

**OAKESHOTT AND PAREKH:
THE INFLUENCE OF BRITISH IDEALISM ON BRITISH
MULTICULTURALISM**

*Varun Uberoi*¹

Abstract: This article uses new textual evidence of Michael Oakeshott's influence on Bhikhu Parekh's work about multiculturalism so as to offer an interpretation of this influence that is valuable for four reasons. First, it replaces a doubtful alternative interpretation. Second, it clarifies the provenance of frequently discussed parts of Parekh's texts and it shows how we should understand them. Third, it shows, contrary to much scholarship, that the ideas of British Idealists and multiculturalists are related, as Parekh was attracted to ideas that Oakeshott shared with other British Idealists and he used these ideas in his work on multiculturalism. Fourth, parts of this interpretation are shown to apply not only to Parekh, but also to other prominent British multiculturalists, such as Tariq Modood.

Bhikhu Parekh is among 'the greatest figures' in British political theory;² his work on multiculturalism is said by Will Kymlicka to be 'full of wisdom and insight', and by Charles Taylor to indicate 'the path of wisdom'.³ Many scholars thus study Parekh's work on multiculturalism,⁴ and claim that it contains the ideas of Parekh's former teacher, Michael Oakeshott.⁵ But this article uses evidence of Oakeshott's influence on Parekh that no other scholar has considered so as to offer a new interpretation of Oakeshott's influence on Parekh's work about multiculturalism; and this new interpretation is valuable for four reasons.

¹ Reader in Political Theory and Public Policy, Department of Social and Political Sciences, Brunel University London, Kingston Lane, Uxbridge, UB8 3PH. Email: varun.uberui@brunel.ac.uk

² P. Kelly, *British Political Theory in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 2010), p. vii. See also p. 27.

³ W. Kymlicka, 'Liberalism Dialogue and Multiculturalism', *Ethnicities*, 1 (1) (2001), p. 128. C. Taylor, 'How to be Diverse', *Times Literary Supplement* 20 (1) (2001), p. 4.

⁴ C. Tyler, 'The Democratic Implications of Parekh's Cultural Pluralism', *Politics*, 16 (3) (1996); J. Seglow, 'Reply to Tyler', *Politics* 17 (1) (1997); J.B. Priess, 'Multiculturalism and Equal Dignity', *Respublica* 17 (2) (2011); T. Brooks, 'Ethical Citizenship and the Stakeholder Society', in *Ethical Citizenship — British Idealism and the Politics of Recognition*, ed. T. Brooks (Basingstoke, 2014); M. Mookherjee, 'At the Borders of Otherness: Tracing Feminism through Bhikhu Parekh's Multiculturalism', in *Multiculturalism Rethought*, ed. V. Uberoi and T. Modood (Edinburgh, 2015); P. Jones, 'Liberty, Equality and Accommodation', in *Multiculturalism Rethought*, ed. Uberoi and Modood.

⁵ P. Kelly, 'Dangerous Liaisons, Parekh and Oakeshottian Multiculturalism', *Political Quarterly*, 72 (4) (2001); V. Uberoi, 'National Identity — A Multiculturalist's Response', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 21 (1) (2018); G. Levey, 'The Bristol School of Multiculturalism', *Ethnicities*, 19 (1) (2019).

First, it replaces another interpretation of Oakeshott's influence on Parekh, that is shown to be doubtful. Second, it clarifies the provenance of frequently discussed parts of Parekh's texts, and shows how we should understand them. Third, contrary to much scholarship, it demonstrates how the ideas of British Idealists — such as T.H. Green, F.H. Bradley and Bernard Bosanquet — and multiculturalists are related.⁶ This is because Oakeshott was not only a conservative thinker as he was also taught by, identified with, and was one of the last British Idealists.⁷ I thus show that Parekh was attracted to Oakeshott's particular use of ideas that were common among the British Idealists, and that Parekh used these ideas in his work on multiculturalism. Fourth, parts of this new interpretation are shown to be true not only of Parekh, but also of other prominent British multiculturalists, such as Tariq Modood.

As Oakeshott is often regarded as a conservative thinker, it may be surprising to learn that he influenced a well-known multiculturalist and egalitarian such as Parekh. But Parekh says that Oakeshott was a 'great influence' on him when he was a graduate student at the London School of Economics (LSE).⁸ Parekh also endorsed and used ideas from texts by Oakeshott that I show influenced his work on multiculturalism.⁹ But what is multiculturalism?

Multiculturalism has been conceptualized in many different ways.¹⁰ But whatever else multiculturalism is, it is a tradition of social and political thought that emerged among cultural minorities in the early 1960s as they began to reject monocultural conceptions of their societies and to advocate the first policies of multiculturalism that appeared in the early 1970s.¹¹ From the late 1980s onwards, political theorists made seminal contributions to this tradition by, for example, offering liberal justifications for minority rights and by showing why societies should not feel threatened by their cultural

⁶ W.J. Mander, *British Idealism: A History* (Oxford, 2014), p. 270; C. Tyler, *Idealist Political Philosophy* (London, 2006), pp. 167, 187.

⁷ D. Boucher, 'The Victim of Thought: The Idealist Inheritance', in *A Companion to Michael Oakeshott*, ed. P. Franco and L. Marsh (Philadelphia PA, 2012); D. Boucher, 'Oakeshott and the Context of British Idealism', in E. Podoksik, *The Cambridge Companion to Oakeshott* (Cambridge, 2012).

⁸ B. Parekh, 'Conversations in International Relations', *International Relations*, 18 (3) (2004), p. 388.

⁹ B. Parekh, 'The Political Philosophy of Michael Oakeshott', *British Journal of Political Science*, 9 (4) (1979), p. 499; B. Parekh, *Marx's Theory of Ideology* (London, 1982), p. 231; B. Parekh, 'Living as an Immortal', *Cambridge Journal*, October, accessed at the LSE. Oakeshott Archive (1991), p. 102.

¹⁰ V. Uberoi and T. Modood, 'Has Multiculturalism in Britain Retreated', *Soundings*, 53 (1) (2013).

¹¹ V. Uberoi, 'Multiculturalism is a Tradition of Political Thought that Liberal Nationalists can use', *Nations and Nationalism*, 26 (3) (2020); V. Uberoi, 'Multiculturalism and The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms', *Political Studies*, 57 (4) (2009).

differences.¹² I show how Oakeshott's ideas influenced Parekh's most significant scholarly and policy contributions to this tradition.

These contributions are *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, which scholars, journalists and politicians praise;¹³ and the *Parekh Report*, which journalists criticized, but the UK government implemented 66% of its recommendations within three years of its publication.¹⁴ Since this report came from a commission that Parekh chaired, it also contains the ideas of other commission members, thus I focus on ideas in this report that appeared in Parekh's work long before they appeared in the report. Both texts were published in 2000 and immediately before politicians, journalists and academics in many countries began to reject multiculturalist ideas.¹⁵ But I say little about the social context in which *Rethinking Multiculturalism* and this report were published, as doing so will tell us little about whether Parekh used Oakeshott's ideas in these texts.

As Parekh seldom cites Oakeshott in these texts, I use evidence of Parekh explicitly endorsing and using Oakeshott's ideas long before he wrote *Rethinking Multiculturalism* and his report; and I show how he later uses these same ideas in *Rethinking Multiculturalism* and his report. This approach differs from that of Paul Kelly, who is the only other scholar to show Oakeshott's influence on Parekh and is often cited as doing so.¹⁶ Kelly demonstrates Oakeshott's influence on Parekh by perceptively showing how similar their ideas are. Yet in this article, I question Kelly's claims and offer my own interpretation of this influence in the following way.

In Section I, I identify reasons to doubt Kelly's claims. In Section II, I show that Parekh endorsed Oakeshott's use of ideas that were common among the British Idealists and that he used these ideas in *Rethinking Multiculturalism*. In Section III, I show that the same is true of the ideas in the *Parekh Report*. I conclude by using what I found in previous sections to identify the components of a new interpretation of Oakeshott's influence on Parekh's work about

¹² W. Kymlicka, *Liberalism Community and Culture* (Oxford, 1989); W. Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship* (Oxford, 1995); C. Taylor, 'The Politics of Recognition', in *Multiculturalism*, ed. A. Gutman (Princeton, 1994); B. Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism* (Basingstoke, 2000).

¹³ Kymlicka, 'Liberalism, Dialogue and Multiculturalism'; T. Modood, 'Their Liberalism and our Multiculturalism' *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 3 (2) (2001); E. Rietveld, 'Debating Multiculturalism in Britain: Competing Frames', *Ethnicities* 14 (1) (2014); D. Goodhart, *The British Dream* (London, 2013), p. 208.

¹⁴ O. Khan, 'The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain: 15 Years On', available at <https://www.runnymedetrust.org/blog/the-future-of-multi-ethnic-britain-15-years-on>.

¹⁵ V. Uberoi and T. Modood, 'Inclusive Britishness — A Multiculturalist Advance', *Political Studies*, 61 (1) (2013); K. Banting and W. Kymlicka, 'Is there Really a Retreat from Multiculturalism', *Comparative European Politics*, 11 (5) (2013).

