



RSA/Prospect Political Debate

Diversity versus solidarity

Speakers:

David Willetts MP,
Bhikhu Parekh,
Michael Hastings,
Professor Robert E Rowthorn

Chaired by:

David Goodhart,
Editor, Prospect

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David Goodhart: I'd never really thought about this issue until in March 1998 Prospect conducted a round table debate on the future of the welfare state and the man to my left, David Willetts, described the problem that we are debating tonight with such clarity and eloquence that I'm going to read out what he said. This sets out the argument very nicely. David said then, *'The basis on which you can extract large amounts of money in taxation and pay it out in benefits is that most people think benefit recipients are people like themselves, facing difficulties which they themselves could face. If values become more diverse, if life styles become more differentiated then it becomes more difficult to sustain the legitimacy of a universal risk pooling welfare state. People start asking, "Why should I pay for them when they are doing things I would never do?" This is America versus Sweden. You can have a bit welfare state like Sweden's, provided that you are a homogenous society with intensely shared values. In the US you have a very diverse, individualistic society where people feel fewer obligations to fellow citizens. This is the real progressive dilemma: progressives want diversity but they thereby undermine part of moral consensus on which a large welfare state rests.'*

I thought that summed up a real issue, but diversity of course is often a code for racial and ethnic differences, and that is clearly part of the story, part of what we're here to debate tonight but just a reminder in a way that this is a much, much larger question. I remember at that round table, the first person to come back, after David had said that, was Patricia Hewitt, who came up with a little story that she recounted from her own constituency. She'd been canvassing in one of her Leicester council estates and she'd knocked on the door and an elderly white couple had answered and they'd

seen her Labour rosette and said, "Oh no, no we're not voting for you lot!" because "you give too much money to our daughter". Their own daughter, who lived on a nearby estate, who had had three children by two different men and who's values they appalled.

There are all sorts of other issues raised by this debate. One could say it's actually solidarity versus freedom in some way, or has the sort of freedom that has increased exponentially since the war inevitably led to increases in crime, reductions in trust and so on? The other way of looking at it is with whom are we happy to share? What is the nation's state? What is the national culture? It's clearly not a fixed thing and this is perhaps, ultimately, a contest between the Burkeian-view of our affinities rippling out from our families and immediate localities, onward to nation and beyond, pitted against a liberal universalist view which would see us as equally obligated to all human beings.

Just looking around contemporary political issues, this dilemma I think is thrown up by all sorts of things: EU enlargement, the whole question of Turkey, asylum and immigration of course and foreign aid budgets.

David Willetts, who's Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary, a Member of Parliament for Havant and in some ways, as I've said, 'Father' of the debate tonight. To my right, Bhikhu Parekh, Member of the House of Lords and the centennial Professor of the London School of Economics. His latest book is *Re-thinking multiculturalism* published by Harvard University Press.

Further to my left is Bob Rowthorn, Professor of

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Economics at Cambridge, author of all sorts of books on economics and a book on Northern Ireland. Bob told me earlier today that he's a former member of the International Socialists and was thrown out of the organisation for being 'too nationalistic'.

On the far right, we have Michael Hastings, who is – amongst many other things – Chairman of Crime Concern and was a Commissioner for the Commission of Racial Equality for nine years.

David Willetts: It was kind of David to refer to those remarks years ago, and I stand by them. They were intended to identify a dilemma that I thought progressives faced, little did I envisage that you would then call me here to ask me how I would impale myself on this dilemma that I'd identified for others.

I think that the starting point for this is what is the odd sister out of the threesome of liberty, equality and fraternity?

We all talk about liberty a lot and we all talk about equality a lot, but people are rather unsure about the 'fraternity' bit and it's fraternity which is now taking its modern form in a debate about community and which is, as you rightly said David, in the 18th century took the form of a debate about 'sympathy' – as it was then called. Nailing my colours to the mast straight away, I think that those 18th century thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment, who did recognise that sympathy was something that you felt more intensely for the people around you than for people – in Adam Smith's example – in China for example, that remains an emotionally and morally correct. That is indeed the position, that although in some Universalist

sense the death of an individual in China is as much of a loss to the human race as the death of an individual in this country, the fact is that we're more likely to be stirred by the death of someone in our own country, and even more likely in our own family or network of friends. That is how our emotions operate.

So that seems to me to be the starting point. I would like just, first of all, to clear the ground and I'm very pleased that you mentioned Patricia Hewitt's comment, because there is a very fraught debate about ethnicity and culture and I don't want to get into an argument about race: we're talking about a shared culture, which has nothing to do with any individuals racial background. I think one of the most vivid forms of this dilemma of diversity is one that Patricia touched on, and which I'm very aware of, spending a lot of my time at the moment thinking about pensions. Namely what obligations there are between the generations. One of the features of our society that is insufficiently remarked on is it seems to me that as society changes so fast, as popular culture changes so fast, the gaps between successive generations get greater and the bridges that people have to cross in order to identify with someone 30 years younger or 30 years older or 40 years younger or 40 years older get greater and I've only recently discovered an essay that I'm sure the learned academics on this panel are already familiar with: Carl Manheim wrote a fascinating essay on generations in the 1920s predicting gaps between successive generations as a new social divide and I think that this argument applies at least as much to gaps between the generations as it does to any other forms of diversity.

I would like to make three points. First of all I've been heavily influenced by a great man, who is in London this week, James Q Wilson, who wrote a book *The Moral Sense*,

which is an attempt to offer an explanation as to where our moral feelings and intuitions come from and the dilemma that he identifies is that they come first of all from feelings of affinity and obligation within the family or within the neighbourhood. That is indeed the germ of the wider obligations we start feeling to other people as well. That's where we first start to understand what it is to have an obligation to other people. We do, in other words, start off as Universalists. We start off with feelings of obligation to the group, to kith and kin, to the tribe, to our nation and there is no account of universal morality, which seems to me to work but doesn't recognise that it's starting point, the first way in which people learn morality, is by feeling obligations to the local, the particular and their own community. So, the Universalism comes later. The dilemma which he identifies therefore is that sometimes people are so trapped in the feelings of their obligations to the local and the particular that they completely fail to grasp the fact that moral propositions end up being universal, but their roots are local.

The second point that I wanted to make is that – and I'm sorry to quote two more thinkers and after this I will stop – the Universalists (and I'm not a Universalist) who quote, I suppose the greatest moral thinker of them all in this scheme, Emanuel Kant, see obligations as ones which follow from features of our position that are universalisable where all particular facts about ourselves, about our culture, about who we are, are removed. Rules carries out a very similar experiment in his theory of justice, where in

order to go through the veil of ignorance and to reach the propositions that he wants, we have to shed virtually all the facts about ourselves that make us who we are. You have to lose your language, you have to lose a position within a family, you have to lose a position within a neighbourhood; you have to become a-social. You have to become a sort of atom that loses any of the distinctive features that make us human. And I don't think that that captures the way in which moral obligations work. I am instead a follower of a different school of understanding morality, which I trace back to Hegel and who's most powerful, contemporary exponent is Alistair MacIntyre and that would say that your moral obligations follow on and have to be understood and embodied in a society in roles and social positions that you occupy and you can't make sense of them if you think of them as an abstract. There are obligations that we have that follow on from being a British citizen. There are obligations that you have for example to serve on a jury, which just don't apply to people outside your own society. And the welfare state – this is the point I was trying to make in that debate all those years ago – is the most vivid example of that. We are willing to have money taken off us compulsorily and you can only justify this on some moral basis, because we feel obligations to our fellow citizens. We do not feel the same obligations to someone living in Boulogne as we feel to a citizen in Birmingham and we feel even less of an obligation to someone in Bogota. This is not to say that wishing to give money to people in Bogota is wrong, of course individuals want to do that, of course they want to help others, but the fact is that the scale of

the welfare state and the obligations we take on as citizens take place within a framework of a nation's state.

