

# THE



# ETHICAL RECORD



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# SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY

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## Coming at Conway Hall

### Tuesday, March 2

7.00 pm—**Discussion** introduced by **Colin Hutchinson**. Subject: **The Scope for Personal Action**

### Sunday, March 7

11.00 am—**Sunday Meeting: ANTHONY DEAVIN** on **Natural Law and Land**. Bass-baritone solos: Tony Crasner

6.00 pm—**Bridge and Scrabble** in the Club Room

6.30 pm—**Concert: Orion Piano Trio**. Beethoven D Op 70 No 1, Ravel Ami, Brahms C Op 87

### Tuesday, March 7

7.00 pm—**Discussion** introduced by **Peter Cadogan**. Subject: **The Tide of Devolution**

### Sunday, March 14

11.00 am—**Sunday Meeting: CYRIL BARRETT** on **The Dangers and Evils of Truth**. Contralto solos: Jean Robertson

3.00 pm—**Forum with Dr D. Stark Murray**. **Health, Ethics and Social Responsibility**

6.00 pm—**Bridge and Scrabble**

6.30 pm—**Concert: Tunnell Piano Quartet**. Brahms Cmi Op. 60, Hurlstone Emi piano quartets, Schubert Bfl (1817) string trio

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## CURRENT SPES PUBLICATIONS

THE ALTERNATIVE SOCIETY James Hemming 10p  
THE BREAKDOWN OF GREAT BRITAIN

Leopold Kohr 10p

MAN AND THE SHADOW Laurens van der Post 10p

WHAT ARE EUROPEANS?

G. K. Young, CB, CMG, MBE 10p

THE ORIGINS OF CHRISTIANITY FROM

PAGAN AND JEWISH BACKGROUNDS G. A. Wells 20p

HUMANITY AND ANIMALITY Edmund Leach 10p

THE USES OF PAIN Jonathan Miller 10p

3½p postage for one—7p for two or more

# THE ETHICAL RECORD

Vol. 81 No. 3

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*The views expressed in this journal are not necessarily those of the Society*

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## EDITORIAL

### Getting down to work

THERE can be few aspects of life so sorrowful to a fit and normal person as to be unemployed. The number of people out of work in Britain just now is horrifying, and the misery of the victims should be multiplied by their two or three probable dependents each, to find the true picture.

Britain's bad economic situation is undoubtedly the root cause, but what is the cause of *that* is a much wider subject.

Happily, over the past few years, we have managed to develop a better social system probably than we have ever known. It is a fact that the pension, for example, is way ahead of the rate of inflation, having been increased almost 100 per cent in four years, during which period the rate of inflation has totalled 61 per cent.

Conversely, the ordinary working chap in a less than militant union, has only enjoyed wage increases totalling about 37 per cent.

Unemployment benefit, though, has kept up fairly well, particularly where it is earnings related. This gives most advantage to the "steady" type of person who enjoys getting his teeth into a job, and is normally redundant rather than kicked out.

The social security system is also quite advanced, the main criticism it meets being over-generosity!

Surely it is better for a few malingerers to get what they do not deserve than for everyone else to suffer for fear of paying the idlers.

But there may be an odd glimmer of hope. Odd, because it concerns the rundown of some massive industries.

The growing stores of goods all round the country demonstrate that for a long time parts of British industry, including some of the car firms, have been churning out products nobody wants. On the other hand, there are shortages of all sorts of things.

In the car industry, for example, the Japanese acknowledge that a large part of their success in Britain is due to our own makers' inability to produce enough cars *of the type people want*.

The home-based firms say their machinery is too old for modern styling, and new machines are way out of financial reach. That is why most "new models" in recent years have used components and pressing up to 25 years old.

The ideal is for those unemployed to be allowed, perhaps with Government backing, to get down to making things which are actually needed and which are in short supply now, except for imports.

It is an ideal, but ideals are what bored and dejected people most need.

# The Significance of J. A. Hobson

BY

P. J. CAIN

J. A. HOBSON, who was lecturer at South Place between 1907 and his death in 1940, deserves to be better known both to yourselves and to a wider public. He was a thinker of great merit who has suffered in that his most important contributions to knowledge have been obscured by deceptively similar ideas propagated by more famous men. Hence his theory that the capitalist economic system needed imperial expansion to survive is regarded as an early version of a similar, but different, Marxist idea; and his pioneering attempt to show that unemployment was endemic to an unregulated capitalist society, although not the same as that of Keynes, has been largely forgotten in the latter's triumph. He did, however, have a significant effect on the formation of policy behind the scenes both for the pre-1914 Liberal government and the Labour Party in the 1930's.

Hobson was born in 1858 in Derby, the son of a wealthy local newspaper owner and died in 1940. As a young man he showed little intellectual curiosity and at Oxford, where he took an indifferent degree in Classics in 1879, he was known for his prowess as a high jumper rather than for his mental gifts. It was at Oxford, however, that he lost his faith in the Anglicanism of his father. After University he taught for many years in a quiet part of England only venturing into print to attack Gladstone's religious views. In 1885, he came to London to take up a post with the University Extension Movement and from there onwards his intellectual journey began. In the coming years he found himself increasingly out of sympathy with the capitalist society in which he lived and with the economic theories on which support of this society rested.

