

Britishness in the 21st Century

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Prime Minister, Mrs Blair, distinguished guests: it is a great pleasure and privilege to be addressing you this evening, but also a peculiar challenge. The subject I have been asked to tackle is the likely nature of Britishness in the 21st century: and yet there are many in politics and the media today who would argue that this scarcely merits a fifty minute lecture. For what can a new millenium do for British national identity except confirm and complete its disintegration?

Those taking such a view can point of course to global trends which are currently challenging the integrity of all states, and not just this one. The ever more rapid flow of capital, information and people across the world is exciting. But the internet, migration, e-commerce, and multi-national corporations also represent assaults on all kinds of customary boundaries, beliefs and allegiances. Moreover, as initiators of the world's most successful language, we in these islands are particularly open to such invasions. Just over two hundred years ago, anyone on this planet who spoke English as his or her first language was a British subject. It was as simple as that. Political identity then was linguistically-anchored.

Today, however, speaking English means we can do business with virtually the whole world. But it also means that we are exposed to novels by Asian and African writers, that we listen to Jamaican music, watch American movies, videos and computer games, and relish Australian soaps. Our French neighbours may try -with limited success - to keep their national culture pure and distinct, we in Britain have not a hope of doing the same. And while our Scandinavian, German and Dutch neighbours (who seem often to speak English better than we do) possess as well proprietorial, minority languages, English is our first and in most cases our only language. Consequently, we in Britain are always going to be acutely susceptible to the forces of globalization, and especially to Americanization.

There are other major challenges to Britishness as a fixed and distinct entity, some longstanding, some far more recent. Both Great Britain and the United Kingdom are and have always been composite states made up of different nations, with considerably different cultures. Many of the forces which allowed these different nations to purchase into a common Britishness in the past have ceased or are ceasing to operate. Outside Northern Ireland, Protestantism no longer serves as an effective lynch-pin of British identity. The monarchy has recovered from Princess Diana's death more adroitly than pundits predicted at the time, but it seems unlikely that it will ever again be the kind of charismatic, unifying icon that it was in the 1940s and '50s.

The empire, which made Scots, Welsh, English, and even many Irish men and women call themselves British so they could share in the plunder and glory, has gone. And so, for the moment, has the spectre of major war. Armed conflict with foreign powers is no longer available on a large scale to encourage the inhabitants of these islands to forget their internal differences and band together. Nor are we as willing now to acquiesce in the kind of strong, centralised government from Westminster and Whitehall that only emerged this century in response to the demands of massive war. It was the two World Wars, followed by the Cold War, which made Britain one of the most centralised states in Europe. Now that peace,

or at least freedom from invasion has become taken for granted, we must expect growing demands for a diffusion and reduction of London's unifying power.

There are three more big, post-war developments which challenge customary notions of Britishness, though whether they are also at odds with a workable British state is another matter.

First, what is now the European Union increasingly intervenes in our trade, patterns of work, environment, foreign policy and law. In practice, if not according to some notions of constitutional theory, Westminster's sovereignty is already shared. Second, the former empire has struck back. These islands have always attracted immigrants. But since 1945, and for the first time, there have been large numbers of incomers into Britain who are not European in origin or white. Enoch Powell's intolerant ethnic nationalism fortunately never acquired here the kind of currency which Monsieur Le Pen's racist politics possess in France.

Nonetheless, the challenge of properly accommodating and adapting to millions of visibly different Britons remains an urgent one. The third post-war challenge is more recent. Since 1979, this country has experienced two radical administrations which have in different ways dismantled some of the traditional props of Britishness.

National identity is not just, perhaps not even mainly a matter of political allegiance. It is sustained by custom and by the texture and reference points of everyday life. So when Margaret Thatcher and John Major privatised those big, nationalised industries which inevitably had the word "British" in their names, and when they wore down trades unions like the National Union of Miners or the British union of this or that, they were - whether they knew it or not - dismantling some of the mundane architecture of Britishness.

When Mrs. Thatcher criticised British Airways for taking the Union Jack off its tailfins, she really only had herself to blame. And New Labour has continued the assault, though on different fronts. Abolishing the voting rights of hereditary peers in the House of Lords, re-establishing a Scottish parliament, setting up a Welsh Assembly may be desirable and overdue reforms. But such measures alter customary institutional components of Britishness, and the long-term consequences of this cannot be known.