¹⁶ L. Thomassen, *British Multiculturalism and the Politics of Representation* (Edinburgh, 2017), pp. 61, 65; Uberoi, 'National Identity', p. 57; Levey, 'Bristol School of Multiculturalism', p. 208.

multiculturalism, and by showing why this interpretation is significant for a number of reasons.

I

Kelly's Interpretation of Parekh's use of Oakeshott's Ideas

While Kelly never says so explicitly, he has five claims about Oakeshott's influence on Parekh, and in this section I will show why there are plausible reasons to doubt each of them. First, Kelly claims that while 'some of Parekh's concerns are incompatible' with Oakeshott's *On Human Conduct*, 'Parekh draws more heavily . . . from Oakeshott's earlier work, *Rationalism in Politics*, especially the chapter of that name and "Political Education"'.¹⁷ No evidence is used to support this claim; but as Parekh is very critical of *On Human Conduct*, he is unlikely to be attracted to or influenced by it.¹⁸ Yet Parekh is also unlikely to be attracted to and influenced by the two essays that Kelly refers to, as he seldom mentions them in fifty years of publications. Instead, when discussing Oakeshott at length, such as in review articles of his work, Parekh discusses other texts by Oakeshott and barely mentions the two essays except to criticise them.¹⁹ For example, Parekh calls 'Political Education' 'complacent, evasive, even a little self-indulgent and arrogant'.²⁰ In short, Kelly has yet to show how essays that Parekh seldom mentioned except to criticise, influenced Parekh.

Second, Kelly claims that Parekh uses 'the Oakeshottian idea of practices that are constitutive of a way of life as a means of distinguishing the relevant groups for the purpose of multicultural inclusion from those that are merely lifestyle choices'.²¹ No evidence is offered to support this claim; and Parekh does not cite Oakeshott when noting that a way of life that a person is born into contains practices and is unlike the lifestyle choice of, for example, an artist.²² This idea is also common and could have come from others such as Gandhi, as Parekh shows in his work on Gandhi how practices are part of a

¹⁷ P. Kelly, ' "Situating Parekh's Multiculturalism": Bhikhu Parekh and Twentieth Century British Political Theory', in *Multiculturalism Rethought*, ed. Uberoi and Modood, p. 46.

¹⁸ Parekh, 'Political Philosophy of Michael Oakeshott', p. 502; B. Parekh, 'Oakeshott's Theory of Civil Association', *Ethics*, 106 (1) (1995), p. 184.

¹⁹ Parekh, 'Oakeshott's Theory of Civil Association', p. 179. Parekh, 'Living as an Immortal', p. 101; Parekh, 'Political Philosophy of Michael Oakeshott', p. 487.

²⁰ Parekh, 'Living as an Immortal', p. 101.

²¹ P. Kelly, 'Identity, Equality and Power: Tensions — Parekh's Political Theory of Multiculturalism', in *Multiculturalism Identity and Rights*, ed. B. Haddock and P. Sutch (London, 2003), p. 99.

²² Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, p. 3. See also B. Parekh, 'The Logic of Intercultural Evaluation', in *Tolerance, Identity and Intercultural Evaluation*, ed. J. Horton and S. Mendus (Basingstoke, 1999), p. 163.

way of life.²³ Kelly thus needs evidence that this idea came from Oakeshott; but such evidence is hard to find. The two essays by Oakeshott that Kelly refers to seldom, if ever, refer to ‘practices’ and refer instead to ‘traditions’ and ‘manners’ of behaviour.²⁴ *On Human Conduct*, of course, contains a conception of practices,²⁵ but Kelly, we saw, claims that *On Human Conduct* is ‘incompatible’ with some of Parekh’s ‘concerns’. Thus Kelly fails to show why Parekh’s idea of practices comes from Oakeshott.

Third, Kelly claims that Parekh (a) follows Oakeshott and ‘rejects . . . an appeal to universal principles . . . as a way of . . . arbitrating between . . . groups’; and (b) defends an Oakeshottian alternative to using such principles.²⁶ No evidence is used to support this claim. However, in chapter nine of *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, Parekh does argue that the harm principle and principles of human rights do not tell us whether to permit minority practices that need not entail any harm or breach of human rights but are still controversial, such as wearing a *burqa*.²⁷ Instead, Parekh advocates a dialogue with minorities over whether the ‘operative public values’ (OPVs) of their polity can permit the controversial practice. Such OPVs are values that guide what should happen in a polity, as they are in its constitution, law and norms. Kelly says that Parekh is offering ‘a version of’ Oakeshott’s idea that traditions of political behaviour in a polity, such as treating citizens equally, guide (or as Oakeshott says, ‘intimate’) what should happen in the polity.²⁸

But when discussing controversial minority practices and the use of OPVs, Parekh does not cite Oakeshott at all, or use Oakeshottian terminology such as ‘intimations’. It is thus unclear why the ideas that Kelly refers to necessarily came from Oakeshott, as they could just as easily have come from others. For example, Hegel famously argued that abstract principles alone do not guide political practice and are part of a ‘contextual’ ethical life that does so;²⁹ Parekh studied Hegel, and Hegel scholars have valued Parekh’s ‘advice on Hegelian philosophy’.³⁰ Kelly thus needs evidence that shows how Parekh got these ideas from Oakeshott, rather than Hegel or the many scholars who are

²³ B. Parekh, *Colonialism, Tradition and Reform* (New Delhi, 1989), p. 18.

²⁴ ‘Rationalism in Politics’, in M. Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays* (Boulder CO, 1993), pp. 8, 26, 32; M. Oakeshott, ‘Political Education’, in *ibid.* pp. 52–62.

²⁵ M. Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct* (Oxford, 1975), p. 55.

²⁶ Kelly, ‘Dangerous Liaisons’, p. 431; Kelly, ‘Identity, Equality and Power’, p. 99.

²⁷ Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, pp. 266–7.

²⁸ P. Kelly, ‘The Oakeshottians’, in *The Oxford Handbook of British Politics*, ed. M. Flinder *et al.* (Oxford, 2009), p. 166; Kelly, ‘Situating Parekh’s Multiculturalism’, p. 49.

²⁹ G.W.F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 192–3, 243, 247.

³⁰ Thom Brooks, *Hegel’s Political Philosophy* (Edinburgh, 2013), p. xii. R. Plant, *Hegel* (London, 1973), p. 10.

shown to use Hegel's idea of a contextual ethical life such as, for example, Bradley.³¹ But Kelly provides no such evidence.

Fourth, Kelly claims that Parekh does not explain 'what grounds he has for assuming that there will be' an Oakeshottian dialogue over OPVs; as it might not occur.³² But Kelly does not identify the passages in Parekh's work that indicate this assumption and I cannot find them. In an earlier published version of Parekh's argument about the use of OPVs, Parekh claims that minority practices are often banned without 'serious public discussion'; thus, Parekh seems to know that a dialogue may not occur.³³ It thus seems unlikely that Parekh assumes a dialogue is inevitable and instead he seems to assume the following in Chapter 9 of *Rethinking Multiculturalism*.

A dialogue with minorities over whether OPVs permit a controversial practice is likely when other ideas that are defended earlier in *Rethinking Multiculturalism* are accepted too. For example, a government that wants the 'public culture' regulating its citizens' collective affairs to reflect not only a cultural majority, but also cultural minorities, will have a dialogue with such minorities about how they interpret OPVs, as OPVs are part of the public culture; and the dialogue may result in minorities contributing to it. Parekh thus justifies minority contributions to a public culture in earlier published versions of his argument about OPVs, and at length, in Chapter 7 of *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, and briefly, in Chapter 9 of *Rethinking Multiculturalism* too.³⁴ Chapter 7 is also in what Parekh calls the 'theoretical' part of *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, which is meant to inform its 'practical' part containing Chapter 9's defence of a dialogue over OPVs.³⁵ Parekh thus seems to assume that the dialogue that he defends in Chapter 9 of *Rethinking Multiculturalism* is likely when earlier ideas in *Rethinking Multiculturalism* such as creating an inclusive public culture are accepted too. Kelly must show that this is untrue, and that Parekh assumes instead that the dialogue is inevitable, but he does not do so.

Fifth, Kelly claims that 'the whole thrust' of Parekh's Oakeshottian 'perspective privileges the received operative public values of a society'.³⁶ Kelly does not show where this privileging occurs in Parekh's text, but the most obvious example is Chapter 9 of *Rethinking Multiculturalism*. In this chapter, Parekh argues that cultural minorities should accept a cultural majority's interpretation of OPVs if (1) a dialogue reaches no agreement and (2)

³¹ Mander, *British Idealism*, pp. 182, 495.

³² Kelly, 'Identity, Equality and Power', p. 104.

³³ B. Parekh, 'Cultural Diversity and the Liberal Democracy', in D. Beetham, *Defining and Measuring Democracy* (London, 1994), p. 214.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 211; B. Parekh, 'Pluralism and the Limits of Diversity', *Alternatives*, 20 (4) (1995), p. 435; Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, pp. 223, 269.