## Victorian Beginnings

The Victorian society into which Hobson was born put great stress upon individual effort as the key to both material and spiritual success. It was largely taken for granted that what a person legally owned he had, somehow, justifiably earned and also that poverty, degradation and unemployment were basically individual failings which could be mitigated only by personal effort. The idea that central government might be used to correct the obvious imbalance of wealth in society or to counteract other "natural" economic phenomena, like the trade cycle, was abhorrent. Such use of the State was seen as a means of confiscating the rightful property of individuals, removing the crucial need for self-help and creating a vast and corrupt engine of officialdom which would undermine the wealth of society.

If most of his contemporaries tried to stress an atomistic attitude to human society, Hobson on the other hand was impressed by the organic interaction and interdependence of all people. He emphasised the extent to which the creation of wealth was a social product and, in contrast to most people at the time, played down the extent to which individuals could claim to have created or earned income. From this he drew the conclusion that the actual, extremely unequal, distribution of income and wealth was unjust. It was also dangerous in his view, since mal-distribution of income led on to overproduction, underconsumption and unemployment. It was also responsible he argued, for the squalor and poverty of the average life in industrial towns, and since the majority of the people had neither the initial means or the access to education they needed the complacent notion that they could raise themselves from their poverty through their own efforts was ridiculous.

His solution to what he saw as the crisis of free capitalism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was to call for an increase in the power and influence of central government. He wanted to counteract monopoly in the basic industries by nationalizing them. He also argued for what we now know as the Welfare State, using progressive taxation as a means of raising the funds for old age pensions, unemployment benefits, free and wide-ranging education and so forth. He also strongly supported the formation and strengthening of trades unions which he saw as a means to the raising of wages and the general standard of life.

It might be thought, in view of this, that Hobson should be called a socialist, but fundamentally he remained a firmly committed liberal. His idea was that the basic animal needs of mankind for food, shelter and warmth should be met without fear of inequality or extortion by monopoly. The rest of people's lives should, he thought, be devoted to the uninhibited exercise of their own particular talents. Hence he favoured what we now call a "mixed" economy.

It is doubtful, however, if Hobson would be pleased by the economic life of today, when a high standard of living is equated with the possession of more and more material goods, many of them a trivial waste of precious resources. As early as 1894 he was warning that the emphasis on material wealth would lead eventually to a scarcity of raw material supplies. His own idea was that, as people became better educated, and when the organisation of society reached the point where no-one had to struggle for basic needs, men would become interested in a more artistic, spiritual life, the basic material components of which would be very small.

He would probably have also been disturbed by the vast degree of bureaucracy spawned by the modern State. In his own time the role of the State did not seem large enough but he had imagination enough to see that it might grow too large and that in any event a powerful central government could only be checked by active and intelligent democracy. He supported the fullest widening of the franchise and was an early supporter of the women's movement. He also championed proportional representation and gave the referendum an important part in his political philosophy on the assumption that these measures would help to counteract the growth of pressure group parties of the kind which, unfortunately, we have today. Above all, he was concerned for the fullest possible education of the people to make them aware of their rights and responsibilities and to encourage them to participate.

It is legitimate, I think, to see Hobson as a man trying to steer a rather precarious intellectual course between unbridled capitalism on the one hand, and the totalitarianism, to which it could always give way, on the other. Insofar as we have, up to the present, succeeded in doing this in Britain we owe a debt to Hobson and those like him who lit up the way.

*(Summary of a Lecture given on December 28)*

## **Has Linguistic Philosophy Given Up The Ghost?**

BY

ARDON LYON

PHILOSOPHY has traditionally been looked upon as "the study of the nature of reality and our knowledge of it". This profound discipline seems to many people to have been superseded among contemporary British philosophers by abstruse yet trivial discussions about words. Naturally, there are many

philosophers who work outside this territory, but those of the so-called "Ordinary Language" School, associated with the views of Ludwig Wittgenstein, may appear to have abandoned the traditional themes of science and art, God and morality, politics and life. I shall try here to explain how linguistic philosophers are still endeavouring to deal with the traditional problems. This will be exemplified by giving a brief account of a philosophy which posited the existence of a non-material transcendental world—a theory which had and continues to have an enormous influence on the evolution of theology, art and science—and by then indicating how these same topics are approached by philosophers of the "linguistic school".

We don't know at what stage there arose the very natural belief in the existence of unseen forces, spirits or gods which affected the behaviour of the material world around us. On the whole, inanimate bodies seem to stay where they are unless propelled by an agent: and if there is no visible agent, then presumably there is an invisible one, such as the wind. Animate bodies; plants and animals, appear to be propelled by a spirit or a "life force": when a man dies, his body remains motionless. So there seems to be a "ghost" in the bodily machine, which somehow, mysteriously, controls its actions. On death the ghost is either annihilated or departs. Such ghosts or gods could be thought of as invisible but still physical, materials objects, like air.