There is one more respect in which post-1979 administrations have accelerated potentially disruptive change. Margaret Thatcher, John Major, Tony Blair have all in different ways advocated an opportunity state, a classless society. Right on. Yet, paradoxically, class politics in the past often worked to unify the different parts of Britain. Think of Neil Kinnock in 1975 speaking in praise of "the combined strength of working class people throughout the whole of the United Kingdom brought to bear against any bully". No ambitious politician would speak in such terms now; and nor would the majority of voters.

Instead, and as a substitute for class politics, you increasingly get the politics of place, ethnicity or religion. Unable or unwilling to regard themselves anymore as British workers ranged against the country's employing class, or as British property-owners looking down on its masses, men and women in these islands are more likely now to adopt other, local or sectional labels, and define themselves primarily as Welsh, or Cornish, or Muslim, or whatever. Class politics, whatever their inherent costs, were still indisputably British politics. The new, sectional interest politics often explicitly rejects notions of a unitary Britain.

So how, if at all, can the pieces be put together again? Since so many of the constituent parts of old-style Britishness have been dismantled or have ceased to

function effectively, is it possible successfully to re-design and re-float a concept of Britishness for the 21st century?

Many would say not. Some, on all sides of the political spectrum, predict that devolution in Scotland and Wales will only accelerate what is anyway their inevitable detachment from the Union; that in twenty years or so, demographic change together with devolution will result in Northern Ireland being re-absorbed into a united Ireland; and that all that will remain will be a resurgent English nationalism, which may prove radical and open, but which may instead be inward-looking and in every sense conservative.

Other prophets argue that how the inhabitants of these islands choose in the future to view and govern themselves will be less important than their gradual, collective absorption into a European super-state, which must inexorably sap the authority and appeal of its constituent nation states.

Some, however, reject both of these projections for the 21st century, and remain firmly complacent. In their view, Welsh, Scottish and Northern Irish devolution represent resolutions to problems not their beginning; and Englishness is neither here nor there. A combination of low taxation, tactical retreats, and adroit grants, these phlegmatic souls insist, will continue to paper over the cracks, and Britain will go on getting by as an asymmetrical, composite state full of different but inchoate allegiances. It will continue to be a mainly unenthused member of a strictly limited European Union, while acting as a moderately more enthusiastic Boy Wonder to 21st Century America's Batman. And so on into the sunset.

A possible break-up of Britain, then, or the full integration of these islands within a united Europe, or going on much as before and venturing nothing: I have to tell you that I find none of these three possible scenarios entirely convincing or attractive.

Welshness, Englishness, Scottishness, and what Roy Foster calls varieties of Irishness are immensely powerful loyalties which will always have unpredictable political repercussions. But to my mind, the three nations of Great Britain, together with the island of Ireland, are too geographically adjacent, too small, and have been characterised over the centuries by too many complex and profound linkages, to go off on completely separate tangents in the future, or to be connected only by a loose, occasional Council of the Isles.

Indeed, one of our important projects for the 21st century must be to continue working out mutually useful and innovative links between Britain and the whole island of Ireland. If the matter of Northern Ireland can be successfully resolved, then these islands may actually move closer together next century, though obviously not within the old imperial framework.

I don't believe either that a European superstate, though it may emerge at some point, is likely in the near future. At present, Brussels suffers from a democratic deficit, and remains a largely technicist apparatus not much interested in commanding sentiment or affection from the millions of ordinary Europeans attached to it. One of our great challenges in the 21st century will be working out how to address these and other inadequacies in the E.U. Yet even if Europe succeeds in making itself more democratic and more popular in the next millennium - and I hope it does - it by no means follows that older national attachments will in the process become insignificant.

So I do not believe that a spectacular break-up of Britain or being "swallowed up by Europe" are necessary fates. But neither do I believe that complacency is in order. To the question: "What will Britishness signify a century from now?" the answer may well turn out to be: not much. What I want to devote the rest of this

lecture to arguing however is that this may not matter. And that instead of persistently asking agonised questions about the viability of Britishness, which has historically always been a shifting and uncertain concept, it would be more productive to devote our energies, intelligence and imagination to a different though connected issue.

