Multicultural and Multi-ethnic Societies

by

Henri Giordan

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This UNESCO programme encourages research on the interconnection of identity problems with the development of democracy (1). The decline of the two main systems of thought which have dominated contemporary history - liberal universalism and Marxist universalism - in fact the end of the great empires, has coincided with an increase in nationalism, religious fundamentalism and a whole range of xenophobic and racist attitudes. These phenomena seem to us to be exerting a decisive pressure on social development and have in the past given rise to events with tragic consequences for humanity, ranging from wars between nations in the nineteenth century to totalitarian regimes, Fascism, Nazism and Stalinism. It is distressing to find this return to identity « values » taking place within a context of acute economic crisis world-wide today as in the 1930s. « Identities » which set themselves up as standards and have no place for otherness and difference belong to the logic of totalitarianism. The social context, like the intellectual environment in which this explosion of « identities » is taking place, gives us good reason to dread developments similar to those that resulted in totalitarian systems and the Second World War.

This trend is even more worrying in that it is very widespread. For several years the development of nationalist and xenophobic movements has run counter to the trend towards economic globalization and the establishment of areas of multinational economic solidarity. This movement is strengthened by the emergence of new formulations of the claims of minorities designated as « ethnico-national » or even « linguistico-cultural » (2). This process of differentiation is bound up with the assertion of independence by the most diverse social groups, within developed Nation-States, which is a particularly wide-spread social phenomenon and clear sign of the increasing segmentation of modern societies.

However, we should not forget the positive side of this situation. In many ways the universalisms which are now in such confusion were fronts for very specific ideological and geopolitical interests. The rediscovery of paths towards autonomy which would show regard for the wishes of the greatest number of people could quite rightly be considered very encouraging. After all, our era is also « the age of rights » (3) and among fundamental rights, it now seems legitimate to include the recognition of diversity which safeguards the identity of each individual as well as the existence of various « collective identities ».

Multicultural and multi-ethnic societies thus pose problems which raise fundamental questions about the organization of our civilizations. What is at stake is so important that comprehensive consideration of the causes of this situation has become a matter of urgency. Given the scale of these phenomena, it seems vital to re-examine the approaches adopted by the social sciences so as to equip ourselves intellectually to combat retrograde tendencies which, although they are taking new shapes, nonetheless constitute a threat to peace and development. However, if we simply express our misgivings at the excessive demands associated with « identity », we might be

missing the point. Our aim should be to forge conceptual tools which can respond to these demands without sacrificing the universalist imperative to protect and develop fundamental human rights (4).

1. DIFFERENT APPROACHES

A combination of different approaches may make it possible to grasp the complexity of these phenomena. We can describe their importance for the comprehension of contemporary societies by proposing a theme for reflection, both historical and philosophical, on the overall evolution of societies, and then adopt a geopolitical approach, which has the advantage of casting a clearer light on contemporary social movements.

1.1 An overall approach

Reflection on contemporary European history reveals the existence of a historical trend which makes it easier to identify the key problems at issue in multicultural and multi-ethnic societies. We would have to clarify this (tentative) view of our history and see if the two extremes observed in Europe are pitted against each other in other world regions, and if so in what ways.

- There is, on the one hand, an effort which is the force driving human progress itself, to overcome identity constraints and to draw up rules which guarantee the freedom of the individual and collective life in a State governed by the law and maybe tomorrow in a law-abiding society.

- Yet, on the other hand, there is a tendency to fall back on identities which generates new types of ethnic, national or religious fundamentalism. The emergence of preoccupations with identity can be backward-looking and reflects a felt need to counterbalance ethnocidal tendencies caused by the technological advances of recent decades (5).

1.1.1. Freedom from the confines of « identity »

The concept of progress and modernity meant first of all controlling an increasingly large area of freedom. Modern democracies were constructed on this basis by fighting for individual autonomy against the types of order traditionally structuring society. This fundamental progress of civilization was reflected in the acknowledgement of freedom of opinion and of the press and in the right to form associations and political parties and culminated in the definition of human rights. The social definition of individuals - through social power (serfdom, gender domination), through political power (suzerainty) and, in a more profound way, through religious control - gradually gave way to the definition of individuals in the private realm. Secularism can be seen in this long progression as the social hallmark of the movement towards increasing autonomy for both men and women.

