. A culture cannot be imagined without any connection to other cultures, and this ensures the survival, continuity, and development of the self.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, what is referred to as Taylor's policy of recognition is one of the most important concerns and issues sought by humanity as a whole. In this paper, our philosopher has tried to find political and ethical solutions to the cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity that cannot be overlooked in the world. This is achieved through the establishment of an ethical philosophy that does not disown the other, but rather recognizes and calls for embracing it without any conditions, prerequisites, or barriers related to gender, race, or religion.

The need for recognition of the other has thus become a human necessity and an urgent demand, meaning the respect for the different other and openness to cultures in order to preserve the authenticity of identities and the distinctiveness of human groups.

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