

Multicultural conversations: The nature and future of culture, identity and nationalism

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Abstract

Despite well-known criticism of multiculturalism in Britain, the Netherlands, Germany, Canada, Australia, India and elsewhere since 9/11, such policies have proliferated (Banting and Kymlicka, 2013; Mathieu, 2018) and the Canadian and Australian policies of multiculturalism have since celebrated their 50th birthdays. Political theories of multiculturalism have proliferated in this period too (Lenard, 2022; Modood, 2007/2013; Patten, 2014; Parekh, 2006, 2019; Phillips, 2007; Tyler, 2011). Schools of multiculturalist thought have been identified (Levey, 2019; Uberoi and Modood, 2019), as have contextual methods in the political theory and normative sociology of multiculturalism (Modood, 2020; Modood and Thompson, 2018). New historical inquiries into the origins of the political thought of multiculturalism have begun (Tyler, 2017; Uberoi, 2021) and the ideas of multiculturalists have been altered to defend majority rights (Koopmans and Orgad, 2022). Current and former politicians continue to debate its merits (Braverman, 2023; Denham, 2023). Policies of multiculturalism and multiculturalist ideas have thus proved more resilient than many had thought. In the following conversation chaired by James Connelly, which took place on 20 June 2023, Bhikhu Parekh, Tariq Modood, Varun

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Uberoi, and Colin Tyler discuss the history, varied natures, and future of the contested multiculturalist ideas of “culture,” “identity” and “nationalism”.

Keywords

Multiculturalism, identity, culture, majority, national identity, intersectionality

James Connelly

The following arose out of discussions regarding contemporary multiculturalism and cultural diversity, between Bhikhu Parekh of the University of Hull, Tariq Modood of Bristol University, Varun Uberoi of Loughborough University, and Colin Tyler of the University of Hull. The participants conduct the research in line with their shared commitments and beliefs, especially as those relate to the vital importance of collective conversation rather than isolated declarations by individuals. Having said that, they are now going to produce isolated declarations by individuals, starting with Bhikhu and after that will be Tariq.

Bhikhu Parekh

I want to start by saying something about my book, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*. The question is, why did I give it the title that I did? I think that’s very important because lots of reviewers and readers have missed it. I call it “rethinking” to show that I was neither endorsing multiculturalism nor rejecting it. I was rethinking it. In other words, I was what Marxists call “critiquing” it, trying to tease out its valid insights, trying to reject those I considered invalid.

Now, what were the valid insights and what were the invalid ones? That follows later on, but the point was that when people talked about multiculturalism, the name itself suggested that cultures can be individuated, there can be multiple cultures like multiple objects. Somehow the term, seemed to indicate heterogeneity, the bundle of isolated elements. But it did not necessarily mean any of those things, although that’s what some people took it to mean and criticised it. So that’s the first point. Then multiculturalism. “Multiculturalism,” basically, I take to mean a doctrine that accepts and is sympathetic to a multicultural society or cultural diversity. It would create conditions favourable to the flourishing and survival of multicultural society or cultural diversity. In other words, it’s a doctrine that favours or values differences. That’s what multiculturalism basically comes down to. It’s about respecting and valuing cultural differences.

So, that’s basically what the title of the book was supposed to mean, and the question now is what are the cultural differences to which multiculturalism are sympathetic. What are differences? What does it mean to say X is different from Y, and secondly, what are cultural differences? What kinds of differences are cultural as opposed to religious or social or economic? And the book goes on to talk about it. Basically, I concentrate on cultural differences, not difference per se. And “a culture” to me means a body of beliefs

and practices in terms of which human beings try to conceptualize and organize their individual and collective lives. Culture necessarily mediates the relation between individuals and the world. You can't step out of culture. You function from within a particular culture and try to understand the world in a certain way. And because we operate from within different cultures, there are differences between us, and the question is, how we are to respond to those differences. Multiculturalism says, we respect those differences and then we go from there. The next question is when you start talking about valuing and cherishing differences, you come to the heart of the subject of multiculturalism, and it raises a cluster of interrelated questions, such as: What is culture? How does it define a person's identity? How does it differ from other cultures? How can it be judged? How can we hold multicultural societies together without losing their multicultural character? So, these are some of the questions that cultural diversity or multiculturalism raises.

I discussed these and related questions and offered what I take to be satisfactory answers at the time. Looking back at the book 25 years down the line, I have a feeling that there are no substantial views which I would disagree with. There are views where I would take a mildly less aggressive view or less universalist view, but there are no views which I would reject.

But there are, as I said, one or two places where I would want to take a slightly different view, slightly different, but not too different. One of them, which I will only briefly touch upon, is the idea which two of my panellists have been forcing on me, pressing on me, for umpteen number of years, and that is the idea of national identity.

I tended to understand national identity in the sense of a body of rules, ideals and so on. I have been told that this is too formal. You must think of national identity in terms of language, culture, all of those things which shape our beliefs and practices. I plead guilty to defining national identity in too narrow a manner, and I would today define it differently, as I've done in my subsequent writings.

Secondly, I emphasize the centrality of dialogue. Dialogue for me is central to understanding and resolving differences. That's fine. But dialogue does not always work. In some cases, it requires appropriate conditions and institutional structures, and in their absence, dialogue simply does not get off the ground, and I think that's an important point of context which I do not sufficiently emphasize.

The third and the last point is the importance of cultural diversity. I even give cultural diversity an ontological and epistemological status. That is cultural diversity, by which I realize and recognise myself. The recognition is not only a recognition of who I am, but that I am. That I'm recognized gives me an affirmation of my identity. So, I give cultural diversity enormous importance. But the question is that cultural diversity can only be sustained in certain situations. In a powerful capitalist economy, its tendency is to flatten all differences and therefore to get rid of cultural diversity or globalization or nationalism. In other words, one can talk about cultural diversity, but one also ought to bear in mind those areas in which cultural diversity is located and which can frustrate the flourishing of cultural diversity. And in those situations, the state becomes very important.

And the last point about which I have only been thinking for the last few days is I was unhappy with the term "multiculturalism." Partly for the reason I mentioned earlier, the idea of "multi" implies you can count and enumerate, even individuate. You can ghettoise

it and give a handle to its critics who keep saying “oh, this multiculturalism”. It implies this kind of broken down, mechanical understanding, and therefore the term “multiculturalism” I find slightly uncomfortable, but at the same time, what is the alternative? You think of “pluralism,” it’s too vacuous, too empty, too general. So, what you need is a term which has the aggressiveness, the combativeness of “multiculturalism,” but at the same time, not this disintegrative tendency of multiculturalism. Within pluralism, you have a dominant culture trying to set out structures for minority cultures to flourish. In multiculturalism, minority cultures are pushing against the dominant culture, and asking for spaces to function. Both have different starting points. Do we have a term which can capture both starting points? Well, that’s what I’m looking for and will continue to do so. Thank you.