In part because New Labour is one of the few authentically British political parties remaining in these islands, since May Day 1997 questions of Britain and Britishness have been receiving concentrated attention. Focus groups such as Demos have produced suggestive reports. So have state-sponsored organisations like the British Council. Speeches by heavyweight Cabinet Ministers and Opposition spokesmen have been devoted to these issues, as have an interminable succession of T.V. and radio programmes and newspaper articles. It is good that questions of Britishness be aired and contested.

But it is surely worth asking quite what we expect all this navel-gazing to achieve. Politicians and pundits shape existing national identities. They rarely by themselves invent or sustain them. And while it may be valuable to try to identify core national values, it is in practice difficult to do so in a way that commands broad assent, unless you descend to uttering platitudes. This is particularly the case in a multi-national, multi-cultural, infinitely diverse polity like Britain.

Let me illustrate the problem from my own situation. (And incidentally I speak as someone who is part Welsh, part Irish, part English, who has spent 16 years in the States, but who views myself as British alongside other identities.) At present, I have two homes. In London, I rent a terraced house in the East End. Most of my neighbours there are Bangladeshi. Many of them are poor and out of a job. Some, especially the women, cannot speak or read English. Try telling these people about cool, high-skill, high-tech Britannia' My other home is in a rural Norfolk village.

Many of its inhabitants have never been out of the county in their lives, and you can go for years there without seeing anyone who isn't white. Try telling these folk about fast-paced, high-octane, multi-cultural Britain, and see how far it gets you! Yet these are both English locations a mere two hours drive apart. Once you get North of the Border, or into parts of Wales, the difficulty of finding all-encompassing slogans that will beef up notions of Britishness while resonating with ordinary peoples' experience becomes still more apparent. As opinion polls show, there are at present growing numbers of Scots and Welsh (especially the young), as well as many Irish and Chinese residents in Britain, for whom the concept of Britishness has little or no appeal, even as a subsidiary identity.

Let me be clear: in drawing attention to these problems, I am not advocating giving up on Britain as a political unit, nor ceasing to re-think it. Emphatically not. But I am suggesting that powerful and influential people like yourselves might usefully leave intransigent issues of Britishness to look after themselves, and focus instead on something where you can make a substantial difference. I propose to you a crucial distinction which is often insufficiently understood: that between identity and citizenship. Instead of being so mesmerised by debates over British identity, it would be far more productive to concentrate on renovating British citizenship, and on convincing all of the inhabitants of these islands that they are equal and valued citizens irrespective of whatever identity they may individually select to prioritize.

Fostering peoples' understanding of the difference between citizenship (which is political and functional) and identity (which is more ancestral and visceral), could be valuable in at least two respects. First, it could contribute towards easing the British problem. But, second, a better understanding of this distinction might also help on Europe. People might become more relaxed about being citizens of the European Union if they could be brought to accept that such citizenship does not necessarily involve purchasing into an homogenised European identity, and

discarding older, valued points of reference. So think hard about the distinction between identity and citizenship and focus on the latter.

How might we in these islands set about constructing a new, revived Citizen Nation? Let me offer as a starting-point five broad suggestions.

First, we badly need better, more inspiring and far more accessible definitions of citizenship. Some would argue that a Citizen Nation requires a comprehensive written constitution, but I am less sure. What is indispensable, it seems to me, is a new Millennium Charter or Contract of Citizen Rights. This would in one form take the shape of a major and complex document incorporating European, English and Scottish law as well as fundamental but currently unwritten ideals.

But this Charter or Contract of Citizen Rights should also be available in a much briefer, more accessible version so that every schoolroom, every home, every place of work could have one on hand. At present, if an ordinary man, woman or child in these islands enquires: "What are my rights as a citizen here? What defines me?", only expert, constitutional lawyers - and not always they - can supply answers. If citizenship is to function well and to excite and unite, then citizens themselves must feel they have direct access to some of the answers to these questions.

Second point: the symbolism and public culture of this new Citizen Nation would need to acknowledge the essential equality of the people of these islands far more than at present. Does this mean that Britain must become a republic? Again, I don't think so, though it may happen. Monarchs can serve as extremely useful and reassuring symbols of stability, especially in periods of massive cultural, economic and political flux like this one.

