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Inclusion, integration, assimilation.

Conceptions of incorporation of Others and definition of “freedom” in contemporary philosophy and political thought of modern liberal democracies: considerations of philosophers and cultural representations

Abstract

Equality and freedom are the foundations of liberal democracy and the Western society. However, they can be differently defined, and their definition implicates the different conditions and shaping of both culture and society. The main line of distinction is the orientation of definitions of both equality and freedom: they can be individual-oriented or group-oriented.

The philosophical dilemma about what is true freedom and true equality is also a practical problem: which definition should be applied in today's social politics and how to integrate individuals and groups into a single multicultural postmodern society. I shall demonstrate the main conceptions and potential consequences of their application. Then I shall analyse cultural representations of those conceptions. Such representations not only reflect but also influence popular thinking. Finally, I shall try to draw some conclusions regarding the implementation of different social conceptions.

Keywords: Assimilation, Difference-neutral, Difference-specific, Distinctiveness, Equality, Freedom, Individualism, Integration, Queer

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Thinking over the essence of freedom is in the very centre of contemporary philosophical and political problems. The controversy lies in whether freedom should be understood as an autonomy of the individual or as “group freedom”: one’s freedom to belong to any group, even if the group contains or restricts their freedom. Which means: can freedom mean voluntary deprivation of individual autonomy?

The question about freedom leads to a question about equality, which is another foundation of liberal democracy (in the classical meaning of the word as “the system based on liberties”) and indeed the entire Western civilisation. Equality and freedom have been the roots of it, either as the Greek and Roman heritage, or the Christian one.

In fact, equality and freedom as political notions were based on the exclusion of many people and embraced merely the minor (but considered major) dominant group - but as ideas they were universal. When the excluded started to claim or get the factual participation in those universal categories, the problems of definition emerged. The controversy over freedom and equality spread from the domain of pure philosophy to the domain of political philosophy and politics.

Equality

If “equality” means that democracy has to guarantee to everyone the freedom to achieve their goals, realize their desires (without harming others) and satisfy their needs,¹ then

¹ According to Arjun Appadurai and James Holston, there were two definitions of liberal democracy: one assumed that the nation state had been created thanks to the voluntary unification of people in order to achieve common goals, whereas the other assumed that the nation state had been created thanks to the unification of people who wanted

should it be *difference-neutral equality* or on the contrary *difference-specific equality*?² Arjun Appadurai i James Holston give the example of the maternity leave: should it be considered as a usual sick leave or should it be considered specifically?³

Some of the discriminated groups argue that their rights will never be truly equal as long as they are not difference-specific, taking in consideration their specific needs and values. Difference-neutral equality is tantamount to homogenisation and uniformisation of everyone on the example of one sample - the sample of the dominating group indeed. Such equality presume implicitly that everyone's desires and needs are the same - and the same as the needs and desires of the dominating group. Also the same are the means of satisfying everyone's needs and desires.

However, difference-specific equality is practically problematic. If we are to consider the difference, then what degree of difference should it be? To what minor groups should we give group rights? Considering specific rights of ethnic minorities sometimes means increasing oppression of the groups within those minorities (of women or LGBTQ+ people). What is to be done with the groups that are vulnerable to intersectional discrimination, e.g. black women, lower-class gays? Should we consider such groups as distinct specific groups? Nonetheless, these groups are divided into smaller ones, e.g. black non-heteronormative women, Hispanic lower-class gays. This could lead to considering every

to assure themselves the possibility to achieve individual goals by everyone. Appadurai and Holston think that the latter definition is prevalent. (Appadurai, Holston (1996)).

² Appadurai, Holston (1996).

³ Appadurai, Holston (1996): 194.

individual as a specific group, which jeopardizes the existence of the law and society itself.

Freedom

The problem with freedom is analogical: it is the question about what is freedom or what kind of freedom is more important. Individual freedom codified in *human rights*, the basis of modern Western society, frequently undermines cultural freedom, the group rights of people to cultivate their own culture. Sometimes, cultural freedom of a group represses individual autonomy of its members or is even in conflict with *human rights*. The most appalling example is the cliteridectomy or female genital mutilation. It is a harmful operation consisting in cutting off external female genitalia. Yet, there are groups that consider it as being a part of their cultural heritage. A philosophical dilemma finds here its materialisation (or even embodiment - on the female body): should external society, the state, intervene in the name of individual freedom, human rights? Or should the state tolerate such practices in the name of cultural freedom, group rights? This dilemma does not disappear if the object of these practices agrees on them or even supports them. We can argue that a woman agreeing on cliteridectomy or inflicting it on her own daughter does so out of ignorance, indoctrination, fear, that she is miserable without knowing it, that she is manipulated or psychologically addicted to her male oppressors. Yet: is not medicalisation of people's behaviour oppressive?

