

Title—Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea

Author—Tariq Modood

Year—2013

Categories: Theory, Migration, Islam, Politics, Culture

Place: The West (Western Europe, North America, and Australia)

Time: 1940-Present

Argument Synopsis:

Modood's book is focused on better theorizing multiculturalism as a concept; he seeks to identify the core of the political complex of multiculturalism. For Modood, multiculturalism mostly means the political accommodation of minorities formed by immigration to Western countries from outside the prosperous West. He sees multiculturalism as constituting an interrelated set of political ideas which are a development out of contemporary democratic politics. Modood posits that the understanding of multiculturalism has been shaped by the debates around political controversies, such as the Rushdie Affair which he identifies as being a turning point in British discussions of multiculturalism. He notes how multiculturalism has different meanings across the world, with a narrower meaning in Europe than in the United States. Broader multiculturalism, as in the United States, entailed a focus on the struggles of a range of marginalized groups, while narrow multiculturalism, found in Europe, focuses specifically on the consequences of immigration. He is mostly focused on Britain for his analysis, which he claims combines some of the European and American issues—Britain has an 'old country' identity with the color racism and stratification usually associated with the United States. He argues that Britain must address anti-Muslim cultural racism as Muslims become a significant feature of its cities.

The book is organized into eight chapters. The second chapter, after the introduction, highlights why some of the central aspects of Will Kymlicka's position regarding liberalism and multiculturalism are problematic. The third chapter outlines the conception of political multiculturalism based on the ideas of 'difference,' 'multi' and a double conception of equality. The fourth chapter contrasts multiculturalism with some versions of liberalism and philosophical multiculturalism, arguing why the multicultural accommodation of Muslims fits well with a moderate secularism but not with a radical ideological secularism. The fifth chapter considers some social theory critiques which argue that the conceptions of group and culture that multiculturalism employs are fundamentally flawed or not pertinent to how ethnic identities are lived today. The sixth chapter puts forth a vision of citizenship not confined to the state but dispersed across society—he demonstrates that multiculturalism cannot be held responsible for the current crisis. He posits that more multiculturalism is needed to solve the current crisis, not less. The seventh chapter offers a conceptual framework for the concept of integration, underscoring why integration will remain incomplete without multicultural citizenship. The eighth chapter addresses that political secularism is a new, major site of multiculturalism. He claims that current controversies about political secularism are structured by both pro- and anti-multiculturalism. Many of today's multicultural problems are driven by secularism, as well as exclusivist Christianity. Secularism has been increasingly imagined as restricting religious groups, especially Muslims. He concludes with a call for a communitarian multiculturalism that will accommodate group rights and will also acknowledge intra-group diversity as legitimate.

Key Themes and Concepts:

- Multiculturalism—the political accommodation of minorities formed by immigration to Western countries from outside the prosperous West
- Disillusionment and anxiety about multiculturalism today is strongly associated with the presence and activities of Muslims
- Muslims are stigmatized for not fully rejecting social mores that are deemed irrational by Western leftists, especially with regard to gender roles