How does Interculturalism Contrast with Multiculturalism?

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This paper critically examines some of the ways in which conceptions of interculturalism are being positively contrasted with multiculturalism, especially as political ideas. It argues that while some advocates of a political interculturalism wish to emphasise its positive qualities in terms of encouraging communication, recognising dynamic identities, promoting unity and critiquing illiberal cultural practices, each of these qualities too are important (on occasion foundational) features of multiculturalism. The paper begins with a broad introduction before exploring the provenance of multiculturalism as an intellectual tradition, with a view to assessing the extent to which its origins continue to shape its contemporary public 'identity'. We adopt this line of enquiry to identify the extent to which some of the criticism of multiculturalism is rooted in an objection to earlier formulations that displayed precisely those elements deemed unsatisfactory when compared with interculturalism. Following this discussion, the paper moves on to four specific areas of comparison between multiculturalism and interculturalism. It concludes that until interculturalism as a political discourse is able to offer a distinct perspective, one that can speak to a variety of concerns emanating from complex identities and matters of equality and diversity in a more persuasive manner than at present, interculturalism cannot, intellectually at least, eclipse multiculturalism, and so should be considered as complementary to multiculturalism.

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It has been said that the first decade of the twenty-first century will be remembered for a series of historical episodes, including international military conflicts and global

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financial crises; for technological innovations in mass communication, information collection, storage and surveillance; alongside an increased recognition of climate change and an associated environmental awareness (Serwer 2009). Whether or not future generations will come to share this assessment, and while initially much less dramatic, the last 10 years has also witnessed seemingly rapid and perhaps significant developments in the ways plural societies organise living with 'difference'.

For example, it has been argued that during the last decade there has been an observable 'retreat' in north-western Europe from relatively modest – compared with those of Federal Canada – approaches of multicultural citizenship across a variety of citizenship regimes (Brubaker 2001, Joppke 2004, McGhee 2008). Yet this 'retreat' has already been shown to be a complicated and mixed affair (Jacobs and Rea 2007, Meer and Modood 2009a). With much greater certainty one could state that the appeal of multiculturalism as a public policy has suffered considerable political damage, such that the argument that multiculturalism is a valuable means of "remaking of public identities in order to achieve an equality of citizenship that is neither merely individualistic nor premised on assimilation" (Modood 2005: 5), is not being embraced as broadly as it once might have been.

The reasons for this are various, but include how for some multiculturalism has facilitated social fragmentation and entrenched social divisions (Malik 2007, Policy Exchange 2007); for others it has distracted attention away from socio-economic disparities (Barry 2001, Hansen 2006); or encouraged a moral hesitancy amongst 'native' populations (Prins and Salisbury 2008, Caldwell 2009). Some even blame it for international terrorism (Gove 2006, Phillips 2006). While these political positions are the instigators of anxieties over multiculturalism, other beneficiaries have included a number of competing political orientations concerned with promoting unity, variously conceived, alongside or in a greater degree to recognising diversity (Modood and Meer 2011). Some observe this focus in the discovery or rediscovery of national identity (Orgad 2009); others point to its evidence in notions of civicness (Mouritsen 2008), or in a resurgent liberalism that allegedly proves, in the final analysis, to be 'neutral' (Joppke 2008). To this we could also add social or community cohesion (Dobbernack 2010).

Such issues have been discussed at length in a variety of contributions, including in those of the present authors, yet one further 'competitor' term has been explored far less despite both its frequent invocation in public discourse and that it appears to retain something of what multiculturalism is concerned with. This is the concept of 'interculturalism' and the related idea of 'intercultural dialogue' (Kohls and Knight, 1994, Belhachimi 1997, Milton 1998, Gundara 2000, Gundara and Jacobs 2000, Kymlicka 2003, Powell and Sze 2004, Gagnon and Iacovino 2007, Emerson, 2011). For example, the concept of interculturalism is now frequently found in places as diverse as German and Greek education programmes (Luctenberg 2003, Gropos and Tryandifillidou 2011); Belgian commissions on cultural diversity (see below); and Russian teaching on world cultures (Froumin 2003). A prominent symbolic example could be how 2008 was designated as the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue

(EYID), with the European Commission's stated objective being to encourage "all those living in Europe to explore the benefits of our rich cultural heritage and opportunities to learn from different cultural traditions".[1]

It is worth stepping back from these fine sentiments, however, to consider what distinguishes these efforts from other established approaches concerned with recognising cultural diversity. Is it merely the case, as Lentin (2005: 394) has suggested, that interculturalism is an 'updated version' of multiculturalism? If so, what is being 'updated'? If not, in what ways – if at all – is interculturalism different, substantively or otherwise, from multiculturalism? With a specific focus on the political, in this paper we tentatively sketch out and critically evaluate four ways in which conceptions of interculturalism are being positively contrasted with multiculturalism (while these four positive evaluations of interculturalism overlap we also consider them to be sufficiently distinct to be discussed separately). These are, first, as something greater than coexistence, in that interculturalism is allegedly more geared toward interaction and dialogue than multiculturalism. Second, that interculturalism is conceived as something less 'groupist' or more yielding of synthesis than multiculturalism. Third, that interculturalism is something more committed to a stronger sense of the whole, in terms of such things as societal cohesion and national citizenship. Finally, that where multiculturalism may be illiberal and relativistic, interculturalism is more likely to lead to criticism of illiberal cultural practices (as part of the process of intercultural dialogue).

