Tariq Modood

Multiculturalism

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A Civic Idea
Second Edition

Tariq Modood

polity

For Glynthea, Ghizala and Yasmin

About the Author

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Acknowledgements

This book does not aspire to be a comprehensive theory, detailed comparative study or a policy blueprint. It is written to help us see the wood and not just a bunch of trees; to better identify what multiculturalism might mean as a political project that we might be for or against. The argument is that there is an understanding of civic equality that offers a core vision of multiculturalism that is not only coherent and relevant to the twenty-first century but is also attractive and ought to be a basis for civility, political reform and social research.

As is perhaps true of many university books today, much of the writing was done outside formal work time. Many people could complain that they have a time-IOU from me in their hands but I am most conscious of the diminution of companionship and family life that it has entailed for my wife, Glynthea, and daughters, Ghizala and Yasmin. It is small recompense but I dedicate this book to them, the most important loves of my life.

Second Edition
Acknowledgements

I am pleased that there is a demand for a second edition of this book when its topic is supposed to have intellectually and politically died some years ago. I have made some minor corrections and amendments and added two new chapters, each of which try to take the argument of the book further. Chapter 7 develops the view that integration will remain incomplete without multicultural citzenship. Chapter 8 gives further substance to the view that political secularism is the new, major site for multiculturalism, and while this does not amount to a crisis it means that the current controversies around political secularism are structured by pro- and anti-multiculturalism.

My membership of the two European Union FP7 projects, A European Approach to Multicultural Citizenship: Legal Political and Educational Challenges (EMILIE, 2006–9) and Tolerance, Pluralism and Social Cohesion (ACCEPT PLURALISM, 2010–13), nine and sixteen countries projects respectively, enabled me to continue to explore the nature of diversity and how it was changing across Europe, and I would like to express thanks both for the funding and the stimulating collaboration. The work

I am also pleased to renew the original dedication.

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Is Multiculturalism Appropriate for the Twenty-first Century?

The 1960s were a time for asserting the singular character of the human race. Nazism had asserted the irreducible difference between Aryan, Jew, Slav and so on but it had been defeated and anti-racism was on the march. Martin Luther King Jr and his followers proclaimed humanity's essential sameness, that nothing differentiated whites and blacks other than skin colour and few outside the besieged laager of *apartheid* were willing to defend separate development. The imperial idea of 'the White Man's burden' of ruling 'the lesser breeds without the Law' was regarded as an embarrassing anachronism if not a matter of shame amongst white youth. Yet it was also the time for the celebration of difference. A time when people were not only encouraged to 'do their own thing' but when African-Americans started to assert a new black historical pride and the need for a specifically black political mobilization. Some women focused on their sexual differences from men and postulated that women were naturally more caring, consensual and empathetic. For gays the company of co-sexuals became a necessity in order for them to explore the nature of homosexuality and to allow it to be

its own thing in its own space without shame or copying heterosexuality.

At the very same moment that the related ideas of humanism, human rights and equal citizenship had reached a new ascendancy, claims of group difference as embodied in the ideas of Afrocentricity, ethnicity, femaleness, gay rights and so on became central to a new progressive politics. It was a politics of identity: being true to one's nature or heritage and seeking with others of the same kind public recognition for one's collectivity. One term which came to describe this politics, especially in the United States, is 'multiculturalism'.

Multiculturalism also has a more restricted meaning, especially in Britain and other parts of Europe. Here we are said to have become a multicultural society not so much by the emergence of a political movement but by a more fundamental movement of peoples. By immigration – specifically, the immigration from outside Europe, of non-white peoples into predominantly white countries. Here, then, the political idea of multiculturalism – the recognition of group difference within the public sphere of laws, policies, democratic discourses and the terms of a shared citizenship and national identity – while sharing something in common with the political movements described above has a much narrower focus. Perhaps the narrower and the broader meanings of multiculturalism – focusing on the consequences of immigration and on the struggles of a range of marginalized groups or on group differences per se – cannot be entirely separated from each other. The narrower meaning might reasonably be construed as a part, a strand, of the larger current. Nevertheless, post-immigration multiculturalism has its own distinctive concerns and sensibilities which can be distorted or obscured if we see it in generic multicultural terms. It may have connections with racism, which may be quite different when the right to settle is not an issue; or, it may have connections with sexism which can only be attended to when there is sensitivity to culturally

