Ethnocentric political theory, secularism and multiculturalism

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Bhikhu Parekh's *Ethnocentric Political Theory: The Pursuit of Flawed Universals* (Macmillan) and Tariq Modood's *Essays on Secularism and Multiculturalism* (ECPR and Rowman & Littlefield International) were published in the same month, May 2019, and each had the form of a collection of essays published over one or two decades. Their overlapping themes are sufficient to link them together in a symposium but the connexions between them are more than of a thematic kind. Their authors have a thirty years collaborative history and friendship which have

led to mutual learning and produced the foundations of the 'Bristol School of Multiculturalism', in which Parekh and Modood have influenced various other scholars (Levey 2019; Uberoi and Modood 2019).

Multiculturalism is often seen as an extension of liberalism, taking the idea of individual rights and equality to their logical conclusion in a plural state (Kymlicka 1995) or in cosmopolitanism and global justice (Waldron 1991). The multiculturalism of the two books here does not look to liberalism for its justification. While liberalism is a source of multiculturalist politics, it is also itself in need of being multiculturalized. This means not thinking of liberalism as the universal frame for evaluating all other isms but as a political tradition—one that has become in some ways globalized but that needs to be understood in terms of its western roots, its fit with the ways of life that have emerged in the west, and its role in western globalized hegemony. Moreover, liberalism can take different national and institutional forms, both within and beyond the west, as it negotiates with particular societies and circumstances and other isms. Of course, the same can be said of multiculturalism. A feature of these two books is that they engage with liberal democratic theory and practice with some British Asian concerns and sensibilities.

These two are discussed here by four political theorists from three continents. Joseph Carens (North America) is particularly interested in the nature of the theorizing in question. For instance, why does Modood not use a vocabulary of morality and justice? Parekh's discussion of the western liberal tradition focuses on flaws but does not identify anything positive that the tradition has to offer; and it's not clear whether he is criticizing from within or is situating himself outside it, and if so, where? Rainer Bauböck (Europe) suggests that Parekh and Modood tend to attribute too much internal homogeneity and external differences to the worldviews or groups that they urge to engage in dialogues. Different moral traditions may suffer some ethnocentricity but we should not overlook the common ground that the universalism of human rights is built on: a universalism sought by groups such as Muslims that Modood frames too much in terms of a national setting.

Gurpreet Mahajan (India) supports the endeavour to go beyond liberal individualism in developing an understanding of religious diversity but believes that this requires a more radical break with European political secularism than Modood is willing to contemplate. Such diversity does indeed to be approached dialogically, and so she is appreciative of Parekh's view that multiculturalism is about how we should approach the 'other' rather than associating it with minority rights and power sharing. Sune Laegaard (Europe) argues that Modood's attempt to rebut the claim that British Muslims are alienated by the Anglican 'establishment' rests on a flawed account of alienation and that Modood's desire to protect Muslims from hate speech leads him to an illiberal protection of religious belief.

In the final section of this Critical Exchange, Parekh and Modood respond in detail to each of these four critical engagements with their books—in a spirit of gratitude and mutual learning.

Tariq Modood

Multicultural dialogues

These two books remind me of how much I have learned over the years from Tariq Modood and Bhikhu Parekh, especially about multiculturalism. It is a pleasure to engage with them.

Modood says this:

> When groups protest against forms of exclusion, as Muslims have been doing, we should identify what they are asking for and consider whether it is reasonable, and here the argument has to soon become contextual. Do we normally grant such things? If we do, is there a reason to not continue to do so or to not pluralise it? Conversely, if we do not normally grant such things, is there a good reason to do so now? (Modood 2019, p. 186)

This is exactly the right way to begin thinking normatively about multiculturalism (or about other contested topics). Modood does not try to limit in advance what will count as a reason. He only asks people to try to articulate the rationale underlying a given practice and then to reflect upon whether the rationale holds up to scrutiny or has implications that were not previously noticed. This sort of contextual, concrete, open-minded approach is vastly preferable to one that starts with some sort of abstract principle and seeks to deduce what we should do on the basis of that principle.

Liberal theorists often claim that a commitment to individual freedom requires the state to be neutral between different conceptions of the good, including matters of culture and religion. This illustrates the dangers of taking an idea that makes sense in certain limited contexts and turning it into an abstract general principle. With this conception of liberal neutrality, many things that do and should matter are ruled out of order on an a priori basis. Modood shows that this ideal of neutrality is incompatible with the actual practices of every democratic state, not only with respect to religion but also with respect to a vast array of other issues. Many public policies inevitably reflect some sort of judgment about the good. In practice, almost every democratic state provides support for religious identities or religious institutions or religious traditions in various ways. But every state also provides support for a wide range of other values and activities, including economic activities but also sports, art, etc. Modood describes this as 'multiplex privileging' because it is a form of privileging in the sense that it involves support for some things and not others; it is multiple in the sense that there are many different

spheres, activities and values that are involved; and it is complex in the sense that the reasons for providing support, and the forms that support takes, vary from one area to another.

So, neutrality is clearly an illusion. But as my opening quotation from Modood indicates, we can still ask questions about whether we should continue to support something that we currently support, and if so, whether we should extend that support to others. Here I think Modood provides less guidance than we might wish to receive. Not every claim for support or complaint about exclusion has the same moral status. We can and should distinguish between cases when the state is morally obliged to respect some cultural claim and cases when groups are making claims that may reflect legitimate interests but not ones that the state is necessarily obliged to meet. For example, it is one thing to say that someone should be free to dress as their religion requires and another to say that they should receive publicly funded instruction in their religion. There must be some space in politics for the contestation of interests. Not every claim can be satisfied. Can Modood's approach help us to distinguish between a reasonable political loss and a morally illegitimate form of group exclusion?

This leads to a question about Modood's choice of language. One striking thing about this book is that the word 'justice' does not appear in the index and appears only rarely in the text. (I found three instances.) I am curious about this choice of language. Modood is clear that he is engaged in normative theorizing. I recognize that it can be fruitful not to restrict one's normative language to talk about justice. Parekh argues in his own book that the language of rights is unduly limiting, preventing us from seeing a wide range of moral considerations. I agree, and one might say the same about the language of justice. There are other virtues and values. Even so, it seems to me that it is appropriate to distinguish between things that we think are, let's say, morally desirable or undesirable and things that are morally required or prohibited.

Modood often uses the word 'should' normatively, but the normative weight attached to the word is sometimes unclear. When is 'privileging' (in Modood's sense of the term) morally permissible, and when is it morally problematic? Are some sorts of privileging morally required? If you privilege some religion in some respect, are you morally obliged to privilege all religions in the same way, or in some comparable way? Is religion different in this respect from, say, sports or art?

In my own view, multiculturalism (as Modood understands it) is an approach that is morally required, at least for any political community that claims to be committed to liberal democratic values (broadly understood). Modood says 'anti-racism, whether in terms of a difference-blind neutral liberal state or in terms of active de-othering, is not enough. We need a conception of equal citizenship that brings together the equality of same treatment with the equality of respect for difference—in short, a multiculturalism' (Modood 2019, p. 2). I agree with this statement, but I'd like Modood to clarify the nature of the 'need' that he identifies.

What sort of necessity is it? I would be willing to say that it is a moral necessity, that this is what justice requires. Would he?

Finally, I would like Modood to say something about how far he thinks his reflections and arguments extend. He has some very interesting things to say in the final chapter about what it means to be a public intellectual. That is clearly how he sees himself, and from that perspective one might think that he is writing primarily with a British audience in view. That is probably true in some respects, but on the other hand, none of the commentators in this forum is British. So, the presupposition of the forum seems to be that what Modood has to say in this book has implications for other societies, and indeed I think that is correct. So, I invite Modood to make more explicit some of the presuppositions that underly his reflections. How generalisable are the central claims and arguments of the book? What sorts of values and commitments do they assume or draw upon? What is the audience to whom these reflections are addressed?

I want to pose some related questions to Parekh. As his subtitle *The Pursuit of False Universals* indicates, Parekh is concerned with the dangers of excessive generalization from a limited range of perspectives and experiences, especially in the field of political theory. In the opening chapter of his book, Parekh argues that Western political theory is ethnocentric because it has largely failed to engage with other traditions of thought. I am in full agreement with this claim. In my view, one of the most promising intellectual developments in the discipline of political theory in the past decade or so has been that an increasing number of political theorists in North America and Europe share Parekh's view and are attempting to engage with other traditions of human wisdom and reflection. Of course, there are complicated questions about the best ways to do this, especially when the tradition is one that is not one's own. Many of us will have to rely upon what others tell us about these traditions. Parekh himself says that 'Non-western political theory is vast, heterogeneous and not readily available or accessible' and that he himself 'lack[s] the required competence for … a critical dialogue' with non-western political theory (Parekh 2019, p. 21, n. 7). Parekh may overstate his own limitations. At various points in the book, he draws an illuminating contrast between Hinduism and Christianity, and he uses his knowledge of India to good effect. Nevertheless, he is certainly right that one should be cautious about claiming to draw upon traditions of thought in which one has not been deeply immersed.

