Multicultural Equality, Liberal Citizenship and Secularism

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Secularism is dominant, indeed hegemonic, in western polities. However, unlike the oppressive secularism one associates with authoritarian or totalitarian regimes (say Jacobin France, the Soviet Union or Communist China), democratic secularism allows for religious freedom, and indeed in North West Europe, including Britain and with the partial exception of France, it consists of some degree of accommodation of at least some principal religions. In considering contemporary Britain and related countries which now have a plurality of faiths amongst their population, of which Islam stands out both in terms of the number of adherents and assertions of identity, we have to think carefully which forms of secularism are and are not compatible with this democratic plurality. I shall argue that our guide here should be a concept of multicultural equality (the full argument is developed in Modood (2007).[1]

1.   Multicultural Equality

The key normative concepts of multiculturalism are equality and difference. Or, to put it another way, the concept of equality has to be applied to groups and not just individuals (e.g. Parekh 2000). Different theorists have offered different formulations on this question. Charles Taylor (1994), for example, argues that when we talk about equality in the context of race and ethnicity, we are appealing to two different albeit related concepts which, slightly altering Taylor's nomenclature I will call, *equal dignity*, and *equal respect.* Equal dignity appeals to people's humanity or to some specific membership like citizenship and applies to all members in a relatively uniform way. A good example is Martin Luther King's demand for civil rights. He said black Americans wanted to make a claim upon the American dream; they wanted American citizenship in the way that the constitution theoretically is supposed to give to everybody but in practice fails to do so. We appeal to this universalist idea in relation to anti-discrimination policies where we appeal to the principle that everybody should be treated the same. But Taylor, and other theorists in differing ways, also posits the idea of *equal respect.* If equal dignity focuses on what people have in common and so is gender-blind, colour-blind and so on, equal respect is based on an understanding that difference is also important in conceptualising and institutionalising equal relations between individuals.

This is because individuals have group identities and these may be the ground of existing and long-standing inequalities such as racism, for example, and the ways that some people have conceived and treated others as inferior, less rational and culturally backward. While those conceptions persist they will affect the dignity of non-white people, above all where they share imaginative and social life with white people. The negative conceptions will lead to direct and indirect acts of discrimination – they will eat away at the possibilities of equal dignity. They will affect the self-understanding of those who breathe in and seek to be equal participants in a culture in which ideas of their inferiority, or even just of their absence, their invisibility, are pervasive. They will stand in need of self-respect and the respect of others, of the dominant group; the latter will be crucial for it is the source of their damaged self-respect and it is where the power for change lies (DuBois 1903).

So, a denigration of a group identity, or its distortion, or its denial – the pretence (often unconscious because it is part of a culture rather than a personal thought) that a group does not exist – the withholding of recognition or misrecognition is a form of oppression (Taylor 1994). It is a form of inequality in its own right but also threatens the other form of equality, equal dignity, the fulfilment of which can be made impossible by stereotypes or a failure to recognise the self-definitional strivings of marginal groups.

The interaction and mutuality between the two kinds of equality runs the other way too. Equal respect presupposes the framework of commonality and rights embodied in equal dignity. Hence it is quite wrong to think of the latter in terms of universalism and the former as a denial of universality. For not only does the concept of equal respect grow out of a concern with equal dignity but it only makes sense because it rests on universalist foundations. It is only because there is a fundamental equality between human beings or between citizens that the claim for respect can be formulated. As Taylor says, there is a demand for an acknowledgement of specificity but it is powered by the universal that an advantage that some currently enjoy should not be a privilege but available to all (Taylor 1994: 38–39). Hence we must not lose sight of the fact that *both* equal dignity and equal respect are essential to multiculturalism; while the latter marks out multiculturalism from classical liberalism it does not make multiculturalism normatively particularistic or relativist.

Another way of making the same or similar point, following Iris Young (1990) is to distinguish between:

i)   the equality that comes from the impartial and consistent application of a single set of rules or norms or conventions;

ii) the equality that comes from a set of rules, norms or conventions that do not (dis)advantage the different parties to whom they are applied for the needs and sensitivities of all the parties have been taken into account and so each of these parties can identify with these rules; that there is a sense that the rules etc. speak to and for all the parties.

The first equality might be realised but egalitarians will still want to ask, "Whose rules? Who made the rules? Were they jointly made? Do they suit all to whom they apply?" Rawls thought that consideration of (ii) above would lead truly rational persons to choose to live in a state that was culturally neutral, as that way while no one was advantaged, no one was disadvantaged (Rawls 1971). Kymlicka rightly pointed out such neutrality is impossible; that any public space, policy or society is structured around certain kinds of understandings and practices which prioritise some cultural values and behaviours over others (Kymlicka 1995 and 2001). They are not fixed but nevertheless always have a specific character. You are inducted into them, though they also change as you participate. It means, for example, that people can argue for extending them. They may appeal from one practice such as elections for political office, and say why cannot we have that also in the workplace or in the local community. While some change is always possible and often desirable, no public space is culturally neutral.