We subsequently can extend this reasoning on the liberation of human archaisms to a limitless theory on the freedom of the individual with respect to the « social ». At the dawn of the twentieth century, Europe witnessed the destruction of its most firmly rooted identities. In this situation, individuals learn to construct their own identity and to manage their own existence without the help of the social order and its ready-made rules. In his meditation on Viennese culture at the turn of the century, Jacques Le Rider pointed out « this lack of definition can be extremely fertile, encouraging combinations of the most extraordinary variety and richness » (6). For a long time, this movement quite rightly has been regarded as the very essence of the progress of civilization. But it is counterbalanced by a second phenomenon of comparable magnitude.

1.1.2 The re-establishment of identities

This game of self-creation came to an abrupt halt following the First World War. The pre-occupation with national identity which was associated with the emergence of fascist ideologies led to a use of the theme of identity which was to be pushed to extremes by Nazism. The women's liberation movement and the integration of Jews into German society were both brutally curtailed. The savage « restoration » of identity in the Nazi mind formed the basis for racist behaviour and institutionalized violence. A caricatural portrayal of « feminine nature » made possible the subjection of women to unrestricted male domination. Identity was no longer an individual attribute that could be displayed or concealed as the individual chose. For Jews, it was determined by birth, inevitably, and then reduced to its simplest expression, that of a stamp not only on certificates of birth, marriage and death but also on the individual. The yellow star was an instrument of exclusion and a passport to the death camps.

The resumption of efforts to remove identity driven constraints coincided with the return of economic growth from the 1950s onwards. It was reflected in a rich diversity of cultural and social creativity, including the contributions of intellectual movements such as existentialism and various kinds of structuralism and the social innovations of the 1960s and 1970s, from the progress made by Women's Lib to independence movements (7). Since the end of the 1970s, these civilizing movements have been seriously challenged once again by a regressive social trend which is now reflected in an archaic conception of social relations that, recently, the philosopher Michel Serres described as « the most inegalitarian, savage and murderous [...] that history has ever known » (8).

Over the last 15 years we have observed a forceful return to identity « values » which are perceived as a remedy for the despair brought about by the present state of social relations. This tendency can be no more than the harmless re-emergence of an ineradicable nostalgia for a mythical golden age, but it can also, more dangerously take the form of a new domineering fundamentalism. We would do well to bear in mind that this return to identity « values » is now, as in the 1930s, set in a context of a serious economic crisis.

While realizing that history does not automatically repeat itself, we are aware that barbarity thrives on uncontrolled swings between individual freedom and the re-establishment of « identity ». But is this enough to pave the way for solutions enabling freedom to be enjoyed without paying the dreadful price of collective movements intolerant of the freedom that the individual seeks? The challenge today is to find ways of reconciling these two major tendencies. What this means, in fact, is that patterns for human societies need to be invented for which no previous model exists. The analyses we undertake should eventually make it possible to achieve this intellectual goal, without which any political mechanisms which may be improvised to deal with the situation would more than likely prove inoperable.

1.2   A geopolitical approach

The end of the Cold War has greatly accelerated the development of democracy and, consequently, a transformation in the nature of conflict. Present-day conflicts are no longer conducted exclusively between States, and ideological rivalries no longer dominate the international scene. The democratization of societies has enabled an increasing number of local, regional and national grievances to be aired which not long ago were still controlled by States or empires.

The nature and causes of conflicts are evolving very quickly. Yves Lacoste recently drew attention to two important facts directly related to our problem: the large number of new States which have been formed in Europe since the disappearance of the Iron Curtain in 1989; and the large number of conflicts that « have but scant direct cause or economic justification ». The belligerents are not fighting over previous resources but above all for national reasons, for each Nation-State is the more concerned to liberate its entire « historic territory » when its compatriots are being oppressed in regions annexed by other Nation-States (9). Ethnic, cultural and especially linguistic and religious factors are playing a role in these conflicts which we are ill-prepared to evaluate.

Analysis of these situations and of their involvement in the production of current national self-images constitutes an intellectual effort that must be made if a method of contemporary social organization geared toward the prevention and resolution of conflicts of this new type is to be defined.

2.   THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

Lucidity and courage are required to acknowledge that - with few exceptions - the attempt to put forward a model for the organization of developed societies which takes « identity » dimensions, especially ethnico-national ones, into account has so far been a failure. The social sciences too often evaluate these problems on the basis of analytical models in which nineteenth century nationalism occupies too large a place and they persistently

minimize their overall importance at world level. The need to develop new analyses constitutes a major responsibility for the social sciences.