The partisans of group rights and freedom based on distinctiveness seem to have ready-made answers to those

questions, absolutizing the cultural freedom.⁴ They are for maximum freedom, understood by them in terms of group rights. Their discourse, extremely emancipated in theory, paradoxically can be accused of non-emancipation, of waiving individual freedom, of propagating domination of the group over the individual. In a sense, the conservative discourse, sceptical about any freedom, individual or group, would be more freedom-oriented: opposing the practices considered as non-Western would be tantamount to supporting personal freedoms and liberties. This is, indeed, a paradox: supporters of pluralism who see individualism as one's right to choose their group belonging, at the same time put individual freedom above the community (society) and opt for oppression of the individual by putting (specific) group rights above those of the individual. On the contrary, those who claim that the community is primary above individualism would guarantee more personal freedom.

⁴ In a sense this conception is included in Hanna Arendt's texts, if we transpose her theories to the reality of the multicultural society. She is fascinated with ancient politics, differentiating the public domain of freedom and individuality from the private domain of a despotic, hierarchical household with its oppressive system of absolute rule of the master/owner/father of the family, the interior of which is never penetrated by external influences. This seems to support the view that public freedom is superior to private one. Moreover, a lack of freedom in private domain is a precondition of freedom in public domain. Applying this system in the multicultural society, we would accord to a person unlimited liberty to realize cultural freedom and profess one's culture in the public zone but at the expense of individual freedom in private domain. Polish citizens could be free in public domain only because they had slaves and subdued women in their households. Neither the women nor men were free, as the obligation to rule the inmates and kin restrained their freedom. The same would apply to the cultural groups in a modern society. Arendt, the preacher of individualism and diversity, would be a partisan of oppression.

It is important to note that those dilemmas apply not only to groups of so-called traditional, ethnic cultures, but also to contemporary subcultures of modernity and postmodernity. The problem of oppressiveness of male-female relations in some Islamic groups is the same problem that we encounter in inter-gender relations in other groups, among women who search for romantic love or transgressive sexual experiences and fall into an oppressive relationship.

On the other hand, individualism, which prevails in the Western discourse, understood as cultivation of individual liberties and individual autonomy, can (as I have written above) paradoxically become a part of the conservative narration, and even (post)colonialism and oppression. "Human rights" include, for example, the right to ownership, which in practice means that everything which is not a private property (or a property of a modern state) belongs to no one. For the colonisers, from American *conquistadores* to the British in India and North Americans in Latin America, this was an excuse for exploitation of the lands and taking them away from the natives - as in many native cultures the land belonged to the communities, and was not "private". The "private property" was, moreover, a masculine category. Renata Hryciuk shows one example of Guatemala where the Indian system was different:⁵ the land belonged to indigenous communities but was distributed to families and inherited according to the filial system: the daughter inherited after the mother, and the son after the father. The Western system of private property caused concentration of all goods as family wealth, practically in the hands of the father and mostly male inheritors. The Spanish elites

⁵ Hryciuk (2019).

in modern times stole the Indian land by ignoring the system of common property and oppressing the native population structurally and culturally. The situation became even worse because of the neo-colonial politics of the USA, which dominates the Hispanic countries as a whole, both the elites of Spanish roots and, through them native Indians. Hryciuk quotes the example of Mexico, which, pressed by the US and Canada, introduced changes in its constitution depriving Indian minorities of their rights. American politics (including CIA interventions) have led to wars and genocide, whose victims have been usually the Natives. The migrations caused by those wars have met with xenophobic reactions in North America and have led to criminalisation of refugees.

Culture and society

The problem of freedom in contemporary political and social domains is in fact a problem of social organisation in the times of multiculturalism. Thus, it is also a problem of defining a culture and a society and their mutual relationship.

