



# Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory

*Bhikhu Parekh*

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## **Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory** Bhikhu Parekh

Bhikhu Parekh argues for a pluralist perspective on cultural diversity. Writing from both within the liberal tradition and outside of it as a critic, he challenges what he calls the "moral monism" of much of traditional moral philosophy, including contemporary liberalism--its tendency to assert that only one way of life or set of values is worthwhile and to dismiss the rest as misguided or false. He defends his pluralist perspective both at the level of theory and in subtle nuanced analyses of recent controversies. Thus, he offers careful and clear accounts of why cultural differences should be respected and publicly affirmed, why the separation of church and state cannot be used to justify the separation of religion and politics, and why the initial critique of Salman Rushdie (before a Fatwa threatened his life) deserved more serious attention than it received.

Rejecting naturalism, which posits that humans have a relatively fixed nature and that culture is an incidental, and "culturalism," which posits that they are socially and culturally constructed with only a minimal set of features in common, he argues for a dialogic interplay between human commonalities and cultural differences. This will allow, Parekh argues, genuinely balanced and thoughtful compromises on even the most controversial cultural issues in the new multicultural world in which we live.

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