

Multiculturalism

From Crisis to Renewal?

Edited by
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Anna Mielczarek-Żejmo,
and Martin Strouhal

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eds.

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Is the Renewal of Multiculturalism Possible?

Introduction

This book offers both descriptions and interpretations of the present state of multiculturalism. The starting-point of the reflections and analyses presented here is the conviction that multiculturalism is currently in serious crisis both as an idea and as a social practice. The authors of the articles all build on the following shared thesis: *Multiculturalism is in a state of crisis and has become the subject of serious and multidirectional criticism (“multiculturalism in the dock”) and needs to be re-thought, but in view of modern conditions (globalisation, increased mobility, the existence of numerous multicultural communities, migratory flows, intercultural conflicts, relativism), a reconceptualised multiculturalism is necessary as an idea and practice facilitating the formation and maintenance of positive intergroup relations.*

The book is divided into two parts: (1) The Idea of Multiculturalism and its Crisis and (2) Overcoming the Crisis of Multiculturalism.

The authors of the texts in the first part of the book explore the various theoretical approaches and concepts involved in multiculturalism.

The book opens with a detailed account of the “changing fate of multiculturalism” by Katarzyna Narkiewicz, who then tries to formulate a definition of multiculturalism adequate to the challenges of modern times. Her concern with changes in multiculturalism over time is complemented in the essay that follows by Jitka Lorenzová’s account of geographical variation in multiculturalism in chosen regions of the world. Martin Strouhal deals with the impact of the current crisis of multiculturalism on the basic principles on which the idea of educational systems in Western European countries is founded. He places particular emphasis on the influence of a relativistic perspective on the perception of cultural diversity.

Anna Mielczarek-Żejmo describes the public discussion on multiculturalism and the polarisation of views on the migration crisis and ways of dealing with it. Social media play a special role in this discussion. Ease of accessibility and relative inclusiveness make them a source of increasing public participation in public life, and the expression on social media of attitudes towards multiculturalism, the migration crisis and its management by decision-makers has taken on major significance. In this context, Anna Mielczarek-Żejmo asks questions about the quality of public debate and its course as well as its possible effects. With regard to the functions of social media and conflict theories, she suggests two opposite scenarios of public debate on the migration crisis in Europe. The first presupposes a joint search for agreement on the key principles and directions of policy designed to overcome the crisis situation. The second assumes a radicalisation of views on the migration crisis and the deepening of the conflict.

That multiculturalism has had a “changing fate” does not mean that its key assumptions must be abandoned, especially in the situation of deepening cultural diversity of contemporary societies. Regardless of the negative conclusions of the diagnosis of moods related to the migration crisis in Europe, the authors of this volume are convinced that constructive progress is possible. From the perspective of positive psychology and its premise that a good life and well-being are inalienable human rights, Margarida Pociño sets goals for the public sphere with regard to the admission of migrants and measures to secure the social cohesion of culturally diverse communities. Her article opens the second part of the book, in which the analyses indicate the special role of local communities and relevant education for overcoming the crisis of multiculturalism.

Local paths of social cohesion

The response of nation states to the crisis of multiculturalism caused by increased migration in various parts of the world has been variable, from openness to rejection and hostility towards new arrivals. One of the factors limiting an effective response to the migration crisis is the tendency for multiculturalism to become a political issue deployed in power struggles. It is partly for this reason that work on the organisation of conditions for the admission of migrants has been limited in Poland, despite the significant increase in migration from the eastern border in

recent times. The lack of national initiative means that local elected councils have to try to fill the gap, mainly in big cities.

One of the cities taking over the state's functions in this way is Gdańsk. Joanna Frątczak-Müller's article offers an analysis of the way in which the idea of "migrants welcome" has been implemented there. She looks at the efficiency aspect of self-government in the area of programming solutions in the field of integration of immigrants in local communities. The questions she formulates concern the possibility of achieving social cohesion in a situation of cultural diversity.

Katarzyna Narkiewicz's article deals with the strategies for building inclusive communities developed in the Welcoming America program. It also presents a list of pitfalls to be avoided in order to preserve the delicate balance between groups and signalling different approaches towards the present and future of multiculturalism.

Mariusz Kwiatkowski describes a local community project aimed at creating intersections between the "parallel" distant lives of residents of a diverse, divided city. He considers the extent to which an "intercultural walk" as a form of collective activity can contribute to overcoming the phenomenon of "parallel lives", and can assist the growth of community cohesion in culturally diverse environments.

