

Separation, Integration and Citizenship, reply to Glenn

Rik Pinxten*

Introduction

Patrick Glenn's paper in this volume offers a reasoned attack on the notions of separation and integration in western tradition. In my view there is a way out, indeed, but the old dichotomy between extreme right separatism and fuzzy multiculturalist integration fogged the panorama to the extent that we did not even begin to look for another option. In this contribution as elsewhere¹ I advocate for an inclusive form of citizenship.

Separation and exclusivist society models

I have a lot of sympathy for Glenn's analysis of separation thinking (and acting), especially in assessing it as a deep-seated attitude in western tradition. As an anthropologist I claim that separation and dichotomisation is not only a feature of western thinking,² but also of its way of organizing society and the world. The idea that we as westerners would be in the lead position of a unidirectional historical line of development, which encompasses humankind as a whole, and that hence we have the mission to 'develop' all others by bringing them our civilization, is a queer one for a comparative anthropologist. How can we sustain a claim like that? Is the mere amount of material goods of the past three centuries or the temporary supremacy by military means sufficient argument? What about aesthetics, or morality, or the level of happiness emanating from this culture? Anyhow, the format which allows for this claim is that of 'us' against 'them', or in Glenn's terms, that of separation. Whether this

* Rik Pinxten is educated and affiliated in Belgium, Ghent University. Researcher of the NSF Belgium (1972-83) and professor of anthropology and religious studies at Ghent University since 1980. Visiting professor of Northwestern University, Ill and of Syracuse University, NY. President of the Flemish Humanist Federation (HVV). Research: epistemology of anthropology, intercultural negotiation, interreligious entente.

1 R. Pinxten, 'European Identity: One and Many at the Same Time', in: R. Maier (ed.), *Citizenship and Identity at 19-38* (Shaker Press, Maastricht, 2004). R. Pinxten & K. de Munter, *De Culturele Eeuw* (Houtekiet, Antwerpen, 2006).

2 R. Pinxten & C.R. Farrer, 'On learning and Tradition; A Comparative View', in: W. de Graaf & R. Maier (eds.) *Sociogenesis Reexamined at 169-184* (Springer, New York, 1994).

dichotomy is induced by a religious past (as I believe it is) is a difficult question for investigation. But that it obtains can indeed be stated. My main aim in this contribution, however, is not to elaborate on the dichotomy or on the claim of superiority presumably sustaining it. Rather, I want to go one step beyond the analysis and propose an avenue of possible solutions.

The principal claim I need to reiterate first is that the essentialism Glenn points at is, indeed, wrongheaded. Secondly, when we all agree on this, we have to scrutinize the two opposite societal ideologies of the past three decades (in Europe, but also in the USA) and show them to be both forms of essentialist ideologies. I am referring to monoculturalism and multiculturalism. Only by analysing to some depth these two opposing stands will we be able to escape from the separation attitude. In order to make such an analysis I invite the reader to consider that we may all be in the position of a phenomenological illusion. The best known example of such an illusion is that of geocentrism: we 'see' that the sun rises, and we 'observe' it revolving around the earth, which then 'obviously' is in the centre of the universe. It took us many generations to become aware that this is an illusion, and that the phenomena only appear to be what they are not. Now that we 'know' that the sun stands still and that the earth revolves around it, we can mentally correct our observations. Something of this kind is happening in the discussion on separation and identity, I claim. We 'see' differences and conclude that they are the core of reality, they refer to the essences of humankind. Within this frame we then distinguish between two opposing positions: the mono- versus the multiculturalists. We must become aware of the illusionary nature of this essentialist reasoning first.