If the public space and a particular polity or a society that we are members of already has a cultural structure built into it and so is not neutral, where does this come from? Historically, it will have come from a dominant group. Dominant groups can be quite tolerant. They may, for example, allow minorities to live by their own religion, speak their own language, wear distinctive dress and so on but insist that should be done in 'private ' – not in the shared public space of politics, policies, schools and workplaces but only at home or community functions and at weekends. This way of structuring space and of deciding what is public and what is private can be an enormous source of power and inequality. In so far as subordinate, oppressed or marginal groups claim equality, what they are claiming is that they should not be marginal, subordinate or excluded; that they too, their values, norms, and voice should be part of the structuring of the public space. Why, they ask, should we have our identities privatised, while the dominant group has its identity universalised in the public space? So the argument is about the public/private distinction and what is 'normal' in that society, and why some groups are thought to be abnormal or different (Young 1990).

For example, many gay people, especially from the 1960s onwards, argue that they do not want to be tolerated by being told homosexuality is no longer illegal, acts between consenting adults done in private are fine. They want people to know that they are gay and to accept them as gay; and for public discussion about gayness to have the same place as discussions about heterosexuality. So when public policy is made, for instance on widows' benefits or pensions, we should not assume an exclusively heterosexual model of society. The same point applies in relation to ethnic and religious minorities. They may have cultural needs and customs which are disregarded by current arrangements and which can be discriminatory; when they try to get that rectified they may be met by racist devaluing of their needs and norms or told that they do not belong in this country – which takes us straight back to respect and recognition. These needs may be to do with bilingual teaching and other aspects of a school curriculum; or, the provision of

single sex schools, which in Britain have been closing across the country in the same period that the south Asian population has been growing and wanting them. They may be to do with dress, whether it is the convention of wearing headdress indoors, as in the case of young African-American men who seemed to have created new American norms about the wearing of items such as baseball caps, or the Sikh male turban, the Jewish male yarmulke or the Muslim female headscarf, the hijab. It may be to do with whose holy days are to be recognised as public holidays, when employers cannot demand your presence, when university exams may not be set and which are celebrated in shopping malls, on television and on which public funds are disbursed. As in the gay example above, the area of family structure and size is likely to be central. The construction of new social housing across the western world is based on the premise that households are getting smaller and smaller but where does that leave Bangladeshis in east London, whose need is indisputable but who in many cases are too large as a family to be housed in new stock and so are disproportionately allocated old housing. If a social housing provider in Paris has one definition of family (nuclear and two-generational) and French citizens of Berber origins have another definition (extended and multi-generational), does that mean that they have voluntarily put themselves beyond the obligations of the French state? Who is to decide what is marriage and what is divorce? Most western countries forbid more than one wife at a time but put no limit on the number of girl-friends or live-in partners; some Muslims believe there is a place for up to four simultaneous female partners but not outside marriage. Should only one of these views be recognised by the law courts? In all these cases, whatever specific view we may have on any of them, it is clear that a consistent, impartial application of a single set of rules, norms and conventions by itself is not enough to achieve equality. It can, depending on the content of the laws and of the public generally, create two tiers of citizenship, those who are at home in the rules etc, and those who are all at sea, drowning in a culture of misfit and misrecognition.

This is why the ideas of equal respect and recognition are essential to multicultural equality and multicultural integration. As the variety of the above issues show some will involve the law and others will not; some will be public policy issues at a national level whilst others will remain local; and sometimes initiatives can be taken by a particular institution – a particular school, hospital, housing association or charity, or by a private sector employer. Yet, while issues of equal respect and recognition do not simply arise at the level of a national state but across society, a legislative framework and governmental leadership may be crucial (CMEB 2000). Nevertheless, it is best to see recognition of positive difference as a civic principle that in general should inform the relations between fellow citizens and ought to be manifest across the varied sites and institutions of civil society (Seglow 2003: 87–88). Hate speech is a good example of where some legislation is necessary but what one needs to achieve goes beyond the practical scope of law, which can be a blunt instrument endangering freedom of speech. Most countries recognize that

legal intervention is necessary when there is a serious risk of incitement to hatred; or when the 'fighting talk' is likely to inflame passions and risk public order; or when it is likely to reinforce prejudice and lead to acts of discrimination or victimisation. But this falls short of the goal of respect. For that one relies on the sensitivity and responsibility of individuals and institutions to refrain from what is legal but unacceptable. Where these qualities are missing one relies on public debate and censure to provide standards and restraints. Hence where matters are not or cannot easily be regulated by law one relies on protest and empathy, though it will take time for dominant groups to learn what hurts others. This is how most racist speech and images and other free expressions (e.g. the use of golliwogs as commercial brands or The Black and White Minstrel Show) have been censured (rather than censored) away and it is how the British media responded to the Danish Cartoons Affair, recognizing that they had the right to republish them but that it would be offensive to do so (Modood 2006; for an engaging debate see Modood *et al.* 2006). It is sometimes suggested that a concern with issues of respect is in some sense a diversion from the pursuit of integration or equality, that it is a preoccupation with labels, images, and discourse, in short, 'political correctness'. Any serious concern can lead to overzealous, mechanistic application but there is nothing trivial about equal respect. It is certainly not a matter of choosing between difference, integration and equality, for positive difference is necessary to integration that is informed by equal respect as well as equal dignity.

