Multiculturalism and Diversity

Judith Suissa

Introduction

In the following discussion, I will explore how different orientations within philosophy of education are reflected in the ways in which philosophers of education, predominantly those working within the analytic Anglophone tradition, have engaged with multiculturalism. In this context, it seems natural to focus on multicultural education, rather than on the concept of multiculturalism per se. However, it is important to clarify what is generally meant by multiculturalism, not least because the conceptual distinctions, ideas and values underlying any definition of multiculturalism will inevitably inform accounts of what multicultural education is or should be. It is helpful, then, to begin by noting the distinction between the descriptive and the normative sense of the term 'multiculturalism'. While the term 'multicultural' or 'multiculturalism' is often used simply to describe the cultural diversity of a given society, institution or practice, in its normative sense the term reflects a positive evaluation or promotion of such cultural diversity and an acknowledgement of its significance for individuals and groups. In addition to this conceptual point, it is helpful to note the historical and political context in which the term 'multiculturalism' became prominent. As Ali Rattansi notes (2011, p. 12), the term entered public discourse in many Western European states, as well as in Australia and Canada, in the 1960s and early 1970s, referring to "policies by central state and local authorities that [were] put in place to manage and govern the new multi-ethnicity created by non-white immigrant populations, after the end of WW2". In the USA, the term seems to have entered public vocabulary somewhat later, associated with demands for cultural recognition by minority ethnic groups.

J. Suissa (✉)
Department of Education, Practice and Society, University College London Institute of Education, London, UK
e-mail: j.suissa@ucl.ac.uk

While multiculturalism can be used in a general sense to include political demands for rights and recognition by a diverse range of marginalised groups, including women, gays and lesbians, and the disabled, most theoretical work on multiculturalism tend to focus on ethnic and religious minorities within pluralistic states, minority nations within multi-nation states, and indigenous peoples.

This brief account goes some way towards explaining why most of the literature to which I will be referring in the following discussion is situated within a Western context, as well as suggesting significant differences between countries in the ways in which multiculturalism is articulated and defended. Notably, in the USA, where debates around multiculturalism were tied to the battle for cultural recognition that grew out of African Americans' fight against racial discrimination, expanding to include indigenous peoples and other non-White ethnic groups, 'issues of race have always been significant, and sometimes paramount' in these debates. In Europe, in contrast, as Rattansi puts it, "'race' is the elephant in the room" in discussions of multiculturalism (2011, p. 10).

There are a number of ways in which philosophers of education can contribute to clarifying, exploring and defending educational aspects of multiculturalism. Some of this work is oriented towards the body of political theory and philosophy that provides the conceptual framework for justifying multicultural positions and policies, whereas some is oriented more towards the theory and practice of multicultural education. In the following discussion, I will address some central themes within both these approaches that have been illuminatingly developed by philosophers of education. I will end by reflecting on some historical shifts within the discipline, as well as some recurring tensions.

First, a story:

When I was seven, my primary school teacher, in the early weeks of December, distributed brightly coloured squares of paper to the class and told us to "draw something that you would eat at Christmas dinner". I looked around at my class-mates and tried to decipher the markings they were busily filling up their paper with, but I couldn't identify anything that I could copy. After a while, Mrs. Bell loomed over my desk and looked down at the blank piece of paper in front of me. "Come on Judith, why haven't you started drawing?" I had never been to a Christmas dinner and had no idea what people ate at them. "I don't know what you eat at a Christmas dinner", I mumbled, to be met with an impatient brush-off from Mrs. Bell: "Of course you know; you could draw a turkey, or a Christmas pudding". My friend Sarah was drawing something vaguely round and brown with a leaf on top of it and she helpfully turned it around so that I could see. I reached for the brown crayon and got on with it.

I like to think that, over 40 years later, children from non-Christian minorities are unlikely to experience similar incidents in a typical English classroom. We live in 'multicultural Britain' (although at the time of writing, the multicultural ideal seems somewhat under threat); a phrase intended here not in its descriptive sense – for the Britain in which I grew up was a fairly diverse place – but in the normative sense captured by the phrase "the acknowledgement and promotion of cultural pluralism…"

from the *HarperCollins Dictionary of Sociology* definition. Yet just what constitutes cultural pluralism, why it should be promoted or celebrated, and what this means for the provision, control and content of education, continues to be a topic of considerable debate.