Education response

The authors have paid particular attention to the role of education in overcoming the crisis of multiculturalism. Although migration is not a new phenomenon, its scale in the modern world requires the development of new patterns of behaviour and response, establishing and maintaining relationships, meeting needs and solving problems. One of the key sources for both migrants and the receiving communities will be the education system.

The importance of education for the application of the idea of multiculturalism is discussed in the first part of the book by Martin Strouhal. He defines potential ways to treat the multicultural perspective in education, grounding them in a belief in the responsibility born of European culture in the sphere of intercultural dialogue, humanity and search for truth.

Strouhal's article provides the theoretical background for the article by Hana Kasíková and Eva Vincejová, who draw attention to the special role of teachers in the process of adapting the principles of

multiculturalism. They then look mainly at the general approach to multiculturalism and multicultural education in teacher training and further education.

Hana Kasíková and Eva Vincejová attempt to identify the approaches to multiculturalism and multicultural education that should be reflected in teacher education at both levels. Special attention is devoted to educational strategies in both curricular areas.

Dorota Bazuń presents some practical effects of belief in the special role of teachers in dealing with the crisis of multiculturalism. In her article she considers the premises of the project “Among Others”, aimed at developing intercultural education. Its implementation in different countries has made it possible to identify trends in the perception of multiculturalism in various societies, including radicalisation and nationalisms. In this context Dorota Bazuń discusses contemporary challenges facing intercultural education in both national and international perspective, especially the fear of refugees, as factors influencing the success of such projects.

Various axiological positions, scientific disciplines, theoretical concepts and methodological approaches are represented in this volume. The work is interdisciplinary. The main subject is shown from different angles: educational, psychological and sociological. We hope that the juxtaposition of these different approaches will generate new topics for academic discussion and inspire reflection on how we might improve our understanding of otherness and openness to others. For this openness as well as the will to truth are among the basic principles of European culture.

The Changing Fate of Multiculturalism: From Blossom to Crisis

Katarzyna Narkiewicz
University of Zielona Góra

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the birth, evolution and perceived decline of the idea of multiculturalism. Cultures vary widely in terms of their attitudes towards immigrants, and the American psychologist Jonathan Haidt observes that modern societies are facing a major dilemma: “Foreigners bring in plagues, epidemics, and new ailments but, on the other hand, they also bring in many new ideas, goods, and technologies—that is why societies are faced with the problem . . . : they have to find the right balance between xenophobia and xenophilia” (Haidt, 2012, p. 201). From the very beginning, the idea of building multicultural societies has had its supporters and opponents, with their attitudes towards multiculturalism constantly evolving accordingly to the changing situation in different regions of the world. Multicultural theories and counter-theories have increased in complexity and number. As Robert Hughes memorably put it, “multi-culturalism has become a buzzword with almost as many meanings as there are mouths to utter it” (Hughes, 1993, p. 83). This complexity and range of positions over time is one reason why we had to set some limits on our discussion here. Another reason is geographical diversity and the different situations and attitudes in different areas. We could not possibly discuss all the theoretical and practical aspects of multicultural reality around the world in just this chapter. We therefore focus on on the changing fate of multiculturalism in Europe, and sometimes in North America, in other words in what are known as the “western democracies”. In the first part of the chapter we look at the formation of multicultural thought from the historical

perspective of American and European host societies. We also look at the theoretical approaches towards multiculturalism that have evolved in the academic circles of these societies. We tackle multiculturalism by highlighting thinkers representing different perspectives and go on to choose a working definition that covers all the aspects of multiculturalism discussed beforehand. Then we look at the blossoming of multiculturalism and the backlash against it in chronological perspective. The next section seeks to identify the sources, both theoretical and practical, of the anti-multicultural wave. Finally, we try to answer the question of the future of multiculturalism in a post-multicultural era.

