Stuart Hall - *The Multicultural Question*

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My choice of theme and topic for this occasion is designed really to register two things. First, the urgency of putting questions of race, ethnicity and multiculturalism centre stage to the broader political agenda. Secondly, my conviction that far from being an obvious, overused, platitude, questions of multiculturalism, properly understood contain the seeds of a major disruption of our normal common sense political assumptions and is calculated to have disruptive effects on all sides. Multiculturalism, I want to argue, can't just happen. It has to be seriously, actively, put in place and interrogated. Thirdly, I want to suggest that this a propitious moment for political intervention of this kind: the public trauma of the Stephen Lawrence Enquiry and the Macpherson Report, the dramatic rise in racial incidents, coupled more generally with the return of ethnic cleansing to the centre of Europe; the crisis of national identity, which devolution and the new constitutional settlements have put in place; the challenges of Europe and Globalisation; all these factors have precipitated a sort of propitious moment; they have created what I think is an important political opening; but I want to argue it is a political opening of an ambiguous kind, both opportune and dangerous.

At some point in about 1998, the precise moment is still open for questioning, Britain is said to have become a multicultural society. It is commonly assumed that, since Afro Caribbean, Asian and other assorted ethnic people are now visually evident as an inevitable part of the British scene in every walk of urban life, things must be getting presumably better on the race relations front. And society must have somehow slipped almost unobtrusively into a multicultural state. You won't be surprised to learn that I think this is a highly dubious proposition. Undoubtedly, things in this area are changing. Undoubtedly, some things are even getting better, but I think it is more accurate to see this period as framed by two events which stubbornly refuse to be conjugated together. In 1998 Britain celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the arrival of the SS Empire Windrush, the troopship which brought people from the Caribbean to Britain, which is taken as conveniently signifying the beginning of the post war black migration to Britain. The Windrush anniversary was an occasion for widespread self congratulation. The authors of an important volume that accompanied their excellent television series Mike and Trevor Phillips subtitled it *The Irresistible Rise of Multi Racial Britain*. A year later, however, the Macpherson enquiry into the murder of teenager Stephen Lawrence at a bus stop on Well Hall Road, Eltham, delivered the verdict that the handling of this brutal affair by the Metropolitan Police "was marred by professional incompetence, institutional racism and a failure of leadership by senior officers".

Now these two events together seem to me to be paradigmatic of the state of play about race in Britain today. The first speaks to, what I want to call *multicultural drift*, that is to say the unplanned, increasing involvement of Britain's black and brown populations visibly registering a play of difference right across the face of British society. However, this creeping multiculturalism remains deeply uneven. Large areas of the country, most significant centres of power, substantial areas of racially differentiated disadvantage, are largely untouched by it. Outside its radius racialised

exclusion compounded by household poverty, unemployment and educational underachievement persist, indeed multiply. Some Brits welcome the new multicultural mix, which is in my view of the source of the *Cool* in that new Labour fantasy once labelled *Cool Britannia*. I think it's <u>us</u> they were talking about. Many Brits grudgingly accept, or tolerate, this new drift to multiculturalism as another perhaps inevitable step in the slow passing of the good old days. Still others are viscerally threatened by it and violently resistant to it. This is where the Stephen Lawrence murder, and those of Ricky Reel and Michael Menson and the McGowan brothers come in. Those events have been compounded by a determined effort institutionally to revert to what one can only call *common sense* policing, that is to say to normalise the state of violence on the streets, rendering much of it invisible. This suggests to me the deeply unresolved character of British multiculturalism. And that brings me to the main focus of my talk.

This is what I want to call the complex relationship between on the one hand the unremitting struggle for a more socially equal, racially just society. What we might call the old antiracist or race equality and justice agenda, and on the other hand the question of whether and how people's of very different cultural, ethnic, racial and religious belonging can cohabit together in British society and build a common life in a way which recognises rather than abolishing their differences. One could put this dilemma in the terms of the relationship between the struggle for equality and social justice, and, on the other hand what has come to be called the politics of recognition between for shorthand purposes *anitracism* and *multiculturalism*. As far as the politics of recognition is concerned, I have in mind Charles Taylor's famous formulation in the volume on multiculturalism when he says

> The thesis is that our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence. Often by the misrecognition of others. Non recognition or misrecgonition can inflict harm can be a form of oppression imprisoning someone in a false distorted and reduced mode of being.

One can hear the voices of Amilcar Cabral and Frantz Fanon eloquently audible in Charles Taylor's formulation. For many years in Britain antiracism and multiculturalism were seen as mutually exclusive strategies. Multiculturalism with its focus on cultural identity being understood by many, especially many on the Left, as a way of evading the difficult structural, economic and political questions, posed by racism. I believe this distinction to be no longer valid and that our incapacity to evolve a timely and strategic response to what Michel Foucault called the history of the present lies partly in our difficulty in thinking strategically beyond those barriers.