The ancient Pythagoreans argued that there must exist some kinds of non-material entities such as numbers and the figures referred to in geometrical theorems. No physical triangles have exactly the properties assigned to right-angled triangles in Pythagoras' famous theorem, so we seem there to be referring to "ideal", non-physical figures, consisting for example of absolutely straight lines of absolutely no thickness. Again, the symbols "2", "II", "two" and "deux" all refer to the same entity, the number two. But such numbers are not to be found among the physical furniture of the universe—the stones and tree, planets and stars, etc. So when we say that  $2+3=5$  we are speaking of an eternal, unchanging, necessary relationship between non-physical entities. And there is an infinite number of such natural numbers, whereas the physical universe is perhaps finite, and anyway consists of a changing and confusing welter of chaff, only sometimes imperfectly reflecting these eternal forms, for instance in the rather mathematical motions of the planets, or the ratios of string-lengths found to produce musical harmonies.

### Enigma of Origin

Influenced by these views, Plato argued that *everything* in the physical world is an imperfect copy of an unchanging Form. Beethoven's late quartets, a sunset, and Greta Garbo are all in their very different ways beautiful, but of course none of them can be identified with Beauty itself. So what is Beauty? According to Plato it is a non-physical entity which various worldly things partake in, exemplify to a greater or lesser degree, or distortedly mirror. The same thing goes for Virtue, Truth, Man—whatever you will; expecting to meet not only various men but also Man would be like hoping to find  $\sqrt{2}$  in a plant with square roots.

This aspect of Greek thought affected Christianity in the following way. God, who used to be thought of as a powerful but invisible person, like the ancient men-gods, and invisible in the way that air is invisible but still physical, could now be looked upon as invisible in the way that numbers are. God is not really everywhere, yet neither is he nowhere: He is non-spatial, non-temporal, "out of" space and time, and Heaven is only metaphorically a "place" which one's soul could be "in". The old images still persisted as uplifting, yet sadly misleading inspiration for the laity, who could not grasp the mysteries of the transcendental since they were incapable even of a proper understanding of the realm of mathematics.

We can see this influence in a fusion of the religious, the musical and the scientific in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*:

There's not the smallest orb which thou beholds't  
But in his motion like an angel sings,  
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubims;  
Such harmony is in immortal souls;  
But, whilst this muddy vesture of decay  
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.

*The Merchant of Venice*, Act V, Scene i, 56-65.

Famous Platonists in the history of science include Kepler, and to some extent, Galileo.

Plato also took over Socrates' argument that we could never hope to be virtuous unless we knew what virtue is; and until we can say what it is, by providing a definition of "Virtue", we will remain forever floundering in the darkness of abysmal ignorance. To say what something is, we have to obtain *knowledge* of its essential nature, of the way this abstract Form is related to other abstract Forms or properties, as expressed in a correct definition. This is not a matter for empirical scientific investigation, which must always remain tentative—a matter of *belief*, not knowledge, since based on changing theories and possibly misleading observations, for instance that physical objects are solid or that the sun circles the earth. Such a grasp of essences is a prerequisite for science: I cannot investigate the feeding habits of whales until I can tell a whale from a porpoise, and for this I have to know what it is to be a whale.

In this century, the enquiries of Bertrand Russell and others into the nature of numbers gave rise to mathematical set theory. And if we want to see the effect of Platonism in art we only have to think of Cézanne and cubism, or Roger Fry on Significant Form. Even Max Beckmann, whose work seems rather far removed from cubism, wrote:

My life has been devoted to expressing my view of reality as intensively as possible. What I am chiefly concerned with in my paintings is the ideality that lies concealed behind surface reality. . . . I seek in the here and now a bridge to the *invisible*: it is reality that constitutes the true mystery of existence.

Now what would so-called linguistic philosophers have to say about Platonic theory? I can here only indicate briefly how they might approach two of his arguments. First, Plato thought that to know what something is, you must be able to say what it is, which entails being able to define the relevant term. Then his theory was that a term "X" must be defined by way of other terms "A", "B", "C", etc., each of which any X must necessarily have. Wittgenstein and others have suggested that we might produce definitions which function in a different way. I believe that the Platonic or "essentialist" model of definition has a deleterious effect within science itself, although a non-essentialist method is now sometimes applied in the social sciences, using so-called "indicators", which are akin to Wittgenstein's "family resemblance" properties. In any event, if the essentialist view can be circumvented, we have knocked away one prop upholding the belief in transcendental Forms. Of course this would not show that the theory is false; there can be lots of bad arguments for true theories. But it does show how a belief about language—and some would say linguistic confusion—can help to engender non-linguistic philosophical theories.

Secondly, what of Plato's idea, already indicated, that we can have *knowledge* only of the unchanging, and hence of Forms, so that at best we can have more or less reasonable *belief* about the physical world? Without going into his arguments for this, which are anyway not wildly convincing, linguistic philosophers might attack the conclusion directly. An "ordinary

language" philosopher would say that whether something is an example of knowledge is simply a question of whether it satisfies the criteria for the term "knowledge", in its ordinary usage, to be correctly applied to it. Since there are millions of cases where we claim to know something about the physical world and where these criteria *are* satisfied, Plato's thesis that we cannot have knowledge of the changing physical world, but only of the eternal world of Forms (roughly speaking—concepts), must be mistaken. So an analysis of language can help us to overcome mistaken metaphysical theories, with all the practical results which flow from these theories.