That seems to me to be both an accurate account of how our moral feels originate and also to have a respectable strand of moral argument behind it.

What follows from that – and this is my third point – is that the obligations that we have to our fellow citizens are greater than the obligations we have to people, for example from other countries.

Now what is it that follows as a result of being a citizen of this country and is it going to become, am I now in danger of perpetrating some exclusive doctrine that justifies hostility, or even worse, hatred to others? I hope not, I certainly don't intend to go down that route. It seems to me instead that what I'm talking about here is, in our case, a British culture that is inclusive and open, that doesn't cuddle ethnic element to it and where what we expect people to share when they come to our country and they participate in our society, is to participate in a language and a story about what it is to be British that does not demand anything other of them than that they accept a set of values which include tolerance, fair play and willingness to respect the views of people who may have different views from their own.

It seems to me that one of our good fortunes in our country is that whereas perhaps for some countries national identity has become a matter of blood and soil and has become ethnic and therefore far more problematic. One of the great good fortunes of the mongrel history that we have as Great Britain is that it doesn't bring with it that baggage. It makes it possible for us therefore to invite people to share a national identity of being British, regardless of the background from which they

come and it seems to me the best sort of national identity to have, as you enter the 21st century, one which doesn't demand – is not ethnically or racially exclusive in anyway – but one which brings with it a rich cultural history, which has got more examples of tolerance and what you need for people of the variety of backgrounds to rub together on these islands, than many other countries and cultures are able to draw on.

So do I believe in solidarity as the only basis for the modern welfare state? David was trying to urge me that if I believed in a minimal state I'd have to advocate diversity, but I've decided to believe in, impaling myself on the other horn of that dilemma.

Bhikhu Parekh: I think that we would all agree that diversity is a fact of life. I mean Patricia Hewitt's example is one, but there are countless areas where we have religious diversity, ethnic diversity and so on.

Second, it's not just a fact of life, but it is an inescapable fact of life and you can't wish it out of existence.

Three, it's going to increase with the lapse of time, for a variety of reasons: globalisation means that people are exposed to a variety of cultural influences. Trade, commerce are never culturally neutral and therefore as long as we get integrated into a global economy, and a social and political order, we are increasingly going to be a poorer society whose boundaries will not be able to resist cultural influences.

Then, of course, there are other reasons why diversity is inescapable and a persistent fact of life, bound to remain so, has to do with the fact that people

increasingly want to make their own choices. In our kind of society, people want to make their own choices, to define their dignity in terms of their capacity to make choices, but they also – for the last 150/200 years – defined themselves in terms of self-fulfilment or self-expression. There is a ‘self’ which they are trying to express or articulate and that self is unique to each individual.

Then of course there is the fact of immigration, but diversity has nothing to do with immigrants per se, in fact many immigrants might be only too willing to assimilate into society. Even if the immigration rate was stopped tomorrow, diversity will remain an inescapable, pernicious, intractable fact of life.

I would want to go further and argue that diversity is not only a fact of life, but it’s also an important source of value and moral energy. It brings different ways of looking at life and therefore we can learn from each other. No culture is perfect. Each expresses one particular vision of life. Heighten certain ways of living, heighten certain values and in the process, inevitably ignores others. Therefore, cultural interaction is one way in which we can liberate ourselves from the limitations of our own culture and open up our consciousness to the impact of others.

Cultures also bring different forms of imaginations, different forms of creative energy. We have seen in this our own country of ours since 1948, or the United States built by immigrants. How immigrants bring different context, different sensibilities, different values, different sources of energy and different habits.

So my first proposition is that diversity is an intractable fact of life, as well as a source of value. In other words, it’s not just a fact but desirable.

The second proposition is the logical alternative to that, which is no society can be raised on diversity alone. It needs some sense of community. I don’t much care for the notion of solidarity, because I don’t quite know what it means and historically, the notion of solidarity has appeared on the scene in relation to authority and conservatives and fascists. I would rather talk in terms of a strong sense of common belonging or a strong sense of community.

We do need a strong sense of community. Why? A) You can’t hold a diverse society together unless there is a certain basic commitment or a common sense of belonging. B) A society which is not confident of itself will not be able to live with its differences and that confidence comes from the recognition that these differences are not going to tear it apart.

And thirdly, we need a sense of community so that we care for each other, we have common sympathy and we are prepared to share our concerns, our interests, our taxes, our money and lots of other things with others.

So the problem I want to pose is this: we need both diversity and a sense of community or a common sense of belonging. Neither automatically privileges the other. If you have a community where diversity was sacrificed altogether you would purchase the sense of community at the cost of liberty and the sense of self-expression and at the cost of new source as a family.

If on the other hand you had diversity alone, that society will fall apart pretty quickly and will not be able to hold itself together, so we need both and the question therefore

is how can we reconcile the occasionally conflicting demands of both such that we create a society which has a strong of unity as well as a great respect for and delights in its diversity?

Now there are various ways in which one can do that. I just want to mention two or three and then want to return to this larger question, which David you raised, about higher taxation. We are prepared to share taxes, prepared to share our money only with those with whom we share our values. If you go down that road, then you buttress a huge constituents case where somebody would stand up and say “I don’t want to give you any money to the girl at all, because she is lesbian” or “her life style is something I don’t share”, where would we draw the line?

So I think we need to be very careful in how we pose the question and I would suggest therefore that there are several ways in which we can reconcile the demands of diversity and community. A) It is extremely important that people growing up in society should not only have – if they so want to – their own different cultural, religious and other identities, but there must also be an over arching common identity which they share as citizens. In other words, the only over arching identity is a political identity: identity as a citizen. And citizenship not in the abstract, but as articulated in the British way or the French way, because one is not a citizen of ‘a’ community, but is a citizen of this particular community.

So the first thing would be, how do we encourage or how do we create a sense of shared political identity, which over arches and disciplines the demands of narrower religious,

cultural, ethnic and other identities.

Secondly the citizenship of being British has to be defined in such a way that all can sign up to it. If we were to say that to be British is to be white, or to be British is to be English, or to be British is to be Christian then you are excluding a large number of people – Muslims, Scots, Welsh, lots of other people.