If Parekh is not criticizing Western political theory from the perspective of non-Western political thought, however, what is the perspective from which he is speaking? Note that this is a question that Parekh himself invites with his own comments early on about the nature of the political theorist:

> "The political theorist is not a disembodied abstraction" but a socio-historical being born and living within a particular social group during a particular historical period and having certain interests, hopes, anxieties and fears. His

language, the cultural ethos of his society, his way of life, personal feelings and fears and his Lebenswelt profoundly influence him and structure his approach to the world in a way they do not that of a natural scientist (Parekh 2019, p. 10).

There is a bit of a paradox in this passage because Parekh seems to be making a universal claim about the nature of political theorists, while encouraging us to be wary of universal claims by political theorists. I do not want to press this point too hard, however, because, paradox or not, I largely agree with Parekh. I think that one's perspective as a theorist is (at least usually) shaped in profound ways by one's social context and life experiences. I think further that we would often learn more from one another if we tried to become more self-conscious about these factors and to acknowledge them rather than presenting our thoughts as though they were views from nowhere.

Parekh also situates himself occasionally. For example, in his introductory chapter he mentions that the chapter on humiliation 'is also based on my personal experiences during the course of growing up in a caste-ridden Indian village and later as a "black man" living in Britain' (Parekh 2019, pp. 17, 18). On the other hand, I did not find any further mention of this experience in the actual discussion of humiliation (which was, however, extremely interesting) nor did I notice any other appeals to his own experience in the book. On the whole, I was struck by the absence of explicit references to the situated character of Parekh's own reflections in this book, given what he says about political theorists and given his own role as a prominent public intellectual. So, I invite Parekh to say more about the perspective from which he advances claims in this book and the presuppositions of his own analysis. If his audience is, at least in part, fellow political theorists, trained in and limited by the liberal tradition, why does he think that they will be able to understand and appreciate his arguments?

There is one aspect of the way in which Parekh presents his views that I cannot let pass without critical comment, namely his use of the generic masculine. This occurs at a number of points in the book, including the introduction which was presumably written recently. The passage about the political theorist cited above reflects this usage ('The political theorist…His…). Parekh continues that usage a bit further on, even using the word 'man' as an appropriate label for human beings:

> The political theorist …rarely cares to ask who he is, where in history and society he is situated, what his deepest fears and cherished values are, how they shape his experiences and modes of thought and what assumptions he is likely to bring to his study of man and society (Parekh 2019, p. 10).

In a book criticizing false universals, it seems to me to be odd to use language that treats masculine nouns, pronouns and adjectives as adequate vehicles for communicating something general or universal.

On the whole, however, this is an aberration. Over the years, I have learned a great deal from Parekh's work on multiculturalism because of its sensitivity to different perspectives and experiences and his emphasis on taking a positive approach to reflection and engagement. For example, he says, in one particularly effective passage:

> What appears self-evident to one person might not in fact be so, and one's initial dismissal of the other could be deeply unjust and mistaken. It is important to listen to others with patience and respect, to be willing to question not only one's answers but also one's questions and their underlying assumptions. … A creative and mutually transformative dialogue requires the participants to suspend their certainties, acknowledge that they could be mistaken, and open their minds to the possibility of the unexpected (Parekh 2019, pp. 180, 181).

I admire the spirit that this passage encourages when we engage with others. On the other hand, I did not generally feel that this was the tone of Parekh's own engagement with the liberal tradition. Parekh makes a number of broad, sweeping claims about the liberal tradition in his book, and almost all of those claims are critical. They draw attention to what is wrong with the tradition rather than asking what we can learn from it. I want to ask Parekh whether he agrees with my description of his approach to the liberal tradition, and, if so, whether the difference between that approach and the one he recommends for multicultural engagement is deliberate. It may be. Just after the quoted passage, Parekh says, 'Without a broad equality of power and self-confidence, no genuine dialogue is possible' (Parekh 2019, p. 181). Parekh repeatedly draws attention to the hegemonic global position of western states and of the liberal intellectual tradition that they have drawn upon and have imposed upon others. So, one possibility is that Parekh thinks that the hegemony of the liberal tradition warrants engaging with it in a more critical and assertive way than would be appropriate with other traditions. Finally, I invite Parekh to say a bit more about the perspective from which he is challenging the liberal tradition, since he acknowledges from the outset that he is not himself speaking primarily from the perspective of a non-western tradition.

Joseph H. Carens

Universalism, parochialism and multicultural nationalism

Bhikhu Parekh's and Tariq Modood's books share a lot of common ground. Both are committed to a dialogical model of multiculturalism. For the philosopher Parekh this means primarily that there is no single privileged world view or philosophical perspective, including liberalism, that can claim superiority. Instead, principles, and institutional arrangements based on them, have to be worked out in

an actual open dialogue between alternative views, the outcome of which cannot be predetermined by any of them. Such dialogues serve to find out about the virtues and deficits of one's own perspective and to justify political arrangements and policies in culturally diverse contexts. For the political sociologist Modood, the dialogue is not only one between philosophical perspectives but also between groups and communities in culturally diverse societies that struggle for recognition by the state and aim to shape its institutions accordingly. The multicultural accommodation of Muslims in the UK serves as an empirical case.

In my comments I will argue that both Parekh and Modood tend to attribute too much internal homogeneity and external differences to the worldviews or groups that they urge to engage in such dialogues. More specifically, I claim that they do not consider sufficiently the extent to which contemporary conditions of globalization have flattened differences between previously distinct communities and connected them to each other while at the same time creating new dividing lines within communities defined on grounds of religion, ethnic or national identity.

The focus of Parekh's critique is the western liberal political theory that he accuses of ethnocentrism. It claims to provide universal normative principles while in fact wrongly generalizing particular features of western liberal democracies and concealing its particularity through its decontextualized mode of theorizing. There is truth in this critique. Dominant modes of theorizing in analytical political philosophy start from universal principles that they derive from a western canon of political thought, from moral intuitions, and from mostly implicit knowledge about political institutions that is limited to the wealthy and democratic societies where these philosophers are based.

I have some quibbles with the concept of ethnocentrism, which does not seem to capture well either the pretend-universalist nature of liberal philosophy or its real roots which stretch far beyond particular ethnic or national traditions and are frequently described as 'western'. Moreover, ethnocentrism generally imagines an ethnic other that remains excluded, which is incompatible with liberalism's commitment to universal principles. Occidental parochialism might have been a better term to express the core of Parekh's critique.

My more important worry is that Parekh's critique of universalism may be overshooting. It is one thing to claim that liberal philosophers lack knowledge about non-western traditions and societies and are therefore biased in their thinking. Such a critique would focus on the 'pretend' aspect of liberal universalism and can be supported by evidence that exposes its background assumptions as reflecting particularist world views and concerns. Parekh's book provides many fine critiques of the history of liberal thought from Hobbes to Rawls in this vein. It is quite another thing to question all philosophical attempts to come up with universal propositions.

For example, Parekh criticizes 'the assumption that human beings share a common nature and that culture is largely a superstructure built on it and lacking

the power to transform it. This assumption assimilates the human to the natural world, and encourages the view that like the objects in the natural world, humans too form a single species, to know one specimen of which is to know others as well' (Parekh 2019, p. 10). According to modern biology, human beings do form a single biological species and there are some features of that species that philosophers and political theorists must take into account when theorizing about human nature. Human nature is not (or no longer) a philosophical construct but an object of scientific research engaging evolutionary biologists, mind scientists, cognitive psychologists and other branches of the sciences. Our certainty that there is a common human nature is no longer rooted in metaphysical doctrines, but in a contingent fact in the history of evolution: the survival and global spread of homo sapiens and the extinction of other species of humans some 40,000 years ago. If any of these other species had survived, our thinking about human nature might be quite different. The scientific theories that have converged on these insights may be western in origin and may be overturned by future insights, just as Newtonian physics was overturned by relativity and quantum theory, but they are just as little ethnocentric as Newton's theory was.

The natural universality of human characteristics because of their species commonalities underpins the moral universalism of human rights. Parekh is critical of a liberal tendency to regard all rights as human rights and to restrict the scope for cultural variation and moral pluralism by insisting on a single interpretation of human rights (chapter 3). This overstates an orthodoxy that is not as strong as he claims. First, when attempting to determine a moral minimum for justice in the international order most liberal theorists (including Rawls, as acknowledged by Parekh) have suggested shortlists of human rights that deviate from the comprehensive and indivisible list adopted in some international law documents. Second, international courts, such as the European Court of Human Rights, have developed a doctrine of a broad margin of appreciation for states in interpreting human rights when these conflict with legitimate public policy.

