DIMENSIONS OF DIVERSITY[1]

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In 2007, Taylor served with Gérard Bouchard on the Bouchard–Taylor Commission on reasonable accommodation with regard to cultural differences in the province of Quebec. He has also made contributions to moral philosophy, epistemology, hermeneutics, aesthetics, the philosophy of mind, the philosophy of language, and the philosophy of action.

In Canada, we face challenges to our very conception of diversity. In the wake of the battle surrounding the Meech lake constitutional accord, many of those who rallied around the Charter and multiculturalism to reject the notion of Quebec as a distinct society were proud of their acceptance of diversity – and in some respects rightly so. They saw themselves as defenders of what one might call first-level diversity – the view that a population with great differences in culture and outlook and background nevertheless shares the same idea of what it is to belong to Canada. Whatever their other

1 Adapted and updated from Reconciling the Solitudes: Essays on Canadian Federalism and Nationalism, Charles Taylor, Edited by Guy Laforest, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993, pages 182–184.

differences, their patriotism or manner of belonging is seen as uniform, and this is felt to be a necessity if the country is to hold together.

Of course, multiculturalism as a policy has been criticized for failing to address all the forms of diversity requiring protection. It is argued that a too exclusive concentration on it deflects our attention from the injustices and discrimination rooted in the systemic racism which narrows and blights the lives of many racialized Canadians including Indigenous peoples, African and Asian Canadians.

Beyond this, there is also another dimension of diversity. For many Quebeckers, the way of being a Canadian (for those who still want to be) is, by their belonging to a constituent element of Canada, *la nation québécoise*. Something analogous holds for Indigenous communities in this country; their way of participating in the Canadian polity is not accommodated by first-level diversity. This resulting sense of exclusion felt by these groups is puzzling to Canadians who only fully acknowledge and are sensitive to first-level diversity.

To build a country for everyone, Canada would have to allow for second-level or "deep" diversity, in which a plurality of ways of belonging would also be acknowledged and accepted. Someone of, say, Italian extraction in Toronto or Chinese origin in Vancouver might indeed feel Canadian as a bearer of individual rights in a multicultural mosaic. His or her belonging would not "pass through" some other community, although their transnational identity might shape who they are and how they contribute to Canada. But this person might nevertheless accept that a *Québécois* or a Cree or a Dene can belong in a very different way, that these persons are part of Canada through being members of their national communities. Reciprocally, the *Québécois*, Cree, or Dene would accept the perfect legitimacy of the "mosaic" identity.

Is this utopian? Could people ever come to see their country this way? Could they even find it exciting and an object of pride that they belong to a country that allows deep diversity? Pessimists say no, because they do not see how such a country could have a sense of unity. They feel that the model of citizenship has to be uniform, or people will have no sense of belonging to the same polity. Those who hold this view tend to take the United States as their paradigm, which has indeed been hostile to deep diversity and has sometimes tried to stamp it out as "un-American".

These pessimists should bear in mind three things. First, deep diversity is the only formula on which a united federal Canada can be rebuilt, once we recall the reasons why we all need Canada – namely, for law and order, collective provision, regional equality, and mutual self-help, as mentioned above. Second, in many parts of the world today, the degree and nature of difference resembles the Canadian reality rather than the American one. Thirdly, if a uniform model of citizenship better fits the classical image of the Western liberal state, it is also true that this is a straitjacket for many political societies. The world needs other models to be legitimated in order to allow for more humane and less constraining modes of political cohabitation.

Instead of pushing ourselves to the point of breakup in the name of the uniform model, we would do our own and other peoples a favour by exploring the space of deep diversity. To those who believe in

according people the freedom to be themselves, this would be counted as a gain in civilization.

In this exploration we would not be alone. Europe watchers will have noticed how certain attempts in the European community to impose a rigorous unity have created even deeper divisions in these societies.

Finally, even if a break-up were to occur, and we divided to form two polities with uniform citizenship, both successor states would find that they had failed after all to banish the challenge of deep diversity; because the only way that they can do justice to Indigenous peoples is by adopting a pluralist mould. Neither Quebec nor the Rest of Canada (ROC) could succeed in imitating the United States – or the European national states in their chauvinist prime. So let us recognize this now and take the road of deep diversity together.