differentiated sexual norms or gender roles. Moreover, even within the narrower post-immigration phenomenon, the issues can vary between countries. In some countries, racism and the legacy of colonialism may be central; in others, the concern may be how to convert a condition of guest worker into citizen when the former condition offers no opportunity to exercise democratic power. Beginning with a larger idea of multiculturalism tends, as I will illustrate in the next chapter in the case of the philosopher, Will Kymlicka, to distort, even marginalize, some of the specific contemporary issues in relation to the politics of post-immigration, especially in western Europe.

The first countries to speak of themselves as having become multicultural societies were, perhaps not surprisingly, countries which have a long, historical experience of immigration and indeed which have been built up out of immigration, namely, Canada, Australia and the United States. Their previous histories of migration and settlement meant that migrants were more readily seen as prospective co-citizens and the nation was seen as multiethnic in its source, even if till the 1960s and 1970s, assimilation (anglo-conformity) was what was expected from migrants and certainly their children. Most of these historical migrants were of European descent but, as migration policies were loosened to allow non-whites, there was a sense both that the new migrants were more culturally different than many of their predecessors and that assimilation was not acceptable as a policy. As part of, or because of, the wider political acceptance of 'difference' mentioned above, it was felt that the migrants should be able to retain their distinct cultures while they adapted to working and living in their new countries. No doubt some assimilation would take place but it should not be required.[1]

In the decades that followed, some western European societies, especially Britain, the Netherlands and Sweden, began to follow suit. Western Europe had been importing labour, particularly between the late 1940s and the oil crisis of 1973, to rebuild its postwar economies, and the

inward flow carried on as dependants and other kin, legally and illegally, joined the migrants, as the economic cycle created new labour demand and refugees sought shelter. Most European countries do not collect data on non-white citizens and residents, only on foreigners, so all figures are guess estimates, but it seems that more than 5 per cent and possibly up to 10 per cent of citizens and residents of EU15 are of non-European descent. Currently most of the largest, especially the capital, cities of northwest Europe are about 15–30 per cent non-white (i.e., people of non-European descent). Even without further large-scale immigration, being a young, fertile population, these proportions will grow for at least one generation more before they stabilize, reaching or exceeding 50 per cent of some cities in the next decade or so. The trend will include some of the larger urban centres of southern Europe. A high degree of racial/ethnic/religious mix in its principal cities will be the norm in twenty-first century Europe, and will characterize its national economic, cultural and political life, as it has done in twentieth (and will do so in the twenty-first) century US. Of course there will be important differences too between western Europe and the US. Amongst these is that the majority of non-whites in the countries of Europe are Muslims; the UK, where Muslims form about a third of non-whites or ethnic minorities, is an exception. With an estimated over 15 million Muslims in western Europe today, about four per cent of the population (Savage 2004), they are larger than the combined populations of Finland, Denmark and Ireland. For this, if for no other reason, Muslims have become central to the merits and demerits of multiculturalism as a public policy in western Europe, though it is to state the obvious that, at least since the attacks of 11 September 2001, Muslim migrants and set-tlers have come under new political and security scrutiny even in countries in which Muslims form a relatively small proportion of recent settlers, such as the US, Canada and Australia.

The recognition that a society had become multiethnic or multicultural was not simply about demographics or economics. It was an understanding that a new set of challenges were being posed for which a new political agenda was necessary (or alternatively, had to be resisted: the view of certain conservatives, nationalists and French republicans). While this politics was connected with the wider meanings of multiculturalism mentioned above, and was entwined with issues of racial equality, I shall here mean by multiculturalism the political accommodation of minorities formed by immigration to western countries from outside the prosperous West.

A New Idea but not a Comprehensive Political Philosophy

There have been many multicultural societies in the past, especially outside European nation-states, for example, in the Ottoman Empire, where the levels of religious tolerance and accommodation (shown by Muslim rulers towards Jews and Christians) were much greater than those found in western Europe till recent times. Some contemporary societies are much more deeply multicultural than the societies that are the focus of this book. The former include countries like India, which has many millions of followers of most of the major world religions, as well as being the home of many smaller-sized religions, dozens of ethnic groups, over twenty official languages and so on.