More importantly, Parekh does not consider the second source of the universality of human rights, which are not only rooted in human nature but have been imagined and established in a historical context of ever-growing global interdependence. Human societies have always been in contact with each other through war, migration, trade and cultural exchanges. However, it was the European colonial conquest since the late fifteenth century, the emergence of the international state system since the mid-sixteenth century, the spread of globally integrated economic markets in the twentieth century, and the advance of digital technologies in the twenty-first century that have thoroughly globalized the human condition. Kant's rather prophetic statement captures this well: 'The intercourse, more or less close, which has been everywhere steadily increasing between the nations of the earth, has now extended so enormously that a violation of right in one part of the world is felt all over it' (Kant 1795/1917, p. 142).

If human rights apply universally to all societies today, it is largely because all societies are governed by states with similar sets of institutions and coercive powers, and are exposed to global markets and immersed in a global network of interpersonal communications. The risks of rights violations are thus very similar everywhere and so should be the protections against these. This does not mean that all rights are human rights. State sovereignty and democracy imply that variation of rights-regimes between states is inevitable and legitimate. Cultural differences *between* societies is one source of such variation, but it should not be given as much weight as Parekh does. Cultural differences *within* societies are much more important and their accommodation requires similar, even if not identical, sets of rights. Public institutions and public culture will vary strongly between states with Muslim, Hindu or Christian majorities, but the rights to free exercise of religion that need to be protected are primarily those of religious minorities and these ought to be rather similar across such societies. They should thus not be regarded merely as a possible outcome of multicultural dialogues but as an input into these to which all participants have to precommit.

Turning to Modood's book, I do not think that the moderate secularism he defends, which allows for weak religious establishment and other state-religion-connections, is at odds with rights to free exercise of religion. The focus of most essays in Modood's book is on his rejection of state neutrality and the separation between religion and state in the US-American and French ideologies of secularism.

I agree with Modood that the interpretation of state neutrality in religious matters allows for legitimate constitutional variation between democracies. It also allows for legitimate internal contestation because of the risk of misrecognition of religious and non-religious views and communities inherent in virtually every institutional arrangement, be it a neutralist secularism biased against religious views or a religious pluralism biased against non-religious views. The core values at stake are those of equality of respect for all citizens, on the one hand, and communal autonomy and inter-communal justice, on the other hand. There are sometimes trade-offs between these values. What arrangements are legitimate is then primarily a matter of constitutional interpretation by courts, of democratic decisions by legislators, and of claims-making by civil society. Political theorists should be cautious in condemning national approaches (which Modood tends to do with the French one) as long as these enjoy legitimacy in such broadly procedural terms and do not flagrantly violate equality of respect. They may, however, have more to say on cases, such as bans of Islamic headscarves or minarets, that do involve freedom of religious practice.

As I do not have a fundamental disagreement with Modood on these issues, I would like to focus my critique on a more implicit aspect of his approach: the nationalist element in his multicultural nationalism (Modood 2019, p. 17). One side of this coin is a methodological nationalism in Modood's sociological account of

Muslim communities and his failure to register phenomena that transcend national boundaries. The other side is a normative nationalism that informs his commitments as a public intellectual.

Methodological nationalism in the social sciences regards nation-states as the sole units of analysis and containers for social processes (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). This critique is especially salient when studying immigrant groups while ignoring their contexts of origin and transnational relations. In the case of British Asians and Muslims, which are at the centre of Modood's attention, this may appear less relevant, since these are 'old' immigrant communities that have mostly been settled for several generations. However, the critique may still be important when considering Modood's portrayal of Islam. Muslim communities and Islam as a religion have certainly struck deep roots in British society. Yet, this is not the whole story.

Here are five reasons why it could be important to consider more strongly than Modood does transnational aspects of multicultural accommodation of Muslims. First, like Christianity and unlike Judaism or Hinduism, Islam is a universalist creed. This makes it more likely that those who regard themselves as members of a global *umma* will experience conflicts of loyalty when asked to identify strongly as members of European nations. Those for whom Islam is an ethnocultural marker of identity more than a personal religious faith may not share this experience. Yet the *perception* of Islam as a transnational religion shapes Islamophobic stereotypes in the wider society that apply also to secularized Muslims. This is not a historically unprecedented problem. In the nineteenth century US, Catholic immigrants were regarded with suspicion because of their presumed loyalty to the Pope, which made their integration as American citizens a more difficult process compared to other migrants (Higham 1955).

Second, independent of doctrinal features, religious faith has often motivated migrants to engage in activities across borders. Religious entrepreneurs develop transnational networks providing pastoral care to migrants but also a source of identity formation. In 'God needs no Passport', Peggy Levitt argues that transnational religion has changed what it means for immigrants to become American (2009). In Modood's account of what it means for Muslims to be British, transnationalism is curiously absent.

Third, transnationalism from above has been at least as important as that from below. Authoritarian Islamic governments (especially in Saudi Arabia and Turkey) have not merely tried to mobilize, and gain control over, their national diasporas, but have also promoted their national versions of Islam through funding mosques and Islamic organizations abroad. In continental Europe this is widely perceived as a major problem for the accommodation of Muslim minorities. In 2015, Austria adopted a new 'Islam Law' which requires that funds for ordinary religious activities must be raised by Islamic organizations and their members exclusively from inside the country.

Fourth, Muslim communities have been put under suspicion of sympathizing with ideologies and activities that aim at undermining liberal democratic states because of the activities of radical Islamists, including generally non-violent ones like the Muslim Brotherhood and terrorist ones like Al-Qaeda and IS. What distinguishes the threat posed by these organizations from that raised by European left-wing and separatist terrorists in the late twentieth century, or right-wing extremists today, is the transnational character of the Islamist ones. Domestic Muslim communities are perceived as a fertile recruiting ground for organizations posing a major external security threat that cannot be controlled through domestic efforts alone. The poison this suspicion injects into public debates about Muslim's national belonging is hardly acknowledged in Modood's work.

Fifth, Islamophobia too is a thoroughly transnational phenomenon that shows very little national variation. It has become largely disconnected from the particular histories of immigration (postcolonial migration from South Asia to Britain, or guest worker migration from Turkey and Morocco to continental Europe) and is peddling the same stereotypes everywhere.

If all these global and transnational circumstances are important for the identity formation of Muslim communities in Europe, then they cannot be irrelevant for multicultural recognition either.

Modood's normative nationalism (or patriotism) is well articulated in the concluding essay of the book in which he reflects on his role as a public intellectual: 'What I have been concerned about … has not been the well-being of Muslims per se, but the well-being of Muslims who are part of British society and whose future is part of British society' (Modood 2019, p. 228). This seems a sincere statement of Modood's view, but I would guess that it is not very representative of those British Muslims who think of their identity as being primarily faith-based. And why should there be a contradiction between caring for those sharing the same faith anywhere in the world and caring for the future of British society? Isn't it essential for the accommodation of religious diversity in liberal democracies that the state leaves believers free to cherish their faith as something distinct from their national identity rather than subsumed into it? Modood's multicultural nationalism is yielding too much ground to those who ask Muslim communities to adopt a German, French, British or European version of Islam. Why is it not enough to expect Muslims to embrace an interpretation of Islam that endorses the universalistic values of gender equality and democracy that are no longer particularistic national or European ones?

Modood provides a partial answer to this question: 'We need positive national narratives which feature Muslims and Islam as aspects of what it is to be British' (Modood 2019, p. 230). Yes, democratic states need national narratives that embrace cultural and religious diversity, but it does not follow that the identities of all diverse groups must first be nationalized in order to fit into such narratives.

Rainer Bauböck

Cultural identity, secularism and multiculturalism

Liberal democracies are facing a serious crisis. The liberal framework anchored in the twin concepts of tolerance and secularism appears inadequate to deal with the deep diversity that marks most societies today. Some hold Islam responsible for the current crisis; they regard it as the 'radical other' which resists assimilation. Others identify 'illiberal' minority cultures as the problem. In a world scarred by terrorist violence, where mistrust of the 'other' looms large, how do we affirm our deeply cherished human values of respect and dignity? How do we inhabit a diverse society and prevent it from becoming a divided one?

Bhikhu Parekh and Tariq Modood reflect on these questions in their recently published works, *Ethnocentric Political Theory* (EPT) and *Essays on Secularism and Multiculturalism* (ESM), respectively. By engaging with the liberal paradigm, on the one hand, and their critics, on the other, they give a new direction to multicultural theory—its conception of identity, nationalism, integration and secularism. Both books draw upon identity-related conflicts in different societies to chart a path for accommodating religious diversity without sacrificing the historically evolved collective identity and shared values of a political community. This is a methodological frame that we need to draw upon as we deal with issues of diversity in our societies.