James Connelly

Thank you very much, Bhikhu. Well, the quest continues. Perhaps you’ll find the term in the course of the afternoon. Tariq, your presentation.

Tariq Modood

I’ve been thinking quite a lot. You know, as one gets to a certain kind of age, how is my current thinking similar to or different from where I started or some of my statements in the past and so on? And so, I would like to make a few brief points, using that kind of format, a kind of reflective intellectual, autobiographical format. And I suppose my general view, which of course I would be very happy to discuss – and if it’s proved that my self-awareness this isn’t quite right, well then that I’ll be happy to learn – is that I don’t think there have been any radical changes in my view, it doesn’t feel to me that there have. But there have been changes, often additions, if not alterations, but on the whole I would describe modifications in my position as being where I’ve been making explicit what was previously implicit, or perhaps adapting the vocabulary to remain connected to current public debates, and of course this relates to Bhikhu’s last point about the very term “multiculturalism,” the negative reaction it evokes, and so on.

So I would say that if I think about my thinking, which was undeveloped and just emerging actually in action in political controversy in let’s say the year 1992, 30 years ago and I choose that year because I published a short collection called *Not Easy Being British*, and my key terms therefore stating my position at that point were “multicultural citizenship” and “multicultural Britishness.” And what do I think were the things that I was kind of staking a claim about, you know, as intellectual political ideas? Well, four things I’ve made a note of here.

Firstly, racial equality that rejected racial dualism. By racial dualism, I mean framing things theoretically and politically in terms of black and white. Rejecting that in favour of seeing non-white minorities – so there is a layer of colour there clearly, because I’m talking about non-white versus white – seeing non-white minorities as a multi. So not in terms of a coloured dualism, but as a multi with an emphasis on self-definition and subjectivity. What do people think about themselves and specifically about their

communities of identity? Identity for me, was a very central if, I'm sorry to say, a somewhat underdeveloped concept throughout all this period. I was very interested in people's sense of belonging and connecting with non-economic collective identities. So that's my first point.

Secondly, I wanted to emphasize multiple racisms; while I did not want to work with the racial dualism, I certainly didn't want to reject the idea of racism. Therefore, I wanted to multiply, or if you like, multiculturalise, racism, and in particular, to attend to what actually sociologists and a lot of political activists were not paying attention to at the time and that was Islamophobia. Remember I said I'm talking about 1992, so my writings at that point were actually very much informed by the controversy of *The Satanic Verses* affair and my trying to come up with an intellectual political response to that. And so, I was one of the first people to start talking about anti-Muslim racism and Islamophobia, which in the early 1990s and for quite a few years after that too, was dismissed by scholars, sociologists, political activists as either a meaningless term or a divisive term. Because how could there be racism against Muslims? But that's exactly what I was arguing that there could be, and that religion or the ethno-religious and secularism had to be part of multicultural equality. So, I very much introduced the idea of secularism as a multiculturalist issue, obviously very much informed by the Rushdie affair and I think by the kinds of things that Bhikhu was developing at the time as well.

Thirdly, my central focus as I saw it was on equal citizenship, which I tried to relate to national identity and national belonging. So, Bhikhu made an allusive remark to that when he said that two members of the current panel have been trying to foist the term "national identity" on him, or, if foist is the wrong term, to encourage him to express his multiculturalism or his reflections on what multiculturalism might mean by relating it to national identity. So, I did that from the get-go as it were. Obviously, this is reflected in the title of the collection of essays I mentioned, *Not Easy Being British*.

And the fourth, last point I want to raise from that period was that I was looking to both state and civil society to play key roles in responding to minorities, to minorities' political activism, and in relation to obstacles to social mobility. I say I wanted to emphasize state and civil society, because I think there was a tension at the time. You had quite a lot of radical activism, radical anti-racists that were actually anti-statists. They didn't trust the state. They followed a model, a kind of a Marxian variation of emancipation through a bottom-up struggle. You know, an emancipation of the working class, so an emancipation of the racially oppressed. While I was sympathetic to that and thought it was important, I wanted the state to be a focus for multiculturalist thinking and action, and to take a leadership role. So that's why I emphasised both civil society and the state.

OK, so that was 1992. I would say that in the last 10 years or so, I've added certain things to that. I don't think I've given up any of those four things, but I've added some things to them and I now call my theory "multicultural nationalism," which isn't really very different to "multicultural citizenship" or "multicultural Britishness," but it's just trying to use a vocabulary that might have a little bit more traction with contemporary politics.

And so, very briefly, now five things that I feel I've added to what I've already mentioned from my 1992 period. Firstly, it's become clearer to me – and I've tried to

express this – that my multiculturalism is not based on liberal theory but on national context. That’s not new. It’s what I’ve always argued, you know, multicultural Britishness, and so on. But I’ve now tried to give that a more theoretical expression and I’ve been very influenced in that respect by Bhikhu’s work, because his *Rethinking Multiculturalism* really did throw down a challenge to liberalism and multiculturalism in a very theoretical way, in the way that I wasn’t doing then, but I’m trying to join that discussion now or more recently.

Relatedly, and this is the second point, that when I talk about multicultural citizenship, I’m not talking about liberal citizenship, but something thicker or communitarian, or that connects with the idea of fraternité or national solidarity. Again, this is not new, but I’m now trying to theorize this more explicitly.

Thirdly, I realize that my multiculturalism and the secularism I discuss is not liberal secularism. I’ve have quite a fairly developed critique of liberal secularism, both in terms of whether it’s sociologically accurate about the societies that it claims to describe, and whether it is normatively helpful for multiculturalism. And in both respects, my answer is no, and I offer an alternative where I talk about the “multiculturalising” of a moderate, accommodative secularism and that’s become pretty central to my work.

Two last things. So, the fourth thing was I’m not arguing for a thinning of national identity, but a pluralistic thickening - it’s a cultural citizenship, hence the importance of national identity. It’s not just the civic liberalism or civic multiculturalism, but nor is it a thinning of the national identity. Some things may need to be expunged from the national identity, so some thinning might be required, but there’s no special logic which says thinning and thinning only. In fact, if anything I do the opposite, borrowing a term from Charles Taylor, I emphasize the additive, not the subtractive. Which means that our national identity becomes thickened by including the history of racism, British history of racism and black people’s struggles against it, by including Muslim community identities, similarly with Hindus, others, and so on. That’s thickening our national identity, not thinning it. And within that of course, I should emphasize that I’ve become quite interested, more than interested really, in including the majority, because it seems to me once you start talking about pluralistic thickening, you can’t help but ask yourself, “Ah, but what is the role and status,” and I mean the normative status here now, not just ideas about domination and so on, “the normative status of the majority and majority cultural legacies within a pluralized, thickened national identity?”