Theoretical approach

The first countries and societies to perceive themselves as multicultural were those that had evolved from emigration such as the United States of America, Canada, Australia, Argentina or Brazil. They had known the phenomenon of migration since the French Revolution. These societies were not only shaped by the settlement of Europeans, however, and there were many other contributing factors. In the case of the United States for example, they included “the deprivation of indigenous tribes, the slavery of Africans, the conquest of the Southwest (which once was a Mexican territory), the colonisation of other countries (Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and the Philippines prior to its independence), military interventions in the politics of other regions (Korea, Vietnam, the Middle East, and South America), the immigration of peoples from all over the world” (Chow, 1997, p. 596). Built upon traditions of migration and settlement such societies were naturally inclined to accept immigrants as new citizens. Hence, multiculturalism could be defined as social phenomenon resulting from the migration of people, especially non-white non-European ones, to mainly white countries (Modood, 2013, p. 3). Yet such a definition represents a narrow post-immigration perspective. In broader terms multiculturalism is a term for the identitarian policy of staying in harmony with your nature or heritage and aspiring, together with similar individuals, to secure the social recognition of certain groups (ibidem). Even though they have also struggled for certain forms of recognised citizenship it has to be underlined that multicultural citizenship for immigrant groups does not involve the same claims as multicultural citizenship for indigenous people or national minorities. Immigrants, for example, do not seek land rights or official language status.

Whatever the claims, the struggle has been part of a larger human-rights revolution of the postwar era that took place in three stages: the struggle for decolonisation 1948–1965, the struggle against racial discrimination and segregation 1955–1965, and the struggle for multiculturalism and minority rights that started in 1960s America and Western Europe at a time when immigration policy was liberalised and non-white immigrants started to arrive in larger numbers. Welcomed as they were, immigrants were also expected to assimilate into the host societies, but largely because of the great cultural diversity of these newcomers it was eventually concluded that rigorous implementation of assimilation policy was unacceptable. All the same, while immigrants were finally recognised as entitled to their own cultures, it was also assumed that some degree of assimilation would occur anyway, even though it should no longer be treated as obligatory.

Both American and European host societies are liberal democracies—“a system of government in which individual rights and freedoms are officially recognised and protected, and the exercise of political power is limited by the rule of law” (*English Oxford Living Dictionary*). This means the institutionalised presence of equality in social participation on the one hand, and the discourse, including defiance, of methods of extension equal civic rights, on the other. The political philosopher and social theorist Bhikhu Parekh observes that in societies containing people from diverse cultural backgrounds, multiculturalism is “a normative response to that fact” (Parekh, 2006, p. 6). This institutionalised perspective places multiculturalism, as a set of prescriptive policies, in a political context. The social and political commentator Kenan Malik writes that multiculturalism “requires the public recognition and affirmation of cultural differences. Different peoples and cultures have different values, beliefs and truths, many of which are incommensurate, but all of which are valid in their own context. Social justice requires not just that individuals be treated as political equals, but that their cultural beliefs also be treated as equally valid, and indeed that they be institutionalised in the public sphere” (Malik, 2006). British sociologist Tariq Modood emphasises that, in spite of its political context, multiculturalism is not a political philosophy in the sense of a complete political theory. He invokes Bhikhu Parekh who, even though he seems in his book “Rethinking Multiculturalism” (2000), to regard multiculturalism as a philosophy and claims that all state functions must be reconceptualised in accordance with it just as presently they are conceptualised in accordance with the the idea of national and cultural homogeneity, clearly states that it is

not a fully developed political doctrine (Modood, 2013, pp. 6–7). The leading multiculturalist Will Kymlicka points out that “multiculturalism is first and foremost about developing new models of democratic citizenship, grounded in human rights ideals, to replace the earlier uncivil and undemocratic relations of hierarchy and exclusion” (Kymlicka, 2013, p. 76). Even though he refers for support to the theoretical assumptions of John Rawls,¹ the leading theorist of modern liberalism, Will Kymlicka sees a discrepancy between the theory and practice of liberal democracies. According to the theory, citizens are free and cooperative if the state remains neutral about the ethical and religious beliefs of its citizens, but in practice a state has a duty not only to protect the autonomy of individuals but to support whole nations together with their own cultures. A total separation of state and ethnicity is incoherent. In channelling financial resources and political power through ethnically based organisations, governments give a form of authorisation to certain ethnic identities and deny it to others. In practice “a state inevitably supports some cultural identities thereby discriminating against others” (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 108). That is why gradual integration into the host society is not only a practical solution but a normative necessity. Those who left their countries in quest for a better life are obliged to integrate with a new country, and this new country, by agreeing to their settlement, accepts the duty to integrate them as legitimate citizens. A liberal state should be prepared to accept the presence of immigrants’ diverse cultures and languages. Consequently, it should also accept that some citizens will possess hyphenated identities such as Irish-American or British-Indian. Multicultural rights result from the dependence of individual autonomy on participation in social culture. Migrants are people who have left their social culture behind and are not yet able to create a new one in their new environments. In his critical analysis of Will Kymlicka’s theory, Tariq Modood (2013) points out that for newcomers the only social culture available is that of the host society, and that is a kind of situation in which they are not, according to Will Kymlicka’s theory, entitled to any multicultural rights. Paradoxically, Will Kymlicka’s theory can only be used to explain reasons for depriving immigrants of these multicultural rights (ibidem, pp. 33–41). According to Tariq Modood the appreciation of difference, or respect for identity, is a more functional approach for the discussion of multiculturalism. From one sociological perspective