³⁵ Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, pp. 11–12.

³⁶ Kelly, 'Identity, Equality and Power', p. 104.

the 'matter is urgent' as the practice in question is obviously 'morally unacceptable'.³⁷ Hence, an inconclusive dialogue about female genital mutilation might be an example of where (1) and (2) apply, but inconclusive dialogues about wearing a *burqa* or *niqab* are not, as there is nothing urgent and obviously morally unacceptable about wearing them. Thus, a cultural majority's interpretation of OPVs is privileged in only certain instances and this cannot logically be an example of what Kelly calls the 'whole thrust' of Parekh's perspective privileging a cultural majority.

But note what Parekh repeatedly argued in earlier published versions of Chapter 9 of *Rethinking Multiculturalism*:

If for some reason the dialogue were to be impossible, it might be advisable to postpone the decision in the hope that the passage of time and the fusion of ideas brought about by formal and informal public discussions will create enough common ground and goodwill to facilitate a . . . compromise. If the matter is urgent *or* if the impasse persists, *the values of the wider society should prevail* . . .³⁸

This text suggests that an impasse in the dialogue alone is sufficient for the cultural majority's interpretation of OPVs to prevail; but this changed in *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, as we saw, so that a cultural majority's interpretation only prevails if 1) there is an impasse and 2) the matter is urgent. Hence, if earlier published versions of Chapter 9 of *Rethinking Multiculturalism* are the reason why Kelly thought that the 'whole thrust' of Parekh's perspective privileges a cultural majority, then Kelly did not notice how Parekh's position subtly changed in *Rethinking Multiculturalism*.

But Kelly may have another reason for thinking that the 'whole thrust' of Parekh's perspective privileges a cultural majority. This is because Kelly notes, without saying why, that Parekh's dialogue makes minorities 'dependent' on others to allow their practices, thus institutionalizing their 'inequality of status'.³⁹ But cultural minorities can only avoid seeking permission for controversial practices from others, such as a concerned government or citizens, by becoming self-governing; and Parekh says that doing so falsely presupposes that a person can belong to only one cultural group, risks empowering oppressive minority leaders, impedes intercultural learning and much else.⁴⁰ If such groups are not self-governing, they will be dependent on others

³⁷ Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, p. 272.

³⁸ These sentences are repeatedly used in Parekh, 'Cultural Pluralism and the Limits of Diversity', p. 442; B. Parekh, 'Practices and Principles of Toleration', *International Migration Review*, 30 (1) (1996), pp. 259, 266; Parekh, 'The Logic of Intercultural Evaluation', p. 174, emphasis added.

³⁹ Kelly, 'Identity, Equality and Power', p. 105.

⁴⁰ Some think that Parekh wants communal self-government as he advocates 'a community of communities'; but Parekh has explicitly rejected giving each cultural community self-government and means something very different by a community of

to permit practices that are controversial; and Kelly does not say why Parekh should ignore this fact. Nor does Kelly say why a dialogue institutionalizes inequality in the status of minorities as it can also, we saw, help minorities to contribute to a public culture that usually reflects only a cultural majority. The dialogue can thus help to equalize the status of minorities in a public culture as it helps them to influence it.

In summary, Kelly needs to do much more to substantiate his claims. He must show how Parekh was influenced by essays that he seldom mentions except to criticize; and how ideas that could just as easily have come from others come from Oakeshott. He must also show why Parekh assumes his dialogue is inevitable and why 'the whole thrust' of the argument about OPVs in *Rethinking Multiculturalism* favours a majority, as neither seem true. This work seems difficult; and until it is complete, there are plausible reasons to doubt all of Kelly's claims. But there is also evidence of Parekh explicitly endorsing and using ideas from Oakeshott's texts that Kelly does not discuss. These ideas differ from the ones that Kelly refers to, and they are also in texts that differ from those that Kelly refers to; and they influenced *Rethinking Multiculturalism* in subtle yet perceptible ways, as I now show.

II

Evidence of Oakeshott's Influence on *Rethinking Multiculturalism*

I begin this section by briefly describing the conception of philosophy in Oakeshott's *Experience and its Modes* so as to then show how it influenced Parekh and *Rethinking Multiculturalism*. Hence note that in *Experience and its Modes*, philosophy is distinguished from other scholarly inquiries, such as history or science, by noting that all such scholarly inquiries are 'worlds of ideas' that remain 'abstract' until we examine and relate the presuppositions on which they rest. Thus, we might, for example, examine how history presupposes conceptions of time and change, or how science presupposes conceptions of regularity and prediction. Philosophy does just this, as it removes abstraction by examining and relating *all* such presuppositions so as to present 'a unity of . . . irreducible' ideas.⁴¹ Of course, presuppositions that are examined and related are no longer presupposed; thus, philosophy is ideally a presuppositionless inquiry. In his 1979 review of Oakeshott's work, and later too, Parekh shows how philosophy in *Experience and its Modes* is an inquiry

communities (see part III of the article). See Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, pp. 200, 205; B. Parekh, 'Postscript', in *Colour, Culture and Consciousness: Immigrant Intellectuals in Britain*, ed. B. Parekh (London, 1974), p. 228.

⁴¹ M. Oakeshott, *Experience and its Modes* (Cambridge, 1933), p. 348, emphasis added.

that ideally aims to be 'free from all presuppositions';⁴² and *Experience and its Modes* had the following impact on Parekh.

Parekh repeatedly claimed that while Hegel and others also describe philosophy as a presuppositionless inquiry, he had 'greatly benefitted' from *Experience and its Modes*;⁴³ and in his early work, Parekh explicitly claimed that philosophers 'ideally' have 'no' presuppositions.⁴⁴ In his later work, Parekh argued that paying relentless attention to presuppositions is a 'distinctively philosophical activity' and he used the language of *Experience and its Modes* to do so. Hence, Parekh used Oakeshott's words in *Experience and its Modes*⁴⁵ to note how philosophers pay great attention to their presuppositions so as to be fully 'self-conscious' and 'self-critical', and they even 'turn on' themselves to examine what they presuppose.⁴⁶ Now consider what Parekh does in *Rethinking Multiculturalism*.

In *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, Parekh pays great attention to his presuppositions. This is because he claims that *Rethinking Multiculturalism* shows that multiculturalism is a 'perspective on human life' in which (a) human beings are influenced by cultures; (b) these cultures are 'internally plural'; and (c) cultural diversity is valuable.⁴⁷ Parekh thus presupposes that there is what he calls a 'need' to show (a)–(c) as others have done so inadequately, and Parekh defends this presupposition.⁴⁸ But he does not show briefly, as others might, why contemporary thinkers discuss (a)–(c) inadequately. Instead, Parekh learned from Oakeshott to pay great attention to presuppositions, and thus he uses a third of *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, or close to a hundred pages, to show that many of the greatest Western thinkers, from antiquity onwards, ignore or underestimate (a)–(c) in the following ways.

In Chapter 1 of *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, Parekh shows how Plato, Aristotle and others in 'monist' traditions of thought believe that only one way of life is fully human and best, and how they ignore point (a) above, as

⁴² Parekh, 'The Political Philosophy of Michael Oakeshott', p. 483; B. Parekh, *Contemporary Political Thinkers* (Oxford, 1982), p. 97; Parekh, 'Oakeshott's Theory of Civil Association', p. 163.

⁴³ Parekh, *Marx's Theory of Ideology*, p. 231; Parekh, 'The Political Philosophy of Michael Oakeshott', p. 499; Parekh, 'Living as an Immortal', p. 101.

⁴⁴ B. Parekh, 'The Nature of Political Philosophy', in *Politics and Experience*, ed. P. King and B. Parekh (Cambridge, 1968), p. 161. At this time Parekh was also corresponding with Oakeshott about the nature of political philosophy. See Parekh 'Oakeshott's Theory of Civil Association', p. 165.

⁴⁵ Oakeshott, *Experience and its Modes*, p. 353.

⁴⁶ Parekh, *Contemporary Political Thinkers*, p. 187; B. Parekh, *The Philosophy of Political Philosophy* (Hull, 1986), p. 15; B. Parekh, 'Theorizing Political Theory', in *Political Theory in Transition*, ed. N. O'Sullivan (London, 2000), p. 251.

⁴⁷ Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, pp. 12, 336–7.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

'monists take no account of the role of culture in shaping human beings'.⁴⁹ Chapter 2 does the same with point (b), as it shows how thinkers in the 'pluralist' tradition, such as Herder, 'took culture to be an integrated whole and ignore its internal diversity'.⁵⁰ Chapter 3 shows how thinkers in the contemporary liberal tradition ignore point (c) as they can 'give a coherent account of the value of culture but not of cultural diversity'.⁵¹ In accordance with what he learned from *Experience and its Modes*, Parekh pays great attention to what he presupposes, as he devotes a third of *Rethinking Multiculturalism* to defending his presupposition. But note one aspect of how he does so.