In the past decades the new extreme right groups in Europe and the USA have adopted the view that cultures are like essences: they cannot mingle and hence monoculturalism would be sensible and multiculturalism is dangerous for the identity of any tradition. On the basis of this reasoning the rightist groups then plead to exclude other religious or cultural groups from this society: they are said to have another essence and hence not to be likely to mingle with the local cultural group. Both historically and sociologically the essentialism in this reasoning is untenable. In the USA the historical and sociological reality is one of immigration and cultural mixing ever since colonialism. In Europe we have a documented tradition of consecutive invasions, wars, occupations as well as cultural and population shifts since Julius Caesar invaded the northwestern territories of the continent. The claim of cultural essentialism is obviously not well founded when looking at these facts of cultural mixture going on for ages: not Christianity, but innumerable influences from India and China to Islamic cultures have formed what is known as 'western' civilization today, surely formatted by means of local

inventions and original transformations as well. However, the ideology of extreme right essentialism uses the shaky specification of separation thinking to sustain an exclusivist political point of view. That is to say, they wrongly claim things like: druidism is the 'real' religion of this part of the world, and Christendom is a *Fremdkörper* in the West since it was only introduced with Clovis (500 A.D.). As if culture or religion in the region can be supposed to have a perennial core, regardless of the demonstrable continuous stream of occupations and wars in the European plains since time immemorial. On the other hand, a range of democratic politicians and media people in Europe and the USA have over the past three decades been drawn to the position of multiculturalism: democrats claimed to be tolerant (as Glenn mentions) vis-à-vis other cultures (in immigrant and refugee groups) in opposition to the monoculturalists. Unfortunately, when going into the ideology of multiculturalism it is either so vague that it loses policy potential or proves to end up as essentialism as well: multiculturalists claim that members from another cultural tradition should be allowed to live in their new context (e.g., the European Union or the USA) as full members of their (former) culture. The majority is accused of intolerance by hardboiled multiculturalists when it does not respect the unconditional right to live as a member of their 'original tradition' to newcomers. In practice, this led a former Minister of Health in Holland for example, to try and implement a law which would grant the right to women from the Horn of Africa in Europe to be circumcised (i.e., have the clitoris and labia cut out) by a medical doctor and covered by the state health security system. That this practice (apart from cases of acute interventions by doctors, of course) is thus likely to deny the universal principle of equal rights for women and men by institutionalising a violent and coerced mutilation of these women was then considered of less importance than the respect for this particular tradition. In practice this even yields a racist attitude: when e.g. Turkish descendents are addressed as 'Turks' in the third or fourth generation, or rules and habits of the country of origin (with clitoris excision as the one most debated) are to be 'respected' by the host country over and against national or European laws and even Human Rights, we are on a sliding slope to racism. The inequality and the lack of protection for women and children which have emerged from such a form of multiculturalism pose serious problems, not only for the host society which is said to be built on principles like the right of equal treatment, but for any mixed society.

Both of these ideologies, mono- and multiculturalism, are essentialisms: the former claims a cultural essence for a presupposed local majority, and the latter does the same for all cultural communities, except the majority. In my view the main problem is that neither is adequate for the purpose they

claim to achieve. In Europe and the USA the population is religiously and culturally diverse, and since the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989) diversity has increased: e.g., medium cities like Lille, Brussels or Antwerp and Marseille host groups from some 200 non-European cultures. That means that cultural and religious diversity is rampant. There is no reason to suppose that diversity will diminish in the foreseeable future. Both wealth in these regions and wars in the homelands of refugees seem to guarantee that the influx will continue for years to come.

The exercise I engaged in with former publications was to show how a minimal, but universal platform of citizenship rules and attitudes is the only adequate answer to this complex situation. The claim is that a minimum platform of rules and attitudes, shared by any individual of a diverse population, constitutes the necessary condition for such a population to live together in a societal construct and on one territory in a durable and a relatively peaceful way. Both values (peaceful and durable) are ideological in nature, but I suppose a majority can be found for them, and not for constant violence and insecurity as basic principles. What does the platform look like? I limit myself to Europe, to make the claim as strong as possible.