Within this broader understanding two somewhat different concepts emerge through which Parekh and Modood address concerns of religious diversity, and each of these deserves closer attention. Parekh underlines the need to bring in the 'other' by acknowledging the standpoint or reasoning of a culture/cultural community and sees this as the necessary condition of living in a diverse society. Although his plea is for a less 'ethnocentric political theory' it is our attentiveness to this difference that seems to be a crucial requirement of multicultural accommodation. Modood introduces the notion of 'moderate secularism', and the possibility of 'multiculturalizing moderate secularism' to suggest that religious diversity can be accommodated without relinquishing the conceptual categories with which liberal democracies operate. Can these perspectives help us to secure the ideal of 'multicultural citizenship' and 'equality' that Parekh and Modood are committed to? In particular, can they address the concerns of the dominant majority and the cultural minorities that have emerged in much of Europe? Are there limits, which we need also to recognize, about what can or cannot be accommodated? These are the questions that I would like to raise here.

Historically liberal democracies have addressed the issue of religious liberty and differences through the framework of secularism—that is, by treating religion and state as autonomous spheres. However, as is well recognized by now, secularism takes many different forms. Modood distinguishes between 'radical' secularism and 'moderate' secularism (2019, pp. 145–150) to argue that it is the former that is

'incompatible with multicultural citizenship' (2019, p. 186). Moderate secularism, which exists in Britain and many other parts of western Europe, can be a 'resource for multiculturalism' (2019, p. 180) as it recognizes and respects religion, treats it as a public good, and can accommodate multiple faiths and religions. Britain, for instance, has an established church, but the state now extends recognition to other minority religions; it has constituted multi-faith consultative bodies and is willing to make room for some community institutions, such as, sharia councils and tribunals, within the framework of the existing law.

Modood differentiates the principle of secularism from the practices of secular liberal democracies to show that the latter are far more accommodative of difference. His central argument that moderate secularism is, and can be, pluralized addresses the concerns of the majority and the minorities. To the latter it offers much-needed hope that their claims can be accommodated; to the former it gives the assurance that accommodating the claims of minorities does not entail a rejection of the secular liberal paradigm. What is needed is negotiation and dialogue involving different actors and civil society, the state and the established religion—something that is, for him, happening gradually in Britain.

By drawing our attention to the gestures, formal and informal, that are being made in liberal democracies by the state as well as members of the majority, Modood offers a nuanced historical picture of secular liberal democracies—one that takes us away from a simplified understanding of 'western' secularism. In his analysis moderate secularism acts as a bridge between liberal democracy and multicultural democracy. To those who speak of a 'crisis of secularism' it shows that the distance separating these two visions is not as wide as it appears at first glance. This intervention in the ongoing debates on secularism is an important one, and we must acknowledge the difference that multiculturalism has made to the way liberal democracies deal with minority issues today.

Nevertheless, it is also evident from his analysis that secularism places certain structural constraints on what may be accommodated within this framework. Secular states may be willing to fund religious schools of different minorities—Jews, Muslims, Sikhs—but the expectation is that these minority schools would adhere to the national curriculum and other accepted educational norms. Would secular states (even those observing moderate secularism) allow these schools to initiate students into a specific religious way of life? In addition to the study of different religions, would they allow the collective observance of religious practices—such as, prayers at fixed time, observance of their religious festivals, specific dress codes—in these schools? These remain fiercely contested issues because secularism, in every form, is aligned with the ideals of individual liberty and autonomy, and within this framework schools are expected to prepare the young to make informed choices, rather than inducting them into a specific way of life.

Some states observing moderate secularism are gradually making room for community institutions. Britain has, as Modood reminds us, a Muslim arbitration tribunal and sharia councils to which members can voluntarily appeal on civil matters. However, these institutions, too, are expected to work within the law of the country (Modood 2019, p. 140). Institutional pluralism in itself is undoubtedly an important step, but it does not translate into legal pluralism. Moderate, even multiculturalized, secularism retains this distinction, and it is reluctant to go beyond institutional pluralism. Religious personal laws remain suspect and raise concerns relating to gender equality and structural exclusion of marginalized groups in decision making. There are thus limits beyond which secularism cannot be pluralized, and one needs also to acknowledge this, if there is to be a meaningful dialogue between contending positions.

Radical secularism that pushes for a complete separation of state and religion tends to be more unreceptive to the demands for accommodation that come from religious minorities and needs therefore to be interrogated rigorously. By comparison moderate secularism, as Tariq Modood points out, shows greater flexibility and willingness to accommodate. Despite this there remains, it seems to me, a conceptual difference between secularism and multiculturalism, as the latter brings into play values and ideas that go beyond the secular imaginary. We become aware of this quite acutely when we turn to Parekh's *Ethnocentric Political Theory*.

Theories of multiculturalism began by questioning the liberal self-representation; more specifically, its idea of the self, individual autonomy, choice, reason, reflection and change (Kymlicka 1991; Carens 2000). On the positive side, they cherished different cultures—their institutions, ways of life and value systems—as a resource for critical self-reflection, for nurturing the capacity to question what is given or received. It is this reading of diversity that transformed the 'other' from a disturbing presence to a necessary condition for realizing the fullness of one's being.

In his earlier writings Parekh argued that an encounter with the 'other' is essential for critical self-reflection; in *EPT* he explains that valuing diversity serves as a corrective to ethnocentrism. When the 'other' is not recognized or valued, the local surfaces as the universal. We take our own point of view to be the only one, or at least the only viable one, and then apply it to judge other cultures and their worldview. The ensuing misunderstanding can be corrected by taking seriously the 'standpoint of other cultures' (2019, p. 15).

Multiculturalism requires that we change our orientation towards the 'other'. Beginning with the view that all cultures embody a system of rationality, it asks us to recover the reasoning embedded in that culture, however different that might be from our way of thinking. For Parekh, reason is not an abstract, disembodied, objectively given entity: it is available to us in and through different worldviews. Cultures are not therefore the antithesis of reason, and the presence of the cultural does not spell the end of reason. Reason and cultural identity co-exist, and it is by

engaging with different rationalities that new ideas emerge and new readings of principles become available to us.

Parekh effectively reformulates the idea of multiculturalism. Instead of associating it with minority rights/group rights and institutional arrangements for power sharing, he conceives it as an attitude of the mind, a lens with which we approach and address the 'other'—namely, understanding the 'other' in terms of the cultural reasoning of the agents.

Living with deep diversity requires that we adopt this way of approaching the 'other' and making sense of their actions. To liberals one might say that this is what human beings owe each other and what it means to treat others with respect and dignity. As Modood and Parekh point out, societies need to have a sustained dialogue between communities, and adopting the standpoint of the 'other' builds our moral capacity to engage with the 'other' in a meaningful way.

Understanding the 'other', however, is not easy. Parekh is aware of this, but there is a lingering hope, and with it, the assumption, that by listening to the 'other', or engaging in a sustained a dialogue, we could gradually understand the 'other'. If cultures represented a coherent and homogeneous moral order then we could perhaps understand difference through such interactions. The difficulty, however, is that in the contemporary world, cultures do not exist as hermetically sealed entities. Take the case of honour killings—something that is prevalent in many 'minority' cultures. In India some communities observe this practice, and when inter-caste marriages occur, family members justify their actions (killing one or both the partners) in cultural terms. The law, however, does not allow such punitive community actions. Under the circumstances, should one accept or even explain honour killings in terms of the cultural reasoning offered? When law and culture speak in different voices, one needs to reconsider what constitutes cultural difference, and whether an agent's reasons for action can be taken to represent cultural reasoning.

Even as we accept the need to understand the 'other', it is necessary to reconsider the idea of cultural difference and cultural reasoning that is frequently used in multicultural discourses. Cultures, as Parekh himself claims, are internally plural (1999). If this is indeed the case, then multiculturalism needs to find space for that plurality in its representation of minority cultures.

In *EPT*, Bhikhu Parekh makes a distinction between explanation, understanding and justification, and through it reassures his critics that understanding the actions of the 'other' does not mean that we are justifying them. However, if understanding is not to become a justification then we must differentiate between reasons given by an agent in cultural terms and what is accepted in the name of cultural difference. In fact, a multicultural democracy would need communities to engage with their members in order to explain not just what is accepted in the society in which they now live but also to refer to what would be acceptable in the society from which they came. The 'standpoint of the other' must make space to include the latter—

that is, go beyond the agent's reasoning to the legal and moral order that structures the society from which they come.