Of if you were to define British-ness in terms of certain values, which are so narrowly defined. That a British person must have a particular kind of sexual orientation or this, that or the other, then you are delegitimising a large number of people who wouldn't feel comfortable in calling themselves British. So the second thing would be to define our British-ness, our citizenship, our political identity in such a way that it accommodates a large number of diversities, whilst insisting upon a shared common interest and a shared common belonging.

The third thing is that you can't create a sense of community unless you also recognise that people have legitimate identities – and what are legitimate and what are not is a complex question and we might return to it – that people have legitimate religious identities, cultural identities which they cherish and within limits, they ought to be able to cherish. Therefore no political community can be cohesive, or if you like solidarity-eristic unless it's a community of communities. A community of course sharing a common sense of identity, a common interest: what philosophers call a 'community of fate'. Ultimately, a political community is not just a community of history, because

history can be interpreted in plenty of different ways. It is a community of fate, whether we like it or not, we are stuck together and we have certain common interests which we ought to be able to protect.

So while recognising the community of fate, we should also be able to recognise that it should accommodate other communities – religious communities, ethnic communities and so on.

I want to end by just making two small points. I think this debate is not at all new. I didn't want to talk here as a philosopher, although that would be my immediate temptation, but the debate goes back to Aristotle where he criticises Plato. He says that Plato state is unacceptable and impossible. Why? Because it demands so much of unity, that it doesn't lead to diversity and therefore it can neither get off the ground nor would it last. He says that every society is a symphony in which different musical [recording jumps] of themselves in their own individual notes are co-ordinated and harmonized such that there's a genuine music coming out. Not from nowhere but from the apparently discordant notes.

And the second point I want to make very quickly is on this question of social justice. The argument being that the welfare state is only possible if we are all have a sense of solidarity. Well historically there is very little evidence for this. Welfare state arises for a variety of reasons. We share certain common interests. We don't have to share common values beyond a certain point. We share certain common interests. It's a collective insurance. It also arises from the fact that we feel that poverty should not exist. Not just our own poverty, but other forms of poverty, which is why we also feel concerned about other societies, or justice to other societies. And if you are looking for some examples of

societies which are culturally diverse and still have a very strong sense of community, compare not just America and Sweden but compare the United States and Canada.

Canada is much more diverse but with a strong sense of social justice, some kind of a welfare state: the United States has never had it.

In our own country, I can think of periods in our history when there was a constant emphasis on solidarity. Going not at all well with any sense of social justice. We don't have to go too far in our history so I would say that empirically the connection between a strong sense of community and our social justice is rather limited and morally, the basis I would say is rather tenuous.

Michael Hastings: The diversity argument often does get, as David said at the beginning – focused on religion, immigration and asylum seekers. I wanted just to give a slightly different edge to my own remarks: partly to provoke a different way of thinking about it, or certain different issues, and to see what you make of it.

It seems to me that one of the impaling aspects of the way we address diversity and solidarity is the perpetual need to be tolerant and I'm not entirely convinced that tolerance is a valuable virtue that all of us ought to adhere to at all times.

So let me just give you a couple of brief examples of where I'm coming from.

Two things I think are challenged by the question of diversity and solidarity are religion and values. It's become evermore complicated, not just since September 11th, but for many years previous to that, as

different communities of faith – which Bhikhu refers fairly extensively – to which different communities of faith have sought to become integrated into a nation which lacks a faith identity of its own kind. What are the consequences of that? Well one of the consequences of that is that the nation holds no clarity on its faith nor on its faith leadership. As a result of which, when faith issues are at the forefront of people's thinking, whether that is about matters of behaviour or ideas of belief or about constitutional issues such as the role of the church or the monarch in relationship to the church or to the constitution of the nation, there is no clarity about which way we should go.

Diversity and tolerance gives us lots of opportunities to think about the options, but it doesn't give us any direction.

Just take an example. In the Economist newspaper of last week, there was an extensive article about where America currently sits on the abortion question. If you have not read your Economist from last week, I'd urge you to read the three pages. I think they're extremely revealing. They discuss the problems as to whatever you feel about the issue of abortion – and I realise it is a touchstone issue in the US and less so in the UK – but what it does reveal is that after essentially 30 years of the effective legislation, which was very much pioneered in the US through the court system which became more prominent by legislation in Europe, as result of 30 years of that, there is broadly speaking a predominant American consensus that continues to oppose what the law courts provided for in the 1960s. Why is that? It is because, as the article points out – and this is the Economist view, this is not my

view – with an American population where 46% of people attended committed faith (as in Church communities) every Sunday, its possible to have a national view. As a result of that, it's possible therefore for political parties to get a national view, around which a different approach to nationhood can be developed. And we can argue the rights and wrongs of what the American's see or think but I'm just explaining that as a way of approaching diversity, it's an interesting option.

But that question of how religion impacts on the shape of a nation, of how religion shapes therefore the belief systems of a people and how it shapes individual behaviour is as equally pertinent in the Middle Eastern argument as it was and is in Northern Ireland and in the former Yugoslavia. All issues on which we've paid enormous taxes to try and sort out problems.

The second area which I think is affected by our understanding of diversity and the tolerance argument is that of values.

David Willetts made the point at the beginning that morals come from an affinity to tribes, communities, groups, families and networks. I want to suggest that morals and values could also be objective that they don't have to just arise from our relationships. They could arise because they're based on factual truths. Now that is a difficult proposition in any community that doesn't hold to what I was referring to previously, a consensus on faith and faith and values and religion as part of our diverse understanding.

Let me give you an example of this may come down to roots. If our values mean anything in terms of our social behaviour and our public expenditure, if one of the values we choose to believe in – one which I firmly believe in – is that father's are foundational to stable societies. And I say that, not just because I

believe in as a father, but something from my role of Chairman of Crime Concern, we have witnessed as criminal fact the single largest determinant of influences on criminal behaviour is the presence or absence of fathers. But it is the single most uncomfortable thing for the political class to engage with, let alone the nation. I don't need to go into the reasons why. We can debate that if you wish.

In order to be convinced of that value, to hold to it and therefore to take public positions on it, allies very closely to our position on religion and to our general consensus on what is objectively right and objectively wrong. Without that, then of course we may have lots of diversity and plenty of tolerance but we won't have coherence or community or clarity.

Professor Bob Rowthorn:

Politically I come from what might be known as the anti-imperialist left. That is, it was historically a struggle for the self-determination of different peoples and all my adult life I have been involved in that one way or the other and I still am and I still consider the behaviour of the West towards developing countries of the world, or what you might call the Third World, as a disgrace. Effectively in economic terms, we see a new imperialism in which countries or peoples are not allowed to choose their own way in the world but they're told that there's a certain way which is right and it's forced upon.

The reason to say that is to make it clear that I'm not a male chauvinist or xenophobe, although doubtless I will be accused of being so.

The question which concerns me is partly the question of immigration and the cohesion of

our society, but also the way in which we relate, if you establish the relationships between the ethnic minorities and our society in the majority.

The starting point is that Britain has a very large ethnic majority, it's more than 90% and its sub-divided into English, Welsh and Scottish. Personally I straddle the two, being half Welsh and half English.

