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Revisiting the Psychology, Philosophy, and Politics of Multiculturalism as a way of Treating Diversity as a Path for Strategic Organisational Change (SYMPOSIUM REF: ICAP2014-SP1290)

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Abstract: This conceptual paper examines psychological issues surrounding the concept of multiculturalism in the workplace. The paper draws on interdisciplinary social scientific sources, including the work of Steven Lukes, Tariq Modood, and Amartya Sen to outline how multiculturalism is still a highly relevant concept today (particularly post-9/11), and poses dilemmas that can potentially be better articulated and more fruitfully resolved in organisational settings. Going further, the viewpoint that multicultural diversity is not often considered explicitly enough as an organisational strategy and positive direction for change, only in terms of a bundle of practices and policies to be managed, is emphasised. Whilst intergroup relations and intercultural social skills are psychologically important for ensuring valuable outcomes across a diverse workforce, it can also be argued that there is great scope for enabling workplace stakeholders to psychologically engage multiculturalism more effectively in political and philosophical terms, including liberalism, moral relativism, humanism, individualism, and globalisation. Finally, the paper draws practical implications for leadership, communications, and a broader repositioning of the 'business case' for diversity.

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