It is important to register at the outset that we are here concerned with what we understand as 'political interculturalism', by which we mean the ways in which interculturalism is appropriated in the critique of multiculturalism (Booth 2003, Sze and Powell 2004, Wood *et al.* 2006), in a manner that is not necessarily endorsed by wider advocates of interculturalism (in a situation not too dissimilar to how Western feminism (Moller Okin 1997) may be appropriated in the critique of non-Western cultures (see, for example, Malik 2007, Phillips 2007)). Moreover, the purpose of this article is not to offer a comprehensive account of the topic, but to provide an entry point in developing a discussion, especially in relation to multiculturalism and interculturalism as frameworks for political relations in contexts of cultural diversity. To do this satisfactorily we need first to elaborate something of our understanding of the intellectual character of multiculturalism, and it is to this that we now turn.

Liberalism and Multiculturalism

To some commentators the staple issues that multiculturalism seeks to address, such as the rights of ethnic and national minorities, group representation and perhaps even the political claims-making of 'new' social movements, are in fact "familiar

long-standing problems of political theory and practice" (Kelly 2002: 1). Indeed, some hold this view to the point of frustration:

> If we take a very broad definition of multiculturalism so that it simply corresponds to the demand that cultural diversity be accommodated, there is no necessary conflict between it and liberalism. [...] But most multiculturalists boast that they are innovators in political philosophy by virtue of having shown that liberalism cannot adequately satisfy the requirements of equal treatment and justice under conditions of cultural diversity. (Barry 2002: 205)

The first part of Barry's statement is perhaps more conciliatory than might be anticipated from an author admired for his argumentative robustness and theoretical hostility toward multiculturalism; while the second part poses more of an empirical question. Beginning with the first part, Barry's view is by no means rejected by those engaged in the 'multicultural turn'. Modood (2007a: 8), for instance, locates the genesis of multiculturalism within a "matrix of principles that are central to contemporary liberal democracies", in a manner that establishes multiculturalism as "the child of liberal egalitarianism, but like any child, it is not simply a faithful reproduction of its parents". Another way of putting this is to state that as a concept, multiculturalism is a partial outgrowth of liberalism in that it establishes

> a third generation norm of legitimacy, namely respect for reasonable cultural diversity, which needs to be considered on a par with the [first and second generation] norms of freedom and equality, and so to modify policies of 'free and equal treatment' accordingly. (Tully 2002: 102)

Our interest is with the political implication of this 'third-generation norm of legitimacy' for a concept of citizenship, which includes the recognition that social life consists of individuals and groups, and that both need to be provided for in the formal and informal distribution of powers; not just in law, but in representation in the offices of the state, public committees, consultative exercises and access to public fora. This means that while individuals have rights, mediating institutions such as trade unions, churches, neighbourhoods, immigrant associations and so on may also be encouraged to be active public players and fora for political discussion (and may even have a formal representative or administrative role to play in the state). One implication of this recognition means the re-forming of national identity and citizenship, and offering an emotional identity with the whole to counterbalance the emotional loyalties to ethnic and religious communities (Modood 2007a).

Picking up the second part of Barry's statement, to what extent then do we have an established 'canon' of multiculturalism as an intellectual tradition – one that persuasively distinguishes it from varieties of liberalism? It is certainly the case that theoretically there are three established policy-related strands of multiculturalism. One derives from radical social theory, especially uses of Derrida, and finds ideological expression in critiques of Eurocentrism, Afrocentrism and the wars over 'the canon' in the US universities in the 1980s. Another focuses on popular

culture, everyday cultural interaction and the resulting hybridity and mixedness (Gilroy 2004), though the policy implications of such 'multiculture' are not usually operative at the national level (Meer and Modood 2009a). It is the third strand, however, which is the focus of our interest, and which grows out of policy developments, with Canada supplying one of the maturest examples, and, pioneered by Will Kymlicka, is best expressed in engagements with liberal political theory.

The relationship to liberalism of this third strand of multiculturalism is a pertinent issue because it compels us to explore something of the provenance of multiculturalism as an intellectual tradition, with a view to assessing the extent to which its origins continue to shape its contemporary public 'identity'. We might reasonably ask this to identify the extent to which some of the criticism of multiculturalism is rooted in an objection to earlier formulations that displayed precisely those elements deemed unsatisfactory when compared with interculturalism, for example, that multiculturalism is more likely to be essentialist, illiberal, less agency-oriented and less concerned with unity.

Before proceeding with this line of inquiry, it seems only reasonable to offer the intellectual health warning that multiculturalism as a concept is – like very many others – 'polysemic', such that multiculturalist authors cannot be held entirely responsible for the variety of ways in which the term is interpreted. This is something noted by Bhabha (1998: 31) who points to the tendency for multiculturalism to be appropriated as a 'portmanteau term', one that encapsulates a variety of sometimes contested meanings (see, for example, Meer and Modood 2009a). In this respect, the *idea* of multiculturalism might be said to have a 'chameleonic' quality that facilitates its simultaneous adoption and rejection in the critique or defence of a position (Smith 2010).