Now until 50 years ago, this was almost the entire population. It's no use saying that we've absorbed all kinds of people and we're grand mixture and so on. I think that's an evasion. The reality is that immigration in this country has been very very small until quite recently. The maximum proportion of the foreign born in the population has never been more than 5% until the end of the Second World War, being the Irish who congregated in certain areas in large numbers but they were a small proportion of the total population. Basically, most people until then had been absorbed into what you might call the ethnic majority. For example, a small black African population in the 16th and 17th century who came then has been absorbed and in fact probably maybe all of us can carry some of their genes, all of us who are white allegedly may have a little element of that.

But the fact is that we have a long history as a nation, or combination of nations depending on how you view Scotland and Wales, and it is primarily – until recently – a fairly strong sense of national identity and it was an ethnic identity.

Now it's very important to realise, despite the misleading classifications of official publications, that an ethnic

identity is not a racial identity. It's based primarily on a shared history. Language may be important. Religion may be important, but the most important thing is, well not necessarily shared history but shared memory and memory is the absolutely central thing. It seems to me that the base problems which arise in the society now is the concerted attack upon our historical memory. The notion that somehow the large majority of the society do not have the right to have a memory and this is reflected in the teaching of history in schools. My own children have just finished ... one has just finished secondary school the other is now at a sixth form college and I took down from the web site the history syllabus and I was truly astonished. There is no history, effectively, of the 19th and 20th century taught to children in our schools. My children know virtually nothing. They did an item on the First World War, what did it consist of? Well it consisted of what was it like to be in the trenches, and of course we all remain silent and of course what it was quite simply, is a piece of simple passivist propaganda. It wasn't history in any meaningful sense. They have no sense of the historical continuity of our nation, neither do they have pride in it's achievements, nor indeed do they have shame in the terrible things that it's done at various times, so they've actually had the history taken away from them and it seems to me that is what, in the name of diversity, has been imposed upon our children and ultimately upon our nation.

Now the fact is that if you think of our country, it consists of – when I say 'ours' I don't mean the ethnic majority, I mean all of us who are in a sense British – the fact is that we have a very large ethnic majority and a relatively small but growing ethnic minority. The question we face fundamentally is not waffle about diversity and the value of

difference and so, it's how do we govern this potentially very conflictual situation between the large majority and the rather small minorities? That is the fundamental question we face and talking about the virtues of diversity etc will not help and it seems to me the fundamental position is the historic majority of the society wish to remain a majority and that is the starting point and they feel threatened. They wish to remain the majority, they wish to retain their historical identity, they're willing to accept a modest inflow of newcomers and to welcome and to accommodate their present practices and the way they teach, within limits, to the newcomers, that is exactly what the situation is, it seems to me. Provided these do not threaten their own sense of identity and continuity.

Now my view is this is an absolutely justified and reasonable position. I see nothing wrong with it whatsoever. It is no different from the Vietnamese people wishing to govern themselves anymore than the Koreans. The problem of course we have to say is that we have minorities in our society and we must, of course, accommodate them, respect them and in some sense, we have to forge a common, if you like, overarching sense of identity and purpose with them, but that will not be built upon simple things like our civic nationalism. We all have to share common values and common purpose. The fact is in some way we have to create a history in which everyone, or the vast majority, can in some way identify with. That must mean that minorities must accept that the primary basis of history does not refer directly to them. It refers to what is the large majority in the society. I cannot

see any other way in which you can do that. And what has happened, as I've said, is really an attempt effectively to expropriate the national identity of the majority. That is what is our history teaching has done in school and the British nation is defined not just by common values, fair play etc, it is defined, like almost every other nation in the world, is by history.

If you go to America and you think history does not matter, well that is really astonishing and no country in the world, if should we say inaccurate sense of its own history. The crucial thing from a political point of view that not that history is accurate, but that it is believed. The first point about it, is that first of all, not only is the justice I think of the position of the historic majority, but it is also very, very unwise to ignore these feelings. There is a very wide spread concern in the society, shared by may liberal people, liberal white people – I mean long term set of white influence of course – the fear that somehow their country is being taken away from them and you have to recognise this, this is a reality. Large numbers of people feel it and you ignore it at your peril.

The first proposition is that asylum must be brought under control. Whatever the numbers are, people have to feel that these numbers are under control, broadly speaking. They cannot believe that an indefinite flood of people can come from abroad and in incomprehensibly large numbers, because the potential is very large.

The second thing is that immigration into society must be on a modest scale. That's not to say there is no value in having new people into the country. Of course there are: people of

different religion, different races etc. Of course there's a value of having new people in a society but there are two propositions that I'd make. The fact that race is not a primary issue here. The record of Britain in terms of assimilation, in terms of inter-marriage, for people who are say Christians in the society or who have no religion is in fact extremely high. In other words, it's not like the United States whereby there's very little black/white intermarriage or interbreeding for example. In this country it's very high. And so the assimilation process toward, say with respect to Afro-Caribbeans is proceeding very very rapidly. There may be a lot of criminality, but essentially it proceeding and I see absolutely nothing wrong in that. The notion of proceeding, of maintaining racial differences in society is totally unacceptable as a political objective.

On the other hand, when we come to religion, I think religion is very different. Religion is a very important part of peoples' lives. It has many public virtues and many public benefits and I am 100% behind, for example, the funding of Muslim schools. It seems to me that Muslims in our society or Hindus or Sheiks have to be welcomed as a really important element of diversity, which one can't say has to be maintained by the state in the sense that we have to preserve it forever, but has to be regarded very sympathetically and a really good and valuable contribution to our society in many different ways and when it comes to saying we should teach them our values, I have to say to be perfectly honest, the values of people who hold these religions are in many cases, I would regard, superior to the kind of values our society has developed over the last 50 years.

So that is an element of diversity which we could eliminate by learning from it. If you see what I

mean, or else we might adopt these values.

Now on the question of teaching history, I think we must restore in our schools a sense of narrative history so that people and our students know where they come from and what the history of the nation is. Now of course, since we have many new people who have come here in the last couple of generations we must have a history which in some ways brings them in. I mean they have to accept that the broad history of the nation is relevant to them but we must include them.

Now we have a great advantage in Britain, which is widely unappreciated, that we have fought or conquered virtually everybody in the world at some time. And therefore there is virtually no immigrant in the country or the children of immigrants who can't say your history is irrelevant to me because if we taught the history of British expansion in the Empire, there is no one we would have to leave out and so I actually think the truth of the matter is we have to teach a history which says, well you know, it's true that we're the dominant majority as it were, but actually we've all in some way been involved in it. Also I think we have to teach a history in which the majority population – which who knows how we'll inter-marry with the others, as it were – actually has a sense of pride in its history but also a sense of shame, because a nation without a sense of history, has no shame and therefore you cannot say we have special responsibilities to other people in the world or even to particular minorities in our own midst. You cannot say that, because that must depend upon history. If you don't teach history, those things

are meaningless. So my view in the end, the most important project apart from governing the rate of immigration, I do not want to say stopping it because I don't believe in stopping it, but maybe some limitations on it governing it in a meaningful way. It is that we have to create in society a sense of history and it is not enough to refer to civic nationalism, because the successful countries that have civic nationalism have very strong historical sense.