Multiculturalism is like race itself or identity or ethnicity or diaspora, a much contested term which can only be deployed as Derrida would say "under erasia". I have to say its no longer effectively operating innocently in the original paradigm which it was developed, but nevertheless it is a term without which we cannot think the relations around this question at all. The term multiculturalism is contested by the conservative right in the name of the puritan integrity of the nation, by liberals in defence of individual liberty and formal equality, by modernisers of all stripes, and there are many, for whom the triumph of western universalism, enlightenment reason and modernity, over cultural particularism and tradition and racialised belonging, is seen as an irreversible transition to the modern which any of us would desert at our

peril. It is contested by the left for substituting what might be thought of as soft issues of cultural identity in place of the hard issues of structure and economics, and for dividing the progressive forces along ethnically particularistic lines.

There are indeed many multiculturalists. In pluralist multiculturalism, as I call it, prevalent for example in the United States, non-wasp non-European minorities are treated as strongly bound unicultures, hierarchically arranged in an ethnic pecking order. In corporate multiculturalism, cultural differences it is assumed, dissolved by the market with no significant redistribution of resources required. In multicultural managerialism, difference is managed by and in relation to the centre and increasingly functions in terms of fixed cultural distinctions and ethnic demarcations, this is what my friend Farand Maharaj has called sometimes "a spook lookalike apartheid logic": apartheid coming back to meet you from the other side. I agree with a remark passed by Peter Caws in Goldberg's collection on multiculturalism when he emphasises that multiculturalism, with the emphasis on *ism* "Stands for a wide range of social articulations, ideas and practices, and that the problem with the *ism* is that it reduces it to a formal singularity, fixing it into a cemented condition (sort of ideology of political correctness) and reduces the heterogeneity which is characteristic of all multicultural conditions.

What concerns me in what follows is, as Goldberg states

> Rather the theoretical, philosophical and political presuppositions and implications of multiculturalism, with different relations they encompass between what it calls *history* and *multiple histories*, between *Reason* (with a capital R) and *many rationalities*, between *culture*, *domination* and *self assertion*, between heterogeneity and homogeneity.

In what follows then, I use the term multicultural adjectivally, not substantially. I use it to describe the very different societies in which people of different ethnic, cultural, racial, religious backgrounds live together provided they are attempting to build a common life, and are not formally segregated into distinct separate segments. Historically there have been many such societies but their visibility has greatly increased in recent years. That is I think as a result of several factors which I want quickly to identify but which I can't explore further in this lecture. So those forces are, first of all, the process of postwar decolonisation and the formation in its wake of the plurality of postcolonial states, many of which are multi ethnic and multi religious, where often the problems of governance assume the character of interethnic conflict. Another factor is obviously the break-up of the Soviet Union and its sphere of influence, which has precipitated another wave of small societies seeking independent nationhood. Some, like Serbia, using the invention of tradition to construct a past which would legitimate their contemporary ambitions for an ethnically cleansed nation-state. Thirdly, that visibility has been heightened by the process of globalisation itself which has weakened and undermined, without destroying, the reach and stability of the modern western nation-state, setting in play global cross-lateral processes above and below the level of the state. And playing across these three precipitating conditions is the remorseless process of planned and unplanned migrations and movements of people whether driven by poverty, underdevelopment, labour exploitation, structural adjustment programmes, civil wars and natural disasters. All of them taking place in the conditions of deepening global

inequality. This has precipitated the breakdown and the break-up of traditionally well founded communities and societies. The mixing and mingling of cultures, languages, religions and traditions which is the consequence of what Appadurai calls "these new global flows".   As Aziz Ahmad, who is no natural ally of the hybridising intelligentsia, has argued

> The cross-fertilization of cultures has been endemic to all movements of people and all such movements in history have involved travel, contact, transmutation, hybridization of ideas, values and behavioural norms.

What this has done above all is to challenge the assumption of a universal cultural homogeneity, a society which is culturally and socially homogeneous, an idea which has underpinned the western nation state since the Enlightenment and introduced in its place the principle of a radical social heterogeneity.

My argument is that the emergence of the multicultural question in its many forms has not only presented a ramified range of practical problems for the governance of such diverse societies, it has also disrupted and transformed many of our classical and common sense categories, theories and assumptions. Take for example globalisation. The assumption of what David Held calls the hyperglobalisers is that contemporary forms of globalisation, deregulated markets, gigantic capital and currency flows, transnational production and consumption, the technologies of the so-called *new economy*, these are all driven essentially by the developed and industrialised West, including of course, paradoxically, some other countries like Japan which are not in the west. Since the world, according to this view is divided between the advanced liberal modernity of the West and the tradition bound developing worlds of east and south, globalisation in this account must involve the simple imposition of the forms of life, socio-economic organisation and culture of the former, that is to say the developed west, in a wholesale takeover of the culture and organisation of the latter, that is to say the tradition bound underdeveloped world. Now there is no point in denying that this is indeed one of globalisations fundamental tendencies. But cultural homogenisation is not globalisation's only impact. For alongside this hegemonising tendency are some other important unintended consequences, including its extensive and intensifying differentiating effects. What I want to call the subaltern proliferation of difference. I want to argue that the globalising world is as marked by the subaltern proliferation of difference as it is by, as it were, the universal takeover of a hegemonic western culture. In part this is in my view because the system is global in two senses. It is global because its operations are increasingly planetary in scope. There are very few places which are completely beyond its destabilising interdependencies. But it is also global in the sense of its very uneveness. That is to say, its close to what Marx, who was much more clear sighted in my view about the world markets than he was about the class struggle, used to call combined and uneven development. That is to say, its processes are not uniform in character, they do not impact everywhere the same, they do not produce equal outcomes and cannot operate without contradictory effects. This subaltern proliferation of difference cannot certainly frontally stem the tide of western late modernity but it represents the emergence what we may call a new kind of local, indeed something which is related to, but is not fully subscribed, in the global and this local still significantly inflects, deflects and translates western imperatives from below.