Parekh uses traditions of thought, be they monist, pluralist or liberal, to defend his presupposition; and he does so as Oakeshott's famous introduction to Hobbes's *Leviathan* influenced him in the following way. Oakeshott claimed that all 'masterpieces' of political philosophy focus on the human 'predicament', but they also differ; thus he divided political philosophy into three traditions so as to show the tradition in which *Leviathan* is a masterpiece.⁵² Parekh says that, as a student, he was 'thrilled by' this text's 'philosophical profundity, argumentative power and literary elegance';⁵³ and early in his career, Parekh not only repeated Oakeshott's claim that important works of political philosophy focus on 'the human predicament', but also endorsed how Oakeshott used such traditions in this introduction and advocated examining such traditions in general.⁵⁴ Later in his career, Parekh called this introduction 'seminal' and used such traditions in different works of his.⁵⁵ Thus, all the available evidence suggests that he also did so when defending what *Rethinking Multiculturalism* presupposes. Ideas from this introduction and *Experience and its Modes* stayed with Parekh throughout his career; thus, Parekh devoted a third of *Rethinking Multiculturalism* to defending a presupposition and he used traditions of thought to do so.

But the ideas in Oakeshott's work that Parekh was attracted to were common among the British Idealists who I noted earlier influenced Oakeshott. Hence, while Hegel had a similar conception of philosophy to the one that is in *Experience and its Modes*, so did British Idealists such as Bosanquet and

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 80; see also pp. 23, 47.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 77; see also pp. 73, 78. Categories such as 'monist' and 'pluralist' might lead a reader to think that Parekh was also influenced by Isaiah Berlin; thus, note that Parekh (*Contemporary Political Thinkers; Rethinking Multiculturalism*, p. 48) was influenced by Berlin in other ways.

⁵¹ Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, pp. 90, 97, 108–13.

⁵² 'Introduction to *Leviathan*', in Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics*, p. 227.

⁵³ Parekh, 'Living as an Immortal', p. 101.

⁵⁴ B. Parekh and R.N. Berki, 'The History of Political Ideas: A Critique of Q. Skinner's Methodology', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 34 (2) (1973), pp. 173, 180, 183.

⁵⁵ B. Parekh, 'Political Theory: Traditions in Political Philosophy', in *A New Handbook of Political Science*, ed. R. Goodin and H. Klingemann (Oxford, 1996), p. 504. Parekh, *Colonialism, Tradition*, p. 18.

Bradley,⁵⁶ and David Boucher⁵⁷ shows how Oakeshott used Bosanquet and Bradley's ideas to devise his conception of philosophy in *Experience and its Modes*.⁵⁸ Equally, Green, Bosanquet and other British Idealists examined traditions of thought so as to discern the insights and the mistakes of past thinkers who had examined similar questions.⁵⁹ Parekh was thus attracted to Oakeshott's particular use of ideas that were common among the British Idealists and he used them in *Rethinking Multiculturalism*. But was Parekh also attracted to how British Idealists other than Oakeshott used these ideas? To think and claim that Parekh was, we need evidence such as the following.

We need evidence of, for example, Parekh endorsing Bosanquet or Bradley's use of these ideas, or Parekh expressing these ideas in a way that they did, but that Oakeshott did not. Yet I can find no such evidence. Instead, when Parekh notes how Hegel and others had a similar conception of philosophy to the one that is in *Experience and its Modes*, Parekh does not even acknowledge that other British Idealists also did so, let alone endorse their ideas.⁶⁰ Equally, in fifty years of publications, Parekh seldom refers to other British Idealists, even when he discusses Oakeshott; and on the rare occasions that Parekh does refer to these Idealists, he seems unattracted to their ideas as he criticizes them and notes how hard it is to understand them.⁶¹ There is thus some evidence that Parekh was unattracted to the ideas of other British Idealists; and no evidence that he was attracted to how other British Idealists used the ideas above.⁶²

⁵⁶ B. Bosanquet, *The Philosophical Theory of the State* (Indiana, 2001), p. 47; F.H. Bradley, *The Presuppositions of Critical History* (Oxford, 1874), pp. 2, 4, 5, 10.

⁵⁷ Boucher, 'The Victim of Thought', p. 56; Boucher, 'Oakeshott and Context of British Idealism', p. 252.

⁵⁸ I first began to think about this point after an email exchange with Colin Tyler to whom I am grateful for this exchange.

⁵⁹ See Mander, *British Idealism*, p. 39; M. Richter, *The Politics of Conscience*, T.H. Green and His Age (Bristol, 1995), p. 227. For examples see T.H. Green, *Lectures on Political Obligation* (New York, 1917), pp. 49–78; Bosanquet, *The Philosophical Theory*, pp. 85–104.

⁶⁰ Parekh, 'The Political Philosophy of Michael Oakeshott', p. 501; Parekh, *Marx's Theory of Ideology*, p. 231.

⁶¹ B. Parekh, 'The Spectre of Self-Consciousness', in *Colour, Culture and Conscience: Immigrant Intellectuals in Britain*, ed. B. Parekh (London, 1974), p. 76; B. Parekh, 'A Misconceived Discourse on Political Obligation', *Political Studies*, 41 (1993), p. 237.

⁶² A critic could refer to a letter that Oakeshott sent to Parekh in 1966 (provided to me by Parekh). In this letter Oakeshott notes that philosophers offer more than what Bosanquet calls a 'theory of the first look' that tell us merely what politics is as they look at what it presupposes too. We might thus argue that Oakeshott assumes in this letter that Parekh read and will understand his reference to Bosanquet's *Philosophical Theory of the State* (pp. 104–5), whose early chapters contain a conception of philosophy similar to *Experience and its Modes*. But Oakeshott may instead assume that what he says is

Instead, the evidence indicates that Parekh was attracted only to Oakeshott's particular use of British Idealist ideas. Hence, while so many prominent political theorists of multiculturalism explicitly belong to the 'Anglo-American analytic tradition of philosophy'⁶³ that begins with G.E. Moore and others who rejected British Idealism,⁶⁴ Parekh was attracted to Oakeshott's particular use of British Idealist ideas, and he used them in the first third of *Rethinking Multiculturalism*. Knowing all of this helps to correct the following common misunderstanding about the first third of *Rethinking Multiculturalism*.

The first third of *Rethinking Multiculturalism* is often said to be 'insensitive' to the textual and contextual detail that historians usually consider, even though Parekh says that this section of *Rethinking Multiculturalism* is 'historical'.⁶⁵ But no particular claims in this section of *Rethinking Multiculturalism* are challenged and said to be implausible.⁶⁶ Thus, a lack of detail is said to be a problem, but not demonstrated to be one. Equally, Parekh never said that this section offers a detailed history; and describing it as 'historical' need not imply that it does so. This is why Sheldon Wolin, for example, distinguished his own 'historical' approach from 'a detailed history of political thought'.⁶⁷ Had Parekh wanted to offer a detailed history, he knew how to do so as he had published such work before.⁶⁸ But the first third of *Rethinking Multiculturalism* served a different purpose. It was 'historical' only in the sense of discussing past thinkers, and it did so recall, so as to defend a presupposition: that other thinkers inadequately discuss how (a) human beings are influenced by cultures; (b) these cultures are 'internally plural'; and (c) cultural diversity is valuable. Parekh's conception of philosophy required him to pay great attention to this presupposition, thus this section serves a

clear without knowledge of this text, or he may assume that Parekh can look up this text if he wants to. This letter is not evidence that Parekh read Bosanquet's text let alone endorsed how certain ideas discussed above are used in it.

⁶³ J. Carens, *Ethics of Immigration* (Oxford, 2013), p. 312; W. Kymlicka, *Introduction to Political Philosophy* (Oxford, 2002), p. 8.

⁶⁴ Mander, *British Idealism*, p. 544.

⁶⁵ Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, p. 12. See Horton, 'Bhikhu Parekh Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory', *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 18 (3) (2001), p. 308; F. Dallmayr, 'Multiculturalism and the Good Life', *The Good Society*, 12 (2) (2003), p. 41.

⁶⁶ The only author who I know of who attempts to briefly *demonstrate* a problem with Parekh's claims in this section of *Rethinking Multiculturalism* is S. Muthu. But even Muthu falsely assumes that Parekh is offering a detailed intellectual history in the early chapters of *Rethinking Multiculturalism*. See S. Muthu, 'On the Intellectual Histories and Political Theory of the "Multiculturalist Perspective"', *The Good Society*, 12 (2) (2003).

⁶⁷ S. Wolin, *Vision and Politics* (Princeton, 2004), p. xxiii.

⁶⁸ Hence, Parekh famously corrected Herbert Hart's interpretation of some of Bentham's work and Hart could see that he had made errors. See N. Lacey, *A Life of H.L.A. Hart* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 311–2.

philosophical purpose as it justifies why Parekh shows (a)–(c), but it does not offer a detailed history.⁶⁹

Had critics known that this part of *Rethinking Multiculturalism* was not meant to offer a detailed history, they may have been reluctant to criticize it. This is because we seldom criticize an absence of textual and contextual detail in the early chapters of books that do not offer a detailed history unless particular claims in them seem implausible in light of such detail. Critics it seems just assumed that this section of *Rethinking Multiculturalism* should contain more textual and contextual detail, as they also assumed that it offered a detailed history. They can no longer do so now that we know how Oakeshott's particular use of British Idealist ideas influenced this part of *Rethinking Multiculturalism* and gave it a rather different purpose. I now show how Oakeshott's particular use of British Idealist ideas influenced the *Parekh Report*.