And, lastly, I have a concern which goes beyond anti-racism. Well, my concern is that anti-racism and multiculturalism should not contribute to the current socio-political polarization that we see in Britain. It’s even worse in some other countries, like the United States or India, but clearly we see it in Britain. On the other hand, more positively that we should be developing a multiculturalism, I should be developing a multiculturalism, which positively contributes to the depolarizing, that doesn’t just wring its hand at the polarization, but contributes to the depolarization.

And one of the results of what I’ve just said is that I spent quite a lot of my time in the last 10 years or so thinking about, well, where does this leave me in relation to what I call multiculturalism, which isn’t actually so very different from what Bhikhu and Varun and others call multiculturalism. Where does this leave us in relation to other political “isms”?

For instance, interculturalism, so that's become quite a big theme for me. Thinking also about cosmopolitanism and certain versions of liberalism.

James Connelly

Many thanks indeed, Tariq, and thank you to Tariq and Bhikhu for your opening comments, and now we'll move on to some discussion and questioning. And to lead us in this, Varun Uberoi.

Varun Uberoi

First, it's wonderful to be in dialogue with you all and especially with both Bhikhu and Tariq. Both mentioned the issue of how we hold society together and depolarization. For many critics of multiculturalism, these issues are secondary in multiculturalism. Depolarization, holding a society together, that's not what multiculturalists are really focusing on, except at the periphery. But I've always thought that that was wrong. I've always thought that these ideas are central to multiculturalist thought. Take, for example, intercultural dialogue in a society. It presupposes different groups are not hostile to one another and are willing to interact and sympathetically engage with one another. The unity – and that's the term I have used in the past for holding a society together or depolarization – the unity of a multicultural society is presupposed in intercultural dialogue and is central to multiculturalism. Critics incorrectly suggest that it's peripheral.

Now, what do I mean by unity? I think I mean something like this. In the first instance, all citizens in a political community must be able to see themselves collectively as a unit or a group.

This is crucial if they are to take collective action, conceptualize collective challenges, conceptualize collective goals, and in difficult times, they may need to do more than just think and assume that they are a unit or a group, but also they may need to feel loyalty to one another. Rather like with unity amongst families and friends and co-religionists, there are times when unity among the citizens of a polity must be more visible. And national identity is crucial to foster it. For me, national identity looks something like this: if we feel that we have a British identity, then we also feel that we are part of Britain and connected to other British citizens. I use the word "feel" instead of saying I'm a British citizen. If we feel we are British, we feel connected to others in Britain. National identity is crucial to fostering unity. But if I say I feel British, I must have some conception, some idea of Britain in my mind, and if that conception, if that idea of Britain doesn't include cultural minorities, then they are naturally going to be seen as outsiders. Minorities must be part of the way in which British citizens think about their country. But I think in the past we've gone wrong by not mentioning the fact that there is a cultural majority. Tariq and I published some work about a decade ago now, which looked at how dominant politicians were conceptualizing Britain, and it showed that they often did so by referring to its political institutions, but also to cultural diversity. Majority groups might rightly say "Where are we?" and I think we have to be more explicit about the significance of majority groups and cultural minorities and the way they together form a country.

James Connelly

Thank you very much, Varun, Tariq and Bhikhu. Let me now invite Colin to join the conversation.

Colin Tyler

So, I'm going to take quite a different perspective really on some of the issues – but it's been fascinating to hear what you've been saying, particularly the debate around nationalism and majority cultures. Just a little bit by way of background, I grew up in a working-class family in Worcester, England. The class I was in at primary school, half of the people looked like me, half of the class didn't look like me. They were second-generation migrants, often from the Indian subcontinent but also a lot of Italian and some Chinese students. So, this idea of a majority culture – what was purported to be “British culture” – I felt quite alienated from it a lot of the time because it didn't fit the reality that I had experienced. And I suppose, more importantly here, this informs my own mature views about culture. So, I share the reservations that many people feel about talking in terms of culture at all. I fear that it's too vague to be meaningful or useful in debates, in political philosophy, or in my own discipline of political theory. And, too often, it seems that claims regarding culture serve merely to mask the exercise of power, to privilege one group's interests and loose perspectives over those of other groups and individuals. For example, claims about cultures tend to lead to the privileging of the voices of bodies and individuals that claim to speak for the ‘true’ meaning of a faith, say, or a faith group with the associated denigration and marginalization of other believers and nonbelievers. And a sense of a shared culture can be generated “internally” by an elite within an ostensible (formalised or quasi-formalised) group, or “externally” imposed by the way in which that outwardly-perceived (really, manufactured) group is oppressed. (And now I'm thinking through Iris Marion Young and particularly *Inclusion and Democracy*). But the root problem, it seems to me, is that claims that invoke the notion of “culture” often in practice – and often despite the good intentions of the people who use the term – neglect two very important disruptors. The first of these is that human personalities are individuated, perspectival and intersectional. They combine within each individual various elements from a whole series of social positions, adapted by the individual – consciously or not – from what others might characterize as cultures. And, secondly, each human personality is liminal: it embodies shifting, ill-defined commitments to meanings and values, sources of authority, and so on.

Developing that idea further, certainly I think we do require some type of collective institutions and this is where I have a lot of sympathy with much of what has been said. I think Tariq, I found your input particularly interesting, because institutions provide relatively fixed points through which we as individuals can orient ourselves, and through our always only partial commitment to them we can enjoy greater stability in our own personalities. Moreover, the individual can exercise more power if they work with others, through institutions, by claiming rights and privileges that society ascribes to the ostensible group. However, of course the individual must comprise, because their

relationships to these institutions are rarely clear and all-encompassing, and they're marked by numerous critical distances from them. And this to me highlights the importance of the liminal character of human personalities. The latter are intersectional in that any one individual will always orient themselves in relation to numerous institutions, and those institutions presuppose perspectives, meanings, values and commitments of other institutions. But they also compete with those other perspectives. Humans are then socially oriented and to some extent socially embedded, but always in ambiguous and shifting ways that are in tension with each other. So, that's my initial thought.

James Connelly

Right. Well, I suggest that right now we go back to ask Bhikhu and Tariq what their comments are on what they've just heard from Varun and Colin.

Tariq Modood

This is a multiparty conversation, a 'multilogue'. So, this is not like an exhaustive response, just some kind of response. Colin, you started off by saying "Oh, I'm going to take us somewhere totally different," after Varun had finished. Actually, I think there's a lot of complementarity between what the two of you did, what you focused on. The difference as I heard it just now is that I think Varun, or at least speaking for myself, I do believe that human beings have a sociality and a communal character that is part of their identity and that they have an emotional investment in at least some of those identities, and of course possibly not evenly distributed, some identities are much closer to some people than others. And that this sense of identity and of people's sense of themselves must be brought into the centre of thinking about equality, because the people who dominated the nineteenth/twentieth century debates about equality tended to only think either just in economic terms, or in economic terms plus political participation. And what multiculturalists have been trying to say is "No, that's not enough. That is too limited an idea of equality and equal citizenship." People's identities can be a source of oppression as well as their class status, you know their positioning in what we might call capitalistic economies. Their cultural identities or the identities that matter to them can be used by others to oppress them, can even be created by others to oppress them, like the identity "black". And, therefore, a proper understanding of democratic egalitarian citizenship means thinking about the value of identities, especially to those who are being marginalized or oppressed because of their identities, and the use of other identities by others in oppressive ways. So, that's what I think multiculturalism does, it inserts the idea of the value of identity to individuals. It then gives that value a normative status, saying this is very important, because it's not only about individuals, it's about structures of oppression and marginalization. So, where you stand in that, it seems to me from what I've just heard, I'd say two things about it, in contrast to the view I've ascribed to myself and which I think to Varun too.