An actualisation of the principles of the Enlightenment will do the job. That is to say, along with Glenn I advocate that culture can never serve as a basis for the organisation of a mixed society. As anthropologist, however, I grant that cultural identities are very important for communities. Combining both claims in one societal and political structure is my proposal: a basis of common 'civic values' which are transferred through education to all citizens and cultural identities which come in at a secondary level. Yet more importantly than mere values, the institutionalisation of these values is what has been happening over the past six decades of EU: freedom for all, equality for all and solidarity (guaranteed by a neutral redistributive instance). These principles and their institutional concretisation in rules of conduct and in institutions (laws, services, organizations) have been installed in the mind of the citizens in their respective states and prove to be shared and genuinely incorporated by citizens. Over the decades we saw a growth of freedom to the extent that churches and political parties have lost their firm grip on their following. This is sometimes interpreted as a crisis (e.g., the distance between political parties and the citizens), but may be appreciated as well as a growth toward 'integral freedom'.³ In that interpretation, which I advocate with Touraine, the citizen is not only 'free from bonds' (with king and church, i.e., negative freedom), but gradually deliberates autonomously as an agent at each instant. The challenge for the citizen then, is to go into negotiation as a free agent in order to find optimal condi-

3 A. Touraine, *Qu'est ce que la démocratie?* (Fayard, Paris, 1996).

tions for all living in this free world. Not much has been forwarded in this department, but the condition is well described by Touraine's notion of 'integral freedom'. In terms of equality a similar trend of growth of equality can be assessed: 'equal rights' is high on the agenda and women, holebis (i.e., homosexuals, lesbians and bisexual people) and other minorities have gradually been granted (more) equal rights. To be sure, not all is well and certain groups are not treated equally in the EU (notably refugees and immigrants), but the difference with the situation around the Second World War is striking: women have gained financial and economic independence to a large extent, discrimination on the basis of gender or religion has diminished dramatically, and so on.

Finally, solidarity is installed as a shared system of beliefs and practices in the EU, which serves as a safeguard for all needy citizens: social security and health insurance for all. The system is basically a solidarity system in that salaried people, entrepreneurs and policy organisations pay a substantial percentage of the wage to a neutral body (a state agency, most of the time) which acts as a redistributive instance for all those in need at a certain time of their life. The intriguing thing, from my point of view, is that this system is clearly accepted and carried forward by European citizens (notwithstanding some criticism or attempts to reorient it).

This constitutes the minimal platform: it is clearly a set of rules of conduct and of institutions which apply to all citizens, regardless of gender, religion, culture or descent (in line with the charter of Human Rights, as the basis of the EU construct). The attack of neo-liberalism on the solidarity corner of this building testifies to the tension between the three principles and their institutional formats: dropping one of them reshapes the whole building of common citizenship, or might have it collapse. For example, if one attacks or abolishes the principle of solidarity (by privatising health insurance) the European project will probably cease to exist, and exclusion of particular groups is to be expected: in the programs of extreme parties this is exactly what is proposed vis-à-vis refugees and immigrants, who then get at best a second rate citizenship status.⁴ If one drops the principle of equality, a form of apartheid could be argued for by policy makers. This is what we saw in the 'dual society' model of the UK and The Netherlands in 2005. In both latter cases religious or cultural identity can be granted or even subsidized by a government, but equal chances or equal rights are deleted from the triad of principles. My contention is that such policies will prove to yield instability and violence, as is already well documented for the UK.⁵ Hence, the thesis

4 A. Banks & A. Gingrich (eds.), *Neo-nationalism in Europe* (Berghahn Publisher, Oxford, 2006).

5 E. Seward, 'Racial Conflicts in British Cities', in: R. Pinxten & E. Preckler (eds.) *Racism in Metropolitan Areas* at 23-34 (Berghahn Publisher, Oxford, 2006).

seems to stand that durable and peaceful coexistence with a high degree of diversity in the population is only possible, provided the three principles of freedom, equality and solidarity for all are actively safeguarded and respected by all as a minimum common platform. It is clear that this minimal circumscription of citizenship then comes first for all members of a population: citizenship is here defined as the respect for and active pursuit of the platform indicated by all members of the population. Beyond that level of citizenship individuals, groups and communities can live their religious or cultural particularities, with respect for the common platform for all as citizens of a common political complex. I deliberately use the term 'political complex', and not 'the state' (see below).