One illustration of this is the manner in which multiculturalism is simultaneously used as a label to describe the fact of pluralism or diversity in any given society, *and* a moral stance that cultural diversity is a desirable feature of a given society (as well as the different types of ways in which the state could recognise and support it). Moreover, in both theoretical and policy discourses, multiculturalism means different things in different places. In North America, for example, multiculturalism encompasses discrete groups with territorial claims, such as the Native Peoples and the Québécois, even though these groups want to be treated as 'nations' within a multinational state, rather than merely as ethnocultural groups in a mononational state (Kymlicka 1995). Indeed, in Europe, while groups with such claims, like the Catalans and the Scots, are thought of as nations, multiculturalism has a more limited meaning, referring to a post-immigration urban mélange and the politics it gives rise to. One outcome is that while in North America language-based ethnicity is seen as the major political challenge, in Western Europe the conjunction of the terms 'immigration' and 'culture' now nearly always invokes the large newly settled Muslim populations. Sometimes, usually in America, political terms such as multiculturalism and 'rainbow coalition' are meant to include all groups marked by 'difference' and historic exclusion such as women and sexual minorities (Young 1990).

Some have turned to this variety in meaning and usage of the term as an explanation of the allegedly "widely divergent assessments of the short history and potential future of multiculturalism" (Kivisto and Faist 2007: 35), and it is to these different meanings and the contexts that generated them to which we now turn.

Forging Multicultural Citizenship

The term 'multiculturalism' emerged in the 1960s and 1970s in countries like Canada and Australia, and to a lesser extent in Britain and the USA (where it was initially limited to the field of education). As we have already noted, in the case of Canada the focus was from the start on constitutional and land issues, in a way that informed definitions of nationhood and related to unresolved legal questions concerning the entitlements and status of indigenous peoples, not to mention the further issue of the rise of a nationalist and secessionist movement in French-speaking Quebec.

At the outset in both Canada and Australia, multiculturalism was often presented as an application of 'liberal values' in that multiculturalism in these countries extended individual freedoms and substantiated the promise of equal citizenship. As evidence of this position, Kymlicka (2005a) points to the then Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau's 1971 speech on the implementation of a bilingual framework (a precursor to the later Multicultural Act). In this, Trudeau promised that "a policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework is basically the conscious support of individual freedom of choice. We are free to be ourselves" (Trudeau 1971: 8546, in Kymlicka 2005a). In Kymlicka's reading (2005a: 2), this statement reflected the natural outgrowth of the liberalisation of Canadian social legislation in the period between the Bill of Rights (1960) and Charter of Rights (1982), because "the fundamental impulses behind the policy were the liberal values of individual freedom and equal citizenship on a non-discriminatory basis".

While similar observations might be made in relation to Australia, they could only be so in so far as it reflected "essentially a liberal ideology which operates within liberal institutions with the universal approval of liberal attitudes" (Jupp 1996: 40, in Kymlicka 2005a). This is because in contrast with Canada, Australian multiculturalist policy developed more as a means to better integrate new immigrants, by easing the expectations of rapid assimilation.[2] Initially, as Levey (2008) elaborates, the policy did not include Indigenous Australians until the end of the 1970s with the Galbally Report (1978), which spoke of multiculturalism being a policy for 'all Australians' *including* Indigenous Australians.[3]

This kind of multiculturalism nevertheless simultaneously encompassed the recognition of discrete groups with territorial claims, such as the Native Peoples and the Quebeckers, even though these groups wanted to be treated as 'nations' within a multinational state, rather than as minority groups in a mononational state. In reconciling these political claims to a political theory of liberalism, Kymlicka's own intellectual work is reflective of how an early theorisation of liberal multiculturalism was developing (1995). This is because Kymlicka proposed group differentiated rights

for three types of minorities comprising indigenous peoples, 'sub-state' national minorities and immigrant groups. The general principles common to each of these different types of minorities, he argued, included, first, that the state must be seen as belonging equally to all citizens. Second, individuals should be able to access state institutions, and act as full and equal citizens in political life, without having to hide or deny their cultural identity. Third, the state should acknowledge the 'historic injustice' done to minority (non-dominant) groups. He interpreted these principles to mean that national and indigenous minorities were entitled to territorial autonomy and separate political representation, while migration-based groups, who were assumed to have no relationship to the country prior to migration, were entitled only to 'polyethnic rights', namely, full civic integration that respected their cultural identities.

Outside of Canada, in the USA, UK and later the Netherlands, respectively, Kymlicka's distinction between national minority rights and polyethnic rights was not easily transposed. On the one hand, multiculturalism in these contexts mostly comprised of 'polyethnicity': the policy focus was more likely to be concerned with schooling the children of Asian/black/Hispanic post-/neo-colonial immigrants, and multiculturalism in these instances meant the extension of the school, both in terms of curriculum and as an institution, to include features such as 'mother-tongue' teaching, non-Christian religions and holidays, *halal* food, Asian dress and so on. On the other hand, the citizenship regimes in European countries included historical relationships with former colonial subjects that were distinct from the citizenship regimes of settler nations. For example, the 1948 British Nationality Act granted freedom of movement to all formerly or presently dependent, and now Commonwealth, territories (irrespective of whether their passports were issued by independent or colonial states) by creating the status of 'Citizenship of the United Kingdom and Colonies' (CUKC). Until they acquired one or other of the national citizenships in these post-colonial countries, these formerly British subjects continued to retain their British status. Thus, post-colonial migrants to Britain were clearly not historic minorities, but nor were they without historic claims upon Britain and so constituted a category that did not fit Kymlicka's categories of multicultural citizens.