Educational Policy and Political Philosophy

As philosophers of education, our orientation is both to educational policy and practice, and to the discipline of philosophy. How these two strands are reflected in the work of individual philosophers of education is a matter of considerable stylistic and substantive difference, but when it comes to addressing issues of multiculturalism and diversity, it is within the sub-discipline of political philosophy that most philosophers of education have tended to situate their work. This relationship to political philosophy can take different forms, ranging from drawing on normative political theory in order to articulate and defend specific educational policies, to reflecting on educational reality in order to problematise or challenge some positions within political philosophy. So while political philosophy can provide conceptual resources with which to understand the values underlying versions of multiculturalism, work by philosophers of education has often contributed to this project by problematising some of the relevant conceptual distinctions.

Integration and Assimilation

The distinction between 'integration' and 'assimilation' is often seen as central to understanding the shift towards multiculturalism in Western states, conceptualised as reflecting a shift from policies of 'assimilation' of minorities and immigrant groups, towards a policy of 'integration'. Yet Eamonn Callan's work has problematised the neat distinction suggested by this contrast. In 'The Ethics of Assimilation' (Callan 2005), Callan articulates the connection between multiculturalism, diversity and integration, noting how: "A wholesome regard for diversity has been taken to require a wholesale rejection of assimilation" (p. 274). He goes on to discuss just what is involved in assimilation for individuals who may choose to assimilate, and how assimilation may involve "a creative effect whereby the host culture is diversified, not a one-way homogenizing effect" (ibid). After exploring in some detail the complex relationship between assimilation and self-respect, Callan concludes that "assimilation has to be evaluated with a close eye to the variable contexts in which it occurs" (p. 475).

In later work, Callan develops these conceptual connections further, explaining how multicultural policies are often regarded as a corrective measure for past imposition of assimilation measures on minority groups (see Callan 2015, p. 164).

Recognition

Callan's discussion also draws attention to the concept of recognition, which has been at the heart of contemporary philosophical work on multiculturalism at least since Charles Taylor's influential essay 'Multiculturalism and "the Politics of Recognition"' (1992).

Leonard Waks articulates the connection between multiculturalism and recognition in an educational context: "The term 'multiculturalism' arises in circumstances where there are distinct ethnocultural subgroups residing within the polity, whether on their own native grounds, in immigrant enclaves, or dispersed throughout the population, and making claims for cultural and political recognition (…). In its normative sense, the term denotes recognition of the personal identities and group loyalties tied to these subgroups, and of their claims for differentiated rights, including differentiated educational rights" (2007, p. 28).

Yet while Taylor's own work has explored some educational implications of the politics of recognition, these aspects have been further developed and challenged by philosophers of education. Taylor's central argument is that identity is constructed intersubjectively, and that "a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being" (1992, p. 25). One obvious educational implication of this view concerns the way individuals from minority groups are represented in the curriculum. Rene Arcilla (1995) summarises this approach as follows: "Our multiculturalist initiatives in education should be principally concerned with exposing and criticizing images and terms that stunt possibilities for self-definition, particularly for members of cultures that already suffer from a history of discrimination" (p. 8). On this account, a more appropriate educational approach to guide my primary school teacher's interaction with her pupils in the run-up to Christmas would have been one which recognised the existence in the school community of non-Christian children, and allocated classroom time to engaging positively with their cultural and ethnic heritages. Yet Arcilla also questions the implication, emerging from this account, that an appropriate multicultural education can allow students' authentic selves to emerge through encounters with others, and draws on Derrida to suggest that the quest for a definitive form of self-knowledge is bound to fail due to the aporetic and always indefinite nature of the language in which we define ourselves in dialogue with others. The danger, to use this example, would be that such forms of 'recognition' risk reifying neatly defined definitions of cultural, religious or ethnic group identities, thus failing to do justice to the complex, fluid and dynamic sense of self of those who 'belong', nominally, to such groups. For Arcilla, this is not a reason to reject multiculturalism, but rather to embrace an education that celebrates what eludes identification. As Arcilla's work demonstrates, while the idea of multicultural education can be seen, as Dhillon and Halstead (2003) argue, to "flow[s] naturally from the prime liberal values of 'justice,

freedom, and equality'" and the liberal principles of "toleration, respect for persons, and in particular the notion of rights" (p. 152), it is not only within the framework of liberal theory that these ideas can be and have been developed.