But if there is to be a 21st century citizen's monarchy in this country capable of attracting broad, enduring support, it will require far more than a face-lift in image. Its public presentation will have to continue changing, but so must its avowed rationale. The crown jewels, together with the gorgeous robes, the golden coaches and the ermine should be consigned to museums.

At their coronations, future monarchs should not only undertake to protect the faiths of each and all of their subjects, they should also swear a new oath of service to the majesty of the people. Members of all parliaments and assemblies in these islands should also swear oaths of service to the majesty of the people.

If all this sounds excessively radical, I must point out that Denmark implemented similar reforms to the ones I've just outlined after 1848, yet the Danish monarchy remains - as you know - one of the most dignified and popular in Europe. The notion that monarchs must either be surrounded by pomp, circumstance, rank and traditional glitter, or be reduced to riding bicycles, sets up a thoroughly false dichotomy. We need next millennium to move beyond it.

We will need to cleanse our public political culture of antiquated remnants in other respects as well. Titles suggestive of rank, as America's Founding Fathers recognised, are incompatible with a Citizen Nation pledged to equality. This applies even when such titles are earned not inherited. Because consider what messages the language of titles conveys in this country. Calling someone a Lord implies he lords it over others; calling someone Lady This or Lady That suggests she is more and better than a mere woman. I realise that peerages are cheap and effective forms of government patronage; and that at a certain level most of us still lust after them. But our honours system needs re-working. Peerage titles - if not peerages themselves - should go; and so, surely, should allusions in awards to a lost British Empire.

By the same token, there is limited point in excluding hereditary peers from voting in the Lords, if the Opening of the Westminster Parliament continues in the future to be an affair littered with coronets, white tights, long dresses, Ruritanian uniforms, and assorted jewels and staffs. As a historian, I understand very well the importance of an element of ceremony and dignity in big state occasions.

But the Houses of Parliament possess some of the world's most sumptuous and impressive interiors. To make a good show there you scarcely need as well all these antique individual frills and furbelows. Monarch, ministers, M.P.s, and officials should be seen on these occasions wearing smart but ordinary dress that underlines their equality with their fellow citizens whom they serve, and that emphasises too that they are living in the present not the hierarchical past, and that they are here to do a job of work.

Third point: if Britain is to evolve into an effective 21st Century Citizen Nation it will require on the one hand a constantly reforming centre, and on the other hand a diffusion of power away from the centre. Such a diffusion will be wrenching, and will involve risks, but done properly it could foster political cohesiveness, involvement and consent. Diffusing power (a process which devolution has already initiated) recognises the plurality of national identities contained in these islands; but it is also a way of nurturing active citizenship. The more you diffuse and localise power, the more you increase the number and type of people playing some kind of active political role.

Power becomes something not just done to and for the people, but which the people themselves participate in. And diffusing power actually represents a return to our past. Before the late 19th century, much of the tax revenue raised in these islands was spent in ways determined by strictly local authorities. Hence those magnificent Victorian town halls which now moulder away, largely unused in Liverpool, Leeds, Birmingham, Glasgow etc. These monuments to civic patriotism were made as splendid as they are because in the 19th century municipalities did a real job of creative and autonomous political work, including spending large amounts of public money. And as the Victorians understood, civic patriotism does not detract from wider loyalties. Rather the reverse.

Nonetheless - as I say - diffusing power involves risks. London politicians and bureaucrats, as well as dealing with Brussels, will need increasingly to think in terms of the interplay of several centres of power in these islands, not all of which will be of the same partisan complexion. Who controls tax revenue is going to become an ever more complex and contentious issue.

And once diffusing power starts, it is hard to stop. Any notion that devolution can occur in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, while the 80 per cent plus of the British population who live in England go on exactly as before, is plainly unrealistic. This is not to raise again the weary West Lothian question, nor is it to have any truck with nightmare scenarios of a new, embittered English nationalism, or a fully-fledged English parliament.

But there will need to be more imagination and more change. Politicians will have to demonstrate greater sensitivity both in language and in policy terms to varieties of Englishness, as well as to Irishness, Scottishness and Welshness. And regional government, which opinion polls suggest already commands majority support in London, the North East, the Midlands, the South West, and the Eastern region, will have in the 21st century to expand far beyond the purview of current R.D.A.s.