The deep communal cultural diversity that characterizes countries like India, no less than the territorial nationalisms of the Quebecois, for instance, or claims of indigenous peoples, is beyond the scope of my theme. The concern here is with the relatively limited diversity caused by large-scale immigration of people perceived to be 'different', who do not simply melt away into the populations they have settled amongst but are ethnically visible and

so various multicultural, multiethnic, multifaith urban dynamics come to be and do not seem to be short term only. The 'difference' in question is typically marked by various forms of racism and similar forms of ideologies as the migrants come from societies or groups that have been historically ruled and/or perceived as inferior by the societies into which they have settled. Yet the latter are typically also liberal democracies. That is to say they are places in which – compared to the norm in the world, past and present – an ethical primacy is given to the individual and individual rights are politically fundamental. Relatedly, embedded institutionally are ideas of equality of participation in national self-determination, in democratic processes and public participation, which make up the practice of citizenship and debates – including serious contestations – about how equal citizenship is to be extended.

This is what makes contemporary multiculturalism a new political idea, a new '-ism'. It arises in the context of liberal or social democratic egalitarianism and citizenship whereas earlier manifestations of similar political ideas were in the absence of political citizenship, where the minorities and majorities alike were subjects of the crown/ emperor. Hence it is not right to look at the pioneering policy developments in Canada as a 'return to an ancient pattern. . . . Specifically, Canada is finding space for the classical, Islamicate model that existed into the modern era only to be eradicated, not by colonialism, but the triumphalism of the West' (Sardar 2004: 29).[2] This does not mean that multiculturalism is simply a liberal idea, an outgrowth of liberalism. But nor is it a political philosophy in its own right, if by that is meant a comprehensive theory of politics. The closest it has come to that, in my opinion, is in Bhikhu Parekh's *tour de force*, *Rethinking Multiculturalism* (2000). Yet even though Parekh does seem to treat multiculturalism as a philosophy and argues, for example, that all the functions of the state have to be reconceived in the light of it, for they are currently conceived within the ideas that the state represents national

and cultural homogeneity, and that citizenship cannot be differentiated other than territorially, he pointedly states that multiculturalism is not a fully fleshed-out political doctrine (Parekh 2000: 336). Moreover, contrary to popular caricature, the multiculturalism I speak of is not necessarily dependent on a general theory about the nature of morality or an epistemology and so is not a form of moral or knowledge relativism. Of course, a political multiculturalism may be part of a larger theory such as moral or truth relativism, liberalism, postcolonialism, (anti-)globalization and so on. My point is that it is possible to construct and defend a more intellectually modest and non-totalistic political perspective, and this is what I endeavour to do here.

While I am not a liberal in the sense of, say, Kymlicka (1995), of wanting to show that multiculturalism can be derived from theories of liberalism,[3] the context of the multiculturalism that I seek to elaborate is, as I have said, democratic; for multiculturalism arises within liberal democracies and its advocacy and critique have to relate to existing, functioning liberal democracies (which of course will not be perfect instantiations of political ideals, let alone of any one '-ism'). This does not mean that an evaluation of multiculturalism is or should be framed by liberalism. My point is that multiculturalism presupposes the matrix of principles, institutions and political norms that are central to contemporary liberal democracies; but multiculturalism is, as we shall see, also a challenge to some of these norms, institutions and principles. In my view, multiculturalism could not get off the ground if one totally repudiated liberalism; but neither could it do so if liberalism marked the limits of one's politics. Multiculturalism is a child of liberal egalitarianism but, like any child, it is not simply a faithful reproduction of its parents. I assume both that liberal democracies are composed of a complex of principles and compromises, open to a number of interpretations and ways forward; and that the right attitude to any of these principles, including liberalism, is

not simply take-it-or-leave-it but a respectful and critical engagement. This engagement, however, should be informed by Hegel's insight that tensions or contradictions in our ways of thinking, usually accompanied by or a product of new social relations, can sometimes only be resolved by going beyond our starting '-ism' or '-isms'. This requires creative thinking – not simply the work of theorists – which often takes shape through, indeed is led by, changes taking place in the world, including political struggles, which suggest new ideas and adjustments, or offer what Oakeshott called 'intimations' (Oakeshott 1962), a modest and tentative sense of where we are going and how to get there.

