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Book Reviews



Christian Joppke,

Is Multiculturalism Dead? (Polity Press, Cambridge, 2017), ISBN 9780745692129
(paperback)

Nasar Meer, Tariq Modood and Ricard Zapata-Barrero (eds.),

Multiculturalism and Interculturalism: Debating the Dividing Lines (Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2016), ISBN 9781474407083 (hardback)

These two books both engage with a debate occurring at a time of significant existential threat to multiculturalism – the proclamation of its death by several political and academic figures in both Europe and North America. The debate revolves around many complex and often provocative questions – what is the role of the “majority” in the paradigm of multiculturalism? Do we need to re-define multiculturalism? Do we need to redefine the nation? These questions arise in the context of migration resulting from conflict, natural disaster, and – as the editors of *Multiculturalism and Interculturalism* point out in the first chapter – “[t]he prevailing context [...] that the majority of the world’s population resides in 175 poorer countries relative to the wealth that is disproportionately concentrated in around twenty” (p. 1).

Both books take the proclaimed “failure” of multiculturalism as a starting point, and in some sense contribute to legitimizing the discussion of its demise. In *Is Multiculturalism Dead?* Christian Joppke offers his own ‘individual multiculturalism’ to depict and inform prevailing diversity policy in Western Europe and the United States, while *Multiculturalism and Interculturalism* puts forward approaches from both schools of thought in its title as a remedy to the supposed failure of multiculturalism.

Is Multiculturalism Dead? sets out to propose a theory based on a residual form of multiculturalism created largely by stripping away the groupist elements of multicultural theory and policy that the author finds incompatible with liberal constitutions. This ‘multiculturalism of the individual’ is illustrated

primarily through an endeavour to portray the legal standing of gay¹ people (with a focus on gay men) in the US and Muslims in Europe as comparable examples of multicultural policy approaches. This is, as the author admits, a fairly controversial approach, given that queer communities are rarely included in definitions of strictly multicultural groups; thus from the outset, the book sets itself a complicated goal both in terms of theory-building and of conceptualization more broadly. In many ways, this decision sets up an insurmountable stumbling block for readers with a background in minority, queer, and multiculturalism literature, as the competing aims of untangling theoretical foundations and assessing the compatibility of concepts make for a rather convoluted read.

The book is laid out firstly to provide a definition of multiculturalism and its often nebulous manifestations. Chapter 2, “Multiculturalism: Not One but Many Things”, outlines sexual orientation, language, religion and race as the author’s categories of analysis. This is followed by two chapters that give shape to the case studies of gay rights in the US and the accommodation of Muslim religiosity in Europe. Chapter 3, “Retreat of Multiculturalism and Civic Integration”, discusses the rhetoric around multiculturalism (and briefly, interculturalism), and Chapter 4, “Why Multiculturalism is Necessary: Liberal Law and the Empowerment of Gays and Muslims”, focuses on US case law (*Lawrence v. Texas* and *Bowers v. Hardwick*) and constitutional law, primarily that of Germany. Chapter 5, “Multiculturalism v. Antidiscrimination”, explores the tension between antidiscrimination laws and provisions that seek to remove oppressive distinctions made on the basis of difference, and multiculturalism that seeks to accommodate and recognize those differences. Finally, in Chapter 6, “What Remains: A Multiculturalism of the Individual”, the author presents his theory on the multiculturalism of the individual, comparing and contrasting it with the philosophies of leading theorists in the field. Each chapter moves rapidly between different regions and topics, focusing broadly on international interpretations of multiculturalism in the ‘new’ and ‘old’ worlds, the two case studies, and the additional category of race in the US (and its alleged absence in Europe).