Nevertheless, the term 'multiculturalism' in Europe came to mean, and now means throughout the English-speaking world and beyond, the political accommodation by the state and/or a dominant group of all minority cultures defined first and foremost by reference to race, ethnicity or religion, and, additionally but more controversially, by reference to other group-defining characteristics such as nationality and aboriginality. The latter is more controversial not only because it extends the range of the groups that have to be accommodated, but also because the larger political claims made by such groups, who resist having these claims reduced to those of immigrants. Hence, despite Kymlicka's attempt to conceptualise multiculturalism-as-multinationalism, the dominant meaning of multiculturalism in politics relates to the claims of post-immigration groups.

This provenance of multiculturalism has bequeathed to its contemporary instantiations the importance of reconciling ideas of multiculturalism to ideas of citizenship, within a reciprocal balance of rights and responsibilities, assumptions of virtue and conceptions of membership or civic status (Meer 2010). While there is agreement that the membership conferred by citizenship should entail equal opportunity, dignity and confidence, different views remain about the proper ways, in culturally diverse societies, to confer this civic status. Those engaged in the 'multicultural turn' still maintain that conceptions of citizenship can frequently ignore the sensibilities of minorities marked by social, cultural and political differences (May *et al.* 2004).

Hence, the *political* multiculturalism of Modood, for example, insists that "when new groups enter a society, there has to be some education and refinement of...sensitivities in the light of changing circumstances and the specific vulnerabilities of new entrants" (2006: 61). As such, a widely accepted *contemporary* thrust of what multiculturalism denotes includes a critique of "the myth of homogeneous and monocultural nation-states" (Castles 2000: 5), and an advocacy of the right of minority "cultural maintenance and community formation, linking these to social equality and protection from discrimination" (5).

Beyond Multicultural Coexistence, towards Intercultural Dialogue and Communication

Outside of Canada and North America more broadly, the idea of interculturalism has hitherto more commonly featured in Dutch (de Witt 2010) and German (Miera 2011) accounts of integration, as well as in Spanish and Greek discussion of migrant diversity in the arena of education (Gundara 2000). Until relatively recently it has been less present in British discourses because concepts of race relations, anti-racism, race equality and multiculturalism have been more prominent (Gundara and Jacobs 2000). While its current advocates conceive it as something societal and therefore of much broader appeal than in a specific commercial usage found in some American formulations (in terms of facilitating 'communication' across transnational business and commerce) (Carig 1994, Bennett 1998), what its present formulation perhaps retains from such incarnations is an emphasis upon communication. Indeed, according to Wood *et al.* (2006: 9) 'communication' is the defining characteristic, and the central means through which "an intercultural approach aims to facilitate dialogue, exchange and reciprocal understanding between people of different backgrounds". The question is to what extent this can be claimed as either a unique or distinguishing quality of interculturalism when dialogue and reciprocity too are foundational to most, if not all, accounts of multiculturalism. To put it another way, what makes communication unique for interculturalism in a manner that diverges from multiculturalism? According to some advocates, a difference is perceptible in

the social or convivial 'openness' in which communication is facilitated. As Wood *et al.* (2006: 7) maintain:

> Multiculturalism has been founded on the belief in tolerance between cultures but it is not always the case that multicultural places are open places. Interculturalism on the other hand requires openness as a prerequisite and, while openness in itself is not the guarantee of interculturalism, it provides the setting for interculturalism to develop.

The 'openness' or 'closedness' that the authors have in mind is not an ethical or moral but a sociological concern related to – if not derived from – a spatial sense of community and settlement as discussed further below. However, it is also an openness of another kind that is not more than a few steps away from what Smith (2004) characterises as models of inter-religious dialogue. These models come from the North American context, including the 'Dialogue as Information Sharing' and 'Dialogue to Come Closer Model', which encourage religious groups to focus on commonalities, in a way that seeks to eschew differences in order to elevate mutuality and sharing. What is striking, however, is the extent to which Wood *et al.*'s characterisation ignores how central the notions of dialogue and communication are to multiculturalism (2006). This might easily be illustrated with reference to some canonical contributions that have provided a great deal of intellectual impetus to the advocacy of multiculturalism as a political or public policy movement.

Our first example could be Charles Taylor's essay from 1992, widely considered to be a founding statement of multiculturalism in political theory, and in which he characterises the emergence of a modern politics of identity premised upon an idea of 'recognition'. The notion of recognition, and its relationship to multiculturalism, can be abstract but is located for Taylor as something that has developed out of a move away from conceiving historically defined or inherited hierarchies as the sole provenance of social status (in the French sense of *préférence*), toward a notion of dignity more congruent with the ideals of a democratic society or polity, one that is more likely to confer political equality and a full or unimpaired civic status upon all its citizens.[4]

Drawing upon his previous, densely catalogued account of the emergence of the modern self (Taylor 1989), Taylor mapped the political implications of this move onto two cases of Equality. The first is the most familiar and is characterised as a rights-based politics of universalism, which offers the prospect of affording equal dignity to all citizens in a polity. The second denotes a politics of difference where the uniqueness of context, history and identity are salient and potentially ascendant. For Taylor, this coupling crystallises the way in which the idea of recognition has given rise to a search for 'authenticity'. This is characterised as a move away from the prescriptive universalisms that have historically underwritten ideas of the Just or the Right, in favour of the fulfilment and realisation of one's true self, originality or worth. According to Taylor, therefore, people can no longer be recognised on the basis of identities determined from their positions in social hierarchies alone but

rather, through taking account of the real manner in which people form their identities. That is to say that Taylor emphasises the importance of 'dialogical' relationships to argue that it is a mistake to suggest that people form their identities 'monologically' or without an intrinsic dependence upon dialogue with others (see Meer 2010: 31–56). As such he maintains that we are "always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the things our significant others want to see in us" (Taylor 1992: 33).