1 John Rawls’s most discussed work is his theory of a just liberal society, called *justice as fairness*.

this “difference” is negative. It is synonymous with degradation, stigmatisation, exclusion, discrimination, racism, etc. The association of colour and squalor is firmly cemented in the public mind. From another sociological perspective, however, we can see groups as possessors of an identity generated from within. The differences are noticed both by persons outside and inside groups, and eventually unbalanced “we–they” relationships are established. Choosing “difference” instead of “culture” as a sociological perspective means understanding that this difference is not just shaped from the inside, by the minority’s culture, but also from the outside by the majority’s treatment of minorities. “Culture” is not an alternative to race, ethnicity, religion, etc. and so it is incorrect to argue that multiculturalism is “about cultural rights instead of political equality or economic opportunities; it is a politics which recognizes post-immigration groups exist in western societies in ways that both they and others, formally and informally, negatively and positively are aware that these group-differentiating dimensions are central to their social constitution” (Modood, 2013, p. 36). Instead of building multicultural policy upon a notion of “culture”, which is Will Kymlicka’s approach, it is better to create it with reference to actions taken by post-war, non-European, non-white immigrants and their communities to gain some form of acceptance and equal membership (ibidem, p. 39). For all these reasons of differentiated cultures, identities, economies, and political patterns we should not expect there to be one single applicable model of multicultural society. Similarly, there is no single commonly accepted definition of multiculturalism. There are claims and counter-claims as to what multiculturalism is or should be. “On the one hand . . . Will Kymlicka believes that he is merely justifying what is already to a large extent existing practice in liberal democracies, and furthermore that the kind of justifications he offers are a subset or natural development of mainstream liberal-democratic thought. . . . On the other hand, the well-known critic of multiculturalism, Brian Barry, sees all multiculturalists . . . as betraying the norms of liberalism and egalitarianism and returning to the pre-Enlightenment moral world of irrational distinctions and privileges” (Crowder, 2013, pp. 5–6). For our purposes it seems reasonable to adopt George Crowder’s working definition, as it does not exclude any political theory or practice usually referred to as multicultural. This definition has three parts:

- “1. Multiculturalism starts with the observation that most contemporary societies are ‘multicultural’—that is, they do in fact contain multiple cultures.

2. More distinctively, multiculturalists respond to that fact as something to approve of rather than oppose or merely tolerate.

3. More distinctively still, multiculturalists argue that the multiplicity of cultures within a single society should be not only generally approved of but also given positive recognition in the public policy and public institutions of the society” (Crowder, 2013, p. 7).

Whatever the arguments, the context of debate on multiculturalism is always democratic. It assumes the existence of rules, institutions and political norms that are the core of contemporary liberal democracies. Therefore, while discussing multiculturalism both its opponents and advocates have to refer to these rules.

Chronology

The triumphal march of multicultural policies lasted in Western democracies from the late 1960s to the mid-1990s. Practiced at national level they were synonymous with rejection of earlier ideas of unitary and homogeneous nationhood. Canada was the first country in the world to adopt multiculturalism as an official government policy. It was announced in a statement to the House of Commons on 8 October 1971 by the prime minister of the day, Pierre Trudeau. Multiculturalism was intended to preserve the cultural freedom of all individuals and acknowledge the cultural contributions of diverse ethnic groups to Canadian society. In 1982 multiculturalism was recognised by section 27 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms which is a part of the Canadian Constitution. One result of this policy statement was the Canadian Multiculturalism Act (CMA) of 1988 which binds the federal government and institutions to promote the policy. In the twentieth century-United States, the previous calls for assimilation began to find opposition in the form of multiculturalism. The concept of the “melting pot” was often contrasted with metaphors such as “salad bowl” and “cultural mosaic”. However, in the eyes of many an idea that was meant to heal social problems of the time turned out to be the cause of unrest both in the United States and Western Europe. On 16 October 2010, at a meeting of young members of the Christian Democratic Union, Angela Merkel, the German Chancellor, referred to growing anti-immigrant sentiments and announced that “This [multicultural] approach has failed, utterly failed” (Merkel, 2010). What were the reasons for this? To answer this question it is necessary to go back to the origins of the “immigrant problem”. The economy of the