These counter tendencies are not outside the global because since inauguration of the project of western expansion and colonalisation, for which a convenient date is 1492, most of the world has been convened, or attempted to be convened, within the empty homogenous time of western modernity. But the fact is, as we now know about that history, this was never done by successfully obliterating the specific disjunctures of difference, of time, history and culture in those societies. Its not wholly a simulacrum of western culture either. The binary difference of the absolutely other, which is represented by that opposition which continues to haunt our political discourse between modernity on the one side and tradition on the other. That binary difference is progressively retained by an astonishing variety of systems of difference and similarity which constitute what Arish Marinyar once called in an important essay "together in difference" or what I want to call "vernacular modernities". These are differences which are not fixed but which are positional along a spectrum. They obey what Derrida would call the logic of *differance* rather than the logic of difference (with an anomalous "a") to signal the continuous sliding and deferred movement which they represent. Now, in our world, *differance* is not able to inaugurate totally different forms of life, it cannot preserve older traditional ways of life wholly intact, it operates in what Homey Barbar has called the borderline time of modernities, but it does prevent the global system from stabilising itself as a fully sutured or stitched up totality and it continues to explore it at a level often below the visibility of the global media, the interstices, the gaps, the discontinuities as potential sites of resistance and intervention. Here we find the return of the specific and different, of what is specifically different, at the very centre of globalisation's panoptic aspirations to world closure. It confronts universalism's empty western time with different conjunctural times. It is what accounts for the paradox that the very moment of the so called apotheosis of globalisation's universal mission to closure, is at the very same time also the moment of the slow, uneven, decentering of the west.

The bearers of this complex process in Britain are the so-called ethnic minority populations. Which, since the large scale migrations of the 1960s have been subjected to the process of economic social exclusion, racialised disadvantage, informal and institutional racism and cultural differentialism. These factors are now typical across Western Europe today. Arabs in France, North Africans in Italy, Turks in Germany, Muslims in Spain and Portugal. Assimilation and pluralist segmentation have been the two preferred strategies applied to this mixing of populations and cultures. But assimilation, which implies the total absorption into the majority culture of all traces of cultural particularity, by the death in Britain in the 1960s, thank goodness, the price of assimilation was too high for most of us to pay. And pluralist segmentation runs right against the liberal political culture and in any case does not actually correspond with the reality we have in force. The key point from a multicultural point of view is as follows: the ethnic minorities have tended to form distinct communities which are culturally marked containing many contacts with their countries of origin and retaining connections with linguistic social religious and cultural traditions especially in the context of personal life, of the family and of the domestic scene. In terms of actual social practices however these communities reveal extraordinary variations produced by such cross cutting factors as social class, gender, nationality, region, religion and, above all, generation. The idea of some common Asian or Afro Caribbean undifferentiated community way of life is a fantasy. In fact the groups have never formed racially or ethnically segregated communities, even in the areas of the densest settlement. In the most traditional of these communities

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traditions and customs are maintained and are crucial to the question of identity but they are maintained alongside the most extensive daily interaction with and adaptation to native British ways of life. Once more they have impacted of course in a class differentiated, gender differentiated, culturally differentiated way on British public and social life at every level, transforming cities into proto multicultural metropolises. Ethnic and racialised identities have become, according to a recent survey of ethnic minorities published recently ascriptive and more associational. That is to say, these identities tell you the groups with which younger people wish to identify themselves, but there is a steady decline in actual cultural practices across the generations.

Separateness is as much a function of the actual exclusionary mechanisms experienced in the so-called "old" societies as it is a sign of some primordial identity which people brought with them and remain unchanged across three generations. Indeed, ethnic and racialised difference has become not simply a badge of dishonour but a cultural resource which is positively deployed in both translating inherited traditions and negotiating with the cultures of the communities around them. This is what is signalled by talk about the hybridising or trans cultural effects evident in these diasporic communities. This term *hybridity* seems to me to have been much misunderstood (I'm partly guilty of using it myself. I'm taking the opportunity to clarify its use). It is not about the literal mixing of racial categories. It's not a question of the pure races as a pose to the hybridised ones. It is not about hybrid individuals, which you can then set up against modern individuals and traditional individuals, and it is certainly not a celebration of a kind of postmodern nomadism where new identities are put on like cosmetics and taken off every morning, and where life is like nothing so much as a Scandinavian smorgasbord (help yourself). In fact, the costs of hybridisation can be extremely high, personally and collectively. No. Hybridity describes the inevitable process of cultural translation which is inevitable in a world where communities, peoples, cultures, tribes, ethnii are no long homogeneous, self sufficient autochthonous entities, tightly bound within by kinship and tradition and strongly boundaried in relation to the outside world. All such communities, of which there are more and more in the world today are, as it were, under the sign of the culturally translated. Ever since the impact of the global western project through exploration, conquest and colonisation, self sufficient communities across the world, translation and diasporisation has been increasingly the logic of the transnational transcultural process. Tony Barber has argued hybridity signifies

> An ambiguous, anxious moment of transition that nervously accompanies any mode of transition or transformation which lacks the promise of a celebratory closure.