Other philosophers of education have challenged Taylor's conceptual link between recognition and multiculturalism. Lawrence Blum (2001) is critical of the way in which Taylor's account of recognition "ties it intimately to ethnocultural identity" (p. 539). Blum draws on examples of how individual and group identity are expressed and played out in concrete educational situations in order to question Taylor's account. As Blum puts it, "recognition, as a value in education, has a significance that transcends ethnocultural identities and multiculturalism; and multicultural concerns in education transcend those of recognition" (ibid). Blum argues that "From the point of view of recognition, we must distinguish between an identity feature that is important to the individual himself, and an identity feature that is socially important, or important to a significant reference group outside the individual in question" (pp. 548–49). His analysis is significant not only for reflecting on educational contexts in order to problematise and enrich work in political philosophy, but also for putting concerns about race at the centre of the discussion. Given these insights, it is worth reflecting on the question of whether, in my own example, it was my Jewishness or my whiteness that was the most salient feature of my identity, and how the answer to this question may have been very different in different social and historical contexts. As Blum notes, "the ethno-raciality of people of colour is a much more socially salient feature of their identity than is the enthno-raciality of 'white' people […] Hence it is more difficult for individual persons of colour than for whites to be relatively indifferent to their ethno-raciality" (p. 548). Yet "the thrust of Taylor's recognition argument appears to be directed toward the individual's self-identity, not to her socially salient identity(ies)". Therefore, Blum concludes, "the argument about individual recognition is much less conceptually linked to multiculturalism than Taylor, and most of his readers, have presumed" (ibid).

Group Rights and Cultural Belonging

In a similar vein, Walter Feinberg's work has added an important educational dimension to Will Kymlicka's argument about liberalism and culture. Kymlicka's work on group rights is of central significance to multiculturalism. Kymlicka (1989) has refuted critiques of liberal theory that associate it with a simplistically individualistic notion of the self, arguing that cultural belonging and community are essential for the development of individuals' identities and choice, and thus that liberalism demands the recognition of group rights, particularly of cultural minorities. If one accepts this account, then clearly, as Feinberg notes, "liberalism is no enemy to multicultural education" (1995, p. 203). Yet the notion of "learning through culture", Feinberg argues, is significantly different from the espoused aim of multicultural education as "learning about culture" (p. 204). Whereas the second idea presents no

difficulty for liberalism, the ideal of multiculturalism that suggests that "difference will be celebrated in a way that enables children to learn through their own cultural practice" is harder for liberals to accommodate (pp. 204–5).

A consideration of educational policy and practice in fact complicates the distinction between group rights and individual rights for, as Dhillon and Halstead point out (2003, p. 149) "provision of state funding for religious schools may be claimed as a group right by Catholics and Muslims, but the choice whether or not to send their children to such schools is exercised by parents as individuals".

Liberalism and State Schooling

I have considered ways in which philosophers of education have reflected on educational practice and policy in order to develop, and in some cases to problematise, the conceptual distinctions and theoretical positions articulated by political philosophers.

Other work offers a more explicit defence of particular education policies on the basis of normative political theory. Before I discuss some of this work, it is worth recalling that at a time when multicultural policies were being adopted in many Western states, in light of growing immigration and demands from minority groups for inclusion and recognition, the dominant body of work in political philosophy was the version of liberal theory associated with John Rawls. It is not Rawls' *Theory of Justice* that is the most pertinent conceptual framework for theorising issues of diversity and multiculturalism, but his later *Political Liberalism*, where his central question is: "How is it possible that there may exist over time a stable and just society of free and equal citizens profoundly divided by reasonable though incompatible religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines?" (Rawls 1993, xviii).

While Rawls himself had notoriously little to say about education, philosophers of education have contributed significantly to his project by showing how a commitment to the principles defended by Rawlsian liberal theorists can justify particular forms of educational provision and regulation.

Rawls claims that whereas comprehensive liberalism may "lead to requirements designed to foster the values of autonomy and individuality as ideals to govern much if not all of life"; in contrast, "political liberalism has a different aim and requires far less" (1993, p. 199). Yet philosophers of education have challenged this claim, arguing, as Meira Levinson (1999) does, that "insofar as accepting the burdens of judgement requires that people gain sufficiently critical distance from their own conception of the good to realize that theirs is not the only reasonable way of life, Rawls' political liberalism requires at least a rudimentary level of autonomy" (p. 17). Similarly, Eamonn Callan (1996) points out that "To retain a lively understanding of the burdens of judgement in political contexts while suppressing it everywhere else would require a feat of gross self-deception that cannot be squared with personal integrity" (p. 12), concluding that acknowledging the kind of political education demanded in order for citizens to accept the Rawlsian burdens of

judgement leads to a collapse of the distinction between comprehensive and political liberalism.