The classical definition of Johann Gottfried Herder does not differentiate between culture and society. They are one, inseparable and unified. Herder did not really approve of any kind of individualism (nor autonomy of the individual, nor the individual's right to choose the group of affiliation), neither freedom - nor individual autonomy, nor group rights. He did not think that in homogenous culture-society there would be any distinctive subgroups, or really distinctive individualities. The loss of homogeneity, individualisation, liberties, emancipation and pluralism of identities would change one culture into many cultures and by this, would destroy the society.

Herder's conception of culture claimed that culture is a source of social organisation, and is rooted in its people, that society and culture form a community in which all individuals form a single organism, a kind of ball or bubble. Postmodern multicultural conceptions are different. Society is a voluntary union of individuals which guard both their autonomy and the right to belong to different cultures.

Almost all international documents (UN, UNESCO, Council of Europe, European Union) acclaim multiculturalism, understood as citizens' integration with "the right to differ".⁶ "The postulate: <<integrate civically without unifying culturally>>"⁷ assumes a new model: one society - many cultures. "<<The Other>> as own belongs to inclusive <<us>>"⁸. Pluralism and individualism of the 20th century claim that they do not destroy the community since the group-orientation is not necessary to the creation and the maintenance of the community; on the contrary, the community is constructed through individualism, through individuals, not above them.⁹

⁶ Krzysztofek (2003): 81 (Author's own translation).

⁷ Ibidem: 81 (Author's own translation).

⁸ Ibidem: 81 (Author's own translation).

⁹ Hannah Arendt considered public domain, the community, as independent from the society. Society indeed cannot exist without some homogeneity. A *sine qua non* condition of society is that people act as if they were one big family, having only one opinion and one interest, and individuals who don't follow the rules are seen as asocial or abnormal. But society is the only possible form of a community. Arendt argues that the society is a hybrid of the private and the public. It is a modern creation, unknown in the Antiquity, especially in the Ancient Greek democracy, based on the idea of *polis*. *Polis* was a highly integrated community based on individuality, plurality and rivalry among individuals. The public domain was the domain of individuality, a place to show oneself. For Ancient Greeks, contrary to modern people, the public domain was a domain of freedom and individualism,

Nonetheless, some researchers have doubts. First, there are those who are sceptical of individualism and pluralism. Secondly, there are supporters of pluralism and individualism who have problems with defining them – the problems similar to those with defining freedom.

The fears of sceptics may be caused by identification of the community with Herder's idea of cultural unification. Still those fears have some serious foundations. Extreme pluralisation and individualisation impair social norms (sometimes even tend to form a normless society), even such norms as democracy or human rights, which are considered as just ones of many cultural creations in a multicultural society.

Those fears sometimes lead to extreme reactions. In recent years, we could observe not only the flourishing of conservative and nationalist movements, but even fundamentalist, fascist and suprematist ones. They all share the ideas and rhetoric of a return to the cultural identity understood as cultural sameness, to so called "roots".¹⁰ Contemporaneity is torn between two general tendencies and ideologies, needs and desires. They strengthen each other, as the existence of one is a reaction to the existence of the other: return

and the private domain was a homogenous space of duty and necessities of biological life, a space for satisfying only the basic needs of life. At present, it is the public domain and above all the social domain which is the domain of duty and oppression, and the private domain is a space of freedom, even though restricted by social oppression. Obviously, a return to *polis* is not possible. Today's world is far more populated than the Ancient one. Nonetheless, Arendt thinks that we can build a community based on individuality and plurality. She even claims that a true community cannot exist in any other way. Homogeneity is an end to the community. The source of the current social crisis is not plurality but mass society - as mass society is a standardised, homogenous one. Individualism is not a threat, but a cure. (Arendt (199*): 61-62 and 79).

¹⁰ Welsch (1999).

to national, conservative and even fundamentalist tribalism was a reaction to the process of globalisation and liberalisation. It is worth clarifying some important points here. Both globalisation and tribalisation are universal phenomena, although they have somewhat different forms in different places. Global culture is mainly based on Western culture. That is why in the West globalisation can be seen as opening to Others, or, in conservative optics, as contamination of “our” culture by Others. In non-Western cultures things are a little different. Those cultures are Western “Others”. For them globalism is, on one hand, a possibility to be closer to the West (if not becoming a part of it). But this means also resigning from at least a part of their own culture. Nationalisms and fundamentalisms of non-Western cultures have a different, more complicated countenance. A Westerner is perceived as better, but sometimes also as hostile. Things get even more complicated when a Westerner is a non-White at the same time. Ethnicity considered as worse concurs with provenance considered as better. To simplify the issue, I shall concentrate on the Western forms of contemporary tendencies.