There can however be a ready come-back against the ordinary language view. The criteria for knowledge—the definition of the word "knowledge"—might be thought to be somewhat as follows: "X" knows that p", where p is any proposition, means (i) it's true that p, (ii) X believes that p, and (iii) X has good grounds for that belief. Thus I might rightly believe that there is life on other planets, but lacking proper evidence for this, I cannot properly be said to *know* it. Plato's arguments attempt to show that, despite what the "man in the street" believes, we never do have good grounds for our belief about the physical world: in a famous metaphor, Plato likens us to men in a darkened cave who mistake the shadows cast by objects for the objects themselves. Wittgenstein's colleague John Wisdom suggested that metaphysicians typically narrow or widen our ordinary language concepts, and hence their views are not so much correct or incorrect, as misleading or illuminating ways of viewing things, having good or bad results and often both. Thus narrowing the concept of knowledge has excellent results when it leads to a reduction of dogmatism, but bad results when it leads to a despairing scepticism. We have to look at both the advantages and disadvantages if we want to obtain a clear grasp of how things are. Thus philosophical understanding is simply impossible without an examination of actual and proposed linguistic usage. This "linguistic" philosophy will be more akin to the Socratic dialectic of discussion of individual questions as they arise, than to the monolithic system building of Plato and many of his successors.

Finally, what if carrying out this analysis leads to a destruction of belief in the beautiful Platonic ideas with all their fruitful offspring in science, religion and art to which I have briefly alluded? Should we then refrain from trying to get philosophical insight? Surely not, for in maturity we should want the truth—and we can still admire the wondrous beauty of man's various creations, even if we consider many of them to be cathedrals to confusion.

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## For the Record

BY

THE GENERAL SECRETARY

FOR the February issue of the *New Humanist* Nicolas Walter wrote a very fair assessment of the situation facing the humanist movement as a whole. It is, he says, "in serious difficulties".

The BHA has just more than doubled its subscription, the RPA has raised its sub by half for the second year running and is still losing money, *The Freethinker* (which used to be weekly) is now monthly and nearly twice as expensive; and this happening when members are having to reduce their financial commitments anyway.

The Editorial recognises that the four societies (adding *South Place*,



with its own special problem, to the list above) have very different histories and meet different needs and adds that "most Humanists seem to regret the lack of unity". Further, our diversity "encourages the feebleness of our impact". At the same time there is no doubt that there are millions of humanists all round us who completely ignore the organised humanist movement as such.

Nicolas then, I think, puts his finger firmly on the trouble, if not on its causes or cure: "Belonging to a tradition of dissent and deriving from the rejection of old institutions, our movement finds it hard to create a tradition of assent and to develop new institutions".

We know what we are *against*, but what are we *for*? For a long time we have known that this is the difficult question. Why is it that we cannot produce an answer? The fault can only, ultimately, be in ourselves.

If there is one virtue we have at *South Place* it is plain speaking. But somehow the movement as a whole has yet to get round to it. The arguments amongst us that ought to be couched in the term of straight criticism seem to turn into bad tempered personal assaults. And personal attacks are *not* plain speaking—their proper names are ignorance and rudeness.

One of the most distinguished humanists in the land did a broadcast a couple of years ago (I have it on tape) in which he, Ronald Fletcher, maintained that the cardinal quality of humanism was *courtesy*. It bears thinking about!

It seems to be that nothing interesting will happen about Humanist unity until it has already happened at the deepest level—in the hearts of Humanists. In-the-head comes second. If we *feel* that we want to do things together then we shall do them—it is the feeling that is missing. And we can't simply wish ourselves into that starting position. It can only follow from a deeper personal understanding of the human situation.

The fact seems to me that, historically, we are just as much a product of *laissez faire* as are the most orthodox Christians. The mark of "the loner" is upon us and that mark is now the mark of the dead. It is becoming evident that the future belongs to the re-discovery and re-invention of community.

If this is true it means that we have been mistaken in one of our basic puritan assumptions i.e. that the ultimate human unit is the individual. If, on the contrary that unit is the pair, the group or the community this does not exclude the individual but makes him or her secondary in serial order. This realisation turns the last four hundred years upon its head and provides a new basis for humanism.

It is my view that whoever grasps this new truth will make the future and whoever fails will get left behind to perish in his own good time.

Since *South Place* is nothing if not a congregation it follows that *if our imagination is up to it* we could be pushing at an open door.

### "Our Sense of the Sacred"

This was the title of the article I wrote about religious humanism for *The Freethinker* at the request of the Editor, Bill McIlroy and a fierce debate continues in its pages. Robert Waller replied in a personal letter and what he says is so much to the point that I thought I would repeat it here. He writes:

"The Church has stopped religion by placing a ban on speculation about the nature of God, having decided that this has been once and for all revealed; whereas science soared ahead because there was no ban on speculating about nature. No wonder all the arid controversies about the exact nature of the divinity of Christ led to such bloodshed—it is a non-question. Religious humanism will set going a new

civilisation and a new culture if it could really inspire that kind of speculation related to our everyday life . . . The personal qualities of love, pity, charity, mercy, wonder, etc, are the qualities most felt to be sacred. I believe a person can have a religious vocation just as he can have a scientific vocation, feeling himself "bound on a course".