A significant body of work in philosophy of education associated with this approach therefore defends the provision and control of compulsory schooling in and by the liberal state. Meira Levinson (1999) perhaps provides the most systematic defence of the conceptual connection between political liberalism, the common school, and multiculturalism. In arguing that political liberalism implicitly invokes autonomy, and that sustaining liberal institutions and values therefore requires a form of compulsory liberal schooling (p. 8), Levinson defends a conception of the common school as a community whose normative structure is "autonomy driven" (p. 61). This position leads her to reject models of educational provision that may seem ostensibly to be in keeping with multicultural ideals, but where school choice and the existence of state-funded faith schools has led to a "divided pluralism" (p. 113); i.e. a "pluralistic national community composed of a number of mutually uninterested monoreligious, monocultural, monolinguistic, and/or monoeconomic subcommunties", where multiculturalism "itself is not treated as a public good" (ibid). Likewise, the French model, where "students' private commitments and beliefs are excluded from the public sphere of the classroom" is, on Levinson's view, ultimately illiberal. A "truer form of political liberalism" for Levinson (p. 119) is expressed in the multicultural ideal whereby students from diverse communities come together in the shared public space of the school and, through their teaching, curriculum and encounters with diversity, "embrace the virtues of toleration, mutual respect, and critical reflection" (p. 119). My own example clearly illustrates that many state primary school classrooms in 1970s Britain fell far short of this ideal model of the multicultural, liberal state school. Yet while aspects of multiculturalism are now widely embraced in state school curriculum and practice, we should be wary, as I will discuss further below, of assuming that the common state school is, or indeed can be, a neutral space. Such concerns are in fact more urgent than ever given recent developments in British education policy, such as the UK Government's Prevent Duty for Schools (Department for Education 2015) and the requirement to promote 'fundamental British values'.

Rob Reich is another philosopher of education who has considered the implications of liberal theory for questions about the control and provision of schooling in multicultural societies. Reich has argued for what he calls "multicultural accommodations" in schooling as a way of achieving justice for cultural minorities (Reich 2003, p. 318). In discussing the limits of state intervention, he criticises arguments developed by Kymlicka and other defenders of "cultural rights", on the grounds that "respecting cultural groups [...] may not respect the autonomy of future adults born into the group" (p. 310). This argument is made, like all the above arguments, in the context of a defence of the liberal state which, Reich argues, "should be reluctant to grant rights to separate schooling or to permit broad exemptions from educational requirements such as mandatory attendance. The liberal state should maintain, at the very least, regulatory authority over schooling and attempt to provide an education that aims, among other things, to foster the development of autonomy in children, as well as civic virtues, such as tolerance and civility" (p. 311).

Walter Feinberg has written extensively on the common school and multicultur-alism, with a particular focus on religion and faith schooling, defending the ideal of a public school as a "place where one should learn the skills and attitudes required for living together in a democracy" (2003, p. 386). For Feinberg, "A public school must aim to reproduce a public" (ibid). Thus, like Reich, Feinberg is not against liberal state funding for faith schools, but argues that "any support for religious schools must be predicated on the school advancing individual and social autonomy, and that this would require accountability to public as well as to religious bodies" (p. 388).

These discussions illustrate how when central concepts associated with liberal theory, such as autonomy, are considered within an educational context, one inevi-tably comes up against a discussion of children's and parents' rights. For many liberal philosophers of education, the argument for compulsory public schooling in multicultural societies rests on a conception of children's rights akin to Joel Feinberg's (2007) seminal account of "the child's right to an open future". In the context of debates over separate schools – particularly religious schools – within liberal societies, Walter Feinberg's argument is that "Children have a right to grow up with a reasonable possibility that they will have opportunities to develop beliefs that are different from their parents" (2003, p. 393). In other words, the liberal prin-ciple of respecting individuals, even those with illiberal beliefs, "does not entail the requirement that society aid them in transmitting, through publically supported church education, their illiberal views to their children" (ibid).

Historical Shifts and Tensions

Questions about the institutional form, control and governance of education have always been at the heart of work in philosophy of education and defences of the ideal of the common school can be traced at least as far back as Dewey. Yet there are interesting distinctions, when it comes to multicultural themes, between some of the work discussed above, and earlier work in the discipline.