III

Evidence of Oakeshott's Influence on the *Parekh Report*

The phrase 'community of communities' often appears in the *Parekh Report*. In this section, I show that while this *phrase* was not Oakeshott's, Oakeshott taught Parekh the *ideas* that it refers to. But what were these ideas? Answers to this question usually ignore how Parekh explained and used this phrase, and simply attribute a meaning to it. For example, journalists criticized the report for claiming that a 'community of communities' should replace the term 'Britain' and the idea that Britain is a nation;⁷⁰ and scholars criticized this phrase in the report as they claimed that it suggests that 'groups should determine the rights of their members'.⁷¹ But none of these claims are in the report.⁷² Journalists and scholars simply attributed meaning to the phrase 'community of communities' instead of discerning what this phrase meant by considering how Parekh repeatedly explained and used it, as I will do shortly.

⁶⁹ I do not claim that in the first third of *Rethinking Multiculturalism* Parekh was seeking a 'rapprochement between history and philosophy' as others with views similar to Oakeshott, such as R.G. Collingwood, were as Oakeshott was not seeking such a rapprochement in *Experience and its Modes* or the introduction to *Leviathan* which are the texts that I show influenced Parekh. There is also no evidence in Parekh's texts about the nature of philosophy, history of political thought or political theory that he advocated such a rapprochement.

⁷⁰ *The Sunday Telegraph*, 11 October 2000; *The Times*, 12 October 2000. Other aspects of the report were distorted in the media too. See T. Modood, 'Multiculturalism and Britishness: Provocations, Hostilities and Advances', in *The Politics of Ethnic Diversity in the British Isles*, ed. R. Garbaye and P. Schnapper (Basingstoke, 2014).

⁷¹ B. Crick, 'All this talk of Britain is so English', *Guardian*, 12 April 2004.

⁷² Modood, 'Multiculturalism and Britishness', p. 26. Commission for Multi-Ethnic Britain (CMEB), *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain Report* (London, 2000), p. 45.

Before I do so, note that Kelly claims that this phrase ‘*could* have been lifted directly’ from English Pluralists such as J.N. Figgis, G.D.H. Cole and Harold Laski.⁷³ I thus begin by noting two problems with suggesting that Parekh took this phrase and what it means from the English Pluralists. First, Kelly does not show where Parekh obtained this phrase and its meaning. Instead, he notes that these Pluralists also refer to a ‘community of communities’ and that like Figgis, Parekh notes how religion shaped British institutions; and like Cole, Parekh thinks the state is one association among many; and like Laski, he thinks the state has its own ‘interests’.⁷⁴ But such similarities and the use of the same phrase do not mean that Parekh took this phrase and what it means from these Pluralists as Parekh’s ideas are similar to others who use this phrase and he could just as easily have taken this phrase and what it means from them. For example, Martin Buber calls the community that emerges from intercommunal dialogue a ‘community of communities’, and Parekh, we saw, values such dialogue.⁷⁵ Equally, former Canadian prime minister Joseph Clark famously called Canada a ‘community of communities’ as he accepts communal diversity in a polity. As we saw, Parekh does too.⁷⁶

Second, to claim that Parekh took this phrase and what it means from these Pluralists, we need evidence that Parekh read and was attracted to their phrase and what they meant by it. Yet there is no evidence that Parekh studied the texts in which they used this phrase; and even if we assume that he did, it is difficult to also assume an attraction to their phrase and its meaning. As we saw, this is because Parekh might have been attracted to what others mean by it; and he may even have rejected how these Pluralists used this phrase because they did so as follows.

Cole, Laski and Ernest Barker, rarely referred to a ‘community of communities’,⁷⁷ but when they did, they were usually referring to an idea from

⁷³ Kelly, ‘Situating Parekh’s Multiculturalism’, p. 33, emphasis added. See also Kelly, *British Political Theory in the Twentieth Century*, p. 27. See also B. Barry, ‘The Muddles of Multiculturalism’, *New Left Review*, 8 March–April 2001, p. 50

⁷⁴ Kelly, ‘Situating Parekh’s Multiculturalism’, pp. 35–7.

⁷⁵ M. Buber, ‘Comments on the Idea of Community’, in *The Martin Buber Reader* (Basingstoke, 2002), p. 246.

⁷⁶ J. Clark, *A Nation Too Good To Lose* (London, 1994), p. 25. See Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, p. 3.

⁷⁷ G.D.H. Cole, *Guild Socialism Restated* (London, 1980), p. 117; G.D.H. Cole, *Social Theory* (New York, 1920), pp. 30–2. H. Laski, *Studies in the Problem of Sovereignty* (New Haven, 1917), p. 274; H. Laski, *Authority in the Modern State* (New Haven, 1919), p. 386. E. Barker, *Political Thought In England: From Herbert Spencer to The Present Day* (New Delhi, 1913), pp. 175, 249; E. Barker, ‘The Discredited State: Thoughts on Politics before the War’, in *Group Rights: Perspectives since 1900*, ed. J. Stapleton (Bristol, 1995 [1915]), p. 91.

Figgis.⁷⁸ Figgis was inspired by the medieval idea of *communitas communitatum*; and he used the phrase ‘community of communities’, as David Runciman also shows, to refer to the idea of ‘self-formed and self-governing’ legally autonomous religious communities in a state that refrains from interfering with them.⁷⁹ It is difficult to just assume that Parekh was attracted to this idea, as he has rejected a remarkably similar idea since the 1970s as follows.

Parekh claimed that the ‘full-blooded pluralism’ that some immigrants seek, in which there is legal autonomy for each religious community, leads to a ‘union of communities’, not a ‘community of communities’, as it undermines the community that smaller communities are part of.⁸⁰ Equally, Parekh values voluntary bodies to which disputes can be taken, such as, in the UK, the Rabbinical courts, but he explicitly rejects legally institutionalizing the autonomy of the communities that such voluntary bodies serve. Thus, he notes that it is not the state’s:

job to institutionalize the relevant communities into bureaucratic corporations and throw its authority behind them. That is the way to social fascism in which communal corporations, enjoying the patronage and subject to the manipulation of the state, oppress their members, build up vested interests and freeze the inescapable process of cultural change.⁸¹

Parekh also opposed other ideas that Figgis endorsed, such as religious communities focusing only on their own moral standards, as Parekh defends religious communities learning from one another.⁸² Parekh’s opposition to ideas such as Figgis’s makes it difficult to just assume that he uses this phrase in his report to mean what Figgis did. Instead, to discern what Parekh meant, we must consider how he used and explained this phrase as follows.

‘Community of communities’ was a ‘shorthand’ in the *Parekh Report* for what it repeatedly referred to as a ‘community of citizens and a community of

⁷⁸ Cole had many opportunities to use the phrase ‘community of communities’ and give it new meaning (Cole, *Guild Socialism Restated*, p. 117; Cole, *Social Theory*, pp. 30–2), but did not; and Barker in ‘The Discredited State’ preferred to refer to a ‘federalistic theory of the state’ and to ‘polyarchism’, seemingly because ‘community of communities’ was Figgis’s phrase and idea, as Runciman notes too: D. Runciman, *Pluralism and the Personality of the State* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 218.

⁷⁹ Runciman, *Pluralism and the Personality of the State*, p. 144; J.N. Figgis, *From Grotius to Gerson 1414–1625* (London, 1907), p. 205; J.N. Figgis, *Churches in the Modern State* (London, 1913), p. 80.

⁸⁰ Parekh, ‘Postscript’, p. 228; B. Parekh, ‘Integrating Minorities’, in *Race Relations in Britain: A Developing Agenda*, ed. T. Blackstone, B. Parekh and P. Sanders (London, 1998), p. 4; Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, pp. 200, 206 (emphasis added); CMEB, *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain*, p. 45.

⁸¹ Parekh, ‘Cultural Diversity and the Liberal Democracy’, p. 213; See also Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, pp. 200, 206.

⁸² Figgis, *Churches in the Modern State*, p. 113. See the second edition of B. Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism* (Basingstoke, 2006), p. 371.

communities',⁸³ as the report's academic advisor and one of its main drafters also noted.⁸⁴ Parekh encountered this shorthand in Indian thinkers whom he began to study in the early 1980s when he was living in India;⁸⁵ thus Parekh says that Gandhi describes the Indian state as a 'community of communities'.⁸⁶ But Parekh did not think that this phrase captured his ideas entirely, thus he expanded it to describe the Indian state as 'an *association of individuals* and a community of communities'.⁸⁷ Parekh then altered this phrase again to a '*community of citizens* and a community of communities' so as to describe the Indian state, the 'British polity' or his ideal state in different texts.⁸⁸ In each instance, Parekh used the phrase 'community of citizens and a community of communities' so as to convey the following four ideas about a state or a polity.