Firstly, you, Colin, take a more sceptical view about the uses of identity, especially by powerful people. You seem to think that identity will be used to dominate and to oppress –

or the term used was “culture,” I’ve been using “identity,” you said “culture” – is used as a medium of oppression or a rhetorical device – “This is our culture, your culture’s backward, or doesn’t belong here or whatever” – and it’s used to create power relations of inequality and marginalization, and so on. So, I think my response to that would be “Well, of course, multiculturalism needs to be alert to that.” In fact, I think it is alert to that, it’s part of its, what you might say originating dynamic in the way that I just described a moment ago. But unlike you, someone like me, and I think Varun and Bhikhu, we don’t assume there’s some kind of invariant relationship between culture and uses of collective culture – people expressing a sense of collective culture – and domination. There can be a relation, but we want to identify where that relationship is benign rather than necessarily malign. Where it is malign, we want to emphasize it may not be necessarily so. What we need to do is to salvage or to bring it into the benign from its malign historical or contemporary practices. And I think that, we also, I think everybody does, and so all of us in this discussion, realize that people have multiple identities. I mean, the idea of thinking in terms of monistic or essentialist identities is dead, or it may exist at a certain level of unreflective thinking but I don’t think it’s part of any theorizing. But I would say for my part, and I know Bhikhu expressly said this, just because one has an intersectional identity doesn’t mean one values all aspects of one’s identity in an equal way. So, one of Bhikhu’s very favourite words is “cherish.” Bhikhu’s always speaking up for those people who cherish their culture, cherish their traditions, cherish their identities and arguing that liberal reasoning with its focus on certain ideas about rationality, isn’t able to give appropriate normative value to this cherishing. So, I think that would be my reply to your sense, “Well, why choose certain identities rather than others?”

Colin Tyler

Tariq, I agreed with 90 percent of what you were saying, but my worry is that in talking about national identities and the culture that underpins it – because it seems to me, the way in which it has been discussed so far, assumes that there is a culture that underpins national identities – and especially this idea of thick civic cultures and so on, that we start to talk not simply about identities, but we talk about collective identities. And it seems to me further that the whole notion of a collectivity presupposes homogenisation, and hence a simplification of what is happening when invoking collectivities identities. And not simply that the individual simplifies and denies parts of their identity, although I think lots of them do, but it’s that institutions require individuals to simplify their publicly expressed identity, and any form of simplification denies the underlying richness of any particular personal identity. So, if I was to think about, for example, an identity based on certain symbols, people find their own value by remembering, by associating themselves with, those symbols, a royal family, particular religions, Sunday as a special day, whatever symbol gets highlighted. But the other way to view it is that it’s a matter of fate. I’m English. I don’t see it as something that I’m positive or negative about, I just see it as a feature of myself. But I’m very conscious of the fact that my own national identity is quite different to many other Britons. What I look to in British history is not the history of monarchs. Very broadly, for me, it’s more a history of rebellion (the Diggers, the

Chartists). Yet, – taking the recent example of the coronation of King Charles III – there you have what many people would see as the basis of the quintessential form of British identity; one that is built around those sorts of symbols, the crowning of a monarch, the sense of a deferential, allegedly static, always exclusionary “nation”. But for many of us, it’s exactly the struggle against that, that constitutes a core part of our personal identity. So, as soon as we get into that level of debate, it seems to me the whole notion regarding what it is that we’re committing ourselves to when we want to commit ourselves to a form of national multiculturalism highlights the fact that we do always have to then simplify or allow other people to simplify our identities for us, and that’s the root of my worry not just about nationalism, but about culture more generally.

Bhikhu Parekh

A couple of points in response to what Colin and Varun have said. I find this discussion of identity increasingly confusing, partly because there is no consistency of language. We have used the word “identity.” We have talked about people having multiple identities. We have thought that we have a sense of identity, which means it’s one thing rather than many. With all of these I’m not at all clear what it is that we are talking about. I think the first and the most important thing for me is to dissociate the idea of culture from the idea of identity, because otherwise the two get terribly confused and the discussion of multiculturalism gets muddled. Culture to me is an extremely important phenomenon in the evolution of any human being. They start helpless, they’re born helpless. Others decide what you should speak and where you should live and what you should eat and how you should talk. By the time you are 15 or even younger, your personality has been cast in a certain way, your thought processes have been shaped in a certain way, and although you might pretend to reshape your thoughts, you know limits to what you can do. So, if I look back at 70 years of my life, I can see I have made some changes with what I started with, but I can see that other things remain despite my struggle to get rid of them.

So, culture, increasingly, to me is an important determinant of my personality, of who I am, and it orients me in a certain direction. That I don’t think anyone can deny. This is why multiculturalism becomes a problem, because here we are talking about an individual embedded in a particular culture, oriented in a particular way, responding to other ways of doing things, other forms and beliefs. So, that’s the first point I would want to make, the distinction between culture and identity.

And on the question of identity, take Tariq. Here is a man who is Muslim, professor, a very fine human being, a very moral man, a Britisher who also loves his country. Now what is his identity in all this? And when he’s talking to his students or talking to us in this panel discussion, what identity of his is at work? His professorial identity, expert on citizenship, a Britisher? What? And all of them might come into play. A bit of Muslim identity does come into play because he talks about their community with sympathy and understanding. Likewise with the British. *Not Easy Being British* could only have been written by someone who has analysed not being allowed to be British when he wants to be. So, identity is at two levels, I would basically say. You identify yourself as what? And that depends on the context. When I’m in a classroom, I identify myself as a professor.

When I'm in the British House of Lords, I identify myself with something else. And that then dictates the ethics of what I should be doing. If I identify myself as a professor, then I should behave as a professor and that puts constraints on what I can do and cannot do. If I identify myself as an Indian, then there are expectations about what an Indian should be doing and all that. So, what you identify yourself as, that's the first important thing. That will shape the character of the ethics. Secondly, who do you identify with? Who I identify with depends partly on who I identify *as*. "Identity" implies a sense of connection, the sense of solidarity, you talk about identifying with, I identified with these people. They are my people. I feel fraternal relations with them. So, the important thing, the result of all these ruminations, is to say that identity is a complex concept, a guide to culture, but not always, because identity is individually shaped and it is contextualized.