Treading the multicultural path requires an active public sphere sustained by multiple kinds of dialogue. Both Modood and Parekh emphasize this form of engagement. Perhaps it is time to think of dialogue not merely between different cultures, such as Indian, Chinese, Japanese and the liberal western, but between different ways of life—such as religious and non-religious. We need a dialogue between different religious groups in order to create a degree of familiarity and trust that is so essential for living together, and along with it, to bring the religious way of life (with its conception of sacred, religious duty, etc.) into conversation with a liberal ethic that focuses on autonomy of choice. We may then begin to understand the 'other'—its codes of social behaviour and interaction—and simultaneously reflect upon the convictions that have shaped one's identity. Dialogue is successful if it yields greater understanding of the 'other' as well as critical reflection, and some reconfiguration of one's cultural tradition, so that it does not lose its moral force in a changing world.

Gurpreet Mahajan

The role of alienation and Muslim religious beliefs in debates about establishment and hate speech

Parekh and Modood are among the most prominent theorists of multiculturalism in Europe. They represent a distinctive 'school' or 'type' of multiculturalism (Levey 2019; Lægaard 2014) and have contributed to discussions of specific controversies and how these are central to a multicultural perspective. Here I focus on two examples of the latter, namely debates concerning hate speech and secularism. Their views in these respects lead to reflections on how their methodological commitment to a kind of contextualism colours their arguments. This touches on the issue about the type of multiculturalist theorizing that characterizes their work.

Parekh and Modood have, since the Rushdie Affair, been central figures in the reframing of European multiculturalism as an issue about religious groups, especially Muslims. Modood's central contribution to this debate has been his argument that how European 'moderately secular' states handle religion is a better template for equal treatment of religious minorities than a French or American idea of 'radical' separation. Multicultural inclusion should proceed, not by way of thinning the national identity by excluding religious elements and removing religious privileges from the majority. Rather, the national identity should be pluralized to include both majority and minority religious elements, and religious privileges should be extended to minorities. Modood's idea is to equalize upwards rather than downwards (2019). Modood thus defends religious establishment, which he merely thinks should be pluralized, e.g. by also granting seats to minority

religious representatives in the British House of Lords alongside the bishops who already sit there.

Modood's long standing view (dating back at least to 1994) is that, although religious minorities, more particularly Muslims in Britain, 'do seem to feel excluded and alienated by certain aspects of British society and indeed European society in general … there is no record of any criticism by a Muslim group against the Anglican Church's establishment', because 'Muslims and other religious minorities appreciate that establishment is a recognition by the state of the public and national significance of religion' (2019, p. 207).

In defense of this view, Modood engages with other theorists of secularism, like Cécile Laborde, who has argued that even primarily symbolic forms of establishment might alienate religious minorities. Against this, Modood replies that religious minorities, such as Muslims, are more likely to be alienated by the kind of secular state that he takes Laborde to be arguing for.

Modood's view is that alienation is indeed a relevant normative metric for assessing the legitimacy of establishment. He simply disputes the empirical claim, which he reads into earlier articulations of Laborde's view, that symbolic religious establishment 'necessarily alienates all those who do not identify with that religion or religions' (Modood 2019, p. 23).

Parekh also touches on alienation related to symbolic aspects of the state. His view seems to be that, while a religious state symbol can indeed alienate religious minorities, this is perhaps negligible (Parekh 2019, p. 206), and removal of such symbolic establishment might alienate the majority far more (Parekh 2019, p. 208).

For present purposes, it matters less that Laborde does not seem committed to the strong empirical claim attributed to her by Modood, at least not in her recent work. Her considered view is that symbolic establishment is wrong 'when it constitutes and perpetuates social relations of hierarchy, subordination and domination' (2017, p. 136), i.e. when it violates an ideal of civic inclusiveness. This is a conditional claim. The normative criterion of civic inclusiveness may or may not be violated by any particular instance of symbolic establishment. This is an empirical and contingent matter, so Laborde is not committed to the stronger claim Modood attributes to her that establishment necessarily violates the relevant criterion of civic inclusiveness.

The more interesting question is whether actual alienation is the correct specification of the criterion of civic inclusiveness. This is interesting because Laborde, Modood and Parekh agree that equal citizenship is the normative basis for assessment of regimes of secularism, and they all have a view of citizenship as including not only formal rights but also recognition of equal social status. Furthermore, Laborde disaggregates religion, distinguishing between religion as belief and social identity, in a way that is reminiscent of and supports Modood's point that Islam is an ethno-religious category and that Islamophobia is analogous to racism.

Against Modood's assumption that the absence of criticism from British Muslims of establishment shows that establishment does not alienate Muslims, one could argue that Muslims can be alienated even if they do not voice criticism of establishment. Modood goes to some length to criticize the conceptions of alienation, which such an objection presupposes. He criticizes the idea that it is 'reasonable' alienation that matters (Modood 2019, pp. 23, 24) and that alienation might be understood in some more objective sense, such as classical Marxian notions, according to which one might be alienated even if one is not aware of this (Modood 2019, p. 208).

Modood's objection to reasonable alienation is that 'The reference to the reasonable person being reasonably informed suggests that (s)he needs to take into account some empirical data, and presumably it would be reasonable that this should include the view of Muslims (and others)' (Modood 2019, p. 23). This refers back to Modood's empirical claim that Muslims have not voiced any criticism of Anglican establishment. Modood accordingly equates reasonability with attention to the actually available evidence about alienation. Even granting Modood's claim about the non-existence of Muslim criticism of establishment, his reading of reasonable alienation is nevertheless open to challenges. First, the evidence base might not be adequate. Muslims might be alienated even if they have not voiced this publicly. Second, reasonable alienation might not only be a matter of taking account of the available evidence; it is also a matter of how this evidence is assessed. Reasonability is a normative question about what the *appropriate* response to some state of affairs is (Lægaard 2017, pp. 127, 128). Even if Muslims have, *arguendo*, not objected to establishment, it might still have been an appropriate response. Modood's response to reasonable alienation views accordingly does not engage with the view he dismisses.

The reason for Modood's rejection of objective notions of alienation might explain his resistance to reasonable alienation views. Appeals to objective alienation can be used to deny Muslims' own testimony, which could lead to domination (Modood 2019, p. 208). Modood's example of this concerns cases where critics of Muslim veiling, who object to headscarves because they see them as oppressive and imposed, reject statements by Muslim women wearing the hijab that they do so voluntarily. Modood's worry is that appeal to notions of alienation that allow *any* difference between the actually voiced views of Muslims, and either reasonable or objective alienation, will be potential instruments of domination. His criticism is thus not theoretical but rather strategic.

Modood thus takes articulated feelings of alienation relative to establishment—and, more importantly, their absence—at face value, and apparently takes them to constitute legitimacy. His reasons for adopting this position are understandable when viewed in a strategic perspective but do not provide a convincing theoretical rationale. While Modood is undoubtedly right that any account concerned with alienation should take the actual views expressed by religious minorities into

account, e.g. as indicators of potentially problematic features of religious establishment, it seems implausible to take the articulated views as constitutive of legitimacy. If one is attracted to an alienation account of how we should operationalize the criterion of civic inclusiveness, there is therefore reason to move at least some way along the spectrum away from the purely subjective pole and towards more objective versions of the alienation account.

Apart from this substantive disagreement over the specification of a criterion of civic inclusion in terms of alienation, this also indicates something about Modood's mode of theorizing. I have characterized his reasons as strategic rather than theoretical. Another distinction is between the correct theoretical criterion for legitimacy and the best practically available procedure for handling real-world cases. Laborde is concerned with the former; Modood might be concerned more with the latter, which might explain both his criticism of Laborde and why his reasons seem inadequate in a theoretical perspective.

Something similar seems to hold for Modood's discussion of hate speech. Modood's general point that religion should be treated as in some respects analogous to race is the point of departure for his discussion of laws against incitement to religious hatred. Modood argues that laws should criminalize hate speech against Muslims, just as they protect Jews or Blacks. Both cases are about protecting people. The difference is that protection of Muslims, according to Modood, requires protecting Muslim religious beliefs, since attacks on them can be a way of attacking Muslims. Disrespect against Muslim religious beliefs might be just as distressing for Muslims as Holocaust denial might be for Jews (Modood 2019, p. 63). Laws should thus protect the religious beliefs and related feelings of Muslims as a means of protecting Muslims. This is not because Islam is especially worthy of protection in itself or should be exempt from criticism, but because of the contingent contextual fact that Muslims are likely to be hurt and provoked by attacks to their beliefs (Modood 2019, p. 64).