post-World War II Federal Republic of Germany suffered from a considerable labour shortage. Seeking solutions the German government of the time invited *Gastarbeiters* to the country. The first agreement on recruiting workers was signed with Italy in December 1955. Similar agreements were later signed with Greece, Spain, Yugoslavia and, when the European workforce turned out to be insufficient for the rapidly growing German economy, in October 1961 an agreement was signed with Turkey. At the same time the German Democratic Republic concluded a similar agreement with Vietnam. According to the original intentions these “guest workers” were supposed to return to their original countries when no longer needed. Most did, apart from Muslim Turks who, because of “family reunions” and asylum seekers after the 1980 coup d’état in Turkey, became the overwhelming majority of migrants in Germany. In consequence, the idea of come-and-go migrant labour morphed into the reality of a settled multigenerational community of culturally, linguistically and religiously different people. The liberal and humane concept of multiculturalism seemed to be the answer to the pressing needs of that time. Immigrants “would retain their own culture, including language and religion, and that culture would coexist with the German culture. Thus, there would be a large number of foreigners, many of whom could not speak German and by definition did not share German and European values. While respecting diversity, the policy seemed to amount to buying migrant loyalty” (Friedman, 2010). Will Kymlicka indicates that “Chancellor Merkel’s announcement that multiculturalism has ‘utterly failed’ is puzzling, since the approach has not actually been tried in a significant way in Germany. Official policy at the national level has been hostile to institutionalised pluralism. . . . Merkel’s critique of multiculturalism is therefore a red herring” (Kymlicka, 2013, p. 85). Germany is not the only European country that has been struggling with the issue of civic integration. Since the mid-1990s multiculturalism has been commonly blamed for “promoting ethnic separatism, rejection of common national values, and a lack of interest in social integration” (Vertovec & Susanne 2010, p. 7). It has been often characterised as a “feel-good celebration of ethnocultural diversity, encouraging citizens to acknowledge and embrace the panoply of customs, traditions, music, and cuisine that exists in a multi-ethnic society” (Kymlicka, 2010, p. 33). The so called “3S” model of multiculturalism—saris, samosas and steel drums, also known as the “3Cs”—customs, celebrations, and cuisine or “4Fs”—folklore, food, fashion, and festivals, was already being mocked in Britain in the 1970s as superficial activities with no relation to core issues of economic and

political inequality. In 2011 the British prime minister David Cameron declared that “The policy of treating different cultures as ‘separate and distinct’—known as multiculturalism—had been a ‘mistake’” (Cameron, 2011). Another country that followed the “retreat from multiculturalism pattern” was the Netherlands. In many ways the Dutch had been pioneers in introducing multicultural politics. *Minderhedennota*—the politics of financial and social support for immigrants was officially introduced in 1983 by the Dutch government and abandoned twenty years later after a series of incidents including the murders of the libertarian activist Pim Fortuyn and an artist Theo van Gogh. The Dutch right-wing parties, later followed by a significant part of society, were expressing anti-multicultural sentiments. Immigrants, mainly from Morocco and Turkey, were equated with Muslims and, as such, blamed for terrorism, sexual violence and the unequal treatment of women. Finally, all financial support for non-government pro-immigrant organisations was halted and the time of “mollycoddling” immigrants in the Netherlands was over.² The association of 1100 Turkish and about 700 Moroccan organisations with the Institute of Immigration and Ethnic Studies came to the end on 1 January 2015 (Jos van der Lans, 2016). France with its republican tradition and assimilation approach, had always been sceptical about multiculturalism. According to French politicians France, unlike the rest of Europe, treated every individual as a citizen rather than as a member of a particular racial, ethnic, or cultural group. In reality, however, France was and is as socially divided as Germany or the United Kingdom. Hence the relatively good election results obtained by Jean-Marie Le Pen and, later, Marine Le Pen with their openly anti-immigrant political programme. Similar anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim trends can still be observed both in Europe and overseas countries such as Australia, Canada or the United States. Does this mean we are facing the end of multiculturalism?

Why is multiculturalism criticised?