And I think what we've done is essentially to destroy the historical sense of the people and if that is continued as it is now, it will cause enormous resentment. There is a popular resistance to it already in the form of TV programmes and the huge audience they have on history and the sale of history books. But our schools do not teach it and my children do not know it and I feel, to be perfectly frank, their birth right has been expropriated.

David Goodhart: I think one obvious thing the panel disagree about is where values come from. It struck me that Bhikhu talked about a community of fate being different in some way from a community of values and I think that Bob is in a sense saying that values grow out of the community of fate and that it is indeed a historical thing, that you can't separate the community of fate from the history that has been experienced.

Carolyn Hayman: I think you're right to focus on where do values come from, because I think heard three competing views from the panel and in a sense I'm interested that the word that nobody's mentioned is social control, at least I don't think I heard anyone mention that. Because it seems to

me that actually in a way an interesting dimension of the problem we face is that there isn't enough social control in the UK, but you can only have social control if you have a shared set of values, so in a sense, first of all we have to decide where values from.

I think we've heard three competing theories or possibilities. One is that values come from faith, one is that faith come from family relationships that then sort of ripple out into broader communities and the third is that values come from some kind of social contract, that people agree what the values are that they want to be part of: fair play, tolerance and that sort of thing.

I think we've lost the faith possibly. I'm sort of interested in what was said about we've lost history. I think we've lost faith as well, most people in this country don't adhere to a faith and I think that's probably more true of the younger generations.

I don't really accept the David Willetts thesis that there's something intrinsically true about the idea that we're more interested in people in Birmingham than we are in people in Bogota, because actually I think those things change over time. There was a time when the parish was the central unit of the welfare state. Unfortunately that's no longer the case.

So I think that actually the future lies in some kind of negotiated social contract. I think that's the only basis on which we can maintain the balance between solidarity and diversity. We have to decide what are the elements of values that people need to adhere to in order for us to welcome them into community and which are the aspects of our values that are kind of optional.

David Goodhart: If we really feel exactly the same about the people of Bogota as of Birmingham,

then why isn't the foreign aid budget bigger than the ...

Carolyn Hayman: I'm not saying we feel exactly the same, but I'm saying it's not intrinsically true that we have particular relationships with people in a particular area, because I suppose what I'm really saying is the ripples are getting wider. It was the Parish in the Elizabethan times and in fact, women who gave birth were not allowed access to midwives until they told the authorities which parish the father of the child came from. We don't do that anymore.

Paul Omerod: Perhaps I could just make a brief comment on the concept of cultural diversity and where it comes from? It seems to me it doesn't necessarily require physical presence because we look at say Iceland, a very racially homogenous society, is still open to cultural diversity in the form of American media and all sorts of things, it doesn't necessarily require a physical presence to bring about a great deal of cultural diversity, culture is transmitted in many, many ways. But the main point I wanted to make was on this question of social solidarity, willingness to finance a welfare state and homogenated the population. I think there's some very clear evidence, maybe in the very long run, that attitudes do change. All we can offer is the state of play at the present time.

Just first of all, a bit of casual empiricism. We see since the formulation of the Scottish parliament, increasing within the English region. Ken Livingstone in particular – a man of impeccable left wing background – started to complain about the British region and in particular the Scots, getting more than their

fair share and that the wealth that London generates should be brought back to London. But more importantly there is some quite detailed American analysis, The National Bureau of Economic Research, looking both across countries, as the financing the welfare state: the proportion which people are willing to spend on the welfare state and the degree of racial homogeneity of the country. But I think even more powerfully there's evidence within the American states themselves and to be quite frank, the willingness or the amount of transfer which take place on a state by state level in terms of the welfare state is very, very strongly related to the degree of racial homogeneity of that particular state. So I'm afraid that at the present time, it seems to me the empirical evidence is extremely clear and it rather supports David Willetts position, although of course in the long run, we may actually bring about the perfectibility of humanity and worry about Bogota just as much as Birmingham.

Christopher Lord: I think we should start with remembering Hugh Trevor Roper who contributed a brilliant essay on the invention of tradition, and talked about the invention of a sculpted identity through the manufacture of tartans and so on. And I think that this should remind us, and it's opportune that we should remember, that all of these ideas of national identity are completely different in every set of circumstances. In Eastern Europe there are wildly different accounts given to the new nationalities which are being promoted. In Russia there's a very important debate about what it means to be Russian at all and so on.

I think if we look historically, in Europe anyway, we can see that the historical base of a lot of these is in fact a religious identity because the first minorities were Jewish minorities, who lived among what was a Christian set of values. Now none of this is graven in stone. In Cote D'Ivoire right now, people are fighting a war whether or not there really exists a Cote D'Ivoire identity and the reason for this is because the French attempt to manufacture one has had this sort of unforeseen fall out. And in Britain what we need to do is manufacture a tradition, if you like, or at least an identity, which is going to work for everyone. And that's something that we plainly do not have.

David Goodhart: Is there anybody here who is a history teacher, in a secondary school? Perhaps after this lady has spoken, I would be interested in whether Bob is right about the history syllabus.

Louisa Hutchinson: I was very interested by what everybody said and I thought I'd really agree with some and disagree with others, and I found myself agreeing with everybody in turn. But I was really very impressed by the last speaker and I also agreed that given the recent immigrants who have come in and shared a sense or a knowledge of history is one of the most important things and I wondered what he thought political correctness as being one of the main enemies of openness and knowledge about history, which seems to be a thing that's so strong now in this country, that most people hate political correctness but are also very afraid of it and afraid, I think a lot of the time, the fact that we were once a strong country, with all the shame and pride that entails and its almost a great embarrassment to a lot of people.

Unidentified speaker: Just to say that boys in my particular school do learn history. They learn it all the

way through from the beginning of the school right through to sixth form even if they're not taking history for A level, so they have to learn it.

I think I'm a bit more optimistic about a sense of history being generated amongst the young and that's probably because history I think goes in vogues and at the moment I think we can see a revival of interest in British imperial history, which has been absent for about the last 20/30 years. I think as time goes on and people become more comfortable by distance from their uncomfortable past, then things can be re-evaluated.

Sir Samuel Brittan: I think there are so many logical and philosophical confusions around that I won't have time to go into them all.

First of all there is a distinction between the justification of moral values and their Genesis. The speaker on the far left said he wasn't a philosopher or a politician, well I hope he would read some of the essays of David Hume and he might learn – and I emphasise learn as we're talking about teaching – that you cannot derive an 'ought' proposition from an 'is' proposition. Logically and philosophically moral values are chosen.