In making its case, however, the book does not provide an adequate overview of literature on queerness and queer theories, which is striking given the controversial nature of the comparisons in the book. The discussion would have benefited from the inclusion of more up-to-date and diversified insights; the lack of queer feminist literature and writers is particularly noticeable, which

¹ Joppke primarily employs the term “gay” in his analysis, and thus I have used the same terminology in this review when referring to his text; however, I use it only as an adjective, rather than as a noun.

leaves the discussion very thin with much of the terminology inappropriately contextualized. Likewise, the review of literature on race and blackness in the US (see p. 32) is not up-to-date (indeed, this area of study has grown quickly in recent years). The focus on race in the US regarding jurisprudence and policy in chapters 2 and 5 is particularly confusing. The case study is intended to address sexuality, but it lacks meaningful engagement with how these two different aspects of identity (race and sexuality) interact and diverge in American society and politics. This leaves the analysis somewhat incomplete. Moreover, the preoccupation with sodomy laws in these two chapters shows some inconsistency with the book's central premise; the persecution of gay people in the US is not due to a "cultural clash" in the same way that this term is used in multicultural discourse to describe discrete cultures that have developed separately. Gay culture is, rather, a *resistance* culture first and foremost, emerging from within a variety of conservative cultures and in conflict with societal anxieties around gender and sex. The book does not engage with queer culture as a culture, but rather 'gayness' or homosexuality as a (sexual) practice, and thus misses the opportunity to discuss the intersectional aspects that might be comparable to the broader discussion on multiculturalism.

In addition to this, the book contains many sections that may feed into xenophobic claims, in particular the alarmist statement that "Europe's share of the world population is expected to shrink [...] to an extinction-nigh 7 percent by 2050" (p. 63). This seems to be based on a number of confounding premises, including the idea that each continent should contain a certain "share" of the world population, and that the "extinction" of a continent's population is based on the percentage of the world it comprises (note that Australians, at roughly 0.3% of the world's population, are not mentioned as being in danger of extinction). Others seem designed to tap into prevailing populist fears regarding Muslims, sometimes juggling several tropes in one sentence:

On the other hand, double-parking is allowed in east London when Muslims head to their mosque on Friday afternoons, and the Brussels borough of Molenbeek, infamous for delivering a good number of the Paris killers of November 13, 2015 and where 'the dominant culture is that of Morocco,' sets up a forty-eight-hour 'temporary abattoir' in a council garage during the Muslim feast of Eid al-Adha (which commemorates the readiness of Abraham to kill his son on God's order), to keep its Muslim residents from killing sheep in their bathtubs. (p. 74)

These elements may run the risk of eclipsing the more interesting and valuable sections of the book, and the arguments made therein. Questions such as whether multiculturalism can become part of the cultural goals of European

states for both their minority and majority populations, or what role foreign leaders play when interfering in the societal cohesion of other states by directing disruptive messages at their country's diaspora, are overshadowed. Chapter 5, "Multiculturalism v. Antidiscrimination", is the most interesting chapter in the book but again has no solid foundations – especially with regard to intersectionality. There is a significant difference between multiculturalism in the US and in Europe, but the distinctions aren't made clear. Some ideas often appear incongruous with the overall thesis, such as the claim that race isn't an issue in Europe.

Overall, *Is Multiculturalism Dead?* provides a provocative perspective on current law and policy, but suffers from a number of incongruences. In addition to the points addressed above, it lacks clarity in terms of its intent (is it descriptive or prescriptive?), and tends to ignore other discussions in the forum of multiculturalist debate. Its conclusions could have been based more clearly on the discussions it analyses, and the lines of argument are often difficult to follow. By adhering to the myth of the culturally-neutral state, the book misses a key point: Europe's failure of reckoning and imagination in terms of multicultural understanding; that is, its history in terms of more than just the nation-state cultures of today, encompassing legacies of empire and colonialism, among others. The book also suffers from an asymmetry in the historical analysis of Western Europe, on the one hand, and the US, on the other hand. For the former, the author focuses only on recent policies, while the latter is analysed from the nineteenth century up to the present day. More specifically, while the accountability of a society that has profited from slave trade and labour is acknowledged in the case of the US, Europe's history of interethnic violence and colonialism is overlooked, and the spectres of fascism and authoritarianism remain unexamined.

In summary, although the idea of 'multiculturalism of the individual' is a concept worth investigating within the paradigms of superdiversity and related theories such as interculturalism, this book ultimately runs the risk of moving towards the delegitimization of collective identity in 'groupist' multicultural theory without acknowledging the ingrained power structures that render such collective identity not only important but often vital for the survival of a marginalized group's members.