Integration and an inclusive societal model

Over the past years some important research in the area of politics and culture has been produced. I mention two authors in particular, since their work is missing from both Glenn's and Van Brakel's text (this volume), and they offer highly original ideas for a democratic societal model with a culturally diverse population: Margalit and Castells.

In an awe inspiring trilogy Castells⁶ managed to show convincingly how economic and technological globalisation (through the new high technology of the third industrial revolution) triggers several societal developments at the same time: the nation states are increasingly losing power over the past decades, and identity movements of all shades and degrees emerge worldwide. In other words, there might be a(n) '(ideo-)logical' contradiction between the universal claims of globalisation and the emergence of a multitude of more or less particularistic identity movements. But there certainly is not a societal contradiction when looked at somewhat closer. That is to say, the separation thinkers in the identity movements will land in fundamentalism of one sort or another: the presumed identity separates them out, mentally and eventually socially, as a religion, a culture or a race which is thought to be irreducibly and essentially different from all other human groups or communities. However, when looking at humankind in an inclusive perspective (all of humanity, the one and genetically homogeneous human species, Relethford⁷ it is perfectly logical and existentially gratifying to identify with particular religious groups and cultural traditions at a more particular level of humanity. In other words, once we recognize that we are all human beings and share common features, genetically and physically to begin with, we can adopt

6 M. Castells, *The Information Age*, 3 volumes (Blackwell, Oxford, 1996).

7 J.H. Relethford, *The Human Species: An Introduction to Biological Anthropology* (McGraw-Hill, New York, 2005).

a decent advocacy about our relative differences in tastes and beliefs, habits and rules. When we want to live our particularity as if it counts for the full hundred percent of our humanity, then we land in fundamentalism, racism or more generally exclusivism (see on 'cultural fundamentalism' as a generic term in anthropology.⁸ At the level of a large population (and not of the human species as a whole) a similar inclusive position obtains: when taking an inclusive view on society seriously, we have to reason and propose policies for the population which lives together for a certain amount of time on the same territory and/or in one societal organization. Concepts and rules should imply all citizens first and foremost, and respect for these concepts and rules is asked from the whole population, regardless of the cultural or religious particularities of groups and communities which constitute it.

Margalit⁹ can be profitably linked to this reasoning, although of course his research followed a quite different avenue (coming from political philosophy, and not at all anthropology). He uses the notion of 'decent society' when talking about structural exclusion and structural humiliation of groups and communities. He points to a long-term and systematic frustration of groups and communities who are denied basic (human) rights and are hence not able to fully deploy their personality: e.g., immigrant groups in Europe are denied political citizenship for one or two generations when they do not adopt the nationality of the host country. Or groups are excluded from jobs on the basis of gender (e.g., the case of the women who cannot become priests in Catholicism), religion, physical condition or race. Where we see that the blame is then almost systematically put on the shoulders of the frustrated group and measures of indeed integration or assimilation are devised for them, Margalit claims that the society as a whole (and basically the majority policies) is 'indecent', since it structurally prohibits that group X or community Y can become a full person under the conditions that obtain. Not only does the author offer an intriguing set of 'defaults' that we can easily find in practice in Europe and in the USA, but he also points to measures to reach an inclusive decent society by remedying the defaults, rather than shamelessly blame the victims of exclusion. Hence, a first attempt to overcome the illness is offered here. Typically, Castells claims that state power is diminishing worldwide and Margalit speaks about society, and not about state. In the final section I have to pick up this point of the role of the state once more.