Now we come to the Genesis of moral values, which is different. Now the Genesis, as David said (and it can be hardly contradicted) comes from the small groups. I'm glad he didn't use that horrible expression 'small platoons'. Everytime I hear the Conservatives lose a vote, and I think little bits of Burke are much too much quoted and I would have as a penalty for that the obligation to read the whole of his works. But I think there is ... nationalism has been set up by both speakers on the

right as a sort of cliff hanger. I started off as a historian before I knew anything about economics and philosophy and one of the things that I think I've learnt was that the nation state is a very, very, very recent arrival in human history. I mean you can read the works of Norman Davis on what he called the history of the Isles. Nationalism is a very, very recent arrival and what is extremely interesting is that the Conservatives – sorry to bring Party politics into it, it livens things up a bit – the Conservatives have fairly recently, in historical terms, yesterday taken it up. From a whole period, 1815 to 1850 the Conservatives were the opponents of nationalism, just as they were the opponents of democracy and further in the 19th century it was regarded as a legitimate political project to stop the spread of nationalism. This was what Metonec (sp?) lived for, to stop the spread of nationalism. Castlereagh followed him to some extent and Gladstone – while supporting nations struggling to be free – did not promote any kind of nationalism.

Now what I think is oversimplification is to move from the fact that we legitimately feel more sympathy for people in our group, to make a big difference between those inside and those outside the nation. I probably feel more empathy with a political journalist with minority values in Bogota than I feel with a flogging and hanging Conservative or a very egalitarian Socialist in this country at least, and certainly more in common with a journalist in Bogota than with a militant British trade unionist. So let us not set up this huge cliff that either you are a ridiculous Universalist or you're a

nationalist. You can be neither. You can have more sympathy with your own group and your own group can be defined in various ways. I've said enough, unless you wanted a real tutorial.

Justine Davis: David Goodhart mentioned nobody was discussing history. We've got nothing but history since he's mentioned it and it's very true I think what Bob Rowthorn has said. When I grew up in Ireland, we weren't taught Irish history, we were taught British history and I knew more about British history than Irish history so that in a sense is true.

This came back to me, because I'd been watching the Niall Ferguson series on Empire and he has been stressing how the British, when they were India, they used their influence to change the customs which were prevalent in India at that particular time, of burning wives on the funeral pyre of their husbands. So I was just wondering whether, as regards social justice, the taxation system could be used to change attitudes towards women today. In a sense, raising the minimum wage higher so that they're valued more as wage earners rather than just staying at home. So in a sense, more social justice would be gained by giving them more freedom through the tax system than rather through their own cultural identity.

Michael Hastings: I wanted to comment particularly on the faith dimension of diversity and pick up the point about faith being lost and therefore the implications of it and only just to throw this is as a sort of suggested approach, which is you only have to watch peoples choices as parents every year for the schools for their primary aged or secondary aged children. Given the choice between a church school or faith related school and a standard school and watch where they go. Likewise, it is still the case, the majority of people choose to marry in a

religious institution or organisation and large numbers choose still to christen their children. Whether or not they then practice beyond those points is debatable and I think that what that is an indicator of is that the passion for spirituality is alive and well and thriving in the UK and I don't think this is highly controversial to say this, it was the church that threw it out. Because the church opted, in a post-war period, not to believe in its faith and by not believing in its faith it's persuaded others not to believe in its faith. And bishops have continued to not believe. The consequence of not believing, which has transferred itself throughout the Church of England, let alone other denominations, has encouraged people in thinking that faith has got to be found in alternative mechanism but the desire for it is very real. And that's why, when you talked about negotiating a new social contract, and I think someone else talked about manufacturing a new identity, in other words trying to find something that hold everybody together, that is genuinely an agreement. The difficulty – I don't know whether you'd agree or not – but the difficulty we would find in getting that agreement is that there is no consensus on any absolutes left and as a result of that lack of consensus, probably the only thing everybody agrees on is smoking is a bad habit. Or drinking before driving is a bad thing and we've accepted that it is legitimate for the state to take moral and prepositional views on things such as smoking and drinking but we're extremely troubled by the state taking moral prepositional views on actually those foundational things that we choose to want for our own children. And therein lies a dilemma and I think there's

a growing up that needs to happen. Having had liberalism as part of the main stay of our society for the better part of 50+ years but promoting and celebrating it, I means it's always been there, but celebrating it. And of course the media has a major part to play in that, but having had that, I think we're all very conscious that that hasn't served us very well and most parents are nervous about the consequences of it. So the desire to find a new 'something' around which we cohere and the only thing— I would suggest - that allows us to cohere is objective values and you can only get to objective values if you actually relate those to transcendentals because you have to leap outside of everybody else's potential to disagree and lock onto one idea at the end.

Now that's controversial I appreciate that, but in a society which I would suggest – and a lot of figures support it – really wants spirituality and transcendence, it is possible to pursue it and if we ever had it restored in the church people would flock to it.

Bhikhu Parekh: I was trying to absorb your transcendence actually!

Michael I think you have the making of a good philosopher and if you do wish to register in a philosophy course, I will be more than happy to have you.

I just want to make quick responses to three or four questions. I think Samuel Brittan was absolutely right. When we talked about sentiments for our fellow citizens, of our members of our community, the question to ask is two-fold. Is this sentiment inherent in human nature, or is it a historical development. If it is a historical development then it

can change. And secondly, even if it is there, is it something that we should cherish?

I have natural affection for my wife or for my children but I can always ask – as writers have asked – is this sentiment always to be respected? Are there situations in which that sentiment may not be respected?

So I think the first point to bear in mind is that when we talk about national identity and all that, remember it's no more than about 220 years old in some countries and in others not even 50 years old. Even in Europe, some countries like Italy, they are only just developing this and it can easily lead into a blind alley if one is not careful.

In Europe we are already moving in some sense beyond nation state to the European Union, where there's a tremendous amount of distribution taking place. Germany giving an enormous amount to other states, to regions and so on. So already one is beginning to notice that process, this evolutionary process of the expansion of human consciousness. The expansion of human sympathy and the question to ask is, in what direction do we want to take it and how?

I think the other point that has been mentioned, I want quickly to run through this large question. We talked about the universal where do values come from? I mean, if I were addressing a room of undergraduates I would say this is a logically incoherent question, because values don't come from anywhere. The question is, as you were trying to draw a distinction, how do we justify values? Values don't come from a community.

And I think very simply one would say we all would recognise that human life is sacred. Whether it's the life of the Chinese or the life of my fellow citizens and therefore you have two sets of parameters of

values: there are values which are universal in scope and there are some, not values, but there are certain sentiments which arise within a national context and therefore values in some context get limited to them. So for example, its absolutely proper that because I am closely connected with my fellow citizens, have depended upon them, have built the bonds of expectations, I have certain obligations to them, which are additional to obligations I have to people elsewhere. But that doesn't mean that one always trumps the other, if obligations to my own people were always far more important than others, then there's not reason why United States can't go and bomb Iraq if it wants oil. Our citizens matter most, why do these other outsiders matter? We may not pursue our self-interest in a manner which causes greater damage to the interest of others.

Likewise we may not go around serving the world at the cost of our own people. So you have two sets of obligations to our own community and to human beings in general and both regulate and compliment each other.