The other book in this review, *Multiculturalism and Interculturalism* – a multi-authored volume edited by Nasar Meer, Tariq Modood and Ricard Zapata-Barrero – focuses on the dynamic between 'multiculturalism' and 'interculturalism' as terminology, concepts and policy approaches. It presents the debate that has arisen around the idea that interculturalism provides the remedy to perceived shortcomings in multiculturalism, particularly those that have

resulted in its demonization in national and international politics. Multiculturalists, however, view this as a misinterpretation of multiculturalism and argue for the strength of a consistent and well-developed school of thought over the constant fragmentation of diversity management approaches.

Despite the potential for conflict between the schools of multiculturalism and interculturalism, the book does not seek to discredit interculturalism. For the large part, an effort is made to identify the contributions interculturalist perspectives make to discussions of multiculturalism, including focusing on challenges such as obstacles to interaction, and fluid, diverse identities. As Zapata-Barrero argues, “the rise of interest in [interculturalism] is connected to new trends of migration studies such as transnationalism or the fact that people have multiple identities without really being willing to rank them in a decontextualized manner” (p. 60).

Multiculturalism and Interculturalism comprises 11 chapters from various authors, including the editors, with a foreword by Charles Taylor and an afterword by Bhikhu Parekh, two highly respected voices in the field. The first three chapters provide insight from the editors, with the introduction followed by a chapter authored by Meer and Modood reiterating their well-known stance on the value of multiculturalism as an approach to diversity (Chapter 2), and Zapata-Barrero’s framing of multiculturalism from a more concrete policy perspective (Chapter 3). This is followed by two chapters, one by Gérard Bouchard (Chapter 4) and one by Alain-G. Gagnon and Raffaele Iacovino (Chapter 5), focusing on the case study of Quebec (and, to a lesser extent, Canada) as a fulcrum of the debate between multiculturalism and interculturalism. Ted Cantle (Chapter 6) offers an emphatic rejection of multiculturalism in contemporary British society, whilst Will Kymlicka (Chapter 7) offers a sharp, though indirect, rejoinder to Cantle and a lively review of the debate in the context of populism. Later chapters push the discussion further afield. Ana Solano-Campos (Chapter 8) provides insight into Latin American *interculturalidad*, whilst both Geoffrey Brahm Levey (Chapter 9) and Patrick Loobuyck (Chapter 10) attempt to bring both multiculturalism and interculturalism together within sensible and functional frameworks, again primarily with reference to Quebec in Brahm Levey’s chapter, and from a broader perspective in Loobuyck’s. Tariq Modood contributes a final chapter (Chapter 11) summarising the book and helping to highlight its dialectic role. Overall, the volume offers a series of clearly drawn portrayals of multiculturalism and interculturalism, with the various chapters finding synchronicity and consistency even in their vastly differing viewpoints.

The editors’ basic approach to compiling the book revolves around their assessment of both the common ground between multiculturalism and

interculturalism, and the areas of difference. They see agreement between the two with regard to the existence and benefit of cultural pluralism, the negative effects of assimilationism, an aversion to liberalism that disregards culture, and goals of remaking equal treatment through cultural inclusion (p. 9). The key areas in which multiculturalism and interculturalism are, according to the editors, perceived to diverge include the status of dialogue and interaction, the rights and responsibilities of the historical majority, the normative significance of recognizing groups as well as individuals, and the role of religious communities and groups (p. 9).

A few interesting points are brought up in terms of the scale of society and the levels on which measures or policies are implemented, as well as the levels on which interaction between different groups take place. In general, there is a sense that the nation-state is an unwieldy platform for meaningful intercultural exchange, which is more likely to take place in local communities or even at a city level; interculturalists argue that this point is addressed by interculturalism in its criticism of multiculturalism, but not by multiculturalism itself, which still relies on the nation-state as the unit within which diversity occurs. This forms something of a link to Joppke's multiculturalism of the individual, which might be considered a further extension of this idea fuelled by a neoliberalist rejection of centralized forms of identity. It also raises the question of the role of the nation in this debate: can it be redeemed? Kymlicka, Modood and Meer say yes; others say no, and abandon it as too essentialist and homogeneous. This is a valuable contribution and an important question, as the answers to it often end up framing discourse, strategy and policy in fundamental ways.