The up to date blossoming of conservative and even ultra-right movements in Western countries are an answer to the progress of globalism and liberal governments at the beginning of this century. Particularisms are born out of fear of multiculturalism. Aspiration to homogeneity is a reaction to the aspiration to heterogeneity. “It is a psychological rule (...). Globalisation incites nationalism and ethnocentrism...”¹¹

Finally, on the psychological level, we can define this opposition as the tension between the need of security and

¹¹ Krzysztofek (2003): 90.

the longing for freedom. The sense of security is achieved thanks to the existence of social norms, automatic, innate belonging to a group and clear, simple identity and identification. Freedom is achieved thanks to the lack of oppression and restrictions, the absence of strict norms. Yet still it remains undecided what definition of freedom we should apply.

This exists in relation to two different integration strategies put forward by supporters of heterogeneity: assimilation and distinctiveness. The latter is divided into two types: one is “politics of identity” as Joanna Mizielińska called it,¹² and politics of *queer* (*queer* is usually associated with sexual minorities, but one of its pioneers, Gloria Anzaldúa, thought about identity of *queer* as identity of *mestiza*, mixed, *chicano*¹³). Strategy of distinctiveness is disturbing not only to conservatives but also to supporters of assimilation.

Assimilation is understood in a new “soft” way:¹⁴ assimilation not only changes the assimilated Other but also the assimilating society. The norm is widened, the changes are bilateral and occur within feedback. However, supporters of the distinctiveness strategy point out that even within the “softest” assimilation, the Other has to resign from an important part of their identity. Assimilation expands the boundaries of the norm to embrace those who are less different, less Other. Still, the most different ones, those who seem most Other, remain outside the norm. Inclusion is never complete. This happens in the case of homosexuality: monogamous relationships similar to heterosexual ones are accepted but

¹² Mizielińska (2012).

¹³ Anzaldúa (2010).

¹⁴ This can be caused by impossibility of “hard”, colonial assimilation. Acculturation of Otherness is unworkable because of the irreducible Derridian difference, best explained in the works of Homi Bhabha.

the rest is still subject to social exclusion. Strategy of distinctiveness aims not at widening the norm but at eliminating it, yearning for social acceptance of every Otherness.

Both strategies can be considered from the point of view of the dominating group (social mainstream) or from the point of view of the dominated, those longing for emancipation and equality. For the latter, the choice of strategy lies, according to bell hooks,¹⁵ in an answer to the question: do they want to join the dominating group (or advance in society) or do they want to change the society? Those questions can be asked of most of social revolts: liberal ones usually wanted just a change in the dominating group, a shift in domination or access of a wider range of people to the social mainstream. Such revolts were not led by the most oppressed, rather by those who were just merely different than the dominating group. Truly radical revolutions aimed at a complete change of social order, such as the equality of all people and social groups. Thus, Others can either adapt the liberal assimilation strategy, or the strategy of revolutionary distinctiveness.

The first one is the joining of the colonised to the coloniser. It can be regarded as egoistic: an Other or a group of Others cares only about their own position. If the change is done, this Other, or those Others will dominate over the rest (even over a wider group of their own origin), hand in hand with previous opponents, the dominating group.¹⁶ The second strategy, the strategy of revolutionary distinctiveness is the resistance

¹⁵ hooks (1989).

¹⁶ hooks (1989). The author describes here her own experiences and choices she had to make when, as a Black woman, she became a university researcher, joining the dominating group. She could have chosen either the path of forgetting her origin and assimilating with her new environment, or the path of resistance, remembering her distinctiveness and fight for acceptance of this very distinctiveness.

of the colonised against both discrimination and assimilation. The colonised want equality without having to resign from their own difference (Otherness). What they want is neither to dominate, nor to be dominated. They want to speak with their own voice and be heard. They do not want anyone to speak in their name, even to support their emancipation. They want to be Other and accepted at the same time.