And I think on this narrow question of history, we need to be very careful. For nearly two hundred odd years after the United States became independent, the history that was taught was the history that encouraged Anglo-phobia. This kind of spacial relation that we talk about is relatively recent and for years and for decades and centuries, the stuff of history that the American's student learnt – and I say this as somebody who has taught at Harvard and gone into it in some detail, because history interests me a great deal – one has to be very careful.

If you start teaching history in order that you can build up national unity, then your history will not be objective because it is already subjected to the discipline of politics. Remember the big debate that took place in the United States in the 60s and 70s? You can't say that Thomas Jefferson had a slave woman or a slave mistress. An enormous amount of protest against this, or about George Washington and axing the tree and so on. Don't say that it's a lie, it's made up. In other words, lots of Americans have been saying, "teach our history in such a way that it can generate national pride", pride in being American. Well once you go down the road, do remember that you will have to sacrifice truth along the way.

I say this because I was in India two weeks ago and the biggest debate that this Hindu fundamentalist government have been engaging in, "how do we teach Muslim history?" And the constant concern is to teach it in such a way that Muslim rulers are seen as predators who raped Hindu women and so on and that is the line of history they want to go and there's enormous attempts to re-write history books.

So all I would say is, leave history to historians. Politicians have no business getting involved in it, because as and when they do, they always make a mess of it.

And the last point about taxation and all that, I think I have argued this at great length. I didn't want to go into it, because when I was in charge of producing a report on the future of Britain and the kind of argument that has been made here, was made by Ellen Woolf and others, a twelve page article criticising our report on these

grounds, that look, unless you have a strong sense of social justice and nationalism, you will not ... there's re-distribution of ethics. And I spent 40 pages trying to answer it, by collecting empirical evidence from a lot of countries as well as moral argument.

Very briefly I would say that a strong sense of national identity or national community is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition of social justice. I can give you countless examples of pre-19th century Britain, all contemporary countries elsewhere, where there is a strong sense of community but not the slightest desire to share your wealth with anybody.

In our own country, the Labour Party has had this dilemma. People just don't want to pay higher taxes and I don't think anybody is going to say that our sense of community has dramatically declined during the last ten or fifteen years, so we need to be extremely careful in establishing these kind of equations because otherwise you end up blackmailing people into saying, "you poor people, do you want social justice? Well we've have to tax these people, but they will not feel concern for you unless you start becoming like them". In other words, you will have to blackmail people into giving up their ways of life and getting homogenised in order to secure social justice. And that leads to consequence. A) it is a fraudulent argument and B) you will be blackmailing people and C) what if those people say, "We do not like Patricia Hewitt's constituency". What I do not want to give up is my way of life simply because otherwise you chaps are not prepared to share with me. What do you do? Insight disorder? That's hardly the way to create solidarity.

David Willetts: First of all Samuel Brittan's original question was, what is the disagreement between you members of the panel

and part of the disagreement that I had with Professor Parekh is a straight forward empirical one and I'm with Paul Ormerod on this, it just seems to me pretty clear from the evidence that a sense of shared community and a sense of more values being shared correlates pretty clearly with, for example, the modern welfare state and I thought Paul Ormerod gave interesting evidence I wasn't aware of. I think that the clear link between expansion of the welfare state and time of war is another clear piece of evidence. Its when there is that intensity of sharing in a national effort that people then say we must share much more as well and its no accident that, I suppose, the modern philosopher of the welfare state T H Marshall wrote his book straight after the Second World War. So I think there's an empirical disagreement and the I think the evidence there is on my side.

There is secondly, then people say, "that might, all this is may even be true, but let's move into the realms of philosophy and it doesn't matter where any of these things come from, we're talking about moral obligations and moral obligations are unaffected by stories of where things derive from" and that is Samuel's point about is/ought.

I used to think that Hume was right about the gap between 'is' and 'ought'. I no longer believe so. I think that the whole – and think that you believe that 'is' and 'ought' are divided in this fundamental way, you end up with the most sort of desiccated Oxford moral philosophy. My view is that the nature of moral obligations is they come from facts about yourself and that the fact that you are a father of a child brings with it obligations to that child and that it is not just the way in

which we understanding and feeling moral obligations is because that's how they're generated, it is a feature of a vigorous moral community that the moral obligations come as a result of facts being sated about people and their social rolls, such as British citizen. I am a British citizen, therefore I have an obligation to be a juror and if I may trivialise the argument, it is because you are in the game of cricket and the bowler bowls you down your stump that you then have an obligation to walk to the pavilion. Once you're inside the game, once you're participating in it, the obligation follows as a consequence of certain descriptions of you and I think that is the nature of moral obligations and I'm not with Hume and I'm therefore sadly not with Samuel, despite my great respect for him.

The third point I wanted to make is about this question of history because I thought that where Bob was right was this argument about narrative; that all this has to be part of a story.

This post-modernist language, the invention of tradition, Linda Colley 'forging a nation', Benedict Anderson 'imagined communities'. This game of taking everything that we think of as a British tradition and tracing it back. Most of them can't trace back further than about 1890 and announcing that you have discovered all these things are invented. I think it is, this is residual Marxism and what I mean by that is, is that in the old days the Marxist agenda was to say, if you strip away all this bourgeois game you'll discover the proletariat and you'll discover authentic proletarian identities.

They've lost confidence in those authentic proletarian identities, but instead, that the game of showing that it's all pretence goes on. My view is that this language of sort of invention and forging – and it is false consciousness – is pernicious. What we're doing is describing the series of events, which end up with us feeling British in the way that we do today. It's not that they are somehow accidents or bogus, that is just how national identity happens. It happens by the creation of rituals, it happens by shared experiences and the whole language of invention and forging implies there's something else separate which is real and authentic. It isn't, it's just how we come to share a national identity.

And I found the most powerful recent exploration of this was Melvyn Bragg's radio programme and more recently TV programme on the English language. I thought that was a marvellous piece of narrative history, describing the English language. It was in shamelessly whig-ish terms, it was all about this marvellous language and how it had developed and how it was more sophisticated than the French because it was a mixture of Anglo-Saxon and Latin and that's why it was so subtle and that's why it was taking on the world. It was absolutely sort of shamelessly, agro-anodising account of the English language.

Now we are no longer able to do that sort of history about our political institutions and Melvyn Bragg 50 years ago would be doing that about the creation of the mother of parliaments. That's no longer permitted. We've lost that confidence in the distinctive qualities of our political institutions, but when it come st our language, Melvyn Bragg was celebrating something and I hope every person in this room, regardless of their racial or ethnic background, can

share it and it is part of our national identity.

Bob Rawthorn: Can I begin by saying I'm not sure whether David Willetts is wasted in politics because he's such a brilliant intellectual or whether we should be fortunate that we still have some of this kind in politics. I feel slightly, shall we say, unprofessional in comparison, as full time paid intellectual, as it were.

Can I begin making a couple of points? The notion that now we're spreading out more and people are more concerned about the world, which I heard somebody say, is total rubbish. In the 19th century, there were gigantic movements of concern for other countries, like evangelical Christians, they actually bought Liberia. I mean, can you imagine a group of people today in here getting together with their own money and buying a country? I mean I can't believe it – and not buying it for themselves as-it-were, but buying it for others.