James Connelly

Bhikhu, it strikes me that there might be a distinction between identity and role to add to your initial distinction between identity and culture, but that's just a chairman's obiter dictum, so I'll move on to Varun.

Varun Uberoi

Well, I think my comments follow on very well from Bhikhu's and respond to Colin because my thought looks something like this. I don't think a national culture and national identity are as connected as some people such as David Miller, think. For David Miller, the two are almost indistinguishable. Whilst he, for example, spends a long time talking about what a national culture is, he often then just switches to national identity as if they are the same thing. Indeed, he claims national identity can be a powerful source of personal identity without saying what personal identity is, what identity is, and so on. I think national culture and national identity are not always as related as he thinks. Now, that then generates the question of what do we think a national culture is, and what actually is national identity?

For me, a national culture looks something like this: just as we might think and talk about the culture of an organization being the beliefs and practices that are commonly found amongst its members, so we might say that there are beliefs and practices that are commonly found among the members of nations. We might well commonly refer to these as 'tendencies in their thoughts and behaviour'. These tendencies in thought and behaviour often conflict. For example, think about the English. The tendency towards 'reserve' conflicts with the binge drinking we often see in English cities when young people go on a night out. Likewise, these tendencies in thought and behaviour change over time. They include the residual tendencies of the previous generation and the emerging tendencies of a new generation coming through. So, these tendencies change, and the members of a national cultural group think and act in a range of ways, and the existence of this range of conflicting tendencies is what helps to define a national cultural group, and is familiar to them. That's why, for example, the tendencies in thought and

behaviour of immigrants often stand out, because they're not on this existing range of conflicting tendencies in thought and behaviour that a dominant group are familiar with.

Now, we have here an understanding of sorts of what a national culture is. How does this differ from a national identity? Well, if I, for example, think that I feel British, I'm not necessarily referring to my culture. I'm referring to a way in which my country has helped to shape me or influence me. Or if I refer to national identity in another sense of, for example Britain's identity, I am referring to an idea of Britain as a whole: the people, the history, the territory that helped to make it what it is. A national culture is part of this idea, but it's not all of it. National culture and national identity are not necessarily the same thing. They've been equated unclearly, and I think Bhikhu is right that at times we need to separate the two.

Tariq Modood

Yes, this is interesting because I think we've actually now got a genuine disagreement amongst ourselves. I clearly am very strongly committed to the concept and the term "identity" in my work. It does more work for me than "culture" or "ethnicity" or "race," which are all subsidiary strands in my thinking about identity and what you might call my political uses of the idea of identity. And one of the reasons why, in my book *Multiculturalism*, I said I'm going to focus on slightly abstract terms like "identity" and "difference" is because they allow me to get closer to the socially and politically complex issues than terms like "ethnicity" or "race" or "culture" do, which of course I continue to use, so I wasn't rejecting those terms, but I talk much more about "identity" than I do about "culture." I think that's pretty evident to any reader. And Bhikhu says he has big problems with identity, and of course, that's not the first time he has said it, and he said it both in articles and within his books. But I'm drawn to it because of its elasticity and where of course we share something is when Bhikhu says well it's contextual, identity only means things contextually. Well, yes, of course. I always use it contextually. I mean, contextuality is as much true of culture as it's true of identity, so that's not what distinguishes them. And Bhikhu talked quite a bit about personal identity, as did Colin. But again, something you may not have noticed, I very rarely talk about personal identity. I always talk about social identity, cultural identity, ethnic identity, ethno-religious identity, et cetera, et cetera. So, for someone to say, ah, well, are you a Muslim, a British Pakistani, or a dad? I think, well, what kind of a question is that? I mean, that's a really contextless question. And if your argument depends on asking contextless questions, that's a bit worrying for where you're going.

So, in response to Colin - yes, we have multiple identities or some people prefer to talk about intersectionality but not all identities are equally important to us in any particular context or in general. If you ask people to, you know, say who they are and to rank themselves in certain ways and so on, quite a lot of people - I think minorities more than what we might call white majorities - start giving you an answer. Think of the number of people that will say black, the number of people who will say woman, the number of people who will say gay or transgender. Those who would be likely to be more than 50% of the relevant population sample. So, the idea that people are mixed up about their

identities and their thinking about identities because there are multiple identities I don't see. And I reached out to you Bhikhu by saying one of the things I've noticed and admired about your work is your defence of the culture, traditions and identities that people cherish, meaning they don't equally cherish everything and we mustn't lose sight of that fact in the way that a liberal rationalist can lose sight of that fact and certainly I've made that very important part of my work.

Bhikhu Parekh

Look, I mean first of all, we have moved away from the main theme of this panel discussion, which is multiculturalism. I think we should turn to the question, is there something called human nature? How does it relate to culture? And so on. But on this identity point, just one simple question. When Rishi Sunak was elected as British Prime Minister, the news in every newspaper was that he was a Hindu Prime Minister. Why was it so important? Not only here, but in India too. Now, if you were to ask him is it an important part of your identity? He would have said yes. Why? Because he prays in a Hindu way, you can ask him who is your God and he will tell you so himself. So, is that a part of his identity? Then, this is what I was referring to when I said Tariq is a Muslim, it becomes an important thing. You can't understand me unless you also understand the Hindu bit about me, the Hindu tradition, the caste system and all that rubbish I grew up with, as well as some fine ideals. That mixture, which is what Hinduism is, you can't understand me unless you understand that mixture. That's the point in referring to your religion or ethnicity or whatever.

James Connelly

Bhikhu makes the point that we should keep our eye on the relevance of the conversation for multiculturalism. So perhaps the comments could tie us back to that. Colin, are you ready to tie?

Colin Tyler

Yes, I am. With the greatest respect Bhikhu, I don't think that we have moved very far away from issues of multiculturalism, because Tariq and I see identity in all its contextualised, shifting complexity as being at the heart of this topic. And the difference, or, rather, the relationship, between culture and identity is at the heart of what we've been talking about. And I very firmly acknowledge the fact that role is central to context, and that context is central to identity. And that's underpinned much of what I've said. But what I wanted to bring in was the importance of institutions as setting and determining a landscape in which we understand our roles, we understand our "cultures," and also that we understand our identities. It's through our orientation round those points that we gain a sense of what it is to be British, what it is to be a humanist in my case, et cetera. These all have particular meanings and they have particular meanings for a number of us. Very helpfully, as Tariq put it, say to somebody, what are they? And they might say, a woman, a

mother, they're black, they're an academic, they are any number of other things. And then we might find millions of people using the same labels to define themselves, but the meanings of those labels are often heavily contested, particularly around what is it to be a woman and what are the boundaries of being a woman. You think about the Trans. debate at the moment. Many feminists will very strongly resist the idea that somebody born a biological male can become a woman through medical operations, treatments, and so on. Whereas other people hold that you can transition into that state physically because ultimately gender a mental state, it's a state constituted by your deepest self-understanding. But getting it back to the multiculturalist view, it seems to me that these are just particular instances of what you can say if you ask somebody, what is it to be a Hindu or a Christian? Well, it means a whole series of different things. What it is to be a Muslim means a whole series of very different things, to different people. You think about the violence that's committed within the Muslim communities around the world, precisely around what is it to be a good Muslim. So that's my concern, as we can all claim – and identify ourselves by invoking – these labels or say that “this is part of my culture,” but actually these claims about the nature of and obligations arising from “our culture” can lead to very violent conflicts precisely because the labels themselves are open to dispute and are heavily disputed.