It insists, that is to say, on being neither fully *this* nor fully *that*. It insists on displaying the pluralities and the disonances that have to be crossed despite the relations of proximity. It insists on marking the disjunctures of power and position that have to be contested; the values, ethical and aesthetic, that have to be translated but which refuse to be seamlessly transcended. It is also, however, as Salman Rushdie recognised, often how newness enters the world.

The fact that identities and communities have become less ascriptive and more associational, that is to say, less anthropological and more political, is indeed the site of a paradoxical development, which again challenges many of our common sense

assumptions. Racialised and ethnicised difference has been the focus of course for the operation and practices of racism, racialised exclusion, oppression and disadvantage. However, though race and ethnic difference are social and cultural and political mechanisms, not biological or genetically grounded, they nevertheless have real social effects. This is an idea which people find it difficult to get their heads around. It's a thing, as it were, which cannot scientifically exist but does have very real effects. It is an old sociological truism, that those things which men and women believe to be true are often true in their consequences. Those who have been stigmatised in this way, rather than wishing to abandon all negative identifications for some more universal, internationalist, race-blind, or colour-blind alternative, have instead struggled to insist on and appropriate and transcode their negative figuration into a positive resource. That is to say, they have found, at the very centre of these stigmatised forms themselves, the sources of a positive identification and struggle. This is the moment of profound historical reversal, the site at which black became beautiful, and anti racist struggles began to connect directly to the politics of recognition.

The multicultural question therefore has a disruptive impact on our traditional notions about the very categories of race and ethnicity. In some situations this has become implicitly a sort of rivalry between victims: I am more discriminated against than you. Often practised between the two major minority communities. Since race is a biological and physiologically derived idea seems to make more sense of Afro-Caribbean experience, despite the extremely wide variation in skin colour among all Afro-Caribbeans that I know. Whilst ethnicity seems to make more sense of so called Asian experience, despite the enormous differences between different so called Asian communities. Race of course is not a scientific category. It's a political and social construct. It is the organising discursive category at the centre of a system of practices of socio-economic power, exclusion and exploitation. That is to say, racism. Now this discursive practice attempts to ground exclusion in nature, which fixes the distinctions, giving them a spurious scientific or genetic foundation. One of the most important things of fixing differences of all sorts in nature is that it places them conveniently beyond the reach of reformist social engineering. We can't do anything about it. Since the genetic level is not immediately visible, difference has to be materialised, or read off in the discourses of racism, through easily identified signifiers, such as skin colour or other biological characteristics of hair or physical features, or body type etc, and we know what this process is, this is not nature this is naturalisation. It is a discursive or ideological process it is not a scientific one. It is naturalisation, or what Frantz Fanon called epidermalisation, that is to say, the writing of difference on the skin of the other. Now ethnicity by contrast is grounded in cultural and religious features, customs. It is therefore often on these grounds counterposed to race, and there has therefore been a growing tendency in recent scholarly discourse to speak of two distinct types of discrimination: biological racism and cultural inferiorisation, with a sort of implication that the first is in decline and that the latter is growing. I do not support this view.

Strong versions of ethnicity are not in fact innocent of a biogenetic reference, since cultural transmission of difference across the generations is often underpinned by kinship and intermarriage. Equally, so called biological racism has never been separated from cultural inferiorisation. Blackness always functioned as a sign that people of African decent are (a) closer to nature and therefore (b) more likely for that reason to be lazy, indolent, lacking in higher intellectual faculties, driven by emotion

not reason, oversexualised, prone to violence, etc, etc… The two logics have always been intertwined, ever since the beginning. The Amerindians of the New World, one of the areas where the European discourses of racism and difference were first elaborated, were remarked on, not so much for their physical difference, but for their lack of so called civilisational institutions. They didn't have marriage, they didn't have the state, they didn't have government, apart from the fact of course that they ate one and other and buggered one and other. The main question of anti-Semitism began as a cultural, that is to say as a religious, discrimination, and only afterwards did people discover that actually if you looked Jews in the face for long enough you saw that they weren't only very different from us culturally, but also that they actually had physical characteristics which enabled you to recognise their differences easily. There has never been one or other of these logics in the structure of social exclusion. It is of course true that in different historical contexts one or other of these two logics (biological racism or cultural inferiorisation) has often been foregrounded and this has had different effects in different historical communities. Leading to the necessity of our now speaking of racisms in the plural and bringing biological racism and cultural inferiorisation together in an expanded conception of what racialisation is about in the modern world. Now you may think that this is simply a conceptual or theoretical clarification. I want to argue that in fact these two logics of racism give rise to political demands which are differently inflected though not unrelated. Biological racism tries to provide a scientific foundation for treating people differently. Giving rise to the counter demand for greater social equality and justice. That is to say, we ought to treat people more like they are the same. The cultural referent however is not absent from this claim since black people are not about to trade their black identities simply for greater equality or justice. The discourses of cultural inferiorisation on the other hand degrade those who are culturally different and this gives rise to a related but different demand, a counter demand, that all differences should be accorded a proper recognition. That is to say that one should recognise that, as well under the first title, people ought to be treated more the same, but that they also ought to be treated as if they are different.