2.   Liberal Citizenship and Secularism

Classical liberalism can take one of two forms. The older approach is one of toleration, that is to say, one tolerates difference. Toleration presupposes a number of preconditions. One is that one disapproves of what one is being asked to tolerate (Mendus 1989) – if one approves of, or even if one is simply indifferent to the attributes, beliefs or behaviour in question, then there is nothing to tolerate – the behaviour is simply part of what is normal. Secondly, one must have the power, or believe one has the power, to suppress the behaviour in question. That is to say, there is an alternative to tolerating the disapproved difference, the deviant behaviour. That is why it makes more sense to talk of majorities tolerating minorities than of minorities tolerating majorities (Galeotti 2002). A more theoretical liberal position but still recognisably classic is one that we have already touched on, namely that developed by Rawls (Rawls 1971). In a just society, the state expresses no ethical or religious view but is scrupulously neutral between all possible views or, as he later expressed it, between all reasonable views (Rawls 1993). This is clearly an advance on the idea of toleration since the question of moral approval/disapproval is taken out of the frame (even when the frame is limited to reasonable views, these are identified by Rawls as views with which a dialogical consensus can be built rather than because they are worthy). While I think it is

impossible for the state to be totally neutral, one can see both toleration and neutrality as classically liberal as liberalism has evolved – in theory and practice – over the centuries, especially in relation to religious dissent.

Multiculturalism is clearly beyond toleration and state neutrality for it involves active support for cultural difference, active discouragement against hostility and disapproval and the re-making of the public sphere in order to fully include marginalized identities. This indeed has become the practice, to some degree or other, of some contemporary liberal democratic countries, and has been theorised by some as the correct liberal response to difference (Kymlicka 1995). Multiculturalism is not only more active in relation to minority identities than sanctioned by classical liberalism but also in relation to majority identities. For it is also concerned to encourage a vision of commonalities, of what is shared across difference, and the remaking of citizenship and national identity. This means that far from simply supporting difference, the multicultural state may also need to encourage forms of social mixing and interaction, though this will be a two-way process and not just in relation to simply avoiding minority segregation.

Minorities can also be bearers of distinctive knowledge. They are a primary source about the marginalisation and discrimination they experience, and hence of their distinctive location. They have a take on their societies that the majority does not experience and so offers to the majority a very different perspective on their shared society, its institutions, discourses and self-image. They hold a critical mirror up to that society. They are also likely to have sensibilities, ways of thinking and living, heritages they can call upon to widen the pool of available experience and wisdom. In all these ways the presence of diversity is an epistemological condition, a learning experience and the source of the dialogical, two-way character of multiculturalism (Parekh 2000) – except that a multilogue is much more accurate. It underlies that multiculturalism is much more than toleration. Dialogue necessarily implies openness and the possibility of mutual learning but not uncritical acceptance; and so some kind of mutual evaluation. This is, however, quite a weak sense of 'evaluation'. It can be contrasted with a philosophical multiculturalism which is concerned to develop a frame in which different cultures and religions can come to an understanding of each other and therefore to a richer understanding of humanity. Thus Taylor sees the ultimate frontier of the politics of recognition as being the development – which he sees far off from contemporary capacities – of sensibilities and ways of thinking so that we can understand cultures radically different from our own and thereby evaluate their contribution to human civilisation (Taylor 1992). Similarly, Parekh, emphasises that the ultimate value of multiculturalism lies in cross-cultural and cross-civilisational understanding through which we simultaneously appreciate the varied ways to be human whilst more profoundly understanding one's own distinctive location (Parekh 2000).

While Parekh and Taylor locate their political multiculturalism within a wider, philosophical multiculturalism, I am not locating political multiculturalism in

anything bigger than itself – or more precisely, in nothing bigger than contemporary ideas of democratic citizenship and belonging.

One important implication is that for me the identities and cultures of others are primarily not important for epistemological reasons – except in the sense that all politics involves learning and is epistemological. I can remain agnostic on the ethical and philosophical underpinnings of multiculturalism, or even whether it has any. For me, identities and cultures are important because they are important to the bearers of those identities, people who are members of our society, fellow citizens, and so have to be included into the polity in ways consistent with respect and equality. As Elisabetta Galeotti puts it:

> Differences should be publicly recognised not because they are important or significant per se, though they may well be, but because they are important for their bearers and because expressions of public contempt for them, on the grounds that they depart from the social 'norm' are a source of injustice. (Galeotti 2002: 104)

There is a distinction between the public recognition and respect for identities and beliefs and the moral evaluation of the same; the former is possible without the latter. When we argue for recognition of a difference we are not necessarily morally approving or disapproving of that difference. This does not mean that recognition is beyond the scope of moral principles for moral principles will indeed *limit* what we can recognise: child sacrifice, cannibalism and sati (widows' self-immolation) would be unacceptable for just about everybody and cliterodectomy would also be unacceptable for many. Recognition should not infringe the fundamental rights of individuals or cause harm to others. What this means in practice will sometimes be unclear and contested. The important point is that the instancing of unacceptable cases does not damage or undermine the argument for recognition. All laws and public policies have these kinds of limits but nevertheless most laws and policies are accepted as legitimate without a moral evaluation of their content – a law requires compliance from all regardless of how different individuals may evaluate it. Another way of putting this is that laws and the policies of legitimate governments have a moral standing or at least a public legitimacy without each law or policy being subject to a moral evaluation – though the legitimacy can be undermined if they are shown in any specific case to be immoral by reference to a higher morality. Similarly, the legitimacy of recognition does not depend upon a moral evaluation of the difference in question; but recognition works within moral limits. This distinction between the legitimacy of recognition *as such* and of any specific claim is then on the same footing as law or taxation or war. The claim I am defending is that there is nothing illiberal or inegalitarian or anti-citizenship about recognition.