While I agree with Modood's underlying concern to protect vulnerable minority groups as well as his sociological point that religion, especially Islam, sometimes functions as an ethno-religious category in some ways reminiscent of 'race', I disagree with his conclusion about the protection of Muslim beliefs. Protecting religious beliefs is problematic, even when this is a means to protecting groups rather than an aim in itself. One well-known reason for being skeptical of this kind of view draws on the value of free speech. I will not repeat this kind of criticism here. Rather, my point is that Modood seems to forget his own important insight about the nature of the groups in question. The main reason for protecting Muslims is precisely that, in some respects, being a Muslim functions like being a member of a racialized group. Hostility against Muslims has many features in common with racism or anti-Semitism: it is not primarily about Islamic doctrine or Muslim convictions, but an externally ascribed minority status that functions as the basis for discrimination and exclusion. I agree with this. However, when Modood argues that

laws should protect Muslim religious beliefs, he moves away from understanding Muslims as a racialized ethno-religious group and back to a doctrinal understanding of Islam as a religion. Again, I think that Laborde's disaggregation approach, which separates religion as social identity from the other dimensions of religion, including doctrinal beliefs and ethical practice, better captures Modood's insight about Muslims as an ethno-religious group. Protecting vulnerable religious minority groups requires a focus on equal citizenship rather than protection of Muslim beliefs.

It is interesting that Parekh apparently disagrees with Modood's view that protection of religious minorities requires protection of the religious beliefs of the minority. At least, he remarks that, although Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* mocks Prophet Mohammed and casts doubt on the authenticity of some of the Quranic verses, it is not a case of hate speech (2019, p. 77).

Just as in the case concerning the possible alienating effects of symbolic establishment, the way in which Modood's view stands out might indicate that the kind of argument he offers is posed at a different level than, e.g. Labode's theory. Modood stresses that it is not religious beliefs as such that warrant protection: it is simply a contingent contextual fact that some Muslims are hurt by attacks to their beliefs (Modood 2019, p. 64). This suggests that it is contextual considerations along the lines of the type of contextualist political theory sketched in the introduction (Modood 2019, pp. 19–21) that drive Modood's claim that Muslim religious beliefs should be protected. This contextualist approach rejects basing political arguments on abstract political principles. Rather, principles should be developed out of and informed by the context (see Lægaard 2019).

However, even if some Muslims are hurt in the same way by affronts to their religious beliefs, as some Jews are by Holocaust denial, this does not show that Muslim religious beliefs should be protected. Rather, it might show that 'feeling hurt' is not the right criterion in the first place. Perhaps Muslim religious beliefs should not be protected, even if some Muslims are hurt when their beliefs are attacked. And perhaps the reason why laws against Holocaust denial might be warranted in some countries has nothing to do with whether Jews are hurt by Holocaust denial.

Modood simultaneously writes that protection against hate speech is a matter of protecting the status of equal citizenship. Just as in the case of symbolic establishment, this again boils down to an identification on Modood's part of equal citizenship with what a religious minority like Muslims actually feel—whether in terms of articulated alienation or feelings of being hurt. This is not something that follows from a contextualist approach: it is an a priori decision to make subjective feelings the operative criterion for legitimacy or legal regulation. As a theoretical criterion, I think this is problematic and unconvincing; it is simply not plausible that subjective feelings are what really matters in either of these cases, and it is

normatively problematic to make them determinative of which institutions or laws are legitimate or justified.

<div align="right">Sune Lægaard</div>

Self-critical liberalism

I am most grateful to the Critical Exchange editor of this journal for kindly organizing a symposium on Tariq Modood's and my own book, to the four commentators for the care with which they have read my book and the generous way in which they have commented on it.

Carens complains that, while I talk of learning from a critical engagement with other traditions and cultures, I exclude liberalism from such a dialogue, as is allegedly evident in my critical references to it throughout the book. I am afraid this is not true. The ideas of dialogue, rationality and rights that are all central to liberalism receive extended favourable treatment in the book. My discussion of free speech and criticism of hate speech, too, have a liberal basis, as have those of active citizenship, humiliation, and self-respect.

When I criticize liberalism, I do so at two levels. First, when it is not true to its central principles and offers ideologically biased interpretations of them; for example, its largely negative view of liberty, narrow individualism, its justification of colonialism and its compromise with nationalism. Second, in some other cases I criticize some of its basic principles themselves—for example, its view of humans' relation to nature, its defence of unlimited accumulation of wealth, its passive or 'consumerist' view of citizenship, and its failure to highlight the citizens' responsibility to stand up against the injustices to their fellow citizens.

Carens is right that I do not provide an elaborate statement of what I admire in liberalism, but that is something I have done in my other works going back several decades. There is much that we can learn from liberalism, not just its central ideas but also its unique sensibilities, such as its fear of concentration of power, its deep unease at violation of personal space, hostility to messianic claims, and its fear of arbitrary power. Like other great political doctrines, liberalism is defined not only by the intellectual content of its world view but also by its general attitude to the world and the hopes and fears it fosters. These fears and hopes are in fact partly constitutive of its identity. A doctrine or society that takes no account of these and other insights of liberalism is to that extent deeply flawed.

Second, Carens asks to know the perspective from which I criticize western political theory and what my presuppositions are. This is a fascinating question to which my reply, sadly, has to be brief. By perspective one could mean one of two things: a methodological perspective showing how one approaches a particular subject matter, or an ideological or normative perspective showing the values and

the world view from which one assesses and judges one's subject matter. I shall take each in turn.

As someone at home in the western and Indian traditions of thought, I look at each from the perspective of the other. There is no transcendental perspective or Archimedean standpoint to which one can rise and from which one can view both. One locates oneself in one of them and uses that location to examine the other. Each gives one a platform, a vantage point to go beyond it. My perspective involves asking writers within one tradition questions suggested or stimulated by the other and then using the answers to look again at the tradition from which the questions had emerged. My perspective is located in both traditions, is not fixed and static, distinguishes and where possible fuses their insights, and is inherently bilingual. Since the Indian tradition is not yet fully explored, does not yet seek to understand Indian experiences in their own terms, and so on, the western tradition remains dominant, which it is my hope to change.

Understanding the term 'perspective' in the normative or ideological sense of a body of beliefs, my perspective is neither liberal nor any other. No such perspective on its own can encompass the full range and complexity of human experience. Liberalism, for example, has little to say about God, what virtues to cultivate, why anger, greed and jealousy are to be avoided, and how one should respond to another's suffering. Human life, again, is not a unified whole but made up of different areas governed by their own different principles. Emotional life cannot be regulated in the same way as the intellectual or moral life, and no single doctrine can be equally alert to their differences. Liberalism further has to be translated in different areas such as the economic, the political, the moral, and the social, and in some its doctrines might be unacceptable. Liberal economy, for example, justifies capitalism, vast inequalities, and unlimited accumulation of wealth, to all of which many reflective persons including some liberals themselves feel hostile.

All this means that one cannot live as a liberal alone, that is, base one's entire life on liberal principles alone, and also that liberalism is not a tightly bound package all of whose items are integrally related and must be chosen by persons calling themselves liberals. What I do is not to adopt a single unified, normative perspective but rather rely on one based on what I find valuable in different moral perspectives. Such a perspective has an internal unity but is not homogeneous and remains open to new ideas and experiences.

This is broadly how liberal democracy itself came into existence. Democracy did not spring forth spontaneously as the organic expression of liberalism and lie down easily with it. For decades the two were hostile to each other. They are products of different traditions and views of human life, and their mutual antipathy was to be expected. Over time liberalism was democratized, and democracy liberalized, and the two were brought into some kind of harmony. Even then their conflict remains. Economic equality or equality of life chances, for example, is a major democratic value, but is marginal to liberalism. Free speech is valued by both, but is defended,

defined, and limited differently by them. Democracy is often inclined to limit it when it offends against the majority's deeply held beliefs, a view that finds little sympathy among liberals. It is therefore problematic to talk of liberal democratic values as Carens does. While agreeing on some basic values, its two halves disagree about others or their relative importance. Putting them together in a single expression does not remove their tension or make them say the same thing.

Carens asks why I concentrate on liberalism to the neglect of other political doctrines. I do so for several reasons. Liberalism enjoys considerable intellectual and political hegemony and confronts political thinkers at each stage of their inquiry. Furthermore, it is part of our lived reality and appears self-evident and 'obvious' when in fact it is not so. Unlike other political doctrines, again, it is not just a modern doctrine born within and embedded in the culture of modernity, but rather it is constitutive of modernity. It defines modernity, is modernity, and any discussion of modernity must settle its accounts with it.

Carens asks how I situate my book and who its intended audience is. My concerns in the book define my audience. The audience is twofold. First, it includes those in the west who appreciate the parochialism of their political thought and wonder how to address and redress it. Second, it includes those outside the west who lack the confidence to theorize their experiences in their own terms and wonder how to make their voices heard globally. They feel under constant internal and external pressure to 'think west', even when theorizing their unique experiences. My concern is to encourage them to think autonomously. Some intellectual churning is already going on in both the west and the non-west and my book seeks to participate in the process.

Finally, Carens gently rebukes me for violating the principle of gender neutrality and using the masculine to stand for both men and women. This is a case of flawed universals which I criticize in the book! Although he says it is an 'aberration' and limited to a few occasions, he is right to point it out, and I plead guilty. For my generation this comes naturally, and I agree that we should now move beyond such masculine phrasing.