### Sunday Meetings

If the taboos have come off religion and sex there is one subject on which they still remain—the land, its ownership, its value and its use. I have been hoping for years that we might find someone to make an incisive attack on the problem and I know Anthony Deavin will do it on the 7th. Cyril Barrett is a professional philosopher commended to us by Peter Cronin. He has chosen an extraordinary title: "The Dangers and Evils of Truth". I don't know what to make of that save that it seems most interesting! Whitehead was Russell's teacher and subsequently they wrote *Principia Mathematica* together—then they parted company fundamentally and finally. How? Why? Peter Cronin's subject on the 21st. The one undeniably good thing about Concorde has been the way it made co-operation possible between the English and the French. The English and the French were enemies for 500 years until the *entente cordiale* and the line up against the Germans. Our cultures are miles apart still and maybe we can make a modest contribution to the remedy from *South Place*. Peter Seltman, a Cambridge historian now teaching at the North London Polytechnic, did his PhD on the subject of the Babeuf, St Simon and Fourier and he will make a start on his case on the 28th.

### Tuesday Discussions

In March we are going to do what the song says and "accentuate the positive", looking for grounds for hope in our much divided and dismayed country. Colin Hutchinson, a leading member of the Conservation Society, on *The Scope for Personal Action*, a chap called Peter Cadogan on *The Tide of Devolution*, Peter Hunot of "Spur" on *Possibilities in Communication* and Gerard Morgan-Granville on *The Theory and Practice of Alternative Technology*. Mr Morgan-Granville is Chairman of the Society for Environmental Improvement Ltd and works with the National Centre for Alternative Technology in Machynlleth, North Wales. We end with the usual debate.

### Forums

What *are* we to think about the Health Service? Doctors on strike (why do the media abuse the English language and talk about "industrial action"?), chaos threatening, medicos emigrating . . . Our old friend Dr David Stark Murray will be with us on the 14th. Maybe we shall be able to get our medical hearings again!

On the 28th our annual session on the Society and the wider humanist movement. *Members of all kindred Societies are especially invited*. Will you pass the invitation on? And the Open Door TV film will be shown again—SPES on the screen.

### AROUND THE SOCIETY

□ At the last General Committee we talked briefly about flowers and the Library. Constance Dowman has since provided some beautiful dried flower arrangements for the two wrought-iron stands that are a memorial to George her late husband. If there are one or two other members who would like to think about flowers in relation to the Hall, and do something about it, would they see me?

□ For reasons that are partly but not wholly financial we have decided to vary the opening of Sunday meetings, i.e. to open with music two Sundays a month and with readings for the other two: It will start to happen towards the end of the season and we hope that members will express their opinions on this subject at the AGM. The AGM will be on Wednesday May 26th.

□ Kenneth Furness of the BHA has rung me in connection with the reference to £10 in the page about funerals in the last *Ethical Record*. The wording (if you remember) was deliberately delicate but it really applies to *South Place* only and I am glad to be able to publish this correction.

□ The RPA is running a Weekend Conference on "Non-Expansionist Economics", March 19-21 at Urchfont Manor, near Devizes, Wiltshire—speakers include James Dilloway, James Robertson and myself. Details from the RPA at 88 Islington High Street, London N1. Cost is only £9 because an anonymous donor is supporting it in honour of the memory of Hector Hawton.

□ The NSS Annual Dinner will take place on Saturday April 3rd in the Pavours Arms, Page Street, Westminster SW1. Guest of Honour: Edward Blishen. Tickets in advance, £2.95, from 698 Holloway Road, London N19.

PETER CADOGAN

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## DISCUSSION

### Can We Study Alternative Futures?

DAVID BERRY, the Secretary of the World Futures Society in London, introduced the discussion pointing out somewhat gloomily that Future Studies stemmed from an interest in America where unfortunately the preoccupation had been with the arms industry and the military. Both these enterprises were necessarily committed to extensive forward planning because of their scope and scale. So it was that institutions like the Rand Corporation had been foremost in Future Studies and this might give us a jaundiced view of them in consequence!

Another source of Future Studies was Utopianism and science fiction. Ever since the Renaissance and the industrial revolution and because of the sense of freedom that they conveyed to the enlightened, men have dreamed dreams and have visions of the future. If the visions were optimistic, the result was Utopia. If pessimistic, as in Orwell's 1984, the result was a dystopia, i.e. an upside down Utopia.

Science fiction, on the other hand, identifies one single situation or proposition and ask the question, "What if?" and then proceeds to build a fantasy. This indicates something of the limitation of science fiction because life encompasses an endless range of variables. To treat it as a series of constants with only one variable is to fly in the face of experience. For this reason science fiction faces an endless credibility crisis!

David Berry listed some eight different ways of looking at change. Firstly, there were the theories of change as expounded by Karl Popper and concerned with social engineering in relation to particular problems.