And we'll need throughout these islands to go further still. As someone who lived in the States for sixteen years, I read Jonathan Freedland's recent bestseller 'Bringing Home the Revolution' with mixed feelings. The American system does not function quite as wonderfully as he sometimes suggests. But the section of his book that deals with the vivacity of American grass-roots political activism, the opportunities

for citizen initiatives on U.S. ballot forms for instance, seemed to me absolutely right.

In Britain, there are at present tens of thousands of men and women who are not interested in joining a conventional political party, and who do not have the time or inclination to attach themselves to parish councils, but who do feel strongly about particular, local issues: be it restoring the recreation park, saving old buildings, improving IT provision in schools, expanding volunteer networks, or whatever. We will need in the future to create more room and opportunities for such people in local political life. A 21st Century Citizen Nation will need a more comprehensive vision of what is involved in politics. It must encourage people to get out, organise and argue for their own local improvements, to be active citizens in short.

Fourth point: a revived Citizen Nation committed to equality must take positive steps to improve the position of ethnic minorities and women, and deal with these groupings in tandem. In some respects, the position of ethnic minorities in this country is a powerful argument for the enduring utility of Britishness. Unlike Englishness, Welshness, or Scottishness, Britishness is a synthetic and capacious concept with no necessary ethnic or cultural overtones. Consequently, large numbers of non-whites seem reasonably content to accept the label "British" because it doesn't commit them to much.

The Fourth National Survey of Ethnic Minorities found that two-thirds of the Indians, African Asians, Caribbeans, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis questioned, though only half of the Chinese, felt themselves British at some level; and, as you might expect, these proportions were higher among the young and those born here. Cities in Britain are not ghetto-ised to the same degree as American cities. And in the past two decades, ethnic minorities in Britain have evolved vital, syncretic cultures which now attract white admiration and emulation. As Stuart Hall puts it; "What we had before was the Afro-Caribbean presence in Britain". But now; "a black British culture can be seen. For the first time, being black is a way of being British".

So there is much to celebrate. But there is, as you all know, another side. There are massive though variable inequalities among minority groups. The Fourth National Survey suggests that 80 per cent of all Pakistanis live in households whose income is below half the national average; most Bangladeshi women and some 25 per cent of Afro-Caribbeans have no job. Racial crime is on the increase. And while the U.K. in some respects is a more tolerant, open society than the U.S.A., the glass ceiling keeping minority men and women out of top jobs in both public and private sectors is more apparent here than over there. The position of women is also in some respects less impressive here than in the United States.

Britain has one of the worst records on equal pay in the European Union. Outright discrimination plays some part in this. Perhaps because Britain was for so long such a militarily-active and imperial nation, it retains in some quarters a markedly masculine culture. There is institutionalized sexism here as well as institutionalized racism. But the bigger problems, both with regard to women and ethnic minorities, are inertia and a reluctance to take these issues seriously. There are still too many employers who think instinctively in terms of the right man for the job. And by 'man' they don't mean women, any more than they mean Caribbeans or Asians.

A 21st century Citizen Nation pledged to equality must tackle racial and sexual discrimination and deal with these problems in tandem. I am aware that government intervention on these issues is sometimes resisted by Business on the grounds that it swells bureaucracy and costs too much. But having lived in the United States, where anti-discrimination legislation is tougher than here, but where Business is king, I am unconvinced by these objections.

Insisting that public and private companies compile mixed short lists for all vacancies, or explain why not; instructing companies to detail what they are doing to attract minority and female candidates, and with what success; urging companies and sectors which seem particularly resistant to change to set targets for instituting a mixed work force. and using sticks and carrots to ensure that targets are met: all these initiatives may create extra paperwork. But without persistent chivvying and monitoring, backed by government action, you will not get marked improvement within the foreseeable future.

There is a further reason why women and ethnic minorities need addressing in tandem. As you know, different ethnic communities present different challenges. In terms of health and education, for instance, the problems of British Caribbeans are unlike and much worse than those experienced by Indians, African-Asians and Chinese in this country. But individual minority groups also themselves contain differences, especially the difference between men and women. What an orthodox Pakistani Muslim male wants for his community in 21st century Britain may well be different from the aspirations of the Pakistani Muslim feminist living next door to him. So, here again, our renovated Citizen Nation must consider issues of ethnicity and gender in tandem.