8 V. Stolcke, 'Debating Culture Again', in: *Current Anthropology* 37, at 3-36.

9 A. Margalit, *The Decent Society* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass, 1996).

Intercultural education and other means to overcome separation

Moving away from the old habits of exclusion on social, religious, cultural, gender or still other grounds certainly is far from easy. Hoping that human beings will become tolerant and apply an inclusive perspective on their society or on humanity as a whole spontaneously is at best naive, at worst it borders on irresponsibility and guilty indifference. However, having said this, it is still our duty as scientists and intellectuals to critically investigate which strategies work and which are inadequate. The inadequacy could be triggered by features of the different traditions involved, of religious dogmas or even of fear to lose the economic and wealth privileges the richer communities now have achieved. If we take the above analysis seriously meaning that the triad of freedom, equality of chances and rights, and solidarity are preconditions for a mixed population to live in a durable and peaceful state of coexistence, then we will have to look for means and principles which help make such a minimal platform prominent in the mind of the citizens. I present a few examples of research and implementation of results with which I have been busy over the past couple of years. Theoretical processing is barely starting, but it is certainly meaningful to point to a selection of concrete areas and projects to start with.

A series of methods and techniques are already being devised, be it that they live an almost subliminal life. Both exclusivist ideologies and life stances (like nationalism, some religions, neo-liberalism and 'new' racism¹⁰ and economic globalisation in a harsh form of capitalistic worldwide expansion in the name of unquestioned and almost religiously revered 'laws of the free market' are very dominant and often violently present in the world after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The result is that the well meaning inclusive perspectives are not 'sexy' or 'trendy' as I heard them disqualified. It is clear that the respect for the 'minimal basis' is not automatic. However, there is no alternative and hence education, and good practices can be influenced by state organisms. Time and training in intercultural communication and interaction will have to be allowed to enhance the feasibility of the intercultural project.

First and foremost there is education. In educational studies the exploration of techniques and curricula which are deliberately focusing on interculturality is underway. There are some journals now (like 'Intercultural Education', 'Culture and Psychology', and 'Mind, Activity and Culture') devoted to this perspective and some school projects are being implemented.¹¹ At the EU level, intercultural education was granted the status of 'priority' in 1988, although especially larger nation states in the Union are still hesitant to implement this agreement in their educational system. Secondly, to view the

¹⁰ See Banks & Gingrich, *supra* n. 4.

¹¹ J. Gundara, Racism, 'Devolution and Education in the European Union', in: Evens Foundation (eds.) *Europe's New Racism?* (Berghahn Publisher, Oxford, 2002).

EU as an immigrant region is only very gradually taking shape in the minds of common people and policy makers: the curriculum material is still primarily nation state oriented. Notwithstanding all this, it is a fact that over the past decade the shift towards an 'intercultural' stance has started. The actual pedagogical demands of mixed schools in the cities of Europe only make this shift more urgent and unavoidable. As head of the Centre for Intercultural Education at Ghent University, I can testify to all this. The Centre was commissioned by the Flemish Government to study conflict development in mixed schools, to select adequate curriculum material (Europe-wide) and to offer training on the basis of research to all schools in the Flemish region. It is the largest centre in the EU with this mission, and yet it cannot fully cope with the requests. It develops educational programs which break away from the teacher-focused perspective and recognizes the cultural learning styles of pupils from different origin as a potential input in the classroom happening. Moreover, it offers training where teachers and other staff learn to cope with mixed class populations (with different languages, religions, habits and tastes and school traditions) and bend differences to the benefit of all. Obviously, a lot of territory will have to be covered, but it is clear that the focus on interculturality is a valid one, especially in the cities where diversity is greatest. What is the role of a state in this development? Given that the power of states is decreasing, and in agreement with Glenn's comment that states have more often been causes of division and confrontation, we have an interesting development in the EU: state power at the EU and at the national and regional levels facilitate intercultural education in the perspective of the minimal civic basis of citizenship and at the same time withdraw as much as possible from the educational scene. At the EU level, through the principle of subsidiarity, intercultural education is given priority and at the same time the concretisation of it all is relegated to the lower levels of power (state and region). At the state and regional level, a similar move can be observed: in line with EU rules, schools and school groups are given maximum autonomy. This is a way of seeking a neutral position for the state level, while at the same time defining the most general ground rules. This breaks away from a 'statist' tradition, but is still in its experimental phase, I think. To sanction the general regulations, bylaws are voted in the respective parliaments against racism, discrimination, and so on. The difficulty in reaching workable laws in these issues indicates for me that we are in a transition period: we move away from a situation where the state had at least four instruments to enforce its power (education, military draft, taxes and justice) to one in which all modern states have only two of them (taxes and justice). If this is true, then we do not have a more neutral state now, but rather a less powerful one.