Research can be divided into two broad groups:

- The first approach is to study the way in which ethnico-national situations are related to society at large: a general theory should be worked out in this direction. The need to work out a code of ethics for research in this area, on which we shall dwell later (4 below), is particularly important in that the present lack of data is due largely to the ethnocentrism of most approaches and even until recently.

- The second area open to the social sciences combines the various operations which enable each ethnico-national community to know its own language, history and cultural works and to be aware of the economic and sociological facts which determine its future. We can designate this cluster of scientific approaches which call upon a large number of disciplines by the term « self-knowledge ».

2.1 Towards a general theory on multi-ethnic societies

The general state of knowledge concerning national questions and ethnico-national groupings did not prepare sociologists, analysts and theoreticians in political science to investigate the role that these social groups play in society as a whole. The study of national phenomena has not been sufficiently dissociated from the political interests of States and nations. Reasonably large-scale surveys of ethnico-national minorities have too often been financed by States at a time when their grievances were being put forward with a violence that was creating serious problems for a particular society.

With respect to the theory, the aim is to formulate an overall concept of social evolution accounting for the importance of the diversity of feelings of national, ethnic, religious or cultural identity. This has been neglected in the past. Indeed, « liberal » thinking has more often than not based its analyses on the hypothesis of the eventual destruction of feelings of ethnico-national identity. Although using different arguments, the traditions of classical Marxism have been equally unsuccessful in accounting for this dimension of the life of a society.

If we are to have any chance of progressing in this respect, we must first re-examine the theories which have been formulated in this area and also the historical attempts to make these phenomena part of a more or less stable social structure. It is surprising that although essential texts are now available, there is no consolidated study that gives any kind of shape to the statements made on this subject. The time has now come to undertake a consolidated

study integrating these dimensions in an analysis of the functioning of complex societies.

2.2 Knowledge of ethnico-national situations

The most objective possible knowledge of ethnico-national situations is needed in order to counteract nationalism tendencies - or more generally passion - which can lead to conflict. Historians observe that public support for wars is secured through recourse to national myths, often very deeply rooted in the collective memory and which are reactivated when most convenient. Scientific knowledge is the best defence against this type of manipulation.

The importance of the self-knowledge process in this area for society is, however, by no means accepted by society at large or by the members of ethnico-national communities themselves, who are frequently in a minority situation. In order to understand this phenomenon one must be aware of the fundamental obstacles that confront those wishing to acquire this critical knowledge. The very identity of nations and communities is built around different mythologies.

It was only very recently that the desire for peace in certain peoples led to a re-examination of national mythologies. For example, France and Germany are only now starting to re-examine their national history years after the second World War. This process is even more difficult for minorities in that their situation is fraught with insecurity. Their knowledge of their past has for a long time been a response to an urgent need to build a minority mythology designed to reinforce their awareness of their existence. These mythologies - whose positive aspects are an essential role in the construction of an identity which should not be underrated - are today as dangerous as were the great national mythologies of the recent past, since they very often result in ethnic fundamentalism or inward-looking micro-nationalism.

Obviously, it is inconceivable that the UNESCO research programme re-write national histories or the history of particular minorities. It would be possible, however, to draw up a list, within the framework of regional surveys, of situations where this would be particularly useful. Support from the international community might encourage such endeavours, the initiative for which, of course, should come from those concerned.

3. MAIN THEMES

Study of the development of democracy, the role of the State, the emergence of new nationalisms and new xenophobic and racist types of behaviour, and of the role of « ethnico-national » or « linguistico-cultural » minorities is the core problem. We must nonetheless be aware that the complexity of multicultural and multi-ethnic societies means that those who study them are tempted to incorporate all manner of different subjects, with the risk that the result could be seen as a caricature of the complexities involved. It

will be absolutely essential to keep our main aim in mind when we select the themes for the programme.

This raises a question whose importance should not be underestimated. The underdevelopment of this area of study and the vagueness of the concept of « multicultural » are too often taken as implicit licence to blur the definition of the main purpose of the research. One is then tempted to make one's analytical approach mirror the segmentation of society. The differentiation of groups according to gender, age, language, religion and culture is a factor which must be taken into account in the study of « ethnico-national » groupings. However important these aspects may be, we must not single out any individual one in a multicultural approach to the societies we are studying.