We are not being asked to approve or disapprove in an ultimate way but allow co-presence, public support, interaction and societal redefinition. Of course the giving of a new public status to an identity group is not just to legitimise their presence and to include them in the self-definition of one's society or country, it is

also to allow them to influence the attitudes, mores and practice of the rest of society. For example, encouraging greater public participation by women, gays or Muslims may come to mean that their critical perspectives upon existing practices and values are openly discussed, that marginalized sensibilities become de-stigmatised and come to be more influential and that certain concerns, styles, aesthetics, discourses and literatures come to be produced and shape the mainstream. In these various ways, the broader culture and specific minority perspectives will interact and mutually influence each other. The mainstream will not simply be dominated by one or a few groups, or by people who think alike, a kind of mutual admiration society, but will have a more plural and composite character in which learning is a two-way, or better, a multilogical process.

3.   3+1 Implications for Liberal Citizenship

The multiculturalism or politics of difference that I have been advocating has four major implications for liberal citizenship. Firstly, it is clearly a collective project and concerns collectivities and not just individuals. Secondly, it is not colour-, gender- or sexual orientation-'blind' and so breaches the liberal public-private identity distinction which prohibits the recognition of particular group identities so that no citizens are treated in a more or less privileged way or divided from each other. These two implications are obvious from the discussion so far but the next two implications are less obvious and more controversial. The first of these is that multiculturalism takes race, sex and sexuality beyond being merely ascriptive sources of identity, merely categories. Liberal citizenship is not interested in group identities and shuns identitarian politics; its interest in 'race' is confined to anti-discrimination and simply as an aspect of the legal equality of citizens. Strictly speaking, race is of interest to liberal citizenship only because no one can choose their race, it is either a biological fact about them or, more accurately, is a way of being categorized by the society around them by reference to some real or perceived biological features, and so one should not be discriminated against on something over which one has no control. But if, as I have argued, equality is also about celebrating previously demeaned identities (e.g. taking pride in one's blackness rather than accepting it as a merely 'private' matter), then what is being addressed in anti-discrimination, or promoted as a public identity, is a chosen response to one's ascription, namely pride, identity renewal, the challenging of hegemonic norms and asserting of marginalized identities and so on. Of course this is not peculiar to race/ethnicity. Exactly, the same applies to sex and sexuality. We may not choose our sex or sexual orientation but we choose how to politically live with it. Do we keep it private or do we make it the basis of a social movement and seek public resources and representation for it? In many countries the initial liberal – and social democratic and socialist – response that the assertions of race, political femininity, gay pride politics and so on were divisive and deviations from the

only political identity that mattered (citizenship; and/or class, in the case of social-ists) soon gave way to an understanding that these positions were a genuine and significant part of a plural, centre-left egalitarian movement.

Marginalised and other religious groups, most notably Muslims, are now utilising the same kind of argument and making a claim that religious identity, just like gay identity, and just like certain forms of racial identity, should not just be privatised or tolerated, but should be part of the public space. In their case, how-ever, they come into conflict with an additional fourth dimension of liberal citizen-ship. This additional conflict with liberal citizenship is best understood as a '3+1' rather than merely a fourth difficulty because while it is not clear that it actually raises a new difficulty, for many on the centre-left this one, unlike the previous three is seen as a demand that should not be conceded. One would think that if a new group was pressing a claim which had already been granted to others then what would be at issue would be a practical adjustment not a fundamental princi-ple. But as a matter of fact, the demand by Muslims for not just toleration and religious freedom but for public recognition is indeed taken to be philosophically very different to the same demand made by black people, women and gays. It is seen as an attack on the principle of secularism, the view that religion is a feature, perhaps uniquely, of private and not public identity.

Before we discuss the issue of secularism, however, it is best to get an argument out of the way which, if valid, would prevent the issue arising at all. This is, and it is commonly found in the op-ed pages of the broadsheets, that Muslims (and other religious groups) are simply not on a par with the groups with which I have aligned them. It is argued that woman, black and gay are ascribed, involuntary identities while being a Muslim is about chosen beliefs, and that Muslims therefore need or ought to have less legal protection than the other kinds of identities. I think this is sociologically naïve (and a political con). The position of Muslims today in coun-tries like Britain is similar to the other identities of 'difference' as Muslims catch up with and engage with the contemporary conceptions of equality. No one chooses to be or not to be born into a Muslim family. Similarly, no one chooses to be born into a society where to look like a Muslim or to be a Muslim creates suspicion, hostility, or failure to get the job you applied for. Of course how Muslims respond to these circumstances will vary. Some will organise resistance, while others will try to stop looking like Muslims (the equivalent of 'passing' for white); some will build an ideology out of their subordination, others will not, just as a woman can choose to be a feminist or not. Again, some Muslims may define their Islam in terms of piety rather than politics; just as some women may see no politics in their gender, while for others their gender will be at the centre of their politics.

I put to one side, therefore, the contention that equality as recognition (uniquely) does not apply to oppressed religious communities. Of course many people's objections may be based on what they (sometimes correctly) understand as conservative, even intolerant and inegalitarian views held by some Muslims in relation to issues of personal sexual freedom. My concern is with the argument that

a commitment to a reasonable secularism rules out extending multicultural equality to Muslims and other religious groups.