What we have then is a partial merger or conflation of political horizons arising out of a differentiated migration and exclusionary experience and these claims can no longer be consigned to opposing mutually exclusive political vocabularies. In recent political theory the debate between equality and difference has been conducted as a debate between liberals and communitarians. Liberals emphasise individual liberty and choice, personal autonomy, formal equality, universal citizenship and the cultural neutrality of the state, which is supposed to recognise no particularistic cultural commitments but to operate a sort of legal rationality from behind the famous veil of ignorance. The state, that is to say, must embody no specific conception of the good. Individuals and groups are, within this framework, free to pursue their own particularistic conceptions of the good provided it is done in private. But the state must cleanse itself of all particularistic entanglements. This is the political theorist, Michael Walzer's famous characterisation of what he called "liberalism one" whose claims have made a virtual clean sweep of political theory since the decline of socialism and the collapse of communism. Now *liberalism one's* notions of culture are exceedingly thin and reductive. It doesn't recognise the degree to which the individual is, as Charles Taylor has put it, fundamentally dialogic. That is to say, is always constituted in relation to the *other*, with an identity which only makes sense in terms of what it excludes - its constitutive outside - and is therefore always constituted

within, not outside, power relations. What's more *liberalism one* is profoundly mislead about its own cultural embeddedness. The cultures of a modern western nation state are not, as we are sometimes asked to believe, the result of a mass conversion to Universal Reason than the result of a much more earthy power /knowledge Foucauldian sort of game. It is the culture that won historically, it is the culture that succeeded in rewriting and hegemonising itself into the position of a universal abstraction. Much is said today about the virtues of civic nationalism of the modern nation state which is said to have sloughed off its ethnic particularistic skin and emerged in its culturally cleansed universal civic form. Civic nationalism did indeed bring to an end many forms of religious intolerance and it did have to defend the state against becoming nothing but the playground of rival claims.

However, nation states, as we must now declare, are not only civic political entities. They are also imagined communities. That is to say, they are not only the objects of a civic allegiance to the political institutions of the state, they are also the focus of a cultural identification with the nation. What would Britishness or American-ness indeed be without the systems of cultural representation we call the British and American ways of life. Imagined communities always require systems of representation which give texture and contact to the civic abstractions of their institutions, and it is the types of identification and belongingness which do in fact cement national identities. These can't be constructed outside of culture, outside of representation, outside of the way in which they have become culturally embedded in dense entegument of particular symbols and meanings. Multiculturalism has therefore had the effect of unsettling and unmasking many of the foundational assumptions and discourses of *liberalism one*.

What about the other side? Communitarians of the other side, who believe the self cannot be conceptualised independent of its ends would privilege communities over individuals, because, as even someone like Jurgen Habermas, who is a constitutional liberal, as even he has argued

> The identity of the individual is interwoven with collective identities that can be stabilised only in a cultural network that cannot be appropriated as private property any more than the mother tongue can be.

Accordingly someone like Bhiku Parekh has argued that ethnic minority communities do represent distinct cultures which

> embody concepts charged with historical memories and associations. They shape their understandings and approaches of the world within these traditions.

And this diversity, he says, enriches the social mainstream and is a key element in any multicultural form of society. Tarik Modood argues that the efforts of these communities to maintain collective identities, ought to be recognised, not only in private but as corporate players in the public sphere in policy and law as well. The law he says should be sensitive to the special needs and heritages of communities. Well, the politics of recognition suggest that we have to think of making significant movements in the direction of difference.

However, this communitarian account tends, as I tried to argue earlier, to overemphasise the degree to which these communities represent cohesive, homogenous, unified entities of the order described. Even where religion is concerned, which in communities of faith are particularly well bounded, but even where religion is concerned there are distinct internal differences and traditions in observance, interpretation, and powerful differences in practice and in faith across religious communities in terms of both gender and generation. These are not communities of the singular, monocultural, tight-knit kind which is beloved of rural sociology. And the bewildering and rapidly shifting variations do not lend themselves to communities being enfranchised as collective actors or subjects. To institutionalise what is in fact a changing configuration runs the serious risk of freezing change over time, of giving the power to police the boundaries of community norms to the established leaders, or to the fathers, or to tradition, or to the book conceived in a fixed and dogmatic form, rather than seeing tradition in a more open ended way as what Paul Gilroy calls the "changing same". In fact, many ethnic minority community women for example both defend and respect the rights of their communities of origin to pursue their conception of the *good life* and at the same time do not want all their own choices in marriage, relationship, places of residence, education and careers to be governed wholly by communal laws. Many indeed have insisted to the right to an associational identification and they don't do so believing that it precludes their right to question, differ from and, if necessary, exit from, their communities. That is to say, they rightly demand support of the law and other social agencies to affirm this right in practice. Here ethnoreligious or cultural pluralism properly encounters what I want to call a liberal or constitutional limit. However, in affirming the right of communities to make the claims to have their differences recognised and in reaffirming the cultural context within which individuals grow and choices are made, in that sense we encounter from the opposite direction liberal individualism's communitarian limit. Well, unless you think this leaves you between the devil and the deep blue sea, let me say that I think this is another way of saying that the multicultural question has taken us beyond the confines of our traditional political conceptions and vocabularies. They have taken us into a new political space in which what classical political theories tells us are incommensurable have never the less to be practically contemplated. That is to say, the double demand for greater equality and social justice and for the recognition of difference and cultural diversity. Or, to put the problem more colloquially, the determination of minority people to have their cake and eat it. In fact, as is well known, liberalism with its attachment to formal equality and negative freedom has consistently failed in practice either to come to terms with cultural difference or to deliver equality and justice for its minority citizens, which is why in Britain multicultural drift has always required a socio democratic and welfare intervention as the minimal requirement for securing even a modest sense of redistributive programmes as a basis of social inclusion.