Feminist demands, for instance, will assume their full significance to the extent that we do not make them the subject of a separate study but instead analyse their connection with the demands of a particular ethnico-national group. It is important, for instance, to consider the viewpoint of indigenous women from Quebec when they denounce the « fallacy that collective rights are the only important ones and that individual rights - which are often fundamental human rights - are no more than an infectious illness transmitted by Whites of European origin... » (10) to regard these women as a minority themselves would prevent us from understanding either the problems of indigenous peoples or those of women. Many examples of this kind could be quoted, as regards both differentiation linked to gender and that due to the impact of religions. The very importance of the role played by these factors in the evolution of the problems of multicultural societies frequently leads to confusion and aberrations which must be firmly resisted.

These precautions taken, research geared to the programme's central themes could be divided into three main categories:

- The study of fundamental concepts on the one hand so as to understand how the problems of multicultural and multi-ethnic societies have been approached by different schools and in various world regions and, on the other so as to ensure a sharply defined terminology.

- The analysis of contemporary societies in which the factors leading to the crystallization of identity « values » can be identified.

- The prospects for the organization of multi-ethnic and multicultural societies. This means less, at this stage, the proposal of solutions that have been specifically studied in each region and more the formulation of overall approaches and procedures for the prevention of conflicts that could be applied to concrete situations.

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3.1   The study of fundamental concepts

The study of multi-ethnic and multicultural societies raises questions of paramount importance for contemporary societies. If we are to respond to the intellectual challenge facing us now, we should not confine our analysis to the examination of problems that are too specific. We must, with the utmost clarity, formulate the general theoretical and methodological questions which could guide efficient work.

An effort should be made to define the concepts and the terminology in order to determine what practical human situations are involved in the multicultural and multi-ethnic dimension of a large number of present-day societies.

Very varied terms have been used to designate situations of this kind. Although the list is in no way exhaustive, some of the terms used, for example, are: linguistic minorities, linguistico-cultural minorities, ethnic minorities, ethnico-cultural minorities, national minorities, national communities, stateless nations, ethnic groups, ethnico-national communities, regional movements, proponents of autonomy, supporters of independence, etc. We are often referring to the same situations when we speak of individuals and communities that use national languages, dialects, minority languages, less prominent languages, regional languages, « less widely known » languages, local languages, local dialects, and so forth.

It can also be seen, for instance that situations where there is contact between groups have most frequently ended in the coexistence, within the same political structure, particularly the conventional State, of groups, with or without territory of their own, distinguished by linguistic, religious, socio-economic and political divisions that are mutually reinforcing, in full or in part. Theories of dependence, interior colonialism and the centre-periphery model suggest, at first sight, interpretations which integrate the different areas of social behaviour, and these theories were in fact put forward at different times and in different contexts by social scientists from a variety of disciplines.

It seems vital to us to take stock of things so as to make it possible to study both the way these models were produced, the scientific as well as ideological and political uses to which they are put and, of course, their current validity for the subject we are studying.

Clarification of this sort, with respect to all concepts and terminology, is quite essential. It is wise to avoid adding to the present confusion by putting forward new definitions for which there is no clearly demonstrable need. The scientific examination of the concepts and terminology should be conducted on two levels: the social use of the term and the scientific use.

3.1.1 To achieve this goal, it is proposed that a list of terms be carefully drawn up, avoiding any « a priori » list by studying the context in which a given

notion is used to designate the plurality of societies and their components. This study should focus primarily on an examination of the use which is made of a particular terminology by different schools of thought or according to national and regional situations. In this way a very rich picture could emerge of the different realities underlying the use and representation of the terms by the different majority or minority societies.

3.1.2 This work of identification and analysis will, at the end of the initial phase of the programme, provide a terminology for which we shall seek to achieve the broadest possible consensus. Of course, this work of clarification, which will strive to free research from ideological or political presuppositions in which it is too often imprisoned, must not sacrifice the original contributions of the different approaches. It will, more modestly, enable casting light on their explicit or implicit references and thus facilitate intercomprehension in an area where terminological misunderstandings are particularly fraught with consequences.

3.2   Analytical study of contemporary societies

There is, of course, no question here of proposing a restrictive list of topics for consideration. These themes will be defined more relevantly in connection with the setting up of regional surveys (4.1 below). The few points which follow are the provisional conclusions drawn from the discussions held so far.