In this formulation, Taylor openly draws upon both Hegel and Mead, each of whom maintained that our idea of ourselves, what we claim to be and what we really think we are, is dependent upon how others come to view us to the extent that our sense of *self* is developed in a continuing dialogue. Self-consciousness exists only by being acknowledged or recognised, and the related implication for Taylor is that a sense of socio-cultural self-esteem emerges not only from personal identity, but also in relation to the group in which this identity is developed. This is expressed in Taylor's account as follows (1992: 25–26):

> [O]ur identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the *mis*recognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Non recognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning some in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being.

This is therefore one illustration of how central a concern with dialogue and communication is to multiculturalism too.

Let us consider another landmark text on this topic: Bhikhu Parekh's *Rethinking Multiculturalism* (2000). The central argument here is that cultural diversity and social pluralism are of intrinsic value *precisely because* they challenge people to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their own cultures and ways of life. Parekh explicitly distinguishes his multiculturalism from various liberal and communitarian positions. Some of the latter recognise that cultures can play an important role in making choices meaningful for their members (Kymlicka 1995), or play host to the development of the *self* for the members of that culture (Sandel 1982). Their argument that culture is important for individual group members is well taken but they are less successful in explaining why cultural diversity is necessarily valuable in itself. To this Parekh (2000: 167) offers the following explanation:

> Since human capacities and values conflict, every culture realizes a limited range of them and neglects, marginalizes and suppresses others. However rich it may be, no culture embodies all that is valuable in human life and develops the full range of human possibilities. Different cultures thus correct and complement each other, expand each other's horizon of thought and alert each other to new forms of human fulfilment. The value of other cultures is independent of whether or not they are options for us … inassimilable otherness challenges us intellectually and

morally, stretches our imagination, and compels us to recognize the limits of our categories of thought.

His argument that cultures other than one's own have something to teach us, and that members of minority cultures should therefore be encouraged to cultivate their moral and aesthetic insights for humanity as a whole, is largely built upon an assumption of intercultural dialogue. Indeed, for both Taylor and Parekh, communication and dialogue are in different ways integral features to their intellectual and political advocacy of multiculturalism, and by implication must necessarily be considered so by those drawing upon their work unless a different reading is offered. The point is that to consider multiculturalists who draw upon these and similar formulations as being unconcerned with matters of dialogue and communication is to profoundly misread and mischaracterise their positions.

Moreover, even amongst those theorists who do not elaborate a philosophical concept of dialogical multiculturalism, dialogue is important at a political level. Whatever their varying views about the importance of say entrenched rights, democratic majoritarianism, special forms of representation and so on, they all see multiculturalism as the giving of 'voice' in the public square to marginalised groups (Young 1990, Kymlicka 1995, Tully 1995, Modood 2007a). Specifically, these authors also argue that dialogue is the way to handle difficult cases of cultural practices such as clitoridectomy, hate speech, religious dress, gender relations and so on (see also Eisenberg 2009 on public assessment of identity claims). Therefore, whether it is at a philosophical or a political level, the leading theorists of multiculturalism give dialogue a centrality missing in liberal nationalist or human rights or class-based approaches – and missed by interculturalist critics of multiculturalism. The multiculturalists assume, however, that there is a sense in which the participants to a dialogue are 'groups' or 'cultures' and this leads us to a second point of alleged contrast with interculturalists.

Less Groupist and Culture-Bound: More Synthesised and Interactive

A related means through which the concern with 'closed' communities or groupings that advocates of interculturalism conceive multiculturalism as giving rise to, takes us to our next characterisation of interculturalism contra multiculturalism. This is found in the assertion that "one of the implications of an intercultural framework, as opposed to a multicultural one . . . is that culture is acting in a multi-directional manner" (Hammer 2004:1). This depiction of interculturalism as facilitating an interactive and dynamic cultural 'exchange' informs a consistent line of distinction, as the following two portrayals make clear:

> Multiculturalism tends to *preserve* a cultural heritage, while interculturalism acknowledges and enables cultures to have currency, to be exchanged, to circulate, to be modified and evolve. (Sze and Powell 2004)

> [Interculturalism] is concerned with the task of developing cohesive civil societies by turning notions of singular identities into those of multiple ones, and by developing a shared and common value system and public culture. In building from a deep sharing of differences of culture and experience it encourages the formation of interdependencies which structure personal identities that go beyond nations or simplified ethnicities. (Booth 2003: 432)

This emphasis is warranted for advocates of interculturalism who maintain that the diversity of the locations from where migrants and ethnic minorities herald, gives rise not to a creation of communities or groups but to a churning mass of languages, ethnicities and religions all cutting across each other and creating a 'superdiversity' (Vertovec 2007). An intercultural perspective is better served to facilitate management of these sociological realities, it is argued, in a way that can be positively contrasted against a multiculturalism that emphasises strong ethnic or cultural identities at the expense of wider cultural exchanges.

Notwithstanding this problematic description of how groups feature in multiculturalism, which is challenged in other readings (see, for example, Modood 2007a and Meer, 2010), what such characterisations of interculturalism ignore are the alternative ways in which political interculturalism is itself conceptualised. As stated at the outset, by political interculturalism we refer to ways in which interculturalism is appropriated in the critique of multiculturalism (Booth 2003, Sze and Powell 2004, Wood *et al.* 2006), in a way that may not necessarily be endorsed by interculturalism's advocates.