However, this does not mean that certain liberal values disinterred from their universalistic embeddedness are not also essential for multicultural well-being. The right to live ones life from within, which is in the heart of a modern conception of individuality was indeed honed and developed within the western liberal tradition, but I want to argue that it is no long a value restricted to the west. It has become a cosmopolitan value. And in the form, for example of the discourse of human rights it is as pertinent to Third World workers struggling at the periphery of the global system, to women in the developing world up against patriachal forces, or political

dissenters, trade unionists, native peoples and environmental activists subject to the threat of violent expropriation and torture, as relevant to them as it is to western consumers in the so-called weightless economies.

In making the move towards multicultural diversity at the heart of modernity we must inevitably beware lest one simply reverses into new forms of ethnic closure. Ethnicity has no natural or naturalised relationship to community. We all locate ourselves within cultural vocabularies without them we are incapable of enunciation as cultural subjects at all. We all come from and speak from somewhere. We are all, in that sense located. However, though we can only think within a tradition, our relation to tradition is often that of what is called a *critical reception*. And cosmopolitan critics who value this critical reception relationship tradition are also right to remind us that in late modernity we draw on the broken repertoires of several cultural and ethical language. And then I quote Jeremy Waldron that

> the social world does not any longer divide up neatly into distinct particular cultures born to every community, nor does everyone need just one of those entities, a single coherent culture to give shape and meaning to life.

We operate in my view with too singular and monolithic a conception of belongingness. Communities here and tradition are like families. We belong to one we couldn't exist without them, we are shaped by them, but we are shaped by them both when they nurture and support us *and* when we have to break with them irrevocably in order to survive. I am sure all of you know both those moments.

The awkwardness of the multicultural question is that it has the logic of a double inscription. It moves us towards the recognition of a difference which cannot be fixed or essentialised and which cannot rest simply with an affirmation of an exclusive particularism, and this is because every particular in a multicultural society has to be negotiated with other particulars in a wider multicultural frame. Now, if this isn't to return us by a long detour to that old friend liberal universalism, which comes in circling from outer space and trumps every particular cultural judgement, if we are not to fall into that trap, there has to be some way of thinking a more general framework within which the tensions between relative particularities can be debated and negotiated, and I follow Ernesto Laclau here in thinking this qualified return of universalism in terms of what he calls an "incomplete horizon". Laclau argues that universalism does not arise from outside all particularities, it arises from within the particular, but it is a particular which is obliged to take account of the others because it acknowledges the old radical insufficiency. All identities are radically insufficient because they require the existence of the other. In acknowledging their own radical insufficiency they don't desert what makes them particular, but they recognise that this relativises the degree to which they can, as it were, affirm difference. It expands the horizon within which the demands of others must be recognised. Moreover, return to difference, if it is not to undermine the needs for justice and equality, cannot be used to re-erect new exclusionary zones of practice, so called no-go cultural areas. Accordingly in my view, this multicultural political logic, which depends on thinking in new ways about the relationship between difference, equality and justice, also requires what I would call two further conditions of existence. First, a deepening and expansion and radicalisation of democratic practices, but democracy conceived, not in formal institutional terms but in the form of a never ending agonistic democratic

struggle and negotiation between particulars which, as it were, acknowledge their insufficiency. The second condition is the unrelenting contestation of every form of racialised and ethnicised exclusionary closure, which has to be contested not because we are against sin but because it blocks the access to the process of defining a more inclusive belongingness from within the particularity, and it is only as a result of constituting the debate, the discussion, within that wider framework, only in those circumstances, that is to say, it is only because everyone must be included that in those circumstances everyone can legitimately be invited to identify with the negotiated compromises which are arrived at. How then can the particular and the universal, the claims of both difference and equality be recognised? How can the struggle to deepen democracy and to contest and dismantle racism and exclusion be motivated? This is the challenge, the conundrum which the multicultural question properly understood lays on us. It's disruptive and reconfigures [tape change, words lost?] us to think beyond the traditional boundaries of existing political discourses and their ever ready solutions. It suggests we turn our minds instead seriously to some radically new ways of combining those formal incomensurables of the political vocabulary: liberty, equality with difference; race, equality and justice with the politics of recognition; the good and the right.