The notion that somehow we live in a more diverse society of ideas: has anyone read the history of debates in the 19th century, about vegetarians, nut-etarians, and other kinds of nutty people kind of endlessly engaged in legal disputes? I mean it was a period of enormous ferment. The Victorian age, the idea that is was some kind of boring period is just ridiculous. And I think it's just this notion that somehow we now live in a changing present – in the past it was stationary. The history of Britain indeed of most places in the world has been that of constant change and the interesting question is, as-it-were, continuity through change. That's the really interesting question, not by somehow we're now changing. I think the post-

modernist don't know anything about history. Of course it doesn't exist for them. It's just an invention as it were.

Now what I would like to say about this thing about nations and Europe and so on: I being – shall we say not a Euro enthusiast – I think the European project is not an international project of a higher level of the nation, I think it's just a European nationalist project. It's an attempt to forge a new nation. It is basically to oppose the United States. It's grand project is an alternative nation, which I don't particularly like and I certainly don't think it has more virtue than ours. And in fact, the whole point about the nation is that nationalism or at least the concept of nation and nation state is associated with the notion of the people as a collective actor and that is, if you like, a pre-democratic notion but it involves the same ideas. The fact is its not just a small group of people like a few Lords doing it with their followers or something, or a monarch with a number of retainers, it's the notion of the people as a collective actor. You can see it in Henry V or something like this. The use of the term like England and then later Britain, they're capturing this notion of collective actor and the struggle for democracy in our society is to turn the notion of a collective actor into ones in which the people themselves control the process and one of the characteristics of our society now, which goes along with the mindless stress on diversity – because I certainly support some aspects of diversity – is of course the expropriation of politics, because its replaced by courts and judges. So its no longer the notion of a people of a collective actor, because you destroy the notion of a collective people and

you replace by either sub communities or individuals and the societies rule by judges, which is a small group of illuminati who know everything, and of course they're self-perpetuating. This is both national and international. And I see the notion of a strong national identity as being a collective one, in which we can establish a proper democracy. And of course, everyone who's a citizen belongs in that, whatever colour, whatever religion they have. It seems to me it's a collective and the task is to forge one and it means of course we have to reshape our interpretation of history, so in a way, everyone belongs in it and we have to tell that kind of a story. Not as a lie. I mean it has to have a foundation in truth, but of course we all know: a foundation of truth is not the same as telling a story. You can tell many different stories, but we have to have a story which is true and which everyone belongs to. But it has to be a story which corresponds when you go further back, to what is historically the overwhelming majority of the population. You can't say we'll stop in 1800 because really it all gets a bit embarrassing after that. I mean personally, I think it's always been a bit embarrassing if you look at the history. After all it was the British who was one of the main people who started slavery. It's true we abolished it, but anyway, there we are, I have to finish now.

But anyway, I think the answer is that we have to forge an identity which we all belong to, alright?

Unidentified speaker: I think there is a very basic problem with the assumptions that are being presented. For example, the assumption about solidarity and sympathy. It has been presented in terms of ethnicity. I don't think it is necessary to not to feel solidarity or necessarily sympathy and at the same time co-exist. I mean one example of that would be when will

be the day, for example, the Tory Party, the Conservatives, will declare a sense of solidarity or sympathy with the Labour Party? Or the Socialist Workers Party with both of them?

But we can see that, although this sense of solidarity is not there, nonetheless there must be a set of values that go beyond that, that keep people together.

Anthony Browne: I start from the premise of being a democrat and that society is there to serve the people and I think it's quite a simple thing. I think people should be able to decide the sort of society they want to live in and it's a fairly obvious observation that actually most people don't like diversity in many ways and actually it tends to get imposed on them and they try and resist it and obviously diversity has great strengths. It also has weaknesses, it leads to a lot of conflicts: you don't have to go to Northern Ireland, because you're out in Northern Nigeria and actually you don't see people saying, "We want diversity" in parts of England that are sort of monochrome in one or another. You don't see India – I don't know whether, being a person of India origin, getting India citizen. India's given citizenship to twenty million people of ethnic Indian origin around the world. They're not inviting diversity, they're actually saying we don't diversity and it's the same. I just think people should be allowed to decide what they want.

In Denmark for example, what happened there is Denmark is an incredibly homogenous society, not as homogenous as Iceland, but Denmark social state is totally based on the fact that everyone totally relates to everyone else. It is in many ways one of the world's most perfect

societies in terms of low crime rate, high wealth, high quality of life, high trust between individuals and so on and actually they found diversity being thrust on them and that's why they all ended up voting for the Peoples' Party, saying we don't want diversity, because diversity was leading to division within society and that's their right. It may be boring, their culture may be boring, they may be missing out on a lot of things, but its up to them ultimately.

Sneh Shah (Fellow): Just wanted to make an observation about this notion of shared values. While I'm not commenting on anything that anyone of the speakers said in particular, I think there has been and there still is a tendency generally speaker to focus on shared values of the British majority as opposed to the minorities. I think it's very important for us to remember that when you talk about shared values, even within the British majority – and I do think that I am a British person, so I'm including myself in that category – the debate has tended really underestimate the tremendous variety of values that exist. One can think about the position of women, one can think about what is a family, what are relationships and so on and I think if we really are going to talk about shared values, then it would really help to get into a complete debate about all the values.

In relation to that I would like to emphasise – which I think has been referred to by one or two speakers – the fact that surely every society needs to develop ideas and values. We may wish to think about shared values now, maybe it's a defence mechanism, maybe because we want to keep people out, but in

the long term, is it not detrimental to British Society to decide on the values that are important FULL STOP.

Marilyn Mason (British Humanist Association): I would like to come back to this question of shared values, because I think a lot of the speakers have underestimated the number of shared values we have. It certainly isn't just that smoking is a bad thing: I should think everyone in this room agrees that killing people is wrong, lying is wrong, honesty is a good thing, fraud is a bad thing and so on and so forth.

I would also like to pick up Michael Hastings on one or two points of facts, because it relates to this. I would be very unhappy indeed if I thought that values had to be based on faith, which is waning much more quickly than he admits. In fact, christening is now a minority activity, I think civil weddings have over taken religious weddings recently and anyone that thinks that people send their children to church schools because they're Christians is very naïve about that.

Alex Linklater: Just in case we are imagining a globe of Denmarks all happily at one with themselves, a tangential thought occurred to me when Bob Rowthorn talked about the missing fraternity aspect of the debate, which seemed to me to be crucial to the idea of solidarity and of course the nature of brotherhood as well as bond is, of course, conflict. If we can't accept conflict with other people, if we're afraid of other people, we probably won't be able to accept brotherhood with them either. Indeed within ourselves, which seems in Britain, we are a history of conflicting nations and conflicting histories and that's what makes British history interesting and indeed just to finish on a little Bedouin saying which is quite famous: '*Me against my*

brother, my brother and I against the neighbours, us and the neighbours against all foreigners'.

The interesting thing about that is all foreigners, by that equation have the same relationship to us, as we do to our brothers: very nomic.