Writing from the Quebec context, Gagnon and Iacovino (2007) are one example of authors who contrast interculturalism positively with multiculturalism. The interesting aspect for our discussion is that they do so in a way that relies upon a formulation of groups, and by arguing that Quebec has developed a distinctive intercultural political approach to diversity that is explicitly in opposition to Federal Canadian multiculturalism. Their starting point is that two broad considerations are accepted by a variety of political positions, including liberal nationalists, republicans and multiculturalists; indeed, by most positions except liberal individualism, which they critique and leave to one side. These two considerations are that, first, "full citizenship status requires that all cultural identities be allowed to participate in democratic life equally, without the necessity of reducing conceptions of identity to the level of the individual" (Gagnon and Iacovino 2007: 96). Second, with respect to unity: "the key element is a sense of common purpose in public matters", "a *centre* which also serves as a marker of identity in the larger society and denotes in itself a pole of allegiance for all citizens" (96).

For Gagnon and Iacovino, however, Canadian multiculturalism has two fatal flaws, which means that it is de facto liberal individualist in practice if not in theory. First, it privileges an individualist approach to culture: as individuals or their choices change, the collective culture must change; in contrast, Quebec's policy states clearly the need to recognise the French language as a collective good requiring protection and encouragement (Rocher *et al.* in Gagnon and Iacovino

2007: 99). Second, Canadian multiculturalism locates itself not in democratic public culture but rather "[p]ublic space is based on individual participation via a bill of rights" (110–111); judges and individual choices, not citizens debating and negotiating with each other become the locus of cultural interaction and public multiculturalism.

Gagnon and Iacovino's positive argument for interculturalism can therefore be expressed in the following five stages. First, there should be a public space and identity that is not merely about individual constitutional or legal rights. Second, this public space is an important identity for those who share it and so qualifies and counterbalances other identities that citizens value. Third, this public space is created and shared through participation, interaction, debate and common endeavour. Fourth, this public space is not culture-less but nor is it merely the 'majority culture', all can participate in its synthesis and evolution and while it has an inescapable historical character, it is always being remade and ought to be remade to include new groups. Fifth and finally, Quebec, and not merely federal Canada, is such a public space and so an object to which immigrants need to have identification with and integrate into and should seek to maintain Quebec as a nation and not just a federal province (the same point may apply in other multinational states but there are different degrees and variations of 'multi-nationalism' cf Bouchard, 2011).

This characterisation then is very different to that proposed by Booth (2003), Hammer (2004) or Sze and Powell (2004) because it makes a moral and policy case for the recognition of relatively distinct sub-state nationalisms. As such it is less concerned with the diversity of the locations from where migrants and ethnic minorities herald or the superdiversity that this is alleged to cultivate therein. Its emphasis on multinationalism does distinguish it from post-immigration multiculturalism (and post-immigration interculturalism) but not multiculturalism per se (see, for example, Kymlicka 1995). Alternative, less macro-level interculturalism that focuses on neighbourhoods, classroom pedagogy, the funding of the arts and so on, on the other hand, seems a-political. As such, they are not critiques of multiculturalism but a different exercise.

Committed to a Stronger Sense of Whole; National Identity and Social Cohesion

A third related charge is that far from being a system that speaks to the whole of society, multiculturalism, unlike interculturalism, speaks only to and for the minorities within it and, therefore, also fails to appreciate the necessary wider framework for its success. As Goodhart (2004) has protested, multiculturalism is a-symmetrical in that it not only places too great an emphasis upon difference and diversity, upon what divides us more than what unites us, but also that it ignores the needs of majorities. It thus encourages resentment, fragmentation and disunity. This can be prevented or overcome, as Alev (2007) and other commentators put it, through invocations of interculturalism that promote community cohesion on a local

level, and more broadly through an interculturalism that encourages the subscription to national citizenship identities as forms of meta-membership:

> Interculturalism is a better term than multiculturalism. It emphasises interaction and participation of citizens in a common society, rather than cultural differences and different cultures existing next to each other without necessarily much contact or participative interaction. Interculturalism is therefore equivalent to mutual integration.

> While multiculturalism boils down to celebrating difference, interculturalism is about understanding each other's cultures, sharing them and finding common ground on which people can become more integrated. (NewStart Magazine 7 June 2006)

These common grounds embody a kind of commonality that members of society need to have and which is said to have been obscured by a focus on difference. It is argued that European societies and states have been too laissez-faire in promoting commonality and this must now be remedied (Joppke 2004), hence the introduction of measures such as swearing of oaths of allegiance at naturalisation ceremonies, language proficiency requirements for citizenship and citizenship education in schools, amongst other things. What such sentiment ignores is how all forms of prescribed unity, including civic unity, usually retain a majoritarian bias that places the burden of adaptation upon the minority, and so is inconsistent with interculturalism's alleged commitment to 'mutual integration' as put forward in Alev's account.