First, a state is comprised of people who are individuals;⁸⁹ but they are not solely individuals as it is often difficult to individuate them when, for example, thinking of them as dependent children or parents.⁹⁰ Second, a state is made up of people who form and are influenced by 'religious, ethnic, cultural and regional communities'.⁹¹ Third, despite individual and communal differences, the members of a state develop over time a shared history and experiences that cultivate certain common ways of behaving, and thus we think of them as a community too.⁹² Hence, a state is a 'community of *individuals* and a community of communities', which is the version of the phrase that Parekh finally settled on when later explaining, at length, what the phrase in his report meant.⁹³ Fourth, Parekh recommends that members of a state 'picture' themselves as a community of individuals and a community of communities so as to help them to accept that their individual and communal differences are part of who they collectively are and are not divisive, as, despite their various indi-

⁸³ CMEB, *Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain*, pp. ix, xiv, xviii, xx, 48, 56, 148, 224, 250.

⁸⁴ T. Modood, *Multiculturalism* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 17.

⁸⁵ Parekh, *Talking Politics*, p. 33.

⁸⁶ Parekh, *Gandhi's Political Philosophy* (Basingstoke, 1990), p. 114. B. Parekh, *Gandhi: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 1997), p. 100.

⁸⁷ B. Parekh, 'The Ethno-Centricity of Nationalist Discourse', *Nations & Nationalism*, 1 (1) (1995), p. 41, emphasis added.

⁸⁸ CMEB, *Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain*, p. ix; B. Parekh, 'The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain: Reporting on a Report', *The Round Table*, 90 (362) (2001), pp. 693–4; Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, p. 340.

⁸⁹ CMEB, *Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain*, p. ix.

⁹⁰ Parekh, 'Theorizing Political Theory', p. 251.

⁹¹ Parekh, 'The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain', p. 693; CMEB, *Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain*, p. ix.

⁹² Parekh, 'The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain', p. 694.

⁹³ B. Parekh, 'Integrating Minorities', Institute of Contemporary Arts Lecture (2001), p. 23; Parekh, 'The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain', p. 694, emphasis added.

vidual and communal differences, the members of a state still form a community.⁹⁴

Unlike Parekh's phrase, these four ideas entered Parekh's thought *before* he began to study Gandhi in the 1980s, as Parekh wrote about why people cannot always be individuated in 1968.⁹⁵ By 1978 he argued that while each 'human being is unique', people also 'belong to . . . political . . . cultural, religious and other groups'.⁹⁶ In 1974, Parekh discussed the third and fourth ideas above, as he discussed the 'way of life' that members of a state develop, and he recommends that British people should 'redefine' how they think about Britain so as to include their communal differences.⁹⁷ The four ideas about a state thus entered Parekh's thought early in his career and his PhD and early publications give no indication of their source. But some may suggest that Oakeshott's *On Human Conduct* is an obvious source for these ideas as all four ideas are in the third essay of *On Human Conduct* in one way or another.⁹⁸ But this is implausible for the following reasons.

Parekh discusses three of his four ideas before 1975, when *On Human Conduct* was published. It is also difficult to argue that Parekh was attracted to ideas in *On Human Conduct* early in his career as Parekh was so critical of *On Human Conduct* at that time. Hence, in his 1979 review of Oakeshott's work, Parekh showed why the civil association that is defended in *On Human Conduct* is 'rather fragile and even incoherent'; and he rejected the distinction between 'civil' and 'enterprise association' in *On Human Conduct*.⁹⁹ Oakeshott described these criticisms as a 'disaster', and Parekh claims that they cost him his friendship with Oakeshott.¹⁰⁰ Yet Parekh still repeated these criticisms;¹⁰¹ and was unlikely to acquire four ideas early in his career from a text that he had such strong objections to at the time.

⁹⁴ CMEB, *Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain*, p. 105; Parekh, 'Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain: Reporting on a Report', *The Round Table*, 90 (362) (2001), p. 694.

⁹⁵ See Parekh, 'The Nature of Political Philosophy', p. 173. A critic might say that Parekh says that he was exposed to Gandhi's ideas growing up in India. But Parekh nowhere says that the phrase 'community of communities' was one of the ideas that he was exposed to and refers to more popular ideas such as non-violence. Parekh thus admits that in 1968 he met Hannah Arendt and they discussed Gandhi, and he 'had little understanding of Gandhi'. See Parekh, *Talking Politics*, p. 44.

⁹⁶ B. Parekh, 'Asians in Britain: Problem or Opportunity?', *Five Views of Multi-Racial Britain* (London, 1978), p. 36.

⁹⁷ Parekh, 'The Spectre of Self-Consciousness', p. 42; Parekh, 'Postscript', pp. 230–1.

⁹⁸ Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct*, pp. 241, 242, 243, 249, 275, 276, 279.

⁹⁹ Parekh, 'The Political Philosophy of Michael Oakeshott', pp. 505–6.

¹⁰⁰ Parekh, 'Conversations in International Relations', p. 388. Oakeshott also sent a seemingly angry letter to Parekh (private communication).

¹⁰¹ Parekh, *Contemporary Political Thinkers*, pp. 122–3.

But the four ideas also appear in places where Oakeshott neither defends his idea of civil association nor distinguishes it from enterprise association; such as lectures to LSE students on the history of political thought that focus, *inter alia*, on the modern European state.¹⁰² Parekh says that he attended these lectures four years in a row, they were ‘among the best he ever heard’, and he consulted an unpublished version of them.¹⁰³ These lectures influenced Parekh as he often repeats, almost verbatim, Oakeshott’s claims that the modern state differs from ‘the Greek *polis*, the Roman *civitas* and medieval kingdoms’, is ‘territorially constituted’, is a balance of ‘diversities’ of religion, nations and regions, and, when ‘stable’, it is not threatened by difference.¹⁰⁴ Parekh enjoyed these lectures and repeats their claims about the modern state almost verbatim. And he would have heard the following when repeatedly attending them.

When conceptualizing the modern state, we should not only focus, as Max Weber did, on its power to coerce,¹⁰⁵ or on what Barker called a ‘bundle of officials’.¹⁰⁶ Instead, Oakeshott taught that we should focus, first and foremost, on the ‘collectivity of human beings’ that comprises the state, and this is what Parekh does when referring to a state as a ‘community of individuals and a community of communities’.¹⁰⁷ Parekh would also have heard all four ideas about a polity or state that his phrase refers to in these lectures, as follows.

In the lectures, Oakeshott rejects the assumption that the modern state is made up of people who can always be individuated, and he also did this in earlier lectures to students in Cambridge.¹⁰⁸ He also repeatedly said that the modern state contains ‘diversities of religion, moral opinion, language [and] local communities’, and thus contained groups.¹⁰⁹ Oakeshott also said repeatedly that despite this ‘internal variety’, the people of such a state have a

¹⁰² Some of the four ideas appear in Oakeshott’s *Harvard Lectures*, but Parekh gives no indication that he was aware of or read these lectures until they were published in 1993.

¹⁰³ Parekh, ‘Living as an Immortal’, p. 101; Parekh, ‘Oakeshott’s Theory of Civil Association’, p. 186.

¹⁰⁴ M. Oakeshott, *Lectures in the History of Political Thought* (Exeter, 2006), pp. 364, 374, 375, 380–396. See Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, p. 179; B. Parekh, ‘The New Right and the Politics of Nationhood’, in *The New Right Image and Reality*, ed. N. Deakin (London, 1986), p. 39; B. Parekh, ‘Three Theories of Immigration’, in S. Spencer, *Strangers and Citizens* (London, 1994), p. 107; B. Parekh, ‘Citizenship and Political Obligation’, in P. King, *Socialism and the Common Good* (London, 1996), p. 263.

¹⁰⁵ M. Weber, ‘Politics as a Vocation’, in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (London, 1973), p. 78.

¹⁰⁶ Barker, ‘The Discredited State’, p. 76.

¹⁰⁷ Oakeshott, *Lectures in the History of Political Thought*, p. 401.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 415–7, 423–5; see also M. Oakeshott, *Early Political Writings* (Exeter, 2010), p. 156.

¹⁰⁹ Oakeshott, *Lectures in the History of Political Thought*, pp. 364, 378–80.

common ‘sentiment of solidarity’ that comes from their ‘common historical experience’.¹¹⁰ Finally, Oakeshott showed how thinkers use features of the modern state to make ‘recommendations’, which, as we saw, Parekh does too.¹¹¹ Little wonder that all four ideas about a state that Parekh’s phrase ‘community of individuals and a community of communities’ refers to appear in his early work, as all the available evidence suggests that Parekh heard them when repeatedly attending lectures on the modern state that we saw impressed and influenced him.