Parallel developments can be pointed at in cultural policies. In 2006 the Flemish Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports launched a binding directive for the whole sector stipulating that 'interculturalising' will from now on be an obligatory feature of cultural houses, culture brokers and organisations in the field which draw government subsidies.¹² In practice, the ministry can intervene through subsidies: promoting intercultural initiatives and denying subsidies to monocultural ones. With different representatives in power this may, of course, be altered. Over the past five years cultural initiatives which promote cultural and artistic productions and activities of groups traditionally excluded, were singled out for public sponsoring and given the opportunities to grow and become known. In this area methods and techniques are being scrutinized (slowly but steadily), which can have an emancipating outcome for the groups and communities concerned. So far, a selection of practices is being studied and published in an attempt to help the field restructure in the frame of an inclusive society.¹³

Very recently private companies in design studies and in intercultural management are moving to this focus and showed interest in projects of joint venture. This is still very fragile and too uncertain to attach labels to or refer to publications. It is certainly significant enough to mention it in passing.

A final example stems from policy thinking in an intercultural world. Groups of citizens are gathering here and there to analyse the new society and make proposals. The more publicised of them was a group around Pierre Bourdieu in Paris, which appears to be discontinued after his death. But different local groups exist: for example, 'Pensées libres' in Paris, or the 'Spinozists' in Ghent. The latter develops a proposal for the recognition and eventual subsidizing of tens of religious cults and life stance organisations in the diverse urbanised context of Belgium. It proves to be the case that the existing system of recognition within the confines of the Constitution grew into an *ad hoc* regulation of the field: there are four Christian denominations, one Judaic cult, only one Islamic organisation and one life stance union which were legally recognized and protected. Attached to this status these denominations are allowed to offer a religious course in the school curriculum, and their temporalia are subsidized under certain regulations. However, each of the denominations is subsidized and its working assessed differently from the next one: the Islamic community is systematically counted, screened by the secret policy agency and obliged to organise regular elections of an executive council.

12 'Actieplan Interculturaliseren', nota van de Minister van Cultuur van Vlaanderen (Bert Anciaux), Ministerie van Cultuur, Brussel.

13 A. van Dienderen (forthcoming), *Diversiteit in het theaterveld* (EPO, Antwerpen).

Some of the others simply 'state' what they presume their following amounts to and get subsidies on that basis. One denomination is recognized because it happened to be the one to which the first king of Belgium belonged, and so on. In the perspective that presently tens of other denominations are flourishing in the cities, – with great success for some (like Buddhist and Hindu groups of different origins and format), – it is clear that the 'system' may not survive the growing diversity trends since the late '80s of the past century. Anyhow, the unequal and indeed unjust treatment of some denominations in comparison with others poses a serious juridical problem. Obviously, the system was developed in an era when the problem of (religious) diversity was not on the agenda, not like today anyway. The goal of the group mentioned (i.e., the Spinozists) is to develop an alternative, which would be fair and adequate for the new diverse and urbanised society of today. These are educated citizens at work, who offer their results for discussion with groups of citizens and policy makers. In the examples mentioned, not the state but a group of citizens is taking the initiative to reshape society. For those aspects that are relevant for legislation and law enforcement, political representatives are approached to discuss and eventually pass a proposal for law. Apart from that the traditional state is not in the picture, it seems. Discussion and negotiation is taking shape between groups of citizens first. I believe this to be a trend; the future will corroborate this or reject it.

Conclusion

In this contribution I have analysed the impact of separation thinking and action on the new mixed society we are living in. The important point here is that the choice is not between separation or exclusive thinking on the one hand and the alternative of integration on the other hand. Rather, I advocated that the dichotomy as such should be dropped in favour of the recognition of a commonly shared minimal platform of rules and values for the whole population. This constitutes a common definition of citizenship, which should be transferred through intercultural education and through cultural and societal policies.