Theoretical Resolutions

As the above discussion indicates, many of the questions addressed by philosophers discussing multiculturalism are variations on the classic dilemma at the heart of liberal theory, namely: what should the liberal state do about illiberal communities within it? When it comes to education, this discussion often takes the form of debates as to whether, or to what extent, state schools should or can be 'neutral', in the sense so central to Rawlsian political liberalism. In some cases, the discussion is explicitly framed in this way, as in Dhillon and Halstead's (2003) entry for the *Blackwell Guide*, which notes:

A critical question is whether the state itself should endeavour to adopt a neutral stance with regard to culture, or whether there are any circumstances in which the state can justifiably align itself with the culture of the majority…. (p. 149)

Similarly, McDonough and Feinberg, in the Introduction to their edited collection (2003), note that the contributors are concerned with "the question of the aim of education in societies which want to advance a liberal – democratic agenda, and how those aims might need to be constrained within the context of religious or cultural groups that have a different agenda" (pp. 2–3).

Yet early work that addressed such issues tended to approach them as problems or dilemmas to be resolved, as in the following extract from John Harris's 1982 paper, one of the earliest papers on this theme to appear in the *Journal of Philosophy of Education*: "Multicultural society cannot hope to treat its citizens as equals unless it is also prepared to show equal concern and respect for their cultures". Yet,

> The problem arises in connection with any culture which does not equally respect its own members. It looks as though a society committed to equality and containing such cultures or sub-cultures within it, is caught in a genuine and uncomfortable dilemma. […] Are we to respect cultures and thereby endorse the unequal treatment of persons, or insist on equality for individuals at the expense of insult and injury to their culture? Or, is there perhaps some way of dissolving rather than resolving these questions? (p. 224)

The educational questions following logically from such liberal dilemmas are, it is implied, questions to be resolved – or at least dissolved – at the theoretical level, in order to offer helpful guidance to educational policy makers and practitioners. A similar assumption seems to be operating in work that addresses the implications of multicultural commitments for the curriculum. Thus Yael Tamir (1995) points out that given that one of the aims of multicultural education is "to allow minority communities to protect their ongoing existences as distinct communities" (p.503), and given how central language is to issues of cultural identity, the questions arise: "Yet how many languages should a child learn? What should be the curricula for children of mixed cultural–linguistic origins? What kind of language skills should children have in both the minority and the majority language? Is bilingualism (or trilingualism) an intellectual asset or a burden?" (ibid). One response to these questions could be: 'Which children? Which languages? Where? Bilingualism is surely sometimes an asset and sometimes a burden…'. Yet the idea that one could determine such answers and that they could be used to guide the establishment of centralised curriculum, provision and control of schooling is, I believe, symptomatic of the fact that most philosophers of education are already assuming a state schooling system. This is reflected in the language of Tamir's paper which is replete with phrases such as "all children should".

Philosophy and Empirical Research

A related feature of this early work in philosophy of education is the absence of any concrete examples of educational practice. It is notable that more recent work in the field has engaged much more closely with empirical research. Thus for example

Meira Levinson, in spite of her earlier arguments in defence of the common multi-cultural school as the best way to realise a pluralistic autonomy-based liberalism, acknowledges in later work that although she herself has argued that "it is hard for students to learn to be mutually tolerant and respectful of other people, traditions and ways of life unless they are actually exposed to them" (1999, p. 114), it is clear that "Merely bringing people together into a common space does nothing to help them get along" without conscientious efforts on the part of educators (2007, p. 630). Levinson cites a range of empirical studies that show that "the more we are brought into physical proximity with people of another race or ethnic background, the more we stick to 'our own' and the less and the less we trust the 'other'" (ibid).

Education and Schooling

In most work in the field, the institution of schooling controlled and provided by the liberal state is an unarticulated and undefended assumption, and most discussions of multicultural education are therefore actually discussions of multicultural school-ing. So while discussions of group rights within the liberal state raise questions about the educational rights of parents and children, discussions of these questions tend to revolve around legal issues to do with the establishment, control and provi-sion of state schools. It is important to note, though, that once one takes seriously the insight that the liberal commitment to autonomy means that children have a right to develop into autonomous individuals, one has to at least consider the argu-ment that parents may have no right to pass on *any* of their belief systems to their children. Yet very few philosophers of education consider pedagogical relationships beyond those of formal schooling, such as that between parents and their children. One of the few to do so within the liberal tradition is Matthew Clayton, who in his 2006 book *Justice and Legitimacy in Upbringing* argues that a commitment to polit-ical liberalism entails that it is illegitimate for parents to induct their children into a substantive vision of the good. While Clayton does not equate education with schooling, he is still, like most of the philosophers considered above, working firmly within the framework of liberal theory. In the context of debates on multicultural-ism, however, it is important to consider work that goes beyond, or even challenges, some of the classic liberal positions discussed above.