I proceed on the basis of two assumptions, firstly that a religious group's view on matters of gender and sexuality, which of course will not be uniform, are open to debate and change; and secondly, that conservative views cannot be a bar to multicultural recognition. Those who see the current Muslim assertiveness as an unwanted and illegitimate child of multiculturalism have only two choices if they wish to be consistent. They can repudiate the idea of equality as identity recognition and return to the 1950s liberal idea of equality as colour/sex/religion etc blindness (Barry 2001). Or they must appreciate that a programme of racial and multicultural equality is not possible today without a discussion of the merits and limits of secularism.

Secularism can no longer be treated as 'off-limits', or, as President Jacques Chirac said in a major speech in 2004, 'non-negotiable' (Cesari 2004: 166). Not that I believe, as I shall now go on to argue, that it is really a matter of being for or against secularism, but rather a careful, institution by institution analysis of how to draw the public-private boundary and further the cause of multicultural equality and inclusivity.

4.   Secularism: Different Public-Private Boundaries in Different Countries[2]

At the heart of secularism is a distinction between the public realm of citizens and policies, and the private realm of belief and worship. Secularism as an ideology might consist of an uncompromising separation between religion and state, perhaps even of an atheistic, materialist analysis of religion as the opium of the unenlightened masses, which reason and material progress will consign to the dustbin of human history. Yet that is not what we mean when we talk about secular institutions in western democracies. Ideological secularism may have motivated some of the participants of the French, Soviet and Maoist revolutions and been responsible for some of the brutality and totalitarian excesses that they gave rise to. Its twin, ideological anti-secularism is an uncritical and unwarranted extension of an opposition to ideological secularism into an opposition to all forms of secularism. Both perspectives have little empirical or normative purchase on the secularism as it has actually come to develop in most democracies, what we might call moderate secularism. By which I mean the relative autonomy of politics so that political authority, public reasoning and citizenship does not depend upon shared religious conviction and motivation. Such a moderate secularism can be institutionalised in many different ways but is not hostile to nor characterised by an absolute determination to expel religion from the political, let alone expunge it from the world. While all western countries are clearly secular in many ways, interpretations and the institutional arrangements diverge according to the dominant national religious culture and the differing projects of nation-state building.

The result is that what is taken to be the practice of secularism in one country is thought to be overly permissive or overly restrictive in another.

For example, the United States has as its First Amendment to the Constitution that there shall be no established church and there is wide support for this and in the last few decades there has been a tendency amongst academics and jurists to interpret the church-state separation in continually more radical ways (Sandel 1994; Hamburger 2002). Yet, as is well known, not only is the US a deeply religious society, with much higher levels of church attendance than in western Europe (Greely 1995), but there is a strong Protestant, evangelical fundamentalism that is rare in Europe. This fundamentalism disputes some of the new radical interpretations of the 'no establishment clause', though not necessarily the clause itself, and is one of the primary mobilizing forces in contemporary American politics; it is widely claimed that it decided the presidential election of 2004. The churches in question – mainly white, mainly in the South and mid-West – campaign openly for candidates and parties, indeed raise large sums of money for politicians and introduce religion-based issues into politics, such as positions on abortion, HIV/Aids, homosexuality, stem-cell research, prayer at school, the teaching of creationism at school and so on. It has been said that no openly avowed atheist has ever been a candidate for the White House and that it would be impossible for such a candidate to be elected. It is not at all unusual for politicians, – in fact for President George W. Bush, it is most usual – to publicly talk about their faith, to appeal to religion and to hold prayer meetings in government buildings and as a prelude or epilogue to government business. On the other hand, in 'establishment' Britain, bishops sit in the upper chamber of the legislature by right and only the senior Archbishop can crown a new head of state, the monarch, but politicians rarely talk about their religion. It was noticeable, for example, that when Prime Minister Blair went to a summit meeting with President Bush to discuss aspects of the Iraq War in 2003, the US media widely reported that the two leaders had prayed together. Yet, Prime Minister Blair, one of the most openly professed and active Christians ever to hold that office, refused on his return to answer questions on this issue from the British media, saying it was a private matter. The British State may have an established church in England and a national church in Scotland and in Wales but the beliefs of the Queen's first Minister are his own concern. In disestablished USA when President Bush says God told him to invade Iraq a sizeable popular reaction might be "Jesus be praised!" but in the British state it is the Archbishop of Canterbury that publicly interprets God's will – and on matters of war, as on other political matters, God is not always supportive of government policies, and when this is the case it is the duty of the bishops to let the public know – not just in the churches but on national media. In both countries, churches and priests can be not just major providers of (sometimes state-funded) social welfare and pastoral care but can also be leaders of political movements on issues such as anti-racism, international social justice, third world debt relief, nuclear weapons, world peace and so on.

France draws the distinction between state and religion differently again. Like the US, there is no state church but, unlike the US, the state actively promotes the privatization of religion. While in the US, organized religion in civil society is powerful and seeks to exert influence on the political process, French civil society does not carry signs or expressions of religion. This is particularly the case in state schools where the radical secularist idea of *laicité* is interpreted as the production of future citizens in a religion-free zone, hence the popular banning of the *foulard*, the headscarves worn by some Muslim girls. Yet, the French State, contrary to the US, confers institutional legal status on the Catholic and Protestant Churches and on the Jewish Consistory, albeit carefully designating organized religions as *cultes* and not communities. Through state-sponsored institutions such as the Jewish Consistory and the recently formed French Council of the Muslim Faith (*Conseil Française du Culte Musulman*), the state gives some recognition to organised religions but largely on its own terms: selected religious leaders have regular liaisons with the state but on narrowly religious and non-political sets of issues. Indeed, such an institutional framework is as much a form of state control as it is of recognition and falls far short of any kind of social partnership.