Secondly, there were historical studies which looked at problems in the context of their origins and development and so shed light on their potentialities. Thirdly, there were forecasting techniques, partly of the statistical order, round which a great deal of work has been done in America.

Fourthly, there were social values, witness the current interest in Women's Lib, lifestyle and community living. Fifthly, there was the psychological approach indicated in particular by Maslow and pointing out that if we limited ourselves to the operational we miss the dimension of being. In this connection we can learn a lot from Eastern philosophies. Sixthly, there was peace research, witness the Chair recently established at the University of Bradford.

Seventhly, there was the extraordinary change in communications, e.g. vast sums of money can now be moved in a fraction of a second and computers can make instant calculations which would otherwise take months. These changes have put change itself on an escalator. Finally, there was creative and imaginative thinking, witness de Bono's theory of lateral thinking and new conceptions concerning the world as a whole.

Children are naturally full of new ways of looking at the world because their way of thinking is as yet unprogrammed and their actions not circumscribed by structures. We impose a staggering loss upon ourselves by putting down the possibilities of child imagination and this we do extensively from about the age of five or six in order to condition the children for life in a conformist society. This means that we need to start with a new look at the way we bring our children up. We are used to the notion that mothers must have "time off" to have babies, but we are not yet used to the notion that fathers should have time off to be with their children. The parents are the real educators and we mistake education when we take it away from the home and institutionalise it.

Generally speaking Future Studies have had a poor press in this country. There has been some useful work done in the University of Edinburgh, Manchester and Sussex, but these in turn are too pre-occupied with operational research, seeing the work too simply as a tool of analysis, and the study of the whole of human experience gets left out. Interestingly, the Open University has started a very successful second-level study course and its textbook is selling far beyond its official student public.

P.C.

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## FORUM

# Motherhood and the Idea of Domestic Service

THE FORUM on "Motherhood and the Idea of Domestic Service" on January 11 was opened by Sheila Pusinelli. She is well equipped to do this as she is a working housewife with a small son and trained in anthropology.

She began by saying that the whole question of domestic work was in the melting pot. It was a vast topic but taking it from a purely personal angle she hated domestic work. She was not an enthusiast for Women's Liberation as such, but believed it was a good thing both for the mother and the

family generally that she should have the opportunity of getting out of the house.

Domestic work, she went on to say, could be divided into three categories:

Cooking. (For some people this could be a pleasure.)

Cleaning, ironing and washing.

Mending.

The chore of cooking could be eased by such things as the refrigerator and the deep freeze. These enabled families to buy a large amount of food at one go and eased the burden of shopping. The load of washing could be eased by having a washing machine and a dryer. In the field of mending there was less scope for gadgetry, although there was a gadget for sewing on buttons!

Next there was the question of a mother with a career; especially in relation to the children. Play groups were a help. But for the child under 18 months it was difficult to get help. There was a shortage of good au pair girls and nannies. Another limiting factor was that the extended family had ceased to exist. Must then the mother of the young child be confined to the home? One good solution was the occasional temporary job.

### **Parental Pair**

Fatherhood was not greatly different from motherhood. For a child to have two parents is a distinct advantage. Men and women were basically equal but their approach to children should be different. Child rearing will always be a burden, but it is not one which should be shifted on to others.

For the mother there was the problem of how much time should be spent on motherhood and how much on a career. The process of socialisation was moving over more and more to schools and other agencies. The speaker believed that parents should have the right to withdraw their children from sex education as a matter of right, just like religious education.

In concluding the speaker said that motherhood in itself is a worthwhile career, but it is something which should be a shared job with the husband.

In the discussion following, the point was made that the nuclear family in itself produces violence and tension, and that family life produces mental illness. It was felt that women were struggling in a man-ordered world and that there was too little female influence.

The speaker's point on sex education was also taken up; it was felt that withdrawing the child from this could create problems for the child itself.

The question of the sheer boredom of much housework was also raised; it was pointed out that men also have to do nasty, boring and dirty jobs; miners, for example.

Some doubted the oft assumed idea that the parent always knows best; it simply wasn't true. Parents tried to instill their own ideals and standards on their children. This was not always in the best interest of the child.

It was pointed out that the breakdown of the extended family was the result of the welfare state; people did not feel the same responsibility for the old and the young which previous generations once had.

The General Secretary raised the point that a conflict between a professional career and motherhood was only real for about 20 per cent of women. For the other 80 per cent who were less skilled or unskilled there was no real conflict. We must not underestimate the problems of this second group of women.

Others thought there was no real difference in the problems of working class and middle class women; the real difference was that the latter had more money. The important thing was that motherhood in itself should be made a worthwhile and socially respectable thing.

A.W.K.

*(Report of a Forum on January 11)*

# Thomas Paine and The Age of Reason

BY

AUDREY WILLIAMSON

It is particularly interesting for me to be here in Conway Hall: Moncure D. Conway, as you all must know, was not only a minister of South Place Ethical Society but also author of the first unbiassed and fully researched biography of Thomas Paine.

In fact, there were similar historical foundations in their form of theological dissent. For in the latter part of the 19th century, England was moving back from the rigid biblical orthodoxies of the Victorian age towards the Age of Enlightenment and Reason of the previous century.