The book's strong emphasis on Quebec is understandable given that the debate around multiculturalism and interculturalism in both the province and Canada more generally is well-developed, contentious and more crystallized than in other areas. However, it does unduly weight the discussion around a very specific example that isn't widely generalizable. Gagnon and Iacovino's contribution, in particular, is entirely limited to the Quebecois and Canadian case studies. Solano-Campos' chapter provides a welcome reprieve in this manner, by discussing how differently interculturalism and multiculturalism are contextualized and conceptualized in South America.

Convincing arguments are made on both sides of the central debate in *Multiculturalism and Interculturalism* – the interculturalist emphasis on the shift required in the field of minority rights to better address contemporary realities of identity and community resonates strongly for researchers engaging in the difficult task of bridging a gap between the national minority paradigm and anxieties and arguments around migration and migrant identities and rights.

Bouchard's examination of the role of majorities in interculturalism is carefully drawn and constructed, such that its conclusions – which often directly contradict those of Meer and Modood – form part of a well-reasoned debate, engaged in on the basis of mutually understood concepts and terminology. This is a significant difference between this book and *Is Multiculturalism Dead?*, which is hard to place within a debate as it so often argues based on premises that aren't well-grounded in the discourse within which it is making claims. Cattle's rebuke to multiculturalism and multicultural policies, for instance, is much more strongly stated than Bouchard's, but his skepticism is more clearly situated than Joppke's. The authors' perspectives are similarly oriented in terms of their focus on individual approaches to identity and citizenship, but Cattle focuses more consistently and closely on the issue of superdiversity and plural identity, also encompassing gender, sexuality, and disability within an intersectional view of diversity.

Kymlicka's biting criticism of the populist attempt to set up interculturalism as a new way forward, birthed from the ashes of the failed extremes of assimilation and multiculturalism, provides an excellent opportunity for reflection at the mid-point of the volume. The narrativization of this process of discrediting multiculturalism allows for new myths regarding diversity in Europe, suggests Kymlicka, and likely offers political opportunity for those ready to exploit it – particularly in scapegoating multiculturalism for a variety of real or imagined societal ills. This response to the genus of arguments presented by both Joppke and Cattle brings the hazards of populism and the particular tropes that have been associated with migration in recent years into sharp relief.

Something largely absent in discussions of both interculturalism and multiculturalism, however, are the distinctions between categories created through (especially discriminatory) "Othering", and those that are self-ascribed. The two don't necessarily always overlap perfectly, and this field of inquiry could also look into the tension this generates, and the way that some Othering categories are transformed by an active effort from the Othered group to reclaim the identity and imbue it with more complex and humanizing qualities, such that they become categories that can be gladly self-ascribed.

Additionally, as in *Is Multiculturalism Dead?*, some sections of this book seem to ignore the current political climate in their confident assumption of liberal values in Western societies. This might, however, simply be an indication of how rapidly the international political outlook has changed since the book was published in 2016.

Overall, *Multiculturalism and Interculturalism* is a dense read, cover to cover, and as there is a certain amount of necessary overlap in content between chapters, it toes the line of repetitiveness. However, given its rich and varied

offerings as a dynamic illustration of the debates around multiculturalism's existential crisis, it serves as an excellent reference book for scholars and students seeking political philosophy on the topics of multiculturalism and interculturalism, and an overview of current arguments and depictions of these concepts.

Kymlicka perhaps best justifies this book's contribution to the field in the following excerpt: "Meer and Modood imply that if the contrast between interculturalism and multiculturalism is primarily rhetorical rather than substantive or analytical, it is therefore of less interest, and perhaps even a distraction. I want to suggest, on the contrary, that the politics of rhetoric in this field is itself very interesting and revealing" (p. 159). By presenting the tension between multiculturalism and interculturalism, structured as a rhetorical debate and curating a variety of opinions and perspectives, this book provides insight into the motivations and preconceptions fuelling the controversy around multiculturalism at both a theoretical and practical level, and reveals the political dynamics at play within the academic sphere.

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