We might want to express these three different national manifestations of secularism as in Table 1.

Table 1: Religion vis-à-vis state and civil society in three countries

	State	Religion in Civil Society
England/Britain	Weak establishment but churches have a political voice	Weak but churches can be a source of political criticism and action
United States	No establishment	Strong and politically mobilized
France	Actively secular but offers top-down recognition/control	Weak and it is rare for churches to be political

Adapted from Modood & Kastoryano 2006

So, what are the appropriate limits of the state in a liberal-ish democracy? Everyone will agree that there should be religious freedom and that this should include freedom of belief and worship in private associations. Family too falls on the private side of the line but the state regulates the limits of what is a lawful family – for example, polygamy is not permitted in many countries – not to mention the deployment of official definitions of family in the distribution of welfare entitlements. Religions typically put a premium on mutuality and on care of the sick, the homeless, the elderly and so on. They set up organizations to pursue these aims, but so do states. Should there be a competitive or a cooperative relationship between these religious and state organizations, or do they have to ignore each

other? Can public money – raised out of taxes on religious as well as non-religious citizens – not be used to support the organizations favored by some religious taxpayers? What of schools? Do parents not have the right to expect that schools will make an effort – while pursuing broader educational and civic aims – not to create a conflict between the work of the school and the upbringing of the children at home but, rather, show respect for their religious background? Can parents, as associations of religious citizens, not set up their own schools and should those schools not be supported out of the taxes of the same parents? Is the school where the private (the family) meets the public (the state); or is it, in some Platonic manner, where the state takes over the children from the family and pursues its own purposes? Even if there is to be no established church, the state may still wish to work with organized religion as a social partner, as is the case in Germany, or to have some forum in which it consults with organized religion, some kind of national council of religions, as in Belgium. Or, even if it does not do that because it is regarded as compromising the principle of secularism, political parties, being agents in civil society rather than organs of the state, may wish to do this and institute special representation for religious groups as many do for groups defined by age, gender, region, language, ethnicity and so on. It is clear then that the 'public' is a multi-faceted concept and in relation to secularism may be defined differently in relation to different dimensions of religion and in different countries.

We can all be secularists then, all approve of secularism in some respect, and yet have quite different ideas, influenced by historical legacies and varied pragmatic compromises, of where to draw the line between public and private.[3] It would be quite mistaken to suppose that all religious spokespersons, or at least all political Muslims, are on one side of the line, and all others are on the other side. There are many different ways of drawing the various lines at issue (Parekh 2000: 321–335). In the past, the drawing of them has reflected particular contexts shaped by differential customs, urgency of need and sensitivity to the sensibilities of the relevant religious groups (Modood 1994; 1997). Exactly the same considerations are relevant in relation to the accommodation of Muslims in Europe today – not a battle of slogans and ideological over-simplifications.

5.   Moderate Secularism as an Implication of Multicultural Equality

Multicultural equality, then, when applied to religious groups means that secularism *simpliciter* appears to be an obstacle to integration and equality. But as we have just seen secularism pure and simple is not what exists in the world. The country by country situation is more complex, and indeed, far less inhospitable to the accommodation of Muslims than the ideology of secularism – or, for that matter, the ideology of anti-secularism – might suggest (Modood, Triandafyllidou & Zapata-Barrero 2006). All actual practices of secularism consist of institutional compromises and these can, should be and are being extended today to accommo-

date Muslims and others, just as in the past they have been extended to accommodate rival churches and the Jews. The institutional reconfiguration varies according to the historic place of religion in each country. Today the appropriate response to the new Muslim challenges is pluralistic institutional integration, rather than an appeal to a radical public-private separation in the name of secularism. The approach that is being argued for here, then, consists of:

1. The extension of a politics of difference to include appropriate religious identities.

2. A reconceptualisation of secularism from the concepts of neutrality and the strict public/private divide to a moderate and evolutionary secularism based on institutional adjustments.

3. A pragmatic, case by case, negotiated approach to dealing with controversy and conflict, not an ideological, drawing a 'line in the sand' mentality, with a view to pluralizing the contemporary institutional arrangements in relation to church-state linkages.

Certainly this involves recognizing the normative significance of religion, namely, it offers identities that matter to people. But this is an idea at the heart of political multiculturalism and involves no theological or ethical evaluation of any particular faith or even religion as such.[5] This institutional integration approach can then be used as a basis for including Islam into the institutional framework of the state, using the historical accommodation between state and church as a basis for negotiations in order to achieve consensual resolutions consistent with equality and justice. As these accommodations have varied from country to country, it means there is no exemplary solution, for contemporary solutions too will depend on the national context and will not have a once-and-for-all-time basis. It is clearly a dialogical perspective and assumes the possibility of mutual education and learning. Like all negotiation and reform, there are normative as well as practical limits. Aspects of the former have been usefully characterized by Parekh as "society's operative public values" (Parekh 2000: 267). These values, such as equality between the sexes, are embedded in the political constitution, in specific laws and in the norms governing the civic relations in a society. Norms, laws and constitutional principles concerning the appropriate place of religion in public life generally and in specific policy areas (such as schools or rehabilitation of criminals) consist of such public values and are reasoned about, justified or criticized by reference to specific values about religion or politics as well as more general norms and values in a society, such as fairness, or balance or consensus and so on. I, therefore, recognize that the approach recommended here involves solutions that are highly contextual and practical but they are far from arbitrary or without reference to values. While the latter are not static because they are constantly being reinterpreted, realigned, extended and reformed, nevertheless they provide a basis for dialogue and agreement.