Answers to questions

Questions not audible
I think, obviously, in the ways in which they have been developed as political positions they are very mutually contradictory. I was trying in what I was doing to make a move away from those fixed ways of understanding. You notice I didn't invoke cosmopolitan*ism*, but I said it was a cosmopolitan value. By that what I meant was that it is a value which couldn't rest its justification in the fact that it was part of a particular culture. It had to take a wider horizon and had to expand itself: cosmopolitan in that sense. I wasn't therefore talking about cosmopolitanism in the classical political theory sense which is those who are free of all entanglements or particularities, who are citizens of the world. I wasn't invoking in that absolute sense. I used the term *vernacular modernity*. What I wanted to suggest by that is that we are no longer in a situation where you can talk about tradition versus modernity. The majority of peoples in the world nowadays know what a modern life is. They know they don't have it, but they know what modern life is. But they are coming to it, as it were, from within the historical experiences and cultures which they have. So I wanted to suggest that there are many ways of defining modernity and in rather the same way I would talk about a kind of vernacular cosmopolitanism. The image of the cosmopolitan is the corporate executive whose home is really in international airports. He feels most at home in international airports. They are completely standardised. He doesn't know whether this is Amsterdam, Tokyo or Kuala Lumpur, and it doesn't matter in any case because everybody is speaking English and you can buy 5,000 cuisines etc. The people who come from a Bangladesh village and end up in Wolverhampton are cosmopolitans too. They have the cosmopolitan skills of negotiating between differently coded ways of life, moving from home, family, business, public affairs, the hospital, the state, they are expert vernacular translators, and that is a cosmopolitan value. It is of a local kind. It is within a framework. It still bears the mark of the particular cultures that formed it in the way in which that cosmopolitan demand is enunciated. Which isn't different from people who want to

know all the people, who want to experience life, want to travel and want to see the world etc. So I think we have become boxed into a kind of binary logic: you are either in the tradition or in the cosmopolis; you are either egalitarian or you are liberal, but you can't be both, etc. And sociologically the world is not in those boxes any longer. It is very difficult to say exactly where the world is because it is changing rapidly, and the forms are all the forms I was trying to evoke in what I was saying. They are all mixed forms. People won't let go of their identities but they don't think they are boxed into those identities only. What is that? It is neither this nor that. It is extremely difficult in the traditional way to say "What is our policy towards X?" because X refuses to be one thing, one subject who can be slotted into a … but the problem with that doesn't lie with the individual, it lies with the policy. The policy has somehow to keep up with these changing configurations. So although I understand that at the outer limits to the spectrum of multiculturalism as it is usually understood and cosmopolitanism these appear to be very different things. I was arguing for a weakening of the multicultural notion to include a much more cosmopolitan set elements. Without becoming cosmopolitanism. Or the movement for cosmopolitanism to recognise the force of particular forms of belongingness and therefore to enunciate its dream of being not bound within its traditional communities forever. To recognise that as having to negotiate the various boundaries that people actually occupy: the boundaries of family, work, the public sphere, and so on; which is what modern individuals live with all the time. I happen to believe that they live with those margins? In China as well as in Wolverhampton.

Second question

I don't know whether they are constants but they are powerful governing forces. My argument was not in any way to diminish the force of that. If I was talking about the global system, globalisation, I would have focused more on that. I took it for granted that globalisation is a power system. Both an economic and a political power system. It is by and large driven by the western industrialised societies and their elites and it is operating largely in their favour. I took that as the dominant tendency in globalisation and I simply wanted to: say does that mean that we throw the towel in; or we sit and pray for the revolution to destroy everything? and I was trying to suggest that large numbers of people around the world are doing neither of those two things. They are trying to get the signal that Murdoch beams into India and China and they are trying to say "If you are going to talk to us you had better know what some of our stories are". That is not a heroic victory, but it is a victory of some kind that those forces cannot just ride rough shod and disseminate ER across the world. It is not possible any longer. All those forces, including the forces of consumption, have to indiginise themselves, to disguise themselves within the culture, have to find local natives to impersonate them from inside before they can carry any conviction. And that process of impersonation changes them, because it allows another kind of life to begin to make its impact. We don't know the outcome of this process yet. I am not suggesting that this will triumph, that we will always be able to win out over it, but more and more people and governments, and societies are attempting to manage the extremely difficult question of how to bring some of the fruits of a more modern technological life to their oppressed and exploited people, without having, as it were, to mimic and simply repeat the culture of another world. That is what I call the gaps. I am interested in always giving an account of the global system, first of all recognising that this is the hegemonic system of power, and at the same time not pretending that it

is the only game in town. It is not the only game in town. It cannot be the only game in town, and masses of ideological work goes on in trying to overcome those resistences which are sometimes local, sometimes traditional, sometimes transnational, but to overcome them. This is the hegemonic struggle of a definite kind, globalisation. And we have unforturnately bought a very top down monolithic conception of globalisation. When I say we, I am speaking particularly of new Labour.