As Viet Bader (2005: 169) reminds us: "all civic and democratic cultures are inevitably embedded into specific ethno-national and religious histories". Were we to assess the normative premise of this view, however, we would inevitably encounter a dense literature elaborating the continuing disputes over the interactions between the civic, political and ethnic dimensions in the creation of nations, national identities and their relationship to each other and to non-rational 'intuitive' and 'emotional' pulls of ancestries and cultures and so forth. Chief amongst these is whether or not 'nations' are social and political formations developed in the proliferation of modern nation-states from the eighteenth century onwards, or whether they constitute social and political formations – or 'ethnies' – bearing an older pedigree that may be obscured by a modernist focus. What is most relevant to our discussion, however, is not the debate between different camps of 'modernist', 'ethno-symbolist' and 'primordialist' protagonists, among others, but rather the ways in which minorities' differences are conceived in contemporary form of meta-unity.[5]

It is perhaps telling, however, that much of the literature on national identity in particular has tended to be retrospective; to the extent that such contemporary concerns do not enjoy a widespread appeal in nationalism studies (while the opposite could be said to be true of the literature on citizenship). This tendency is not limited to academic arenas and one of the curiosities in popular articulations of national identity is the purchase that these accounts garner from a recourse to tradition,

history and the idea of a common past (Calhoun 1994). One implication is that national identities can frequently reflect desires to authenticate the past, "to select from all that has gone before that which is distinctive, 'truly ours', and thereby to mark out a unique, shared destiny" (Smith 1998: 43).

It was this very assessment that, at the turn of the millennium, informed the Commission on Multi-Ethnic Britain's characterisation of British national identity as potentially "based on generalisations [that] involve a selective and simplified account of a complex history" (CMEB 2000). Chaired by Bhikhu Parekh, it feared such an account would be one in which "[m]any complicated strands are reduced to a simple tale of essential and enduring national unity" (CMEB 2000: 2.9, 16). It was precisely this tendency that informed the CMEB's alarm at how invocations of national identity potentially force ethnic minorities into a predicament not of their making: one in which majorities are conflated with the nation and where national identity is promoted as a reflection of this state of affairs (because national identities are assumed to be cognates of monistic nations). For, in not easily fitting into a majoritarian account of national identity, or being either unable or unwilling to be reduced to, or assimilated into, a prescribed public culture, minority 'differences' may become variously negatively conceived.

These concerns have not been limited to the UK and may be observed in the Intercultural Dialog Commission (2005) set up by the federal government in Belgium to facilitate a transition at the federal level from an emphasis on integration to cultural diversity. This identified several historical tendencies, concerning (i) a political pluralism that facilitated working-class emancipation and wider political consultation; (ii) philosophical pluralism that incrementally led to the official recognition of various public religions (Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Islamic and Anglican) and non-religion; and (iii) community pluralism as stemming from Flemish and Walloon movements that created the current federal State of Belgium. Importantly, the Commissioners underscored a further form of pluralism as the next step: (iv) cultural pluralism. More precisely they insisted that integration issues should take into account relevant cultural dimensions and that it no longer makes sense to qualify the descendents of migrants as 'migrant' or 'allochtone' – used respectively in the Walloon and Flemish regions – instead, 'cultural minorities' would be a much more relevant definition. On the whole, the report focused its conclusions on the lack of cultural recognition in a manner that later invited the criticism that the Commission had been highly influenced by communitarian theories: of "trying to develop civic responsibility and common citizenship rather than thinking about an increasing space for cultural communities" (*La Libre* 6 June 2005).

One scholarly intervention in this vein can be found in Modood's restatement of multiculturalism as a civic idea that can be tied to an inclusive national identity (2007a); some of the responses this has elicited (see Modood 2007b) helps cast light upon this debate. This concern was present in his *Not Easy Being British: Colour, Culture and Citizenship* first published in 1992 where, not unusually among advocates of multiculturalism, Modood emphasised the role of citizenship in fostering

commonality across differences, before recasting part of this civic inclusion as proceeding through claims-making upon, and therefore reformulating, national identities. In his more contemporary formulation, he puts this thus:

> [I]t does not make sense to encourage strong multicultural or minority identities and weak common or national identities; strong multicultural identities are a good thing – they are not intrinsically divisive, reactionary or subversive – but they need the complement of a framework of vibrant, dynamic, national narratives and the ceremonies and rituals which give expression to a national identity. It is clear that minority identities are capable of exerting an emotional pull for the individuals for whom they are important. Multicultural citizenship, if it is to be equally attractive to the same individuals, requires a comparable counterbalancing emotional pull. (Modood 2007b)

This restatement contains at least two key points that are central to the preceding discussion. The first concerns an advocacy and continuity of earlier forms of multiculturalism that have sought to accommodate collective identities and incorporate differences into the mainstream. These differences are not only tolerated but respected, and include the turning of a 'negative' difference into a 'positive' difference in a way that is presented in the ethnic pride currents as elements of racial equality. The second is to place greater emphasis upon the unifying potential in an affirmation of a renegotiated and inclusive national identity therein. While the latter point is welcomed by some commentators who had previously formed part of the pluralistic left, the bringing of previously marginalised groups into the societal mainstream is, at best, greeted more ambivalently.

Illiberalism and Culture

The fourth charge is that multiculturalism lends itself to illiberality and relativism, whereas interculturalism has the capacity to criticise and censure culture (as part of a process of intercultural dialogue), and so is more likely to emphasise the protection of individual rights.

In Europe this charge clearly assumes a role in the backlash against multiculturalism since, as Kymlicka (2005b: 83) describes, "it is very difficult to get support for multiculturalism policies if the groups that are the main beneficiaries of these policies are perceived as carriers of illiberal cultural practices that violate norms of human rights". This view is particularly evident in the debates concerning the accommodation of religious minorities, especially when the religion in question is perceived to take a conservative line on issues of gender equality, sexual orientation and progressive politics generally – something that has arguably led some commentators who may otherwise sympathise with religious minorities to argue that it is difficult to view them as victims when they may themselves be potential oppressors (see Meer and Modood 2009b).