3.2.1 We must examine the factors that explain this "resurgence of identities » or the production of new identities. At first sight, this is something that does not square with a situation of economic exchanges which, for the first time in history, are truly on a world scale. This economic fact is being accompanied by more and more demands for independence or autonomy. It is insufficient to simply state that this movement may be one way of opposing the effects of globalization. The resurgence of identities cannot be seen as just a movement to salvage traditional and reassuring cultural forms. These issues must be delved into more deeply from the point of view of social psychology or even the study of communication systems. It is usually thought that the development of the media is leading to the standardization of our world and to making individuals part of a "global village". In reality, what we are seeing is much more complex and contradictory, since although the mass media are indeed tending to impose an undeniable standardization all over the world, the trend towards the diversification of forms of cultural expression is, at the same time, also growing stronger by the day.

3.2.2 Another way of tackling the problems of multi-ethnic societies is to examine the role of State institutions in oppressing, sustaining or awakening national or ethnico-national identities. Although it is fashionable nowadays to talk about the eclipse of the nation State, it is nevertheless surprising since the number of States is increasing considerably in several regions. In fact, what we are seeing is more a transformation of the internal relations between State

institutions and the minorities on their territory. The growing number of claims for regional autonomy and the larger number of ghettos inside the large metropolises are raising this question with increasing urgency. We are, instead, facing an unprecedented crisis in the imperialistic forms of the State which, in the shape of empires or pseudo-federations, kept the aspirations of national or ethnico-national groups out of the public eye. The accession to independence of a growing number of small nations shows that we are here confronted by something which is raising the problems of security and world peace in new terms.

3.2.3 The study of the institutional functions of States raises the need to examine the way they are represented. The way in which minorities or identities are perceived by themselves as well as by the international public plays an important role in their history. The mere gathering of data about images of oneself or images conveyed by the majority society raises very great difficulties, even though accurate research methods have been developed, particularly in social psychology and in socio-linguistics, and the findings of surveys carried out with scrupulous accuracy may assume vital importance for the future of the groups in question.

A study of the way in which the State and the law go together is also essential, as every legal system is rooted in a mythology. At least two extremes are discernible. The English-speaking model and that of many non-Western European societies are clearly distinct but they are based on images of societies made up of communities and groups whose cohesion is founded on interdependence. These models admit theories of judicial pluralism which reject the State as the sole framer of law and place value on the initiatives of those administering the law, the producers of local laws. Conversely, the French model is organized around a representation of society that juxtaposes a State that is the sole possessor of the law, and a mass of individuals assumed to be free and responsible. The law is a decisive factor making for the coherence of this kind of organization since the State agrees to submit to it (theory of the State of law). Individuals obtain guarantees from it (systems of declarations of rights) which make their community organization and the recognition of the legal existence of minorities, especially in the form of collective rights, pointless or even harmful. This explains the hostility of the French doctrine to judicial pluralism and its attachment to the explanatory principle of the vertical hierarchy of norms and the State's standard-setting functions. As they stand, these models seem hardly viable. The growing complexity and heterogeneity of modern societies call both for the lines of new kind of solidarity to be laid down and for the over-rigid lines of unitarian patterns to be made more pliable. This programme is therefore calling on lawyers of different traditions to engage in an intercultural dialogue so that they can together reinterpret their mythologies, as they inevitably must.

3.2.4 Present-day multi-ethnic and multicultural societies are made up of several types of ethnico-national minorities or groups. Beside the indigenous minorities with lands, we must not forget minorities without lands, whose

presence in this or that State either go back a long way or may be more recent e.g. from Gypsies to immigrants and refugees. In particular, the new immigrant minorities and refugees are constituting a more and more widespread problem as a result of the population movements being caused in several parts of the world by economic imbalance, political upheavals and wars. The ways in which these communities group together and their social situation within the various host countries are raising very serious problems and are endangering the cohesion of a considerable number of societies. The study of economic and social conditions and that of racial and ethnic representations are clearly matters of urgency here.

3.3   Prospects for the organization of multi-ethnic and multicultural societies

On the basis of the studies thus produced, the aim is to put overall prospects to decision-makers that will be able to guarantee that the movement towards individual freedom, which was the key contribution of the Enlightenment can be admitted into society and into politics without sacrificing for all that, in a standardizing conception of nation-States, the collective wish expressed by the emergence of ethnic, religious and, more broadly, cultural factors of differentiation. Drawing up proposals of this kind means that thought has to be given to three sets of problems.