But note how Oakeshott’s lectures used the ideas of earlier British Idealists. Bradley thus noted how thinking of members of a state solely as individuals is an ‘abstraction’, as it abstracts them from much of what they are;¹¹² and Green and Bosanquet also said, in different ways, that it is inadequate to describe the members of a state solely as individuals as this presupposes that we can always individuate them.¹¹³ These thinkers also all thought that we must conceptualize the modern state as being made up of people who are part of groups such as classes and churches, and these groups are part of a common way of life;¹¹⁴ which led Green to call the modern state ‘a society of societies’.¹¹⁵ These thinkers used such views to make recommendations, just as Oakeshott said, and as we saw, Parekh did.¹¹⁶ But we saw earlier that there is no evidence that Parekh was attracted to the ideas of any British Idealist other than Oakeshott. It thus seems that Parekh was, again, attracted to Oakeshott’s particular use of ideas that were common among the British Idealists, and these ideas ended up in the *Parekh Report*.¹¹⁷

While scholars and journalists misunderstood the phrase ‘community of communities’, all the available evidence suggests that it was shorthand for a longer phrase that, to many, will seem multiculturalist in meaning. This is because it was used, as we have seen, to suggest that differences among the members of a state do not threaten their unity, as they form a community in spite of their individual and communal diversity. But this phrase also seems multiculturalist in origin, as it reflects what Parekh learned from both British

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 364, 380, 423.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 422–5.

¹¹² F.H. Bradley, *Ethical Studies* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 165–6.

¹¹³ See Green, *Lectures on Political Obligation*, p. 146; and Bosanquet, *The Philosophical Theory*, p. 278.

¹¹⁴ Bosanquet, *The Philosophical Theory*, pp. 275–8.

¹¹⁵ Green, *Lectures on Political Obligation*, p. 146.

¹¹⁶ Mander, *British Idealism*, pp. 272–4.

¹¹⁷ A critic might ask why I do not trace Parekh’s ideas of the state to Hegel, as many of the British Idealists had a Hegelian conception of the state. I do not do so because while Oakeshott, like Hegel, rejects the social contract view of the state, Oakeshott’s lectures do not offer a Hegelian conception of the state. Hence, Oakeshott does not distinguish family, civil society and the state, or equate the state with the ‘universal’ and civil society with the ‘particular’, and so on.

and Indian thinkers. Hence, it was during Parekh's study of Indian thinkers such as Gandhi, that Parekh was attracted to a phrase that he could expand to convey the ideas about a state that he had learned when Oakeshott taught the ideas of British Idealist thinkers to his students.

Conclusion

I conclude by using what was found in previous sections to offer a new interpretation of Oakeshott's influence on Parekh's work about multiculturalism; and by showing why this interpretation is significant. I first identify the components of this interpretation that focus on Oakeshott's influence on Parekh; and then those that show how this influence affects Parekh's work on multiculturalism, and our understanding of this work and Parekh too.

The first component, then, is that Oakeshott influenced Parekh as a parent might influence their child or a teacher might influence their student. This is because people seldom abandon all that their parents and teachers teach them. Oakeshott influenced Parekh early in his career, and this influence endured. Equally, parents and teachers teach ideas that they agree with, but these ideas are often not unique as they were learned from others. Oakeshott taught Parekh ideas that Oakeshott himself endorsed, and that Oakeshott had learned from earlier British Idealists.

Second, as Parekh took ideas from Oakeshott that Oakeshott had taken from earlier British Idealists, Parekh's thought resembles that of British Idealist thinkers, just as a distant descendant might resemble their ancestors by exhibiting a small number of the same features. As with any distant descendant, the likeness between Parekh and such Idealists is hard to detect as there are other influences, as we have seen, such as Gandhi. Yet by looking closely, we have seen that certain features of Parekh's thought and his work on multiculturalism descend from the British Idealists. But which features are these? This brings me to the third component.

It was, we saw, conceptual and methodological ideas that influenced Parekh and his work on multiculturalism, as Parekh was attracted to the conception of philosophy that is in *Experience and its Modes* and the use of traditions of thought in Oakeshott's introduction to *Leviathan*; and this affected what Parekh argued in the first third of *Rethinking Multiculturalism*. Equally, Oakeshott's lectures to LSE students influenced Parekh's conception of the state in his report. In these ways, Oakeshott's influence on Parekh affected what Parekh argued in his work on multiculturalism. But it also affected what he did *not* argue in *Rethinking Multiculturalism*; and this brings me to the fourth component of my interpretation.

The conception of philosophy that Parekh took from *Experience and its Modes* made him reluctant to begin *Rethinking Multiculturalism* with the presuppositions of others who contribute to similar debates. For example, Kymlicka and other liberal multiculturalist thinkers aim to offer a 'liberal

theory of minority rights'¹¹⁸ and they presuppose that a liberal theory is closer to the truth than, for example, a socialist or conservative theory, as otherwise there is little need to offer a liberal theory. Yet they never defend this presupposition. Similarly, Iris Marion Young notes at the beginning of *Justice and the Politics of Difference* that 'justice is the primary subject of political philosophy', hence her focus in the book on justice.¹¹⁹ Yet she presupposes (1) a hierarchy of subjects in political philosophy and (2) a method for devising this hierarchy that places justice at the top of it; and she does not defend either presupposition.¹²⁰ Parekh had long criticized such unexamined presuppositions about liberalism and justice and did not begin *Rethinking Multiculturalism* with them.¹²¹

Fifth, by clarifying how Oakeshott influenced *Rethinking Multiculturalism* and the *Parekh Report*, we clarified how to understand parts of both texts. Hence, we can now see 'where Parekh was coming from' in the sense of who influenced his ideas and in the sense of why he designed the first third of *Rethinking Multiculturalism* in the way that he did. It has thus become clear that the purpose of the first third of *Rethinking Multiculturalism* was not to offer the detailed history that his critics assumed. Equally, by showing how Parekh used and explained the phrase 'community of communities' we can now see the ideas that this phrase refers to, and how the journalists and scholars who criticized this phrase in the report misunderstood its meaning. In short, certain criticisms of *Rethinking Multiculturalism* and the *Parekh Report* now seem far less plausible as they were based on misunderstandings of both of these texts.

Sixth, whilst Oakeshott's influence on Parekh affected *Rethinking Multiculturalism* and his report, I found no evidence that Parekh is an Oakeshottian in the sense of being an advocate of Oakeshott's conservative ideas, as was Kenneth Minogue for example. The available evidence thus does not show, for example, that Parekh acquired from Oakeshott either what Oakeshott called a conservative 'disposition' to what is familiar; or the idea that individual freedom is a tradition of thought that limited government protects.¹²²

¹¹⁸ W. Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship* (Oxford, 1995), p. 75; J. Carens, *Culture, Citizenship and Community* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 6, 73; A. Patten, *Equal Recognition* (Princeton, 2014), p. 5.

¹¹⁹ I.M. Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, 1990), p. 3. Young would later try to distance herself from multiculturalism but her early work is often seen as a 'radical multiculturalism'. See D. Miller, *On Nationality* (Oxford, 1995), p. 131; G. Crowder, *Multiculturalism* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 125–31

¹²⁰ Such thinkers may have good reasons for these and other presuppositions. See Carens, *Ethics of Immigration*, p. 298.

¹²¹ Parekh, 'The Nature of Political Philosophy', pp. 173, 175.

¹²² 'On Being Conservative', in Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics*, pp. 407, 427. See also A. Gamble, 'Ideological Politics: Conservative or Liberal', in *The Cambridge Companion to Oakeshott*, ed. E. Podokisk (Cambridge, 2012); E. Neill, 'The Nature of

Instead of Oakeshott's conservatism influencing Parekh, it was ideas that Oakeshott shared with other British Idealists that did so; and neither these British Idealist ideas, nor their effect on Parekh, seem conservative in any obvious way.¹²³

Seventh, the evidence here does not suggest that Parekh is an Oakeshottian in the sense of being a disciple or follower of Oakeshott, as Parekh never simply followed Oakeshott as disciples often do. Hence, we noted how Parekh repeatedly criticized and neglected some of Oakeshott's essays, repeatedly criticized *On Human Conduct*, and was attracted only to ideas that Oakeshott shared with others and that are in only *some* of Oakeshott's texts. It thus seems more accurate to think of, and refer to, Parekh *not* as an Oakeshottian, but as being influenced by Oakeshott.

It might be retorted that Parekh is an Oakeshottian as Parekh is one of a number of prominent scholars who, while at the LSE, were influenced by Oakeshott and who has similar disciplinary interests to Oakeshott.¹²⁴ But Isaiah Berlin, Herbert Hart, Charles Taylor and G.A. Cohen all influenced many prominent scholars who attended the University of Oxford and have similar disciplinary interests to them, yet we seldom think of and refer to Berlinians, Hartians, Taylorians or Cohenians. Using Oakeshott's influence on Parekh at the LSE and their similar disciplinary interests as a reason to refer to Parekh as an Oakeshottian is idiosyncratic.¹²⁵

The seven points above compose a new interpretation and improves our knowledge of the origins of often-discussed parts of Parekh's texts and how we should understand them. But this interpretation is also significant as it suggests that scholars of British Idealism and multiculturalism inadequately understand the influence of British Idealist ideas on multiculturalists. This is because scholars of British Idealism argue that multiculturalists should use the ideas of British Idealists, and seem unaware of how Parekh already does so.¹²⁶ Scholars of such Idealism also argue that the ideas of British Idealists are 'dead' and opposed by multiculturalists.¹²⁷ Yet certain British Idealist ideas 'live on' in the works of a prominent multiculturalist whose ideas

Oakeshott's Conservatism', in *The Place of Michael Oakeshott in Contemporary Western and Non-Western Thought*, ed. N. O'Sullivan (Exeter, 2017).