Partly because of the fears engendered by the French Revolution, England had reversed the trend towards religious scepticism and built up a society based on the Old Testament as much as the New. This was, of course, not only a matter of religious belief. It was a bulwark for the new industrialism and the widening gap between rich and poor. The poor must know their place; and their place was, they were told, where God had decreed they should be. For those who rebelled there was hell-fire waiting. And rebels of the past like Thomas Paine, who had proclaimed the Rights of Man and challenged the authenticity and violent retributions of the Bible, were vilified by Government propaganda and their books suppressed.

Those who published Paine's works, right up to the 1820s, were condemned to savage terms of imprisonment. But underground, he continued to be read. He was a lodestar to the young Shelley—"that great and good man", Shelley called him. After the censorship lifted, Paine was still read by the Chartists.

## Advent of Marx

Those with a social conscience turned to Christian Socialism, like Carlyle, Ruskin and Kingsley—a form of paternalism which persisted until Karl Marx's *Capital* captured socialists like William Morris and H. M. Hyndman for the new ideology of communism.

Yet Marx himself was not unaware of Paine, and his celebrated phrase about religion being used as "the opium of the people" had been anticipated by Paine in *The Age of Reason*:

"All natural institutions of Churches, whether Jewish, Christian or Turkish, appear to me no other than human inventions set up to terrify and enslave mankind and monopolise power and profit."

There is a link between Conway and Paine which Conway missed. This was the Unitarian link. Paine was 37 years of age before he emigrated to America and found fame as the author of *Common Sense*, the book which Washing thought won the cause of American Independence. His last six years in England were spent as an exciseman at Lewes. Here he married the daughter of his landlord, whose father had been minister at Westgate Chapel, virtually attached to the house. Perhaps because Paine was the son of a Quaker, Conway in error referred to this Chapel as Quaker. But in fact it was, and still is, Unitarian; and Conway himself had been a Unitarian minister in Cincinnati. The South Place Ethical Society was itself Unitarian for some years.

I believe the Unitarian influence can be traced in Paine's *The Age of Reason*, alongside the influences of Voltaire, Rousseau and others which he picked up in France. Unitarianism even in early Victorian times still denied the Divinity of Christ—"he was a virtuous and an amiable man", wrote Paine—and they also denied the existence of the Devil, and the doctrine of eternal punishment.

He was an internationalist long before people began to think in this way. On the base of his statue at Thetford you can still read his creed:

"My country is the world and my religion is to do good."

If he was a child of the Age of Reason he also looked ahead to areas of social justice which have literally only been realised in the Welfare State of our own lifetime. Part II of his *Rights of Man* advocated a new system of society; where there were pensions for the aged, workshops for the unemployed, maternity grants to women, and a family allowance of £4 to help children under 14 to be educated, instead of being put out to work. And he maintained, long ahead of his time, that these allowances should be *as a right*, not a matter of favour and charity.

The basis of the 18th century search for liberty and social justice, like Paine's, can be traced to the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the whole movement towards reform that had begun in the France of the Philosophers, passed to America, and spread back from America to France. Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence, in particular the clause about "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of happiness", had become as much a signal of the new human liberties as Rousseau's famous opening line in the *Social Contract*: "Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains." This was the new spirit that, alongside the spirit of religious questioning, swept Europe in the 18th century and gave it its title of The Age of Enlightenment and Reason.

### Social Equality

On the theme of social justice Rousseau had anticipated the battle of every reformer right through to Victorian times and beyond. As he put it in *A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, published in 1755: "It is contrary to the law of nature . . . that the privileged few should gorge themselves with superfluities, while the starving multitude are in want of the bare necessities of life."

In the England that forged Paine, nevertheless, there were indigenous traditions of liberty quite outside Rousseau, and even traditions of deism that had influenced Voltaire. One hundred years before John Wilkes was imprisoned for resisting arrest by General Warrant and attacking privilege in the *North Briton*, the Levellers of Cromwell's time were issuing a pamphlet by Richard Overton demanding universal suffrage. The Levellers, too, showed the way theological dissent in England tended to be associated with radical politics. Civil rights were denied both to dissenters and certain classes of society: it was natural that they should merge in a common cause.

Unitarianism in 18th century England was closely associated with the reformers: Dr. Joseph Priestley, the great chemist, and Dr. Richard Price, whose hailing of the French Revolution sparked off Burke's attack, were both Unitarian ministers. When London's first Unitarian Chapel was opened by Theophilus Lindsey in 1774, the ceremony was attended by Benjamin Franklin and a number of prominent radicals and reformers.

Franklin and Paine's friend, Thomas Jefferson, both shared his unorthodox outlook on religion. As for the radical side, the England that formed Thomas Paine was the England lit up (quite literally), by the often comical farce of John Wilkes' battles with parliament and the riots of his supporters. It was the traditions of English radicalism and English dissent that Paine took with him to America.

The fight is not ended. And we still need sometimes to remember Paine's words on political and religious morality:

"He that would make his own liberty secure, must guard even his enemy from oppression, for if he fails in this duty, he establishes a precedent that will reach to himself."