An example is the development of a religious equality agenda in Britain, including the incorporation of some Muslim schools on the same basis as schools of religions with a much longer presence. It also includes the recommendations of the Royal Commission on the Reform of the House of Lords (2000) that in addition to the Anglican bishops who sit in that House by right as part of the Anglican 'establishment', this right should be extended to cover those of other Christian and non-Christian faiths. The same point can be made in relation to the fact that as early as 1974 the Belgian State decided to include Islam within its Council of Religions as a full member, or to the way that Muslims in the Netherlands have long had state funded religious schools and television channels as a progressive step in that country's traditional way of institutionally dealing with organized religion, namely, 'pillarization'. Similarly, a 'Muslim community' is becoming recognized by public authorities in Germany by appealing to the historic German idea of a 'religious community' (*Religionsgemeinschaft*). Again, a series of French Interior Ministers have taken a number of steps to 'normalise' Islam in France by creating an official French Islam under the authority of the state in ways that make it identical to other faiths (for more on these cases see Modood & Kastoryano 2006; Cesari 2004).

The recognition of Islam in Europe can, as some of these examples suggest, take a corporatist form, can be led or even imposed by the state in a 'top-down' way and can take a church or ecclesiastical model as its form. This may be appropriate for certain countries or at certain moments and could be – usually is – consistent to some degree or other with the conception of multiculturalism I have outlined. However, it would not necessarily represent the multicultural experience and its potentialities at its best. A corporatist inclusion might require, for example, Muslims and their representatives to speak in one voice and to create a unified, hierarchical structure when this is out of character in Sunni Islam, especially the South Asian Sunni Islam espoused by the majority of Muslims in Britain, and of the contemporary British Muslim scene. Corporatism would very likely consist of state control of the French kind, with the state imposing its own templates, plans, modes of partnership and chosen imams and leaders upon Muslims. My own preference, then, would be for an approach that would be less corporatist, less statist and less churchy – in brief, less French. An approach in which civil society played a greater role would be more comfortable with there being a variety of Muslim voices, groups and representatives. Different institutions, organisations and associations would seek to accommodate Muslims in ways that worked for them best at a particular time, knowing that these ways may or ought to be modified over time and Muslim and other pressure groups and civic actors may be continually evolving their claims and agendas. Within a general understanding that there had to be an explicit effort to include Muslims (and other marginal and underrepresented groups), different organisations may not just seek this inclusion in different ways but would seek as representatives Muslims that seemed to them most appropriate associates and partners, persons who would add something to the organisation and

were not merely delegated from a central, hierarchical Muslim body. The idea of numerical or 'mirror' representation of the population might be a guideline but it would not necessarily follow that some kind of quota allocation (a milder version of the corporatist tendency) would have to operate. Improvisation, flexibility, consultation, learning by 'suck it and see' and by the example of others, incrementalism and all the other virtues of a pragmatic politics in close touch with a dynamic civil society can as much and perhaps better bring about multicultural equality than a top-down corporatist inclusion. 'Representation' here would mean the inclusion of a diversity of backgrounds and sensibilities, not delegates or corporate structures. Recognition, then, must be pragmatically and experimentally handled, and civil society must share the burden of representation.

While the state may rightly seek to ensure that spiritual leaders are not absent from public fora and consultative processes in relation to policies affecting their flocks, it may well be that a Board of Jewish Deputies model of community representation offers a better illustration of a community-state relationship. The Board of Deputies, a body independent of, but a communal partner to the British state, is a federation of Jewish organisations which includes synagogues but also other Jewish community organisations and its leadership typically consists of lay persons whose standing and skill in representing their community is not diminished by any absence of spiritual authority. It is most interesting that while at some local levels Muslim organisations have chosen to create political bodies primarily around mosques (e.g. the Bradford Council of Mosques), at a national level, it is the Board of Deputies model that seems to be more apparent. This is certainly the case with the single most representative and successful national Muslim organisation, the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), whose office-holders and spokespersons are more likely to be chartered accountants and solicitors than imams. Most mosques in Britain are run by local lay committees and the *mullah* or *imam* is sometimes, perhaps usually, a minor functionary. Very few of those who aspire to be Muslim spokespersons and representatives have religious authority and they are not expected to have it by fellow Muslims. This is as it should be because the accommodation of religious groups is as much if not more about the recognition and support of communities rather than necessarily about ecclesiastical or spiritual representation in political institutions. The state has a role here which includes ensuring that Muslim civil society is drawn into the mainstream as much as it is to seek forms of representation within state structures.

In my preferred approach it would be quite likely that different kinds of groups – Muslims, Hindus and Catholics for instance, let alone women, gays and different ethnic minority groups – might choose to organise in different ways and to relate to key civic and political institutions in different ways. While each might look over its shoulders at what other groups are doing or getting and use any such precedents to formulate its own claims, we should on this approach not require symmetry but be able to live with some degree of 'variable geometry'. I am unable to specify what this degree of flexibility might be but it should be clear that sensitivity to the

specific religious, cultural and socio-economic needs in a specific time and place and political context is critical to multiculturalism. This indeterminacy leaves something to be desired but I hope it is evident that it can be a strength too. It also underlines that multiculturalism is not a comprehensive political theory but can and must sit alongside other political values and be made to work with varied institutional, national and historical contexts.