3.3.1 The first set concerns the overall conception of society and the theoretical questions resulting from it. The main question here is doubtless that of the theoretical and practical implications of the idea of the development of societies that are based on the notions of cultural or multicultural pluralism. The theme of the institution of a *multicultural society* is increasingly present in the social science discourse and in that of ordinary journalism, but the term is very imprecise and often used to disguise a lack of determination to deal with the problems for which it is used. Multiculturalism has overtones of vague magnanimity and of an ill-defined wish to be receptive but it is basically ambiguous. On the one hand, it confronts with a critical perspective the coexistence of different cultures and, on the other, it functions as a programme of integration for a society in crisis. It is a concept that could very well launch a new kind of hegemony which would absorb different ways of life and views of the world and ensure its power by manipulating the contradiction, tension and conflicts which arise from the forces at work in society.

Other fundamental problems should be included in this first set, such as the questions linked to the debate on cultural relativism and assimilation/integration, the strategies of information/disinformation about minorities, the processes by which cultures come to be considered as exotic, and the conditions for creativity in minority cultures. Special attention could be devoted here to the study of linguistic diversity, which either makes for economic development or is a hindrance to trade. The vigour of people and communities is directly dependent on their feeling of identity. A person submerged in a uniform mass, a mere number in a group whose identity is not

immediately perceptible, would lose the inclination to distinguish himself/herself and would lack the strength to achieve distinction. Cultural diversity could well be a powerful driving force for the development of both individuals and societies.

3.3.2 A particularly important application of these ideas is to be found in the discussions currently on at the international level about the ways in which the law can lay down rules for managing the situation of ethnico-national minorities. A fundamental debate can thus begin between the theory which has it that "minority rights are a pitfall for Human Rights, and especially for cultural rights, because they diminish the notion of cultural identity" (11) and the gradual definition of fundamental rights for minorities and indigenous peoples by international or regional authorities. Particular attention should be devoted to the rights of indigenous peoples who, at present, are still insufficiently covered by scientific thinking about minorities, in part, incidentally, because of the indigenous people themselves who reject the term minorities. The process by which indigenous peoples --particularly in North America-- are managing to be gradually recognized as peoples and enjoy the right of self-determination and independence of government (as distinct from the right of secession) may, however, indirectly influence the thinking on minorities and constitute one of the ways of organizing multicultural societies. In addition, the concept of indigenity is beginning to appear in the European context and even if France, for instance, is refusing to recognize the legal existence of indigenous people on its territory, the concept has major political consequences (12). Examining different national legal traditions in the light of the problems of cultural diversity is a particularly useful way of avoiding the stumbling block of giving an abstract definition of rights which would have only limited chances of being translated into reality. There is still considerable work to be done to come up with really effective ways of making it possible to exercise these rights in a manner adapted to different regional and local situations.

3.3.3 Lastly, the study of possible forms of political organization for such multi-ethnic or multicultural societies is of primary importance. If it is not at all apparent that the concept of the State is presently losing or must lose its importance, conversely, it is certain that the State has to transform itself if it is to cope successfully with the current explosion of identities. It is becoming increasingly clear that the State has to change in the direction of its technocratic elites becoming more familiar with local ethnic cultures, as hoped for by Anthony D. Smith (13). It is less a question of adapting people to the State and more one of asking what structure is suitable for them.

From this standpoint, an examination is vital of the political solutions proposed for the management of ethnic cultural differences on the basis of territory and forms of personal autonomy. This could be done using the views and proposals of authors as different as Otto Bauer, Karl Kautsky, Karl Renner and Arend Lijphart (14).

Of course, examination of these theories should not be confined to a historical study but should be directed towards the adaptation of particular ideas to present-day contexts that raise in new terms, for example, the relationship between the need for autonomy of small-sized national groups and the reality of supra-State structures organizing economic exchanges and handling security problems.

The topicality of this theme was recently highlighted in a very interesting discussion --organized by the Centre for Human Values of Princeton University-- on the philosophical principles underlying the different patterns of the liberal organization of societies (15). This discussion shows that agreement can quite easily be reached on the fact that the need to provide social conditions for the survival of the identity of groups placed in a minority situation is not incompatible with the principles for the safeguarding of fundamental individual rights. Not only that, but this need is suggested by the liberal principle of equal respect for all which, so as not to discriminate against an individual from a minority group, calls for the recognition of the collective identities of minorities. Accordingly, liberal democracy is identified as much with the safeguarding of universal rights as with public recognition of particular cultures. The excellence of the philosophical and historical examination of the issue carried out during this discussion makes the weakness of the political prospects outlined at the same time all the more conspicuous, despite the value of the proposals put forward by Charles Taylor (16) . This difficulty clearly underlines the urgent need to embark on an investigation in this field (17).