This approach is, however, disquieting, and not only for conservatives and nationalists. There are serious doubts as to whether the Western society adapts everything, it will remain Western: “is it possible to contain multiculturalism in (...) the standard of Western democracy, and will this standard be Western then.”¹⁷ What to do with minor marriages, oppressive family structure and dramatically subordinate woman’s position, which some people treat as an integral part of their culture? Should they be accepted and will it not be the end of “Westernity” in the Western society? Or even the end of society in general, as one society will not be able to contain such a diversity; no one will be able to identify with it and society will break into small ethnic/cultural entities (Krzysztofek called them “bantustans”¹⁸), again built up on the rule of “one society - one culture”? The extreme emancipation of minorities will somehow, and in a deformed manner, fulfill the goal of conservatives. This fear finds its illustration in separatists ideologies which began to emerge in the USA in 1980s, inspired by discussions on multiculturalism.¹⁹

The rise of “bantustans” will be the final triumph of the group conception of freedom and individualism over the individual

¹⁷ Krzysztofek (2003): 81. (Author’s own translation).

¹⁸ Krzysztofek (2003): 77-94.

¹⁹ Śliz, Szczepański (2011): 18.

conception. Simultaneously, it will be the end of all freedom, as the “bantustan” society will dominate over its members, over individuals, uniform and homogenous, without any distinctive social groups inside. Fears of the decomposition of society and the rise of “bantustans”, and the fear of the supremacy of the group over the individual are associated with the identity politics within the distinctiveness strategy.

But there is another politics within this strategy. Politics/practice/strategy of queer is supposed to be a remedy to all tensions. Queer rejects both assimilation and identity (identification). It stresses the radical Otherness, but also undermines the existence of the norms that position and define Otherness. Queer claims that the strategy of identity is as normative as conservative thinking: every group has its norms, and norms are always oppressive. So is the group identity, always built upon exclusiveness. Gloria Anzaldua calls for existence outside, above and inter-ethnic groups²⁰. Joanna Mizielińska reminds that imposing a single identity on an entire group is oppressive. She thinks that building the identity of Others in opposition to the dominating group legitimizes the dominating discourse, which first introduced the division into “normal” and “Other”.²¹ Contrary to the politics of identity, the politics of queer transgresses the divisions. This is necessary as the boundaries of identities have always been artificial and unclear (e.g. historically it is very difficult to distinguish between homosexuality and transsexuality). Anzaldua wrote about Otherness in everyone. The politics of queer is somehow similar to transculturality of Wolfgang Welsch.²² Queer is extremely inclusive, it realises the group freedom

²⁰ Anzaldúa (2010).

²¹ Mizielińska (2012): 287-300.

²² See: Welsch (1999).

by transgressing the very idea of the group and at the same time it is radically individualistic. Identity is a construction, flow, fluid and performed.

This is not always positive. Judith Butler and her followers claimed fluidity of identity which meant the lack of it. In the name of freedom, queer can deprive people of the satisfaction of their basic need: the need to identify. The extreme individualism destroys the individual, just as extreme group freedom destroys any freedom. Donna Haraway wrote about what we lose when we resign from some categories in the name of liberating deconstruction:

For example, “sex” as an object of biological knowledge appears regularly in the guise of biological determinism, threatening the fragile space for social constructionism and critical theory, with their attendant possibilities for active and transformative intervention, which were called into being by feminist concepts of gender as socially, historically, and semiotically positioned difference. And yet, to lose authoritative biological accounts of sex, which set up productive tensions with gender, seems to be to lose too much; it seems to be to lose not just analytic power within a particular Western tradition but also the body itself as anything but a blank page for social inscriptions, including those of biological discourse.²³

²³ Haraway (1988): 591. According to Haraway such an attitude is based on the same assumption as the science of “White Capitalist Patriarchy” (Haraway (1988): 592): on complete objectification. Whereas, if we admit his/her/their agency (agency of the body and of the world), we do not have to consider the object as a construct of the describing person and resign from referring to the object.

The realisation of Butler's postulates would be uniforming, homogenising, oppressive and destructive for individuality in the same degree as conventional, conservative culture. Thinking queer can fall in a trap of "disembodied vision"²⁴ that characterized phallogocentric, masculine, heterocentric and ethnocentric thinking. The complete lack of norms threatens the society and on the other hand may easily fall into mental totalitarianism. Such oppressiveness embraces not only theoretical thinking and definition of identity, but also the domain of practical social action.