The critical issue of principle, however, is not how but *whether* religious groups, especially those that are marginal and under-represented in public life, ought to be represented. I have explained why I think a 'neutralist', difference-blind approach is inadequate if equality is our goal. The real problem today, however, is with an approach that eschews difference-blindness in general but would not dream of being anything other than religion-blind. Take the BBC – an organisation with a deserved reputation for public service and high standards, an aspect of which is manifested in the remark by a serving Director-General, Greg Dykes, that the organisation was "hideously white". Relatedly, for some years now it has given political importance to reviewing and improving its personnel practices and its output of programs, including its on-screen representation of the British population, by making provision for and winning the confidence of women, ethnic groups and young people. Why should it not also use religious groups as a criterion of inclusivity and have to demonstrate that it is doing the same for viewers and staff defined by religious community membership? Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs should be treated as legitimate groups in their own right (not because they are, say, Asians), whose presence in British society has to be explicitly reflected in all walks of life and in all institutions; and whether they are so included should become one of the criteria for judging Britain as an egalitarian, inclusive, multicultural society. That there is no prospect at present of religious equality catching up with the importance that employers and other organisations give to sex or race in Europe (outside Northern Ireland) and North America is a measure of the distance we have to travel.

6. Conclusion

Some speak of our times as 'post-secular' and even of a 'crisis of the secular state'. These are very misleading statements. The secular state is doing just fine, especially in North West Europe. It is true that most such states, such as England/Britain, Denmark, Germany and so on, have a historic legacy of a single national church[4] but they have for generations been making adjustments to be inclusive of other churches and of the Jews, and are now making adjustments to include other religions, most notably Islam. So, despite some uncertainties and some exclusionary politics (as also faced by the Jews or Catholics in earlier generations), in many ways it is more business as usual than a crisis for the British secular state (and others in North West Europe, with France being the outlier). It is true that in

recent years religious citizens have become more active as public actors in the name of their religious community, including as interlocutors with government and as recipients of state funding (for the British case, see Dinham, Furbey and Lowndes 2009). Moreover, there is a reaction to this activity – which, with some truth if also some exaggeration, is perceived as a reversal of a historic trend – by some intellectuals in the name of secularism. It is here worth recalling that when Habermas spoke of the start of the twenty-first century as being a "post-secular society", he was speaking primarily normatively, not descriptively (Habermas 2006). He was challenging the secularism not of actual states but of what might be called 'the Enlightenment project', including that of his earlier communicative ethics and of the earlier John Rawls (Rawls 1971). Rawls and his followers had stipulated that "public reason" required that citizens, when addressing each other in the "public square" must speak in ways intelligible to all fellow citizens. From this was derived the view that as not all citizens can understand religious language, religious citizens must "translate" their policy proposals into non-religious language; the public square was out of bounds to religion. Given that non-religious citizens did not have this burden of translation, Habermas came to the view (as before him, Rawls 1993) that this asymmetry was a form of injustice to religious citizens. Hence, his suggestion that we were now in a post-secular society was a plea to lift this "mental and psychological burden" off the shoulders of religious citizens (Habermas 2006). No one "language" could said to be *the* language of the public square. Religious and non-religious citizens alike could speak as they chose and each had an equal duty to endeavour to be intelligible to the other; and each had a duty to make an effort to understand the other. This requires an "epistemic adjustment" in the theory of rationalist secularism (Habermas 2006: 15). This plea then for a "post-secular" citizenship, which in many ways is an important aspect of the multilogical character of a multicultural citizenship (Modood 2007), is supportive of the accommodative secular state that I have argued for as an idealization of what already exists, or more precisely, what is in process as through experimental and incremental steps and symbolic shifts Islam is accommodated. In so far as there is a crisis it is a crisis not of the secular state but of the ideology of radical secularism, of those who urge the state to make a break with a history of accommodation. It is a crisis experienced much more by intellectuals than by politicians, who are not immune to its effects but who for the most part act pragmatically and look for compromise. And they are wise to do so. To heed the voices of radical secularism (no less than those of radical religionists) would be not just to retard the process of integrating Muslims in Europe on terms of multicultural equality. It would also be to destroy the institutional architecture with which western states left religious wars and religious domination behind (Modood, 2010).

Notes

1   With kind permission from Polity Press, Cambridge, this essay is extracted from chapters 3 and 4 of this publication.
2   The next two sections build on parts of Modood and Kastoryano 2006 and Modood and Levey 2009.
3   Not everybody thinks that terms such as 'secularist' and 'secularism' are helpful or should be reformed to give a positive meaning (e.g. Connolly 1999 and Bader 2007). Muslims in particular have an association of the term with European colonialism, atheism and anti-Islamic regimes. I think the term can and should be salvaged from such histories and associations.
4   Of course Britain has two national churches, the Church of England and the Presbyterian Church, but they are both the only established churches in their own national territory, namely, England and Scotland respectively. Similarly, pre-1870 German states did not all have the same national church, but each tended to have a (de facto) state church.
5   Though, additionally, I have come to the view that respect for religion is a good in itself and may sometimes be expressed by the state (Modood, 2010).

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