Critical Multiculturalism

Philosophers of education have discussed multiculturalism and multicultural educa-tion in the pages of philosophy of education journals, books and edited collections. Yet there is also a significant body of literature on multicultural education that, while its authors may not self-identify as philosophers, addresses similar philo-sophical and political questions. An important shift within this body of work is that

from liberal multiculturalism to critical multiculturalism. May and Sleeter (2010, p. 4) characterise the phase of liberal multiculturalism, prominent in the 1970s and 1980s, with a focus on "getting along better, primarily via a greater recognition of, and respect for, ethnic, cultural, and/ or linguistic differences". This approach is reflected in work by philosophers of education in this period, which seemed to embody the hope that if schools were the kinds of places where children from diverse groups encountered each other as equals and learned to respect each other's cultural and other differences, this in itself would lead to a more tolerant society, as reflected in Pratte's statement: "I wish to suggest that schools can be utilised as vehicles for fostering tolerance and understanding among culturally diverse groups" (1978, p. 114).

May and Sleeter state that "a key weakness" of liberal multiculturalism is its "inability to tackle seriously and systematically… structural inequalities, such as racism, institutionalized poverty, and discrimination" (2010, p. 3). In allowing educational policy, curriculum and pedagogy to focus on the ethnic and cultural histories and practices of minority groups, liberal multiculturalism, in May and Sleeter's view, "abdicates any corresponding recognition of unequal, and often untidy, power relations that underpin inequality and limit cultural interaction" (p. 4). The period when liberal multiculturalism was at its height in Britain, leading to enthusiasm for all forms of 'diversity' in the curriculum, often got translated into what Modood and May (2001) describe as "the welcoming of people of other cultures by encouraging their cultural practices, usually in superficial ways (later lampooned as 'a multiculturalism of the three S's': saris, samosas, and steel bands)" (p. 306).

Recent work by philosophers of education has explored the shifting and occasionally conflicting aims within these different phases of multiculturalism. Thus Robert Fullinwider, in the *Blackwell Companion to the Philosophy of Education*, explores the epistemological positions underlying – or implicitly assumed by – much literature on multicultural education, particularly critical multiculturalism. Fullinwider is very dismissive of what he sees as the central assumption that "when students understand the causes of their beliefs, and whose interest they serve, this is supposed to be liberating" (2003, p. 495), arguing that education ought to provide students with "a platform for assessing the soundness or accuracy of beliefs in the first place", irrespective of the need to understand the "causal stories about power and interest" behind them (ibid). Ultimately, he concludes, the strength of multiculturalism "has been its unremitting commitment to closing the achievement gap and fostering respect across ethnic, racial and 'cultural' boundaries. Its weaknesses derive from its intellectual insularity and limited conceptual tools" (p. 498).

However, I believe Fullinwider misinterprets the educational orientation of critical multiculturalism. It is notable that in the work of Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997) and other theorists in the tradition such as Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren, the prime audience for arguments such as those referred to by Fullinwider is actually not students but teachers (see e.g. Giroux 1992, 1988; Kincheloe 1993). The point they are making is not that understanding the causes of their beliefs and the power structures behind them will *in itself* be liberating for students; rather, the point is that in the absence of an understanding on the part of teachers of how structures of

power operate in society, and where they are situated within these structures, their ability to offer an educationally transformative or liberatory experience will be limited, and they will therefore inevitably end up reproducing the dominant power structures and socio-economic inequalities. The critical multicultural teacher, Kincheloe says, "is a scholar who spends a lifetime studying the pedagogical and its concern with the intersection of power, identity and knowledge" (Kincheloe and Steinberg 1997, p. 29). It goes without saying that the critical multicultural teacher is also committed to rigorous intellectual disciplinary knowledge; knowledge that can provide students with "a platform for assessing the soundness or accuracy of beliefs" (Fullinwider 2003, p. 495); but what theorists of critical multiculturalism are calling for is a pedagogy that goes beyond this. Whereas "Mainstream conservative liberal and pluralist multicultural educators have been relatively uninterested in probing the connections that unite the sphere of politics, culture and the economy with education", therefore viewing their task as "merely addressing prejudicial attitudes towards women and minorities", critical multiculturalists acknowledge that "racial, sexual and class forms of oppression can be understood only in structural context"(Kincheloe and Steinberg 1997, pp. 31–32).