Multiculturalism, like other “-isms”, is multidimensional and, as such, open to various interpretations. It is quite a common practice, both in public debate and academic research, to criticise multiculturalism

2 This was manifestation of a new social policy announced earlier by Home Minister Piet Hain Donner—a new model of integration—based on values of Dutch society (Donner 2011).

without giving a clear definition of what it means. Additionally, as each country has followed its own pattern of dealing with immigration and cultural diversity, the rhetoric and practice of multicultural policies have not always been the same in different places.

From the very beginning multiculturalism has faced traditional right-wing criticism. The presence of non-white people was not enthusiastically welcomed by proponents of homogenous national states. According to the liberal philosopher John Stuart Mill, “Free institutions are next to impossible in a country made up of different nationalities” (Mill John Stuart, 1861 [1958], p. 230). More recently, liberal nationalists, in accepting the importance of national belonging, have tended to allow that minority as well as majority national identities should be respected. David Miller argues that a state should protect nations focusing on a single dominant national identity, but also be “accessible to all cultural groups within society” (Miller, 1995, p. 141). In other words, while being consistently against multinationalism, he accepts the necessity of accommodating ethnic minorities but “within the classical liberal framework of toleration or privatisation of cultures rather than the official recognition characteristic of multiculturalism” (Crowder, 2013, p. 87). The idea of financial and civic support for immigrants has always been resisted by “colour-blind” liberals. Writing from a classical liberal perspective, Chandran Kukathas advocates minimal state intervention. Referring to multicultural policies, he claims that no special rights are required for the adequate accommodation of cultural minorities. The liberty of the individual equals the individual’s right to non-interference. Societies should respect not cultures, but the decisions of individuals to stay within or leave them. Cultures are just embodiments of these decisions, a kind of voluntary association whose members “recognise as legitimate the terms of association and the authority that upholds them” (Kukathas, 1992, p. 116). If individuals feel that their cultures are oppressive towards them, they may exercise their rights of exit and simply leave the community. In this cultural *laissez-faire* a state’s duty is neither to protect nor to interfere.

A feeling that the accommodation of diversity has gone too far and is threatening their way of life has been shared by many members of majorities. In consequence many nativist and populist political parties have come to the fore in recent years. Additionally, after September 11, 2001 those critics were joined by many on the centre-left of the the political spectrum who had previously supported multiculturalism. They argued that multicultural policies had turned out to be merely a smoke screen

for the real political and economic issues such as the unemployment, poor education, residential segregation and political marginalisation of immigrants. On the other hand, “the social-democratic discourse of civic integration differs from the radical-right discourse in emphasising a need to develop a more inclusive national identity and to fight racism and discrimination, but it nonetheless distances itself from the rhetoric and policies of multiculturalism” (Kymlicka, 2012, p. 8).

One of the strongest challenges to multicultural policies has come from defenders of women’s rights. The liberal feminist Susan Okin points out that religious or cultural minorities tend to be highly patriarchal. “Discrimination against and control of the freedom of females are practiced, to a greater or lesser extent, by virtually all cultures, past and present, but especially by religious ones” (Okin, 1999, p. 21). Cultural constraints can also harm other internal minorities such as children, homosexuals, the elderly and disabled to whom Chandran Kukathas’s “rights of exit” provide no help. Generally, Susan Okin agrees to cultural accommodation, but in a form that puts the emphasis on individual liberty and equality. “A multiculturalism that effectively treats all persons as each other’s moral equals” (Okin, 1999, p. 131). Another “feminist writer”, Ayelet Shachar, agrees that women are among the most vulnerable members of minority groups. She opposes what she calls “strong” multiculturalism, a situation in which the state authorises the self-determination of cultural and religious groups. Her solution to the problem is “joint governance”—a situation in which neither state nor group have exclusive authority over an individual. Among many possible forms of ‘joint governance’ she especially favours “transformative accommodation” in which it is individuals who decide which jurisdiction will be applied in their case. This should empower even the most vulnerable members of traditional groups to change—transform these groups from the inside. In this way, Ayelet Shachar believes, respect for cultural identity can be combined with respect for individual rights (Shachar, 2001, pp. 118–140).

According to critics, in its “festive edition” multiculturalism brings more harm than good to those who were supposed to be its beneficiaries. Because not all immigrants’ customs are worth promoting and some of them, like forced marriages, polygamy or female genital mutilation, are not legally and ethically acceptable in Western societies, traditional behaviours are subject to suppression and censorship. This, in consequence, has led to a manipulative strategy of selecting those practices that can be “safely” presented to society. These are usually limited to