4. THE METHODS AND ORGANIZATION OF RESEARCH IN MOST

It would seem that a research programme as ambitious as this could be carried out effectively by organizing a specific synergy between teams responsible for undertaking a detailed study of problems in a number of regional cases of particular significance and one or more teams responsible for dealing, in a transverse and composite form, with the key questions raised by the programme.

It seems particularly necessary, owing to the kind of problems under study, to work out precise ethical principles through either regional surveys or the formulation of concepts and theories. Where small nations or « ethnico-national » minorities are particularly concerned, it is crucial to provide, at each stage of the research, for the participation of representatives from the groups under study (18). The need to organize information in accordance with a comparative approach cannot serve as a pretext for the imposition of methods and surveys which do not take account of the achievements of those concerned in their respective fields.

4.1 Regional surveys

The problems covered by this programme are of a comprehensive and universal nature. This remark is nevertheless not enough to guarantee the

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efficacy of the research undertaken. We are faced with a very difficult problem that must be tackled by an action-oriented approach, taking into account two considerations that are especially important:

4.1.1 The intellectual aim that we have outlined obliges us to favour an approach that is as general as possible, with comparisons of the most varied and geographically remote societies. The research must be international and comparative in the broadest possible way and must envisage a number of fundamental problems in their widest philosophical and theoretical dimensions.

4.1.2 However, the nature of what we have to study prompts us to take regional and national particularities into account. The most relevant dimension in this respect seems to be at the regional level, with a combination of spatial economic, social and political indicators. We could therefore imagine teams producing studies in countries in the North America-Europe region or in more restricted regional areas such as Central and Eastern Europe or the Mediterranean area, and so forth. Of course, this two-tier approach is equally valid for the other regions such as Africa, Asia, South America, etc.

4.2   Transverse studies

Research on fundamental concepts (3.1 above) and « organizational prospects » (3.3 above) requires treatment that is not confined to a specific region. The comparative dimension of the programme will take on its full significance from the examination of the way in which particular aspects appear in this or that region. This could be done in the following way:

4.2.1 In the relatively brief initial phase, a list of the principal questions (a multidisciplinary collective evaluation) could be drawn up by a small group of five or six experts in consultation with their colleagues from the regional teams. This would make it possible to assess the situation in a relatively short space of time.

4.2.2 During the implementation phase proper, a team could be asked to examine the fundamental concepts, still in close collaboration with the regional teams, in accordance with the problems identified in 3.2 above.

4.2.3 Still in the programme implementation phase proper, one or more other teams could concentrate on the preparation of the study at the most general level of a given aspect of the problem (overall conception of society, political models, questions of international law, etc.).

5.   BEYOND RESEARCH

The contribution of the social sciences in such a sensitive area should help in devising solutions for the promotion of democracy and the prevention of conflicts brought about by the confrontations inherent in the strengthening of

the multicultural and multi-ethnic character of most contemporary societies. This must not be assumed to be already the case nor must it remain just wishful thinking. We must give thought, even as the research is being prepared, to the conditions necessary for achieving this goal.

In the implementation phase of this programme, it seems necessary to think how use can be made of the mass media in democratic societies. We find, for instance, that in countries like Canada or Australia, very small human groups (Indians, Aboriginals or Inuits) are claiming rights over vast areas of land and are beginning to obtain them, with the support of public opinion and several international organizations.

Conflicts between Nation-States or concerning ethnico-national minorities bring into play powerful processes of disinformation as can be seen in the role of national mythologies and the distorted images of hostile groups that play a key role in their development. The responsibility of the researchers is to help equip democratic societies with the means to counter these disinformation activities. This being so, UNESCO could undertake to produce and circulate democratically verified information about the different components of multicultural and multi-ethnic societies, « ethnico-national » or « linguistico-cultural » nations or minorities.