¹²³ Unlike Oakeshott, many of the British Idealists were not conservative thinkers. See Mander, *British Idealism*, pp. 272–4; Tyler, *Idealist Political Philosophy*, p. 167.

¹²⁴ Kelly, 'The Oakeshottians', p. 154.

¹²⁵ Nor can we claim that Parekh's multiculturalist works are British Idealist in nature as only *some* of his ideas come from the British Idealists and it is unclear why such *parts* should define a *whole*.

¹²⁶ Tyler, *Idealist Political Philosophy*, pp. 191–2; T. Brooks, *Ethical Citizenship, British Idealism and the Politics of Recognition* (Basingstoke, 2014), p. 136.

¹²⁷ Mander, *British Idealism*, pp. 228–31.

descend from them.¹²⁸ Equally, political theorists of multiculturalism also tend, as we saw, to think of themselves as part of the analytical tradition of philosophy that rejected British Idealism; yet I have shown how a prominent political theorist of multiculturalism uses British Idealist ideas. Still, some may wonder whether Parekh is a mere exception; thus, note the following.

Oakeshott's British Idealist ideas influenced other prominent British multiculturalists too; and my interpretation is also significant as parts of it apply to others. For example, Tariq Modood is a prominent British multiculturalist who was introduced to Oakeshott's ideas as a student by a 'friend' and a former student of Oakeshott's: David Manning.¹²⁹ Like Parekh, then, Modood was exposed to Oakeshott's ideas early. Hence, Modood's early publications and doctorate focus on Oakeshott and another Idealist who, at times, did not want to be associated with the British Idealists: R.G. Collingwood.¹³⁰ Collingwood's 'rapprochement between theory and practice' and his writing philosophical work for a broader audience¹³¹ are likely to have influenced Modood's own work as a public intellectual.¹³² But I do not show the influence of Collingwood on Modood here as it is tangential to my argument and will occur in a separate article. Instead, note how Modood uses ideas from Oakeshott in his work on multiculturalism.

Modood explicitly uses Oakeshott's conception of ideology so as to warn of the dangers of Islamophobic, Islamist and secular ideologies.¹³³ Hence, as with Parekh, Oakeshott's ideas influenced Modood conceptually by influencing his conception of ideology. There is also, as with Parekh, a methodological influence, as Modood explicitly uses Oakeshott's idea of 'pursuing' the 'intimations' of 'traditions' of political behaviour so as to justify his method.¹³⁴ Thus, Modood studied the British tradition of multiculturalism that began with the anti-racist ideas, activism and policies of the 1960s and 1970s and he considered what the ideas, activism and policies of this

¹²⁸ I got the idea of British Idealist ideas 'living on' while reading Brooks (*Ethical Citizenship*, p. 5).

¹²⁹ M. Oakeshott, 'Preface', in *The Form of Ideology*, ed. D.J. Manning (London, 2008), p. vii.

¹³⁰ D. Boucher, *The Social and Political Thought of R.G. Collingwood* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 10.

¹³¹ R.G. Collingwood, *An Autobiography and Other Writings*, ed. D. Boucher and T. Smith (Oxford, 2013), p. 47; R.G. Collingwood, *Speculum Mentis* (Redditch, 2011), p. 15. Boucher, *Social and Political Thought*, p. 54.

¹³² T. Modood, 'On being a Public Intellectual, a Muslim and a Multiculturalist', *Renewal*, 24 (2016), p. 91; see also D.O. Martinez, 'Intellectual Biography, Empirical Sociology and Normative Political Theory: An interview with Tariq Modood', *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 34 (6) (2013), p. 736.

¹³³ Modood, *Multiculturalism*, pp. 129, 131–2.

¹³⁴ T. Modood and S. Thompson, 'Revisiting Contextualism in Political Theory: Putting Principles into Context', *Res Publica*, 24 (3) (2018), p. 353.

tradition ‘intimate’ about how we should think about the claims of religious minorities.¹³⁵ As Boucher shows, other British Idealists, such as Bradley, and Oakeshott’s tutor at Cambridge, W.R. Sorley, also noted the importance of such traditions.¹³⁶

Modood passed on this British Idealist-inspired idea of conceptualizing multiculturalism as a tradition to other British multiculturalists whom he has influenced;¹³⁷ and Parekh passed on to British multiculturalists the British Idealist-inspired idea of being careful not to presuppose the truth of liberalism.¹³⁸ Hence, instead of being an exception, Parekh shares a philosophical influence with Modood that may *help* to explain why they and other British multiculturalists have similar views, as many now note.¹³⁹ This is because their similar views are unlikely to be a coincidence or to be caused by their being ethnic minority scholars, as such scholars also disagree. Instead, Parekh and Modood’s common philosophical influences may mean that they share assumptions and formulate questions and answers in similar ways; and they pass on these tendencies in thought to the British multiculturalists whom they have influenced.

The ideas of the British Idealists and British multiculturalists have been shown, then, to be more connected than many scholars assume. Equally, the origins and meanings of often-discussed parts of two multiculturalist texts that are influential inside and outside academia are now clearer. Also a doubtful interpretation of the origins of an influential thinker’s ideas has been replaced by one that uses all the available evidence. This article thus suggests that identifying the origin of the ideas of multiculturalist thinkers is possible and valuable.

But there is little scholarship on the origin of the ideas of multiculturalist thinkers other than *very brief* work on why political theorists were uninterested in cultural diversity after the Second World War; and why they later became interested in it.¹⁴⁰ Hence, the increasing number of scholars who

¹³⁵ T. Modood, ‘Establishment, Multiculturalism and British Citizenship’, *Political Quarterly*, 65 (1) (1994).

¹³⁶ Boucher, ‘The Victim of Thought’, p. 51. Bradley, *Ethical Studies*, p. 173. W.R. Sorley, *Tradition* (Herbert Spencer Lecture, Oxford, 19 May 1926), pp. 6, 14, 20.

¹³⁷ N. Meer, *Citizenship, Identity & the Politics of Multiculturalism* (Basingstoke, 2010), p. 2; V. Uberoi, ‘Multiculturalism is a Tradition of Political Thought.

¹³⁸ Uberoi, ‘Introduction’, p. 3.

¹³⁹ Levey, ‘Bristol School of Multiculturalism’, p. 200; V. Uberoi and T. Modood, ‘The Emergence of the Bristol School of Multiculturalism’, *Ethnicities*, 19 (6) (2019); S. Laegaard, ‘Contextualist Political Theory about Multiculturalism in a Post Multicultural Context’, *Ethnicities* (October, 2020).

¹⁴⁰ W. Kymlicka, ‘The New Debate on Minority Rights – and post-script’, in *Multiculturalism and Political Theory*, ed. A. Laden and D. Owen (Cambridge, 2007); A. Laden and D. Owen, ‘Introduction’, in *ibid*; R. Abbey, ‘Liberalism, Pluralism, Multiculturalism: Contemporary Debates’, in M. Bevir, *Modern Pluralism Anglo American Debates since 1880* (Cambridge, 2013).

examine the history of multiculturalism focus only on the history of cultural minorities seeking policies of multiculturalism.¹⁴¹ Yet as I noted earlier, multiculturalism is a tradition of social and political thought that may have emerged among minorities who questioned monocultural conceptions of their societies and advocated policies of multiculturalism; but political theorists have also made significant contributions to this tradition of thought. The history of multiculturalism thus entails examining the origins of the ideas of these theorists; and if we neglect to do so, we make at least two mistakes.

First, we neglect a part of this tradition that is not only of theoretical interest as it offers the best justifications that exist for changes that many minorities in different countries have sought over the last fifty years, and continue to seek. Second, we neglect to identify the sources of insights that multiculturalist thinkers have had into creating societies that do not feel threatened by their cultural differences, at a time when such sources are needed as cultural majorities feel threatened by such differences.¹⁴² This article is just a first attempt to avoid such mistakes and in doing so to give thinkers, such as Parekh, the sort of historical attention that they deserve.

Varun Uberoi¹⁴³

BRUNEL UNIVERSITY LONDON

¹⁴¹ V. Uberoi, 'Legislating Multiculturalism and Nationhood: The 1988 Canadian Multiculturalism Act', *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 49 (2) (2016); R. Chin, *The Crises of Multiculturalism in Europe: A History* (Princeton NJ, 2017); J. Fazakarley, *Muslim Communities in England 1962–90* (Basingstoke 2018).

¹⁴² A. Eisenberg, 'The Rights of National Majorities: Toxic Discourse or Democratic Catharsis', *Ethnicities*, 20 (2) (2020); A. Patten, 'Populist Multiculturalism: Are there Majority Cultural Rights?', *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 46 (5) (2020).

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