Kymlicka (2005b: 83) narrows this observation down further in his conclusion that "if we put Western democracies on a continuum in terms of the proportion of

immigrants who are Muslim, I think this would provide a good indicator of public opposition to multiculturalism". As Bhikhu Parekh (2006: 180–181) notes, this can be traced to a perception that Muslims are "collectivist, intolerant, authoritarian, illiberal and theocratic", and that they use their faith as "a self-conscious public statement, not quietly held personal faith but a matter of identity which they must jealously guard and loudly and repeatedly proclaim . . . not only to remind them of who they are but also to announce to others what they stand for". It is thus unsurprising to learn that some attitude surveys in Britain report that 77 per cent of people are convinced that "Islam has a lot of fanatical followers", 68 per cent consider it "to have more to do with the middle ages than the modern world" and 64 per cent believe that Islam "treats women badly" (Field 2007: 453).

For these reasons, Muslim claims-making has been characterised as exceptionally ambitious and difficult to accommodate (Joppke 2004, 2008, Moore 2004, 2006, Pew Research 2006, Policy Exchange 2007). This is particularly the case when Muslims are perceived to be – often uniquely – in contravention of liberal discourses of individual rights and secularism (Toynbee 2005, Hansen 2006, Hutton 2007) and is exemplified by the way in which visible Muslim practices such as veiling have in public discourses been reduced to and conflated with alleged Muslim practices such as forced marriages, female genital mutilation, a rejection of positive law in favour of criminal *sharia* law and so on (Meer, Dwyer and Modood, 2010). This suggests a radical 'otherness' about Muslims and an illiberality about multiculturalism, since the latter is alleged to license these practices.

One example can be found in Nick Pearce, director of the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) and former Head of the Research and Policy Unit at 10 Downing Street under Prime Minister Brown. Pearce rejects the view that religious orientation is comparable to other forms of ethno-cultural belonging because this "may end up giving public recognition to groups which endorse fundamentally illiberal and even irrational goals" (2007). He therefore argues that one obstacle to an endorsement of multiculturalism is the public affirmation of religious identities, something Kymlicka (2007: 54) identifies as central to a 'liberal–illiberal' front in the new 'war' on immigrant multiculturalism.

It is difficult, however, not to view this as a knee-jerk reaction that condemns religious identities per se, rather than examines them on a case-by-case basis, while on the other hand assuming that ethnic identities are free of illiberalism. This is empirically problematic given that some of the contentious practices are not religious but cultural. Clitoridectomy, for example, is often cited as an illiberal practice in the discussions we are referring to. It is, however, a cultural practice among various ethnic groups, and yet has little support from any religion. Therefore, to favour ethnicity and problematise religion is a reflection of a secularist bias that has alienated many religionists, especially Muslims, from multiculturalism. It is much better to acknowledge that the 'multi' in multiculturalism will encompass different kinds of groups and does not itself privilege any one kind, but that 'recognition' should be

given to the identities that marginalised groups themselves value and find strength in, whether these be racial, religious or ethnic (Modood 2007b).

Conclusions

This paper provides an entry point in developing a discussion on the relationship between interculturalism and multiculturalism. The question it raises is to what extent the present criteria proposed by advocates of interculturalism, in positively contrasting it with multiculturalism, are persuasive. In assessing this we maintain that whilst interculturalism and multiculturalism share much as approaches concerned with recognising cultural diversity, the answer to Lentin's question (2005: 394) – is interculturalism merely an 'updated version' of multiculturalism? – is in the main 'no'. That is to say that while advocates of interculturalism wish to emphasise its positive qualities in terms of encouraging communication, recognising dynamic identities, promoting unity and challenging illiberality, each of these qualities already feature (and are on occasion foundational) to multiculturalism too. Moreover, multiculturalism presently surpasses interculturalism as a political orientation that is able to recognise that social life consists of individuals and groups, and that both need to be provided for in the formal and informal distribution of powers, as well as reflected in an ethical conception of citizenship, and not just an instrumental one. As such we conclude that until interculturalism as a political discourse is able to offer an original perspective, one that can speak to a variety of concerns emanating from complex identities and matters of equality and diversity in a more persuasive manner than at present, it cannot, intellectually at least, eclipse multiculturalism.

Acknowledgements

Notes

[1]   See, for example: http://www.interculturaldialogue2008.eu/406.0.html?&redirect_url=my-startpage-eyid.html

[2]   We are very grateful to Geoff Levey for alerting us to the nuances of the inception of Australian multiculturalism.

[3]   This inclusiveness was formalised in the first national multicultural policy, National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia, under the Hawke Labor government in 1989. It has been retained in every subsequent version. While Indigenous Australians are formally included, the policy also states that their situation is distinct and requires its own special treatment and set of measures – consequently many Indigenous leaders themselves reject multiculturalism as being relevant to them and indeed as undercutting their special status as First Peoples (see Levey 2008).

[4]   Thus making equal recognition an essential part of democratic culture, a point not lost on Habermas (1994): 113) who argues that "a correctly understood theory of [citizenship]

rights requires a politics of recognition that protects the individual and the life contexts in which his or her identity is formed".

[5] However, this concern relies perhaps on something from the cultural imaginary of the type of 'modernist' argument most associated with Anderson (1983). Moreover, for a study of how this is happening in non-political urban contexts, see Kyriakides *et al.* (2009).

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