So: a constructive and imaginative focussing on Citizenship rather than an obsession with identity. A renovated Citizen Nation, with a Charter of Rights, with a more open, less hidebound public culture, with a different brand of monarchy, with a broader diffusion of power and a more comprehensive vision of politics, and with equal opportunities for minorities and women positively and persistently pursued. There are many other innovations that could usefully be considered. But innovation by itself will not be enough.

I read recently that New Labour are "against the past". I would hate to think that any administration, least of all this one, would adopt such a facile view in fact. Manifestly, it is wrong to allow attachment to the past to obstruct fruitful and necessary change. But it is equally unwise entirely to disregard the past, when you could instead be exploiting and learning from it. And this leads me to my fifth and final point.

One of the problems in Britain today is that people seem very often to nurture erroneous and woefully incomplete views of its past. Some people of course are far too nostalgic about an imagined British past. But by the same token some are far too apologetic and embarrassed about it. There is no sizeable state in the world which has not committed its fair share of genocide and oppression in the past. Britain has certainly committed its share and that is lamentable.

But the idea that we should spend our time now wallowing in post-imperial guilt is profoundly mis-placed. Doing so does no good. Moreover, doing so obscures the fact that empire was only part of the British past, and that even empire was not invariably a bad thing. So we need a healthier, more comprehensive, less apologetic view of our past, not least because one of the best ways to re-vitalise or indeed invent a state is to pillage the past selectively.

Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England have in some respects different visions of the past, but not entirely so. We could all, surely, agree to commemorate the abolition of the slave trade back in 1806, something which all these islands, and black Britons as well as whites, took part in. We could all commemorate the Reform Act of 1832, the first step towards achieving universal suffrage here.

We could all, now, commemorate the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829, or the end of Jewish Disabilities in the 1850s, or Votes for Women in 1918. And why shouldn't we commemorate independence for India in 1947, since its part of our history too? If I were in charge of currency design, or in the business of inventing

new national holidays, I'd be thinking hard about ways of commemorating events such as these, as a means of connecting our radical and reforming past with the extension of citizen rights being implemented now. The idea, which one so often hears canvassed, that the British past is nothing but an embarrassing saga of sluggish tradition and imperial oppression is absurd. We have a perfectly usable, innovative, collective past, if we only look for and select it.

And even the onetime empire offers some useful pointers to the future, to the extent that it alerts us to the importance of these islands having a global perspective. One of the few depressing aspects of returning here from the States is seeing how insular, or at best Eurocentric a lot of public culture in these islands is: the T.V. News, the broadsheets, even education. Now, of course, America is also often insular. But it's big, so arguably it can afford insularity. We're small. We can't afford it. We must develop our position in Europe: of course. But Britain must also look much further afield: and to do this, we need to be better informed.

Why, for instance, do so many schoolchildren here still learn only French or German? They should be learning Spanish which is almost as much a global language as our own. Then there's China. In virtually every American university, students can take courses in Chinese history. In Britain, the subject is rarely available, Yet Britain cannot afford in the 21st century to ignore or be ignorant of huge chunks of the world like China or Latin America. We are islands. We must not be insular.

What I am suggesting then finally is that - at one level - we should know our place better. We should develop a healthier, more comprehensive, more dynamic view of our past, of the ways in which the different nations of these islands have converged as well as diverged, and of the ways these islands have impacted on the world at large.

Achieving such a revised view of the past would not, I believe, hold us back, but rather serve as both an anchor and an inspiration through the various changes these islands must undergo in the future. I have sketched out this evening what some of those changes might be. None of them, or all of them together, would necessarily re-float "Britishness" as such. But such changes in the direction of a Citizen Nation could provide new and persuasive answers to the question: "What is Britain for?"

One last point. When I used to teach British history to my American students at Yale, I would tell them that the British were not very nice, but that they were interesting. This is actually my view. The different peoples of these islands have not in the past been a particularly anodyne bunch. English, Welsh, Scots and Irish have all, to differing degrees, been greedy, pushy, intrusive traders and warmongers, aggressive, violent, frequently oppressive, often arrogant and perfidious.

They have also been markedly creative, innovative, curious, energetic, outward-looking, busy. Some of these characteristics, and not just the nice ones, are going to have to be sustained and even revived in the next Millennium. To that extent, we will need not to know our place at all, but seek audaciously to move beyond it.

Thank you.