There is a considerable dearth of information in this area, not only inside States but also internationally. In fact, only a few NGOs, with too often limited resources, see in part to this essential function. It would be advisable, in order to overcome this shortage, to encourage the setting up, at the regional level, of bodies to gather, process and circulate information about the components of the multicultural and multi-ethnic fabric of a region, i.e. small nations or minorities. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe thus recently expressed the wish that a « mediation instrument » should be set up, one of whose functions would involve « constant monitoring of changes in the situation of minorities in all the European States » (19). The CSCE, for its part, has entrusted the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in Warsaw and the High Commissioner of the CSCE for National Minorities with the task of taking into account all relevant data on the subject. In May 1993, the Warsaw Bureau thus held a seminar on « positive experiences » in regard to the protection of national minorities, and the High Commissioner has just proposed devoting a further seminar to the Roma's. Similarly, the International Colloquium on Linguistic Rights/Human Rights, which was held from 15 to 17 November 1990 at the Council of Europe, envisaged the establishment of a *Monitoring Mechanism for the Linguistic Rights of Minorities* (20). Bodies of this kind ought to allocate to themselves a fairly wide geopolitical area, but with undeniable common features. Europe in its broadest dimension, reaching from the Atlantic to the Urals and from the Mediterranean to the far North, seems to stand out as an area where effective action could be taken.

We can imagine that the programme initiated by UNESCO may move towards the establishment of regional bodies of this sort. In complete harmony

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with its fundamental mission, UNESCO could thus contribute to the prevention of many conflicts. Equipping oneself with the means to combat disinformation is certainly an important contribution to the construction of a culture of peace, ensuring the development of humanity with due regard for its diversity.

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NOTES

1   This contribution owes much to the discussions at the international meeting on MOST programme which was held in Ottawa from 11 to 14 December 1993 by the Canadian National Commission for UNESCO and the Division for the International Development of Social and Human Sciences of UNESCO, and thus particularly to the comments and suggestions made by Ms Nadia Auriat, Ms Elisabeth Barot and Mr Ali Kazancigil. I am also grateful for the advice and comments of the members of the Scientific Council of the *Mercator Programme for Research on Ethnolinguistic Minorities* (Commission of the European Communities-Maison des Sciences de l'Homme), Emmanuel Decaux, Hervé Guillorel and Norbert Rouland and Ms Richèle Rivet and my colleagues and collaborators André Bourgeot, Claudio Cratchley, Robert Lafont, Elise Marienstras, Paul Siblot, Raymond Verdier and Live Yu Sion.

2   See, *inter alia*, Melucci, 1982 and Camartin, 1985 on terminological problems.

3   Bobbio, 1992.

4   An excellent overview of the global nature of the problems of multi-ethnic societies is to be found in the survey recently carried out by Stavenhagen, 1990.

5   I am summarizing here a subject that I developed in a recent article: Giordan, 1993.

6   Le Rider, 1990, p. 357.

7   See Giordan, 1992 b.

8   Serres, 1993.

9   Lacoste, 1994, p. 35, cf. Lacoste, 1993.

10   Association des femmes autochtones du Québec (Indigenous
         Women´s Association of Québec), p. 28.

11   See Meyer-Bisch, 1992 and 1993. Also see the primary contributions
         by Rouland, 1991.

12   Cf. the evolution of the CSCE norms and the referendum on the
         independence for New Caledonia, planned for 1998

13   Smith, 1981. Also see the excellent study by Henri Lefebvre which is
         still very topical (Lefebvre, 1937)

14   Material for a study of Marxist theories has been partially assembled by
         Haupt, 1974 and Yaari, 1978-1979. See also Weill, 1987 as well as the
         excellent edition of Otto Bauer procured by Claudie Weill (Bauer,1987).
         More and more authors of a « liberal » persuasion are studying   this
         field, especially in the United States and in Northern European
         countries, for example see Rothschild´s classical work, 1981.

15   The discussion, by Amy Gutman, Susan Wolf, Steven C.Rockefeller
         and Michael Walzer of a fundamental study by Charles Taylor, is
         reproduced in Taylor, 1992.

16   Cf. in particular Taylor, 1979 and 1988.

17   William Safran recently prepared a very thorough review of the
         institutional solutions applied in different regions of the world to achieve
         the « national integration » of ethnic minorities (Safran, 1994).

18   The code of ethics on research drawn up by the Royal Commission of
         Inquiry on the Indigenous Populations of Canada is of very great
         interest in this connection as it aims to ensure that due respect is
         accorded to the cultures, languages, knowledge and values of
         indigenous peoples as well as to the norms that they use to establish
         the legitimacy of learning.

19   Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Recommendation
         1177 on the rights of minorities, adopted on 5 February 1992.

20   See Giordan, 1992 a, pp. 33-36.

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