James Connelly

Varun, did you want to come back in?

Varun Uberoi

Perhaps just to ask Colin for some clarification. I think it's undeniable that wars in the past have been fought around the labels that you've mentioned. But what's the alternative, because it strikes me that identity is as divisive as culture in that sense and can lead to similar kinds of wars. Identity doesn't seem any more conducive to peaceable relations or the unity that I discuss. Institutions you say are important and I think I agree. I think most people would. But institutions offer a vertical relationship, as it were, between the people and the state and those institutions then shape our sense of who we are too. But are you saying that those kind of institutional relations should replace all conceptions of identity and culture? Or are you saying something different? That's the bit I'm not following.

Colin Tyler

It's about where we start in our debate, where we start to think about which entities are actually repositories and the expressions of “culture.” I start from a very individualized position, but not an individualistic position, because I think that communal attachments are profoundly important, not least as mediated through institutions. Some of them are vertical, while many of them are horizontal. But when we start talking about multicultural positions, it seems to me that we're not talking then so much about individuals. We are talking about collectivities. And this is Tariq's point, he talks about social identities. And I

can understand that; I think there's a huge amount to be said for that. But I'm far more concerned about the perspectival nature of our identity from an individual's point of view. When I say I'm British, it's "British" for me, and that creates the problems about how then we create a collective sense of identity, and so on. And I think that's done through this process of simplification.

Varun Uberoi

Well. It's certainly true that identities are often simplified, and it's also true that individuals matter but I can't help but start from a slightly different position, which is one of a minority. I was always very aware that people like me who grew up in Southall, a small West London Indian enclave, as it was at the time, were culturally very different from the majority group. We would have to adjust the way in which we behave once we got to university, once we got into the world of work, that the ways in which we were at home or with family would differ from others. I remember as a young man, after I finished my first degree, I worked in government and I remember having to tell my line manager that there was a family wedding that I had to attend and the civil ceremony was on a week day. I said I would like to attend; it was my first cousin. I remember him looking at me saying, well, that's not a reason to take a day off work. But if you're from my sort of background, it absolutely is and it's a good reason. I remember it highlighting to me that I start from a very different position. I may well have acquired a dominant way of speaking, an accent, perhaps, but the thought process is rather different. And that is true not just for me. Minorities often have to change when they enter the world of work. They talk about, for example, 'acting white'. Now, that is ultimately about group behaviour, ways of thinking, talking, what you say, what you don't say, that point towards cultural difference. I'm not saying identity is not part of that. I think it is part of it, but it doesn't point towards severing the connection between culture and identity. It doesn't point towards highlighting the importance of identity over culture, and it isn't about simplification at all. It's about different tendencies and thought and behaviour amongst different groups becoming more and more visible in the public domain, and that's the sort of multiculturalism that I take Bhikhu and Tariq to have been defending for 30 years. And I take culture to be the more dominant concept there. Certainly, more so than the individual that you refer to, and I suspect more so than identity as well. But that may just be my perception of Bhikhu and Tariq. Perhaps they should come in and settle the dispute between us and push us back on the right path, so to speak.

James Connelly

Well, in that case, I'd like to invite them to do so.

Bhikhu Parekh

I shall start with the example that Varun gave when he said, look, I would like to take a day off and the man couldn't understand why. Now this is a great case. This came up all the

time when I first came to this country in 1959, where you simply didn't understand what the other guys were thinking about, what his reasons were, and I began to have doubts about the meaning of reason. Because what can the reason be if you can't make sense of it. It seems in those cases the reason is that I have a certain family function and the man doesn't see the reason at all. In this case, you began to ask yourself what will count as a reason with this man? So, I think ultimately, if you want to take it a little further, the discussion becomes a discussion about the way in which this discourse between different individuals, between different cultures, can be conducted. How do you conduct this discourse when every word, every assumption is under scrutiny and is questioned? Every culture has its repertoire, their own idioms, in terms of which its members reason and learn that manner of discourse.

Remember the example where an Asian girl tells her mother she wanted to marry outside her caste and the mother said, "If you do this, I'll commit suicide." The girl then tells the mother, "Look, if you should commit suicide, I'd be very distraught and won't be able to find any joy in my life." The mother thought that the girl had given in and that the matter was settled. But the girl was very English, very Anglicized, and she said, "Well, mother, I would be very disappointed if you do that. I hope you wouldn't, but if you think you must, it is your life." Now, what's happening here? "It's your life, I would be disappointed." The whole manner of reasoning, it's so different.

Tariq Modood

So maybe I'll try and pick up some threads that Varun and Colin, were addressing, and Bhikhu responded to. I suppose one that's quite important really, when I think about it, is because obviously Bhikhu, Varun and I are intellectually quite close and yet they want to talk about culture and I want to talk about identities. So that kind of makes the issue quite important for me. One of the reasons I prefer "identity" is that it's not a behaviouralist term, because I don't want people to be judged as a people who will conform to certain behaviour because of a label attached to them. So, Varun was talking about his growing up in Southall and so well, my own experience - obviously, you know, being older and so on - was that there weren't a lot of Pakistanis around when I was growing up. I grew up in Brent in London, which has now got a very significant South Asian population, Muslim population, and in fact a white British minority are I think, only about a third of that Borough of London. And so, I had a sense of being Pakistani, Muslim, British as well as, you know, lots of other things like useless at football, male, and so on. But in the sense of these kind of key but what I think of as overarching identities, which of course are ambiguous and contested and so on, and perspectival. So, I agree with all that's been said about that. But at the same time always resisting that line of argument as suggesting, therefore, we should give up on identities. If someone says that something is complex, it means it needs more work. Not that, "Oh it's not worth using."