Scott Kerpen, in his paper presented during „Gender (Non) Conformity” conference, talked about “queernormativity”.²⁵ He pointed out that nowadays the queer theory can be accused of exactly the same thing - “disembodied vision” - of which Donna Haraway accused postmodernity. Upper- and middle-class Whites of the Western countries are again privileged compared to the rest of the world, and so are cities - as opposed to villages. Queer is a metropolitan practice, metrocentric in a sense.²⁶ Queer, as everything that gets institutionalized and firm, consists in the privilege of power. It imposes its own conceptions of freedom on Others (undeveloped countries, working class, countryside people). Freedom is defined exclusively as resistance against norms, whereas in reality people can feel free while keeping to the norms.

Queer excludes those who want to have a firm, well defined identity or, on the contrary, imposes a queer identity

²⁴ Haraway (1988): 590.

²⁵ Kerpen (2019).

²⁶ In non-Western countries, where queer is less popular and confused or mixed with other categories, like in Poland, those categories remain metrocentric. Joanna Struzik writes about the conception of “gayness”. See: Struzik J. (2012).

ex cathedra. Kerpen quoted examples of exclusion of non-binary people only because they did not want to identify as queer (they did not know the notion, did not understand it or did not want to use it). He also quoted examples of ostracism and shaming of people who decided to have the transsexual surgery as traitors who gave up on their fluidity and non-binary in order to assimilate. Queer contradicts itself by becoming an identity, normative, exclusive and oppressive.

Cultural representations

Analysing the cultural representations of integration of the Other, I focus on the Vampire Narrations, as the Vampire is *par excellence* the figure of the Other, and Vampire narrations are extremely popular in the 21st century, especially in the American culture on which I will focus.

The first years of the 21st century belonged the phenomenon of *Twilight*, both books written by Stephanie Meyer, and their film adaptations. *Twilight* is an affirmation of individualism. The heroine chooses her identity independently and on her own, she wants to become a vampire and she achieves it, and as a vampire she wants to be “vegetarian” (feed on animals only) and she is. Bella chooses her belonging, she is not defined by her origin, she constructs her identity.²⁷ Also Edward, her lover, is such a subject, as well as other

²⁷ Of course *Twilight* is neither the only, nor the first narration to show such a transcultural subject. Wolfgang Welsch quotes examples of V.S. Naipaul and Salman Rushdie. Both writers consider themselves as transcultural subjects and create such heroes in their works. In *Midnight's Children* the hero has several fathers, which is the best metaphor of a composite identity.

members of the Cullen family: they are vampires who remain human (contrary to the Volturis). Bella is a human who became a vampire. Both have a hybrid identity, and the fruit of their relationship is a daughter, Renesmee, half-human, half-vampire, literally a hybrid. *Twilight* is a pop cultural illustration of Welsch's statement that people can make their own choices about their belonging and should have the right to do so.

Of course, some researchers see this as a threat to the society as well as to the individual. Richard Sennett wrote that in a non-homogenous society an individual becomes more vulnerable,²⁸ because they can feel lost. That is why Rebecca Housel writes that Bella was a victim²⁹. Her relationship was oppressive. However, this can also be attributed to the fact that Meyer's vision of the society is only seemingly transgressive; indeed the heroine still lives in the patriarchal, quite uniform society.

The first years of the century witnessed the blossom of liberal governments, globalism and multicultural conceptions - and also of such Vampire Narration as *Twilight*. Then the rise of conservative and rightist movements in many countries of the West coincided with the rise of the Evil Vampire Narrations, with the most recent Netflix series *Van Helsing* as the example.

The Evil Vampire Narration was historically the first: it arose in the 19th century, while the Positive Vampire Narration only emerged at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century. The Evil Vampire Narration, with a bad Vampire as a symbol of dangerous abject Otherness

²⁸ Sennett (1992): 127.