The novelty of contemporary multiculturalism is that first it introduces into western nation-states a kind of ethno-religious mix that is relatively unusual for those states, especially for western European states; though there are some relevant parallels to do with the Jews, blacks, Christian sectarianism and so on. Secondly, it brings to bear notions of democratic citizenship and individual rights on the idea of a co-presence of ethnic and religious communities which goes well beyond the experience of pre-nation-state multiculturalism even if not necessarily approximating to the extent of institutionalized cultural plurality that was achieved by imperial states such as the Ottoman Empire or Muslim Spain or is to be found in contemporary India.

A further specificity of my focus is that my principal reference point will be Britain and then the countries most similar to Britain: those of western Europe on the one hand and north America on the other. This is not because Britain is any more exceptional in regard to multiculturalism than any other country for each has its distinctive history, political culture, divisions and so on. It is important, therefore, not to lose sight of how our analytical and policy frames will have more relevance for some countries rather than others. As it happens, Britain is an interesting example for it combines historical and contemporary features, some of

which are most represented in western Europe and others in north America. On the one hand, it has a colour racism and stratification, extreme versions of which are more characteristic of the US; and a nested British identity (hosting national identities of Scottish, Welsh and English and a variable relation to Irish) which allows for a degree of relatively open-textured citizenship and national identities (best exemplified by colonial anglophone settler countries such as the US, Canada and Australia), and which countries like France and Germany, for different reasons, find more difficult. On the other hand, like its western European neighbours, it has a self-image of being an 'old country', a country with a historic character that can, no less than socio-economic and welfare policies, be central to the state; and, also like its neighbours, Britain has to address an anti-Muslim cultural racism as Muslims become a significant feature of its cities, and it seems to be more alive to this than its neighbours.

The starting point of any discussion of multiculturalism today has to be its present crisis, which can be captured well by recording it in Britain.

A Crisis of Multiculturalism?

The New Labour Government, which came into office in 1997, sought in its first term to emphasize the plural and dynamic character of British society by speaking of 'Cool Britannia', of 'rebranding Britain', of Britain being a 'young country' (Tony Blair), a 'mongrel' nation (Gordon Brown) and a chicken tikka masala-eating nation (Robin Cook). The year 2001, however, was a turning point for the idea of multiculturalism in Britain, when in rapid succession over a few months David Blunkett became Home Secretary, there were riots in some northern English cities and the attacks of 9/11 took place in the US. These events, especially the riots and the global 'arrival' of a certain kind of armed, messianic jihadism which some feel

that too many Muslims in Britain (secretly) support, led to not just a governmental reversal but to a new wave of criticism against multiculturalism from the centre-left, including from amongst some of its erstwhile supporters. Of course, there have been left-wing critics of multi-culturalism from the beginning, from way back in the 1970s, when it was ridiculed as 'saris, somosas and steelbands' by anti-racists (Mullard 1985; Sivanandan 1985; Troyna 1993), let alone those who thought it was a distraction from class struggle or even a scam on the part of global capitalism (Sivanandan 1982; Zizek 1997).[4] The new criticism, however, came from the pluralistic centre-left, people who do not see everything in two-racial or two-class terms, and have been sympathetic to the rainbow coalitional politics of identity and the realignment and redefinition of progressive forces. Examples of attacks on multiculturalism in 2001 from those who have long-standing anti-racist credentials include the Commission for Racial Equality publishing an article by Kenan Malik, arguing that 'multiculturalism has helped to segregate communities far more effectively than racism' (*Connections*, Winter 2001). The late Hugo Young, the leading liberal columnist of the *Guardian* newspaper, went further and wrote that multiculturalism 'can now be seen as a useful bible for any Muslim who insists that his religio-cultural priorities, including the defence of jihad against America, override his civic duties of loyalty, toler-ance, justice and respect for democracy' (6 November 2001). More extreme again, Farrukh Dhondy, an Asian one-time Black Panther radical who pioneered multi-cultural broadcasting on British television, wrote of a 'multicultural fifth column' which must be rooted out, and argued that state funding of multiculturalism should be redirected into a defence of the values of freedom and democracy (*City Limits*, 11:4).