An important element of critical multiculturalism, then, is the demand that educators and educational theorists reflect on their own positions within structures of power, privilege and oppression. Some acknowledgement of this point is evident in recent work by philosophers of education, in that it would be a lot rarer today to find philosophers of education referring unreflectively to 'our culture' and 'our education'; phrases that were far more common in the 1960s and 1970s, as in the following extract from the Harris paper referred to above:

> We must now return to the issue at hand, to the question of how a culture like our own, which is avowedly and rightly willing to do all it can to show equality of concern and respect to all its citizens and which recognises that it cannot hope to do this unless it is also willing to show equal concern and respect for their cultures, is to cope with the paradox which constituent discriminatory cultures present. (1982, p. 227)

This passage follows a discussion of how

> The suppression by Britain of slavery in the last century and the open attacks by the Royal Navy on the slave ships of other nations might well be seen, and was seen, as a flagrant, high-handed and insensitive rejection of the deeply held beliefs and cultural practices of other societies. These societies might well have claimed that they were entitled to the same concern and respect for their practice of slavery as Britain claimed for the rejection of such a practice. (ibid)

Both these quotes illustrate a lack of reflection in the part of the author on his own position of power and privilege, and what it means, from this position, to talk of 'our culture'. They also betray a historical blindness, well documented by critical philosophers of race such as Charles Mills (2007), who has developed the concept of "white ignorance" to "map a non-knowing grounded in white racial privilege". A familiarity with important historical studies, such as C.L.R. James' *The Black Jacobins* (1938), would have revealed to Harris that Britain's "attacks on slave ships of other nations" were in fact part of a colonial war with the French to gain control

of the strategically vital trade ports of the slave colonies of the West Indies, and that the claim that the British can be credited with bringing about a "suppression of slavery" is dubious, to say the least.

As noted, a great deal of recent work in philosophy of education shows a greater awareness of these issues of privilege and power. Lawrence Blum's work is notable in this regard, not only for its explicit foregrounding of questions of 'race', but for his use of the phrase 'multicultural concerns', which I find a more fruitful phrase than the phrase 'multiculturalism' or 'multicultural education'. It suggests that, rather than multiculturalism embodying a set of aims, or leading to a clear set of policy prescriptions, there are multicultural concerns that teachers, philosophers and theorists should be alert to, whatever educational context they are working in; and that these require an attention to specific moral, political and personal aspects of the situation. This requires us to constantly probe and question the different ways in which we understand and experience issues of culture and identity, and to create and nurture educational spaces in which to develop what Jose Medina (2013, p. 7) calls "democratic sensibilities", that "require free and equal epistemic interaction among the heterogeneous groups that are part of society".

Recent work by philosophers of education that reflects these concerns is often focused more explicitly on social justice pedagogy than on multiculturalism. A notable example here is the work of Barbara Applebaum, who succinctly articulates the shift to critical multiculturalism in stating: "In order for multicultural education to be successful, individuals from dominant groups, in our case both students and teachers, must be persuaded that they are dominating and must realize that this domination must cease" (1996, p. 186).

Similarly, Walter Feinberg, in arguing that "the act of decentring and coming to terms with otherness" is a central aim of public education in a multicultural society, notes that this is "more difficult and, therefore, more in need of systematic development" for members of the dominant group, "because their behaviour is taken as the norm" (1995, p. 214).

Philosophers have also problematised the simplistic rejection of liberalism often associated with critical multiculturalism, pointing out that liberalism itself, while committed to the fundamental value of basic freedom for individuals, does not entail "a posture of blindness or even hostility to group-based identities and categories" (Macedo 2003, p. 415).

Back to School

Back in Mrs. Bell's classroom, I am left wondering what, if anything, she could have done differently. The fact that I recall this incident, and my own discomfort, so vividly, suggests that there was something troubling going on; something that perhaps a different form of pedagogical interaction could have avoided. Philosophical work on multicultural education – a term that was becoming familiar amongst educational theorists as I sat staring down at my blank sheet of paper – shows just why

this approach represented significant progress. Theoretical work on recognition, for example, makes sense of the simple point that there is a form of injustice involved in failing to recognise the experience, identity and knowledge of minority groups, and suggests how multicultural education can address this. Yet as the above discussion shows, the concept of recognition on its own cannot address the issues faced by individuals from minority groups within pluralistic educational settings. Had Mrs. Bell been aware of the fact that I was Jewish and begun the lesson by saying, "Now, everyone draw something that you would have to eat at Christmas dinner, or on Hanukkah", I am not sure that my discomfort would have been eased. We did not pay much attention to Hanukkah in our home, and I wouldn't have had a clue what you were supposed to eat during this very minor Jewish festival.