Third question

That pluralism is part of globalisation is what you are saying? Of course it is. It is of course a particular form of pluralism. It is a form of difference which I call ethnic pluralism, or more *cuisine* pluralism. that is to say, it is the difference which doesn't make any difference. Modern globalisation is full of differences of that kind. In fact one of the paradoxes is that you can eat more native cuisines in Manhattan that any Asian person can eat in their lives. The differences are all available as a kind of global consumerism. So that is true but what I wanted to suggest to you is that we can no longer operate in this system by assigning things wholly to one side or to the other. Because there is difference there doesn't mean that there are not other ways of exaggerating the differences so that they begin to make real structural differences. For instance, what does one say in relation to the expansion of modern technologies of communication. You could say that that is a western driven project and therefore our folks don't need it. I don't think we can say that any longer. I think we have to negotiate "what are the terms on which it is being offered" "What are the terms in which it can be appropriated", so that it serves the life and the meaning and purposes of those people who have been excluded from the main rewards of globalisation, rather than from those who benefit from them. So my argument was that I think we actually have to intervene in the process and try to radicalise and deepen the contradictory effects of globalisation itself which I think are always there. Of course, if you don't think that globalisation is a contradictory process, if you think it is already predetermined by capital or capitalism on an international scale and we have nothing to but resist it, well that is one position, but I think that that can't be the only position. One has to operate on it so that it is, as it were, disaggregated from the hegemonic position it occupies obviously in the world today, and which begins to put some of the advantages of modern processes of production and information at the disposal of those who need it most. In that sense it is an old struggle, but it is a struggle as it were with for in and against the system as most political stories usually turn out to be.

Fourth question

The term multiculturalism is itself deceptive in this respect. It has more or less become in the dominant usage an argument about race, culture and ethnicity, but, of course, what it signals is a much wider diversity of social forms and experiences which include questions of gender, questions of sexuality and so on. My own view is that, long before you get to the ethnic minorities Britain has become a deeply multicultural society in the sense that on almost all the important issues and questions you couldn't find a single unanimity any longer. You would find deep divisions of position, of language, of motivation, of purpose, of aspiration. I could have spent much more time talking about Britain itself. Long before you get to the question of race, ethnicity and the minorities, let us look at the homogenised view of Britain as a

so called nation state. It has never been a nation state. It is a multinational state. But we could have started with the homogeneous account which British nationalism has given of Britain itself and of the unity of the British way of life. And simply contrasting that with what we know about the history. We know that this history has been inscribed across the uneven development between one nation and another. It is inscribed across the systematic inferiorisation of the Irish. You could unwrap the story again and again. We talk about civic nationalism. This is a society so embedded in civic particularism that is it founded on a Protestant ascendancy, and on a veneration of the Anglo Saxon tradition. It has minorities in both the Catholic and the Celtic tradition from the inauguration of the state. So from the constitution itself down to areas of ways of life which are spoken of as the British way of life. Which British way of life? Everything that is taken as symptomatic of the British way of life has first of all been the consequence of a deep and profound struggle between one kind of British person and another. From the beginning it has been a question of contestation, a question of difference, a question of argument, etc. It is only after these things have been settled that they become sort of retrospectively nationalised. They become part of the English tradition. I have heard people saying, including the Prime Minister, that the NHS is part of the British way of life. Just think of how many British people stood in the way of there ever being any such thing, against other kinds of British people. Everything that we have achieved is the result of exactly that contestation of a nation that is supposed to be culturally homogeneous. So one could begin to unpack, long before you got to the multicultural question in relation to the minorities, the opening up of the pluralisation of social life in Britain today on the question of gender, on the question of sexuality, on the question of abortion, on practically any question you think of there are deep arguments between different constituencies going on. So I think multiculturalism has its roots profoundly in an awareness of the much more culturally diverse nature of social life in general of which questions of race and ethnicity represent a kind of particular problem that have their own kind of specific politics and policy implications. They are not separate from the others, as you can see clearly in the response to the Macpherson enquiry, which was to bomb three minority group pubs. Somebody down there is making the connection between the weakening of strongly bounded traditional homogenous communities that police the boundaries how people behave, on the race side, on the sexuality side, on the gender side, and so on. Somebody down there does understand that these things are connected and that in that sense Britain has got away. It has escaped through a loophole. The question is whether anybody is going to permit it to go through the loophole and stay there. Or whether the response or reaction to drifting in this direction isn't going to be a very serious attempt to put the boundaries up, put the barriers back and to climb back into the little black box.

Fifth question

It is much easier to govern a society if you can appeal to it as everybody thinking the same way. People come to accept that the ways in which they think together and without any difference or contestation, etc, is the norm. You can appeal to that over the heads of the minorities who are supposed to be dissident, who are asking questions. It is much easier to govern societies that accept a version of themselves as culturally homogeneous. That is what the discourse of nationalism has always done. We think of the discourse of nationalism as reflecting a unified society. It is not that at all. It is the way in which a society represents a self, which is very diverse, as one.

It constructs the unity out of the differences of class, and of gender, and of background, and of settlement, and of generation, etc. It produces the unity. It doesn't reflect an already constituted unity. It is an attempt to constitute unity which can then be governed as the United Kingdom. So, in that sense, it is not only in nationalist discourse in that way, but what I was trying to argue was that in many of the cultural discourses in our society about art and music, in our museums, in the heritage industry, at a whole variety of different levels, this selective tradition operates so as to produce a more homogeneous, less dissenting, less questioning, less differentiated, image of ourselves. In order to try to persuade us to buy into that, and I think that for a long time, often probably very, very, centrally related to Britain's imperial position the story tended to work for a larger number of people in the society than it does any longer. The bottom and the stuffing has been knocked out of that story and that is why there is a kind of crisis of national identity. What is it that holds people together now which is being very widely discussed - so it should be.