By 2004 it was common to read or hear that a challenge to Britishness today is the cultural separatism and self-imposed segregation of Muslim migrants and that a

'politically correct' multiculturalism had fostered fragmentation rather than integration (Meer 2006) – the public view now of no less a figure than the Chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality, Trevor Phillips, who declared that multiculturalism was useful once but is now out of date, for it made a fetish of difference instead of encouraging minorities to be truly British (Baldwin 2004). In 2004 a swathe of civil society fora and institutions of the centre-left or the liberal-left held seminars or produced special publications with titles like 'Is Multiculturalism Dead?', 'Is Multiculturalism Over?', 'Beyond Multiculturalism' etc.[5] This critical, sometimes savage, discourse reached a new peak with the London bombings of 7 July 2005 ('7/7') and the abortive bombings of '21/7'. The fact that most of the individuals involved were born and/or brought up in Britain, a country that had afforded them or their parents refuge from persecution, poverty and freedom of worship, led many to conclude that multiculturalism had failed – or, worse still, was to blame for the bombings. The multinational commentary in the British media included William Pfaff who stated that 'these British bombers are a consequence of a misguided and catastrophic pursuit of multiculturalism' (Pfaff 2005), Gilles Kepel observing that the bombers 'were the children of Britain's own multicultural society' and that the bombings have 'smashed' the implicit social consensus that produced multiculturalism 'to smithereens' (Kepel 2005), and Martin Wolf concluding that multiculturalism's departure from the core political values that must underpin Britain's community 'is dangerous because it destroys political community . . . (and) demeaning because it devalues citizenship. In this sense, at least, multiculturalism must be discarded as nonsense' (Wolf 2005). Francis Fukyama offered a more balanced analysis but concluded that 'countries like Holland and Britain need to reverse the counterproductive multiculturalist policies that sheltered radicalism, and crack down on extremists' (Fukuyama 2005).[6]

As most people will be aware, this disillusionment with and anxiety about multiculturalism amongst the centre-left is neither simply a post-9/11 phenomenon nor confined to any one country. It is however strongly associated with the presence and activities of Muslims. While it is not quite true to say that 'if we put Western democracies on a continuum in terms of the proportion of immigrants who are Muslim, this would provide a good predictor of public opposition to multiculturalism' (Kymlicka 2005: 83; for qualifications see Jedwab 2005), there does seem to be some connection with what has been described as 'a seismic shift' and 'a wholesale *retreat* from multiculturalism in Europe' (Joppke 2004: 249 and 244; emphasis in original). The Netherlands has seen one of the biggest reactions. In many ways it was a pioneer of multiculturalism with its Ethnic Minorities Policy (*Minderhedennota*) of 1983 and generous provisions in relation to state-funded autonomous schools and broadcasting, which it combined not just with its social democratic approach to social housing, unemployment and welfare benefits but also affirmative action in employment. Initially led by the right, anti-multiculturalism spread across the political spectrum as Muslims became associated with sexual repression and political violence. In particular, they were blamed for the murders of the right-wing gay politician, Pim Fortuyn, in 2002 (despite his being killed by an animal rights activist) and the right-wing iconclast, Theo van Gogh, in 2004 (killed by a lone Muslim fanatic for producing a film with verses of the Qur'an superimposed on the exposed flesh of a woman to depict that the Qur'an teaches sexual oppression). An expert came to the conclusion that by 2005 the term 'multiculturalism' had in the Netherlands 'been relegated to the dung-hill of history' (Doomernik 2005: 35). In France, where republican anti-multiculturalism has always been the dominant position across the political spectrum and where Le Pen of the *Front National* got 18 per cent of the vote as a presidential challenger on an explicit anti-Arab platform in 2002, the French parliament banned the wearing of headscarves and