That's always been my view. People say identity is complex, contextual, multiple, intellectual, and I say, OK, so we must avoid simplicity. What we mustn't avoid is the concept of identity, because you just said from your own mouth how important and complex they are, how they tie up with so many different things. So, my growing up, I

mean, I became much more anglicized, much more quickly for a variety of reasons, but the key one was really that I didn't have a mother at home, and my dad worked very long hours. So, the two primary sources of socialization, let's say between the ages of 8 and 11, critical years, my first years in Britain, the two primary sources of socialization were school and television. And I know I've got a BBC accent. People think I went to some boarding school or something. I say, no, I went to a working class secondary modern in North West London. But I watched a lot of the BBC and even BBC Two when it appeared because if you like, I was kind of noble-minded, high-minded. Anyway, what I'm really getting at is I thought of myself as a Muslim and a Pakistani even when I was not doing so-called Muslim and so-called Pakistani things. So, for instance, my dad didn't say don't attend Christian worship, he said the opposite. He said, "Join in" and I did to a very large degree, not in a passive way. I organised the school choir at Christmas, going out into public, raising money by singing carols outside tube stations, and so on. I read the morning assembly lesson, and so on. So, if someone had said to me, "Are you a Christian?" I said "No, I'm a Muslim." So, identity captures something of one's social location in the way that culture miscaptures it, because culture assumes behavioural conformity to X, Y and Z, whereas "Muslim" means I have a sense of belonging to a Muslim family, coming from a Muslim country, doing some Muslim things, relating to some other people as a Muslim and not as a Christian, and so on. And so identity for me is a much better canopy for multiculturalism in a context of changing identities and especially across generations where we don't say, oh just because someone is a Sikh, they must do X, Y or Z, otherwise, they're not really a Sikh. Otherwise, their Sikh identity is in doubt or to be questioned.

So, that's part of my answer that not only does identity have very significant social and political traction, some identities do, and others don't. And I quite agree with Colin, when you say that these are contested and you stand in a contested position to a lot of what might be regarded as dominant national identities. This came across very clearly in the Commission on Multi-Ethnic Britain, when we talked about the importance of national narratives in the plural, and we actually emphasized that national narratives are often contested. Those people who have a kings and queens' perspective of English history are challenged by those who say "Yes, but what about the making of the English working class and so on." So that's part of my explanation, a continuing part of my explanation, why identity for me is much more of a master category than culture, even though I see myself as creating a political theory of multiculturalism.

James Connelly

Thank you, Tariq. I think Bhikhu would like to respond to that. After that, I suggest that ... we perhaps finish off with some final statements from everyone. But, first, Bhikhu.

Bhikhu Parekh

Why are we postulating a conflict between culture and identity? Which is more important, which is less important? Which is dispensable, which is not dispensable? Each has a

different function. Identity is individual, is personal. Whose identity? is a question we can always ask. When you talk about culture, it is by definition shared, its content is out there, shared by a lot of people, creating their community. In the case of identity, I could say, look we start by being born, embedded within a particular culture, and in the process of growing up we define ourselves. I'm a soccer player, I belong to a particular class, a particular country. And slowly I begin to shape myself in a certain way and, having shaped or defined myself in a certain way, I postulate the morals by which I want to guide my life. So, I think you start with the culture in which you are embedded, move on to constructing your identity, which then goes on to give you a vantage point from which you reflect on your identity, change it if you must, react or respond to other cultures, where multiculturalism becomes relevant. This is the way identity is formed and becomes both descriptive and normative.

James Connelly

Thank you very much, Bhikhu. I'm going to invite people to make their quick closing statements. I don't know who would like to go first. Colin, maybe you would.

Colin Tyler

I think this has been a very interesting exchange. In closing I want to pick up on Bhikhu's final point. I think it does highlight that we need to really think about our central concepts and how we're structuring them. Clearly, some of us see identity as relatively unimportant to multiculturalism but others see it as the central concept. The point that I want to emphasise in conclusion is that while I think all of you have acknowledged that "multicultural" personal identities are ambiguous, liminal, shifting and intersectional, there did not seem to be sufficient recognition of the extent to which that acknowledgement should radically undermine the claim that "culture" can have a meaningful content, when one is conceptualising "multicultural" social and political analysis and critique. The cultures that individuals believe themselves to share with other people are far closer either to being projections of one's own perspectives onto others than to accurately according with other people's conceptions of culture, or, alternatively, they reflect "institutionalised" – and so power-laden – shared constellations of meanings and values ("cultures"). That was why I have emphasised the importance of institutions as stabilising and simplifying centres of gravity between persons. Institutions articulate and privilege what one might call "ersatz cultures"; "ersatz" because institutions express (semi-)formalised conceptions of shared meanings and values, rather than the ideal types of mass cultures (in the Adorno/Horkheimer sense of "mass culture"). I should also like to re-emphasise the importance of the conflictual processes that lead to identity-formation, à la Young and others. To me, nothing that was said in response seemed to undermine my position, and that creates fundamental problems for various "multiculturalist" positions.

James Connelly

Thank you, Colin. Varun, would you like to go next?

Varun Uberoi

So, I thought perhaps I should touch on something that we've not talked about as much, but I think it's crucial to the discussion. We're having the discussion because we think that multiculturalism has a future. And of course, some people will say it's passé. They talk about post-multiculturalism. They say that multiculturalism is dead or a failure, and so on. And I think some of the way in which we've been talking perhaps might lend itself to that as well, because we talk about the term and why it evokes such criticism. But if we focus not on the term but on the ideas, we see their continuing significance.

You see, if multiculturalism refers to a multicultural society, then the people who were originally opposed to this idea, people like the British philosopher Roger Scruton, they were no longer publicly opposed to a multicultural society by the early 2000s. Policies of multiculturalism that came under such intense criticism after 9/11 have actually expanded in the last 20 years. Political theories of multiculturalism that were initially so controversial, well they too have continued to proliferate. Think about Patti Leonard's recent work or Andrew Shorten's recent book. The ideas that the term 'multiculturalism' refers to remain attractive even in a hostile climate. This suggests that the ideas are resilient, and I think that we should not be surprised by this resilience. Multiculturalists talk about how to foster the sort of unity that societies need to not feel threatened by their differences. They show us how to fight discrimination, how to fight racism. These are ideas of our time. And multiculturalism contributes to that. And, also, these ideas, they're rich enough to be recalibrated to address contemporary debates.

And I'll end on this point. Think, for a second, about contemporary debates about statue toppling of slave traders or colonial figures. Many people say that we must have a principle that says whether these statues should stand or be removed or remain and explained, but no principle can apply to the diverse range of statues that exist. Some people say that, "Look, we just need to add more statues to people that minorities revere." But that doesn't change the fact that some statues are controversial. In fact, what we need to do is have a dialogical solution that focuses not just on these statues, but on the types of values such as human equality, that these statues offend against. Bhikhu devised an important set of ideas to deal with controversial minority practices, like polygamy and female genital mutilation, and how such a dialogue would proceed. I think we can apply these ideas to controversial majority practices like statues of slave traders and colonial figures. If ideas of multiculturalism are resilient in hostile climates, speak to now, and are rich enough to be recalibrated to address contemporary debates, I think the future of multiculturalism is more favourable than is often thought.

James Connelly

Thank you, Varun. I'll call on Tariq and then, for the final word after that, Bhikhu.