²⁹ Housel (2009).

has never completely disappeared, but in the second decade of the 21st century it re-emerged with the re-emergence of conservatism, nationalism, tribalism, etc. Of course, the 21st century narrations cannot be identical to those of the 19th century, the pre-war period or the 1950s and 1960s. Some changes cannot be undone, the social borders have been irrevocably shifted, some groups have been deeply assimilated. A black man was a President of the United States and this cannot be crossed out from history books. Although the conservative movement wants to go back to cultural homogeneity of the society, this postulated homogenous Western culture will necessarily have wider borders than in the 19th century. Nonetheless, they try delimit the borders as narrowly as possible, and homogenize culture within those borders. It may embrace an Asian-American or Afro-American, but they must be sufficiently "American". And this "Americanness" consists mainly in the WASP and the conception of the "melting pot", Anglo-conformity, with small modifications. This is cultural racism and it finds expression in pop culture. Black, Hispanic or Asian are positive heroes of films and TV series, they are representations of the American society and culture, they fight dangerous Others and defend "our" people and "ourness" in action, war, fantastic and horror narrations, including Vampire Narrations. Women are heroes in the *Van Helsing* series, one of them being a black lesbian, an Asian is a hero of *Hemlock Grove*, and a Hispanic ranger – of the *From Dusk Till Dawn* series. They oppose Others: terrorists (mainly Islamic ones), mafia (mainly Russian, East European or Hispanic) or imaginative monsters. They oppose sexual and cultural Otherness which usually overlap and condense in the imaginative East, nowadays rather associated with Eastern Europe and the Middle East than with the Far East.

It happens that a positive American hero opposes the Evil of the same ethnic origin or the same sexual orientation. This occurs in the *From Dusk Till Dawn* series, in which a Hispanic Texas Ranger defends the US border against the invasion of Mexican vampires. The border between “ourness” and otherness does not depend on the ethnic belonging but on the cultural one - and culture is again understood as homogenous, even though this homogeneity is a little more flexible than the 19th century one. This is demonstrated by the *Van Helsing* series. “Ourness” contains such values and phenomena as democracy and monogamy, it embraces homosexual, gay and lesbian relationships, but it does not embrace polyamory, sadomasochism, female domination, transsexuality, incest and despotism. The media of such anti-values are again Eastern Others: from Russia (Dmitri and his women, including his sister Atanasia) and from Asia (she-vampire B’ah from China and the female leader of Sisters - probably from China as well).

In today’s pop culture the Vampire works which support heterogeneity, definitely assimilation strategy is dominating. Assimilation seems to be the most popular integration strategy nowadays, despite the claims of official documents. There are very few stories in which Vampires remain vampiric, drink human blood, hunt, kill and manipulate, and yet are positive heroes. Perhaps *The Originals* series is the only such narration. The rest of the works point out the necessity of norms. Even if there are some distinctiveness threads and the positive hero is shown as completely Other, even demonic, finally the prevailing message is that the boundaries (of individualism) exist and must exist. This is the message of *Hemlock Grove*, in which only Schelley, a monstrous girl looking like the Frankenstein Creature, remains truly positive

- because she finds her place in the community. This is also the message of the *Penny Dreadful* series, in which the heroine is guilty and condemned not because she copulated with Satan, but because she surrendered to the temptation of egoism and sacrificed the world to fulfil her needs of acceptance and love. *Hemlock Grove* directly condemns queer theories showing the failure of shifting the bodies experiments.

Conclusion

Equality and freedom are the basics of liberal democracy as well as Western society and culture. However, they can be differently defined, and their definitions implicate different definitions and shaping of both culture and society. Equality can be difference-neutral or difference-specific. Freedom may mean individual autonomy or group liberties. Individualism can be understood as realising one's own autonomy or as a freedom to choose one's group of belonging even if this means waiving one's autonomy. Briefly, freedom, which is a right, but not a must, to differ, can be individual-oriented or group-oriented.

The philosophical dilemma about what is true freedom is also a practical problem: which definition should be applied in today's social politics and how to integrate individuals and groups into one multicultural postmodern society. As I demonstrated, each conception, if developed to its extreme consequences, annihilates not only other conceptions, but also annihilates itself, leading to no freedom at all. This leads to the conclusion that balancing different conceptions is needed.

This is again a question of borders, not of normative social rules, but of the borders which every conception has to put

on, or rather include, in itself. Those are borders of self-preservation, built up in order to save the idea from consuming, contradicting and devouring itself. Of course this statement does not solve all the problems. Far from that, it implicates the need of describing those borders in practice. Nonetheless it is a basis for further reflection.

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