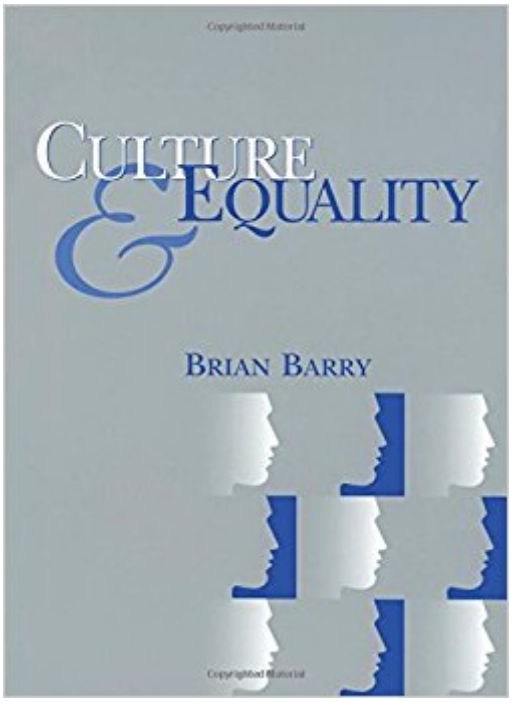
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Culture And Equality: An Egalitarian Critique Of Multiculturalism



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Customer Reviews

Very good critic of multiculturalism written by a philosopher.

In his book "Culture and Equality: an Egalitarian Cririque of Multiculturalism", Brian Barry convincingly argues that multiculturalism is not only a threat to liberalism, but - as in the case of communitarianism - gave the green light to practices that might well open a road that could end with Stalin or Hitler. The concept of "group rights", the claims of religious groups to self-government in internal affairs and the demands for specific minority practices and legal exemptions from general rules for members of minority groups fragments society and condemns liberal rights.Multiculturalism can lead to the reification of cultural groups: "What we might find out by experience is that institutionalizing group representation offers opportunities and incentives for political entrepreneurs to whip up intragroup solidarity and intergroup hostility in the pursuit of power. And indeed this has happened all over the world virtually every time group representation has been introduced."By attributing rights to cultural groups rather than individuals, one risks reifying cultures in a way that is not the case when rights are established for individuals. Eroding the universal framework to which all should abide in liberal democracies, undermine individual rights and the principles of justice. The `rule and exemption' approach - which establishes the right of cultural groups to make claims that place them outside the parameters of the law applied to others , sets a precedent which ultimately delegitimises the law. It is absurd to establish a framework of law and then undermine the universal

application of the law by exempting some groups from it. Any liberal system of justice must apply the law on an equal basis. For Barry, a liberal egalitarian approach to contemporary politics requires a universal set of laws that provide a systematic framework under which everyone can live equally regardless of their private differences. Indeed it is incumbent on the state to establish a liberal system whereby individuals are able to pursue their private perceptions of the good to the greatest extent as long as that does not involve practices that infringe the law.Brian Barry calls for a renewed attention to the concept of universal rights: "[Universal] rules define a choice set which is the same for everybody; within that choice set people pick a particular course of action by deciding what is best calculated to satisfy their underlying preferences for outcomes. . . . If uniform rules create identical choice sets, then opportunities are equal."In his view, cultural differences are not problematic because "within a liberal state all groups are free to deploy their energies and recourses in pursuit of culturally derived objectives on the same terms."Barry's critique of those multiculturalists who seek an alternative for liberalism is indeed devastating because he shows that their approaches conflict with basic liberal values.

This book is likely to be greatly misunderstood. In this 'egalitarian critique of multiculturalism', Barry is not trotting out the tired right-wing argument that minorities don't deserve 'special treatment' etc., Rather, Barry contends that the best way to help those least advantaged is not by engaging in a politics of difference, but rather ensuring that all are guaranteed the full benefits of citizenship.Barry wants to move away from the view that cultural rights are of prime importance so as to facilate a more inclusive social model. He gives several examples to illustrate how the politics of difference is ultimately self-defeating and non-sensical. These range from the rights of the Ahmish, to the issue of Quebec separatism.The discussion of authors such as Kymlicka, Parekh, and Iris Young is very illuminating and to the point. He exposes the weaknesses in their arguments without marginalizing their concerns about the rights of minorities.I read an earlier draft of this work and was blown away by the wit and energy Barry brings to bear here. This is a work by a top - notch scholar, which should be read by anyone who is interested in just what multiculturalism means.

Barry's work is presented as an egalitarian critique of multiculturalism. The work argues against much of the recent theoretical literature on multiculturalism (most notably W Kymlicka, IM Young, and B Parekh), but takes a more positive stance on reasserting the basic values of liberal egalitarianism--i.e., that individuals ought to have the ability to make and exercise rights claims as individuals, not as members of collective cultural groups. Barry goes through a number of case

studies, such as the case of Sikhs in Britain on safety laws to explore whether what he calls "rule and exception" approaches to public policy are consistent with liberal values. He looks in depth at issues of religion and education.The book is important for at least two reasons. One, the argument draws on empirical case studies which is intertwined with the theoretical material--a rare achievement in political theory. Two, the work challenges so much of the underlying assumptions in multicultural thinking. It is a breath of fresh air to read a tightly argued criticism of the kind of PC nonsense that passes for scholarship these days.

Most of the times, academics are enclosed in a bubble far away from real life. This book is exactly the contrary: Culture and Equality offers a vigourous defense of egalitarian liberalism regarding minorities' rights.The book can be easily read since it was written in a succint delicious prose (with some gestes of humour).Every responsible citizen should read this book in order to form a well opinion of what multiculturalism is and how it will change our societies.

The book I ordered arrived on time and in the condition promised. The text is clean with no markings and the binding is in excellent shape. I would definitely order from this company again.

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