Tariq Modood

So I'll make two brief points, one addressing what Bhikhu last said, and one addressing something that Varun's just picked up. Beginning with the first, Bhikhu asked why do we think the terms and concepts of culture and identity are in conflict. Well, Bhikhu, when you get to see the transcript, you'll see the answer because in my handwritten notes I've got here, Bhikhu, "Identity is too loose a word with multiple and sliding meanings, hence must disassociate culture from identity." You pressed for its disassociation, which isn't the same thing as conflict, but the way that you presented the contrast, the coupling or the decoupling, culture was a more meaningful term for you, whereas identity was full of problems about what did it mean, when one should use it, and so on. Anyway, that's a fairly minor point. The thing I really wanted to end up on, which we haven't talked about much, but I'm pleased Varun just raised it, is the term "multiculturalism" and, as it were, the future it promises or doesn't. I guess I do every so often ask myself why do I still use the term "multiculturalism"? Because, for instance, in my 2007 book, which, as you will recall, has the word "multiculturalism" as its main title, and then it has a subtitle. In that book, I said, I don't like the term "multiculturalism," and in fact, wherever I can, I will talk about "identity" and "difference" and not about "culture," for instance. The reason I think that I've continued to talk about "multiculturalism," perhaps there's more than one reason, but one reason I'll share at the moment, is that I've tried to be faithful to a certain intellectual position or intellectual legacy, which I identify with Will Kymlicka, Bhikhu Parekh, and Charles Taylor. And yet what's now been happening in recent years is Bhikhu says, as he said today, "Oh, I wasn't arguing for multiculturalism, I was just trying to raise some questions about what multiculturalism might mean, without saying it was a good idea or a bad idea." It is interesting that you put it like that to explain what you meant by the idea of "rethinking multiculturalism." Charles Taylor, as we all know now for a decade, more than a decade, has called for us to talk about "interculturalism," and that is what you might call no longer a reliable ally for some of us who think of ourselves as multiculturalists. Much as I admire Charles Taylor's work and I've been influenced by it. And Will Kymlicka. I recently heard in a presentation where he said, "The term 'multiculturalism' is doing very well in Canada. But it may be the only place in the world, possibly Australia maybe an exception, but it's the only place in the world where it is the case. And it certainly is not doing well in Europe." And, therefore, he wondered why, if you like indirectly, people like me, Europeans who persist in using the term "multiculturalism," why they're doing so, and shouldn't they be thinking about using a term that was less unpopular? So, in a way, some of the people that I'm trying to stay intellectually faithful to are themselves giving up on the term "multiculturalism," or gave up on it some time ago.

So, I don't know whether I should carry on using it, but I have got to say that I haven't come up with an alternative and you've heard what my strategy, alternative strategies have been, which is to find some other term to link with "multiculturalism" – "multicultural Britishness," "multicultural citizenship," "multicultural nationalism." So, that "multiculturalism" doesn't have to do all the work, you know. So that's my alternative strategy.

That's what it's been up to now. And, well, if someone comes up with an alternative, I am all ears. But, I think that's where I am at the moment.

But going beyond words, I think multiculturalism has made a very big contribution to the way the British society has changed from the time when I was at school to now. Of course, this week we're celebrating the 75th anniversary of SS Windrush, the ship, that brought Caribbeans to Britain, which marks a historical moment, not just for those people who arrived on that day in that boat Windrush, but we're talking about the transition from a white colonial imperial power to a multi-ethnic, multi-faith country. And Windrush is our symbolic moment to mark that historical pivot. We're all, in that sense, children of the Windrush. And so I think that multiculturalism has made a big difference. It's obviously got its opponents, it's got modified, qualified, contained at times. So, I'm not saying multiculturalism has won in the way they Will Kymlicka said in 1999, and then had to change his mind by about 2002. I'm saying that multiculturalism has had a big impact on a society like Britain, even when we no longer – or when some people – no longer want to talk about “multiculturalism,” and perhaps prefer to talk about “multicultural society” in the way that in the 1990s, the centre left gave up talking about “the working class” and preferred to talk about “working families.” So yes, there is something about finding a political vocabulary that doesn't antagonize, but wins people over, and I'm in the market for that, but I don't have it. Thank you.

James Connelly

Thank you Bhikhu, the last word is yours.

Bhikhu Parekh

Just two small things. This is also the 75th anniversary of the NHS [British National Health Service] and we had a big debate in the House of Lords on the NHS. I spoke in that debate. It's striking that the NHS 75th anniversary coincides with the Windrush anniversary when MV Empire Windrush brought people who really kept the NHS going but who were resented by the country. One can see here the tension, even contradiction, within a simple move, to capture which we need a nuanced alternative vocabulary.

Tariq Modood

Sorry, what is the alternative vocabulary?

Bhikhu Parekh

I think the answer I'm increasingly convinced by is not to give up the vocabulary of “multiculturalism,” nor to go for “pluralism”. ‘Pluralism’ is wishy-washy, it doesn't mean anything, and it reminds us of the plural society of Furnival. That's not what we are thinking about. Multiculturalism has a combative thrust. If you look at the history, and I'm trying to trace the history of the concept “multicultural,” how did it appear in our

vocabulary, in our discourse, and what did we do with it, and how did it acquire certain associations over a period of time? It is striking that from the beginning it had this combative force. People outside the palace banging the door, saying “Let us in, we want space.” Now, that combative force frightens the occupants of the palace like Angela Merkel and others, and therefore they keep mocking it because that seems to be their way of discrediting it.

We want to say, “No, just keep knocking brothers, it’s a good thing to do.” So, I think that is the legacy. What we should do is to keep the word, retain its legacy, but knowing that the other side which defines it differently and continue to fight them, while also maintaining our own position. So what I really mean, in this rather vague kind of way, is to use the word “multiculturalism” as I do, but also being aware of the fact that some enemies of multiculturalism would understand it in this other way, as multi-this and multi-that, mocking them and getting on with our own understanding of multiculturalism, which is what I have done, which is what we have done. Continue to use the term and mocking those who mock it.

James Connelly

Thank you very much, Bhikhu. Thank you very much everyone for your contribution. It’s been a fascinating discussion. As the chair, I don’t have any independent contribution to make, so I’m not going to try to make one, except just this quick reflection, which is that one of the things the conversation has taught me, or perhaps I should say, has reminded me, is that terms such as “culture,” such as “identity,” and other related terms of course, can be used in a rigid and reified manner, at which point they can then cause all sorts of problems. But they don’t have to be used in that way. And this is in part about context. It’s also in part about the nature of the concepts themselves, because it seems to me that we’ve established they’re contestable, they’re open concepts, open textured, they have soft boundaries. And I think we need to remember that because some of you have made the point very vividly that ... beware of false polarities, you know. In order to identify the real ones, you have got to make sure you don’t misidentify other things as polarities where they don’t need to be. And just one final thought, going back to Tariq’s comment, I’m not sure whether “Children of the Windrush” is a great title for this discussion, or maybe it’s an even better title for a movie.

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