Turning now to Bauböck's several interesting points in his thoughtful comments. I have space to discuss only two of them. He thinks that what I call ethnocentrism should better be called occidental parochialism. Although this is a good suggestion, I am inclined to resist it. My concern is not just to highlight the West's parochialism but also its tendency to generalize its view, that is, to put parochialism to a particular use. Furthermore, parochialism can occur in several ways. I intend to stress one of the most important, namely the ethnocentric tendency to unwittingly universalize the local and familiar.

Second, Bauböck thinks that I confuse two different kinds of universals, namely what I call flawed or illegitimate universals, and genuine universals, and 'overshoot' my target. He thinks that human nature and universal human rights are of the second kind and immune to my criticism. I take his point and say myself

that there are genuine universals and that they can only be arrived at through an intercultural dialogue. As for human nature and universal human rights, I take a somewhat different view from him.

Human nature is a complex concept. It involves two things, universally shared desires, instincts, propensities, etc. and sharing them by nature. The first can be shown, at least up to a point, and Bauböck does it very well. The second is not so easy. If the universally shared features are contingent historical products thrown up by different societies with similar experiences and institutions, they cannot be said to be acquired by nature. It is not enough to show universally shared features among humans; we also need to show that they are possessed by nature in the same way that eyes and ears or hunger and anger are. I do not think that Bauböck has done this convincingly.

As for universal human rights, I have no difficulty with the concept and in fact advocate them in the book. My difficulty is of a different kind. Given the moral force of human rights, there is a constant tendency to keep adding to the list and inflating them, thereby depriving them of their moral urgency. Furthermore, human rights are derived differently in different cultures such that even if we were all to agree on their content, we might not on their justification. Again, human rights can conflict, and the conflicts are resolved differently in different societies depending on how they prioritize the rights involved and the kind of trade-off they value. Finally, human rights are defined differently in different societies. All human beings have a right to life or speech, but different societies disagree on when life begins and whether speech includes commercial advertisement. In short, I endorse human rights but want to emphasize how complex, contextual, and conditional their universality is.

Let me now turn to Mahajan. I agree with much of what she says. She rightly points out that I reformulate the idea of multiculturalism and take it to be about not so much the rights of minorities and institutional arrangements for power sharing but rather about epistemological, moral and political problems raised by cultural diversity. I go further and say that for me multiculturalism is also about overcoming the limits and biases of one's culture in pursuit of objective truth. Mahajan says that every culture is internally plural and that multiculturalism should find ways of representing that plurality, a view I share and endorse in the book. She says that we need a dialogue not only between cultures but also between ways of life, such as religious and non-religious. I am puzzled why she separates culture and way of life, but basically agree with her. When she says that dialogue is 'successful' if it helps us to understand the other better and critically reflect on our own cultural tradition, I broadly agree except that I do not think that a dialogue that fails to achieve these objectives is necessarily a failure. Dialogue serves several purposes such as greater self-understanding, self-criticism, seeing oneself through the eyes of the other, and is never wasted even when unsuccessful in Mahajan's sense.

There are other areas where I take a somewhat different view from hers. Discussing honour killing, she says that it is approved by custom but often banned by law. She asks if it is right to seek to explain it and whether and how the perpetrator's reasons relate to cultural reasons. Law might ban it, but the practice sometimes goes on, and one needs to explain why some people feel so committed to it as to disobey the law and suffer the penalty. The explanation is cultural when it appeals to, and derives its legitimacy from, the individual's culture. This would involve the culture's notion of honour, its views on parental responsibility, social disgrace, and so on. These are cultural reasons and the perpetrator would need to show that he belongs to the culture whose authority he claims to respect. Understanding honour killing does not amount to justifying it; rather, it makes the action look less monstrous or brings it within our emotional reach, and its perpetrator less inhuman.

Sune Laegaard remarks that I do not feel disturbed by the state's religious symbols. He is right. The symbols do not affect the basic interests of the citizens and do not put the minority at a serious disadvantage. They do not confer an advantage on the majority for whom they generally have only a sentimental value. They alienate the minority without substantially benefitting the majority and are relatively harmless.

Laegaard argues that in my view protection of religious minorities does not require protection of their religious beliefs and that attacks on these beliefs do not amount to hate speech. I agree, with an important qualification. People's interests and lives need protection because they affect the individual's ability to lead a life of their choice without hindrance. Beliefs do not have this effect. Furthermore, people are responsible for their beliefs and are expected to be able to defend them or take their criticism in their stride. The situation is different when the beliefs are mocked, made to look absurd or perverse, or vulgarized. Believers then are made to look gullible, dim-witted, childish, and an attack on their beliefs comes close to an attack on them and could amount to hate speech.

Laegaard argues that for me equal citizenship is one of the criteria for judging secularism and that it involves equal treatment. He is only half right. The secular state has a duty to treat all religions equally, but there are inevitable limits to its capacity to do so. Every state has a history, a culture, was or is embedded in a particular religion, and so on. As a result, it has a certain character evident in its public holidays, public ceremonies, names of streets, and celebration of historical events, individuals, and anniversaries. Other religions that have not played this kind of role in its history could not be treated in exactly the same way without unravelling the previous arrangements, alienating, and even doing injustice to the majority. Following Carens and Modood I would say that the state should treat all religious and non-religious groups not so much equally as fairly or even-handedly.

Bhikhu Parekh

Normativity, national, multiculturalism and alienation

I thank all contributors for their participation and comments and questions to me. I respond by clarifying and developing my position.

Joe Carens points out that we share quite a lot both in terms of the kind of multiculturalism we defend and how we argue for it. Nevertheless, he poses three methodological questions. Firstly, what is the moral status of the different kinds of actions I argue for or recommend? Secondly and relatedly, why are such arguments not described as 'justice'? Finally, he invites me to say something about the scope of my reflections.

The first question relates to what I think is morally required by the state; for example, which (minority) claims should the state meet and which are of value but not morally required? My principal guiding idea is of recognition as a feature of equal citizenship. While it directs us to attend to marginal ethnocultural identities, it, as a point about citizenship is as universalist as the latter. From there I soon turn to contextual normative considerations. For example, how can the symbolic recognition, and the institutional accommodation it entails, be effected in ways that are consistent with what other groups in society receive in the society in question? Where simple consistency cannot be achieved, because a minority might be asking for something new, I then expect that institutional recognition entails some dialogue with the minority and the rest of society, through which some newly imagined solution may emerge that is acceptable to both/all sides and can be implemented in a pragmatic way. As a multiculturalist, however, I emphasize the vulnerability of minorities that are racialized and targets of hostility, including at the level of public and intellectual discourses, which deserve censure, and in extreme cases of hate speech, legal restraint. Similarly, I insist that equal citizenship does not require uniformity of treatment on all occasions: where minorities insist that they have important cultural needs, differential treatment may be the only way to meet those needs. Such processes are often conflictual, and minorities need to mobilize, publicize, press their claims and draw on and rework the normative resources available in the relevant citizenship context. These are promising ways to achieve multiculturalist advances because of the power of identities: the power of a minority to forge a unifying identity and the inclusive power of a national citizenship, which is open to being stretched and re-imagined. The suggestion is that I work with some general, framing ideas and then look to context, with its normative and identarian potentials, minority claims-making and dialogical engagements or negotiations to do the rest. Two recurring policy areas I discuss are the place of religion in state schools (and in the public space more generally) and racist/Islamophobic discourse, free speech, hate speech, incitement, censure, bans and censorship. In discussing these themes, I state what are the

normative ideas I am appealing to and what I would consider legitimate and illegitimate outcomes.

Whether any of this can be described as moral principles—perhaps, citizenship and recognition?—or not, I am unsure; but they are all part of a multiculturalist politics. If, by 'moral', Carens means something extra-political rather than something internal to politics, then I am not offering moral guidance; if, by 'moral', Carens means the more universalist rather than contingent features of an argument, I have tried to explain that in the above.

This is, as Carens notes, related to my reluctance to use the vocabulary of 'justice'. A significant part of my analyses is about particularities: identity formations and assertions, belonging, engaging with and remaking national narratives and so on. As explained above, I think they have a normative significance and are part of the normativity of multiculturalist politics. Since Rawls, 'justice' has become too associated with his way of doing political theory, too much about principles, rules, interests, individual freedom and choices—an understanding of people abstracted from their particularities and understood in terms of a common currency (interests) or law-like principles and reasoning. I do not think such reasoning captures the inner workings of a multiculturalist politics— of misrecognition and the struggle for recognition. I hope I am making a contribution to an understanding of social justice, but I work at a meso-level, explaining aspects of the normative significance of equal citizenship and/or aspects of some collective identities (ethnic, religious, national), rather than attempting to offer a theory of justice.