In terms of the integration/assimilation dilemma, while I certainly didn't feel like an immigrant, having been born in England and with English as my mother tongue, it would have been quite useful for me to have learned what people ate at Christmas dinner. Perhaps Mrs. Bell could have simply said "Here are some things people eat at Christmas", named them, described them, then asked us to produce some imaginative artwork on this theme. As it was, I did not find out until several years later what that brown blob with a leaf on top actually tasted like or how you were supposed to serve and eat it. Had this been explained to me, perhaps I would have felt more equipped to deal with the strange rituals involved in a Christmas dinner, were I ever to be invited to one. But then again, even if Mrs. Bell had taken the diversity of her own classroom into account, there is nothing to say that this would have fostered the attitudes of toleration and recognition that underpin the aims of multicultural education. This is not only because, as Meira Levinson (2007) points out, merely bringing people together is unlikely to achieve these aims, but also because "it is a real danger in diverse common schools that teachers and students become complacent about their inclusivity. They fail to think about whether the groups they choose to focus on because they are represented in the building are the most significant ones for students to learn about" (p. 632).

The fact that children at British primary schools today are unlikely to learn about Christmas without also learning about Diwali, Hanukkah, Eid and Chinese New Year, however problematic the superficial presentation of 'cultures' implied here, surely represents progress. Yet while children from minority groups in British schools today are probably less likely to feel confused and alienated by tasks like making festive decorations, this is not to say that they are not still experiencing alienation, disempowerment, systematic disadvantage and discrimination.

Recognising these systematic injustices and inequalities requires a reflexivity about our own position as we try to create and explore spaces for critical education and critical thinking about education. Perhaps Mrs. Bell would have been a more sensitive teacher had she been aware of her own position as a member of a majority group. But I also need to consider why it was that it did not occur to her that I would not know what people ate at Christmas dinner. I expect that part of the reason for this was that I was a white child in a predominantly white Christian context, thereby passing as one of the majority. There was, as far as I remember, one non-white child

in my year at school; a boy from Mauritius called Farhan. I don't know what his teacher asked him to draw in the Christmas decoration class, and I certainly don't think that assuming that because a child is Black or Asian she will not be familiar with certain cultural rituals is any less problematic than assuming that because a child is white, she will. But it is important to remember that, as Rattansi (2011) notes, "The issue of multiculturalism was racialised from its inception. To a large degree, [it] has its origins in responding to the populations that had previously resided in Europe's colonies and which had by and large been regarded as innately inferior races" (p. 9).

The kind of constant vigilance and sensitivity to how issues of diversity and identity intersect with issues of power and privilege has not always been a concern of philosophers, and there is certainly a lot more we can do to address the lack of diversity within our own discipline. In the mammoth 1999 four volume collection *Major Themes in the Analytic Tradition* (Hirst and White 1999), which, as the blurb states, "represents the major ideas and arguments which have come to characterise philosophy of education", out of 91 chapters, only 13 are written by women, and as far as I can tell, all the authors are white. While there is still a long way to go, the field today is definitely more diverse. Yet there are other kinds of diversity, beyond the politically significant ones of race and gender, that perhaps we should be concerned about if we want to nurture the "epistemic friction" (Medina 2013) that is so vital to our discipline and to democracy. Perhaps more diversity in terms of the intellectual traditions and positions we engage with, and the educational settings – particularly those that challenge the dominance of state schooling – we consider, would be a welcome development.

A piece of writing in philosophy of education that incorporates a personal narrative where the author reflects on her own experience and identity would have been unlikely to be published in a mainstream academic publication 40 years ago. So there have been welcome developments in the discipline (although no doubt there will be those who disagree).

My own view is that good philosophy of education has always done what good multicultural education and critical pedagogy do, namely develop and nurture the intellectual resources for exploring and questioning the common-place understandings and assumptions of educational discourse, thus constituting both what Giroux (1988) calls a "language of critique", and a "language of possibility".

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