Carens' third question on whether I think the scope of my reflections is confined to Britain—the central focus of my discussion—and if not, why not?—can be connected to the central criticism that Rainer Bauböck makes, namely that my political sociology is too focused on the national as such, even if not only on Britain. I take this criticism to have three parts. Firstly, that in discussing a country like France, it is better to condemn specific cases (e.g. headscarf bans) rather than a whole national approach. Secondly, my 'methodological nationalism' and thirdly, my failure to appreciate the transnational dimensions forming British Muslim identities.

My specific answers to these criticisms below is informed by pp. 18–20 of my book, where I explain that my method is like a normative version of Weberian 'ideal types' and needs to be supplemented by an 'iterative contextualism' (Modood and Thompson 2018) in order to develop some comparative analysis and cross-contextual generalizations. I there point out that, as Carens notes, my concepts are generated by my understanding of the British context and experience but also how through iterative contextualism—taking those concepts to another context and seeing in a to-and-fro way how those concepts would have to be revised if they were to have explanatory scope or normative traction with the second context.

In relation to Bauböck's first criticism above, I do think that specific national policies like the headscarf ban have a logical and systemic or semi-systemic relation to a whole web of national policies, and even more importantly, to a way of thinking and acting on the issues in question but also on the other issues, too. These may have developed discursively and institutionally over a period of time and continue to be influential even whilst developing in some ways. Specifically in relation to issues like the headscarf ban in France, Favell (1998), Bowen (2007) and Scott (2009) all show how certain policies, state actions and public controversies can only be properly understood when not analysed discretely, but as part of a larger public philosophy or political culture or interconnected set of institutional arrangements. One cannot understand the bans on the wearing of headscarves without understanding the republican philosophy or philosophies of *laïcité* and how they connect to other central aspects of the French public philosophy and/or racism against Arabs. It is true that Bowen and others have argued that one cannot assume that just because there is a particular national discourse, law, policy or directive that it is enacted in the way intended or enacted uniformly across the country, given the sharing of power between the national and local governances, or between the drafters of policy and those who interpret it as they think it should be implemented (or not) in their own policy domain (e.g. security or social cohesion) or their own decentralized institutional and local contexts. I have not denied this and indeed have been part of a research project to study exactly this in the case of the preventing radicalization policy in Britain (O'Toole et al. 2013).

If there is a kind of 'methodological nationalism' here it is not of 'nation-states as the sole unit of analysis and as a container for social processes', as Bauböck suggests. I have pointed to how concepts can be developed cross-nationally, and of how 'national' may point to a level of governance, not a statement of what happens at every level of governance in a country. That then brings us to the transnational. Bauböck makes some good points about transnational connexions and influences in relation to British Muslim and Islam. But each of them can be made without having to give up on methodological nationalism (as long as it's not an exclusive approach) or having to solely adopt a methodological transnationalism. The problem is not methodological nationalism or transnationalism, but an exclusivism that denies any value in the other or treats the two as an either/or. I have continued to maintain a national focus in the study of British Muslims as, at a time when securitization, geopolitics and 'clash of civilisations' threaten to take over the subject, it allows one to keep focused on issues of equality and citizenship, the aspirational politics of becoming British Muslims—the struggle for recognition and the forging of a multicultural citizenship—when other frames would de-prioritize it. Bauböck says my perspective may not work with British Muslims who think of their identity as being primarily faith-based; I don't think that the national/transnational and the community/faith-based identity distinctions neatly fit. A number of faith-based organizations have made the mining of transnational Islamic resources

to make a distinctively British Muslim identity a central goal—not in order to please the British state but to be themselves. For example: The Muslim College (London), The Radical Middle Way, The Muslim College (Cambridge), New Horizons, amongst others.

Turning to issues to do with secularism and religious 'establishment', I have one point on each to answer in relation to Gurpreet Mahajan and Sune Laegaard, respectively. I have suggested that northwestern Europe (though perhaps not France) can be characterized as a moderate form of secularism, meaning there is no absolute separation of church and state (a condition that hardly holds anywhere) and, more specifically, that there are various forms of support for religion, because organized religion is regarded as a public good (or a danger, under other circumstances). Moreover, this version of secularism can be multiculturalized through institutional accommodation of the faiths of recently settled minorities. Mahajan cautions that there are limits beyond which secularism cannot be pluralized. She illustrates the point with two institutions: state-funded faith schools and religious adjudication councils. She asks of the first if they can allow state-funded 'religious schools to initiate the students into a specific religious way of life?' I argue that a multiculturalist should, in addition to religious education as a normal school subject, support requests by any religious minority for the provision of faith-specific instruction and worship on a voluntary basis in normal (not merely religious) state schools (Modood 2019, pp. 14–16). On the other hand, I say—addressing a further question she asks—that all schools funded by the public purse may be required to follow a national curriculum. Similarly, in relation to religious adjudication (e.g. shari'ah councils), which I think should be accommodated and regulated by the state, Mahajan is right that I do so within the limit of national law and so do not argue for a full legal pluralism. However, in both these instances of the precedence of the national, I do so not just because of the nature of moderate secularism, but also as a multiculturalist. In relation to the latter, I argue that the meeting of distinctive minority needs—e.g. religious instruction at school even when the majority does not want its own religion in school—has to go hand in hand with active fostering of forms of commonality. A common national curriculum, including in religious education, together with faith-specific provisions; and shari'ah councils within a unified legal system seem to be exactly the kind of multiculturalism appropriate to northwest Europe.

In relation to the argument that establishment alienates Muslims, I claim that empirical evidence is necessary. Laegaard argues this suggests a flawed conception of alienation because 'Muslims can be alienated even if they do not voice criticism of establishment'. Moreover, with a normative argument there is always a question of how the evidence is assessed. I do not differ on this second point as I was discussing cases where no evidence is provided, so I will focus on the first point.

Alienation relates to how one's sense of self does not relate to a society or an institution to which one is connected, *to which one is entitled to feel connected* but

is prevented from doing so. This sense of separation is mediated by a normative concept (without which it cannot be identified). The relevant normative concepts in my case are equal citizenship and civic or national belonging. I believe Laegaard and I are in broad agreement here. The difference is that I think some empirical evidence about a minority is necessary in order to establish whether it is alienated or not. For Laegaard, the views of the minority can at best be only 'indicators' of whether it is alienated or not. For me, they are constitutive of the alienation or its absence. Of course, one might argue that a minority *ought* to feel alienated—'if anyone treated me like that in my own country I'd feel my citizenship was devalued'—but that is not determining whether a group is or is not alienated. Just to be clear, this does not make alienation a merely group-subjective concept. In this respect, alienation is like recognition, each refers to normatively understood group relations that depend on an effort to understand a minority in its own terms (with misrecognition being an indifference to this).

Similarly, insisting that we need to understand what the minority thinks to see if establishment causes alienation does not make my account subjective rather than objective. Investigating alienation as normatively understood group relations which are partly constituted by what a group thinks and feels is not to give up on an objective concept. Rather, it is a repudiation of a merely objectivist—including an objectivitist 'reasonable person'—account as compatible with multiculturalism, or indeed as an adequate account of alienation. I think my insisting that the Muslim view is essential to—and not merely indicative of—their civic status makes my account more—not less—objective because it counters at least some of the possible biases in the eye of the beholder.

My final response is to Laegaard's criticism that, in arguing that protecting vulnerable minorities can sometimes mean protecting them from being attacked through their (religious and other) beliefs, I am going beyond the victimization of Muslims as a group and talking about Islamic doctrines. My argument is that protecting groups means preventing them from suffering; to do that, one needs to find out what makes a group suffer, and here the feelings of the group are a primary datum. I then suggest that the devotion to the Prophet Muhammed is relevant here in the same way the Holocaust or black enslavement is. This of course harks back to the importance I place on group subjectivity, this time as a source of pain when attacked in certain ways. Let me conclude, however, by addressing his worries about free speech. I do so by bringing together some points from chapters three and four in the way that I do not do in the book itself.

In relation to discourses against minorities I have a tripartite division:

Incitement to hate speech: to be dealt with my law
Racist/Islamophobic speech: to be dealt with by law or, if possible, by censure (by 'calling out')

Reasonable criticism of Muslims and Islam (and other groups and religions): to be dealt with by dialogue.

All three are necessary and play a role in majority-minority relations. Laegaard speaks of the strategic character of my argument, so using that idea, my strategy is twofold. Firstly, as already noted, to highlight the effect of discourses on the victim group (not just on other potential victimizers and the mischief they may create) and therefore, sometimes, aspects of Islam, such as a devotion to the Prophet Muhammed, can be relevant to all three. Secondly, to shift whatever can be shifted from the more restrictive category to the less restrictive category, i.e. specifically, without giving up on the use of law, to consider if censure or dialogue may not in some cases be better responses. I thus see myself as reconciling protection and free speech rather than allowing one to trump the other.

Tariq Modood

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