# Hector Hawton

*The following tribute was received too late for inclusion last month.—Ed.*

When the Muswell Hill Humanist Group was first formed, Hector Hawton, because he lived in the neighbourhood, was one of our first members and one of our first speakers. As time went on he took to coming to meetings more and more often until, in the end, only a very pressing engagement elsewhere would keep him away. From being a rather remote "President" he became an active Chairman. We gradually forgot to pay him the respect due to a person of his distinction and came to regard him just as one of ourselves. We came to know him best at the "informal meetings" and especially in committee where anything was apt to be discussed and argued over other than the business in hand. He did not, as a rule, say very much but sat there looking amused and benign until, at the right moment, he would intervene with a wise or pointed comment which would bring wild and fragmented argument back to more rational debate. He seemed to enjoy taking part in our more frivolous meetings and was not above a little gossip and an occasional remark spiced with malice. He was a genuinely modest man and so would, I think, be pleased because we remember him chiefly for the pleasure of his company.

Hector was a Humanist in a very wide sense. He was a Rationalist and uncompromising Atheist, but, perhaps partly because he had experienced deep religious feeling, he understood the power and value of the emotions and aesthetic pleasure and human relationships. By the time we knew him, although still very active, I think he was becoming content sometimes to sit back and observe and reflect. It was obvious though this view and conduct of life had been, intellectually and emotionally, one of curiosity and adventure, of making mistakes and of great enjoyment. He was widely read and interested in an enormous variety of subjects. He was, it seemed to me, an example of an earlier humanist concept, that of "the complete man".

Humanists are not generally supposed to hold articles of faith but one article of faith held passionately by Hector was his belief, embodied in the philosophy of John Stuart Mill, in the right of every individual to express freely his beliefs, opinions and prejudices, in fact "the right to be wrong". Those of us who heard it will remember how vividly this was brought out in the talk he gave for the group about John Stuart Mill.

*Agnes Avery (for Muswell Hill Humanist Group)*

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## Viewpoint

### Episcopal Calling

How on earth can you suggest (February Editorial) that the Archbishop of Canterbury was more justified in exhorting us all to work harder and live like good little Anglicans than the Bishop of Kingston was to decry Concorde in the USA? The Congressional committee of inquiry had invited evidence about Concorde and Hugh Montefiore gave evidence as the accredited spokesman of an anti-Concorde pressure group, not in his episcopal role. The Archbishops of Canterbury and York, on the other hand, exceeded the authority vested in them by a minority Church in presuming to preach to the whole population—and not just on their own metaphysical speciality, but on economics, social mores, family life, and personal attitudes. They were acting as agents of the establishment to



subdue the people, whereas Montefiore was giving ecological and human considerations priority over the national economy.

Your reference to a hypothetical "Concorde expert" bears no relevance to the question whether the level of noise is intolerable to people living under the Concorde's flight path. The only relevant "experts" are those same people—an organised group of whom appointed Montefiore as their spokesman. The fact that he happens also to be a bishop is neither here nor there. He did not go to America brandishing a crozier and claiming the authority of divine revelation; he kept to facts and reasoned argument—neither of which can be found in the Primates' call to the nation.

BARBARA SMOKER

London SE6

*The Editor replies:* Barbara reads into the Editorial support for the "moral exhortation" which is not there. Let the bishops *et al* stick to their supernaturalism and leave the rest of us alone.

### Religious humanism

*Ethical Record* readers may wish to know that the debate on religious humanism in the columns of *The Freethinker* (reported in "For the Record" in February), did not end with Peter Cadogan's article, "Our Sense of the Sacred". Critical letters by Nicolas Walter (editor, *New Humanist*), Barbara Smoker (President, National Secular Society) and J. M. Alexander are published in our current issue. Free copies are obtainable from *The Freethinker* office, 698 Holloway Road, London N19 (telephone 01-272 1266).

BILL MCILROY  
Editor, *Freethinker*

Infinite series without a finite sum, such as Newtonian space and time, surely remains as mysteriously incomprehensible to human minds, whether theist or atheist, as the only alternative hypothesis, namely that space has an end and time a beginning.

To atheists like myself the theist's mystical solution (as regards time) of "an uncaused cause", is no answer at all. It merely ignores the problem.

But I think Barbara Smoker's solution (November/December *Record*) also ignores the problem (though standing, so to speak, on the other foot). The fundamental dilemma of the equal incomprehensibility of either a beginning or no beginning is not faced.

The cyclic or oscillating universe does not help at all, even if it were to become scientifically accepted.

At present, as I understand it, the weight of the evidence is in this way: nothing like enough density of matter/energy has yet been discovered to slow the present headlong expansion of the observed universe.

I think Barbara Smoker has not understood that infinite is just as "mystical" as finite time and space.

I think she has perhaps not even heard the molecular biologists' great message: that the "upward" *direction* of evolution, far from being mystical, is now established scientific fact, nor Einstein's great message: that it is the *relative direction* which matters and which can be ascertained. Not any ultimates or absolutes which (ex hypothesis) we simply cannot know and ideas of which, like most extremes, are highly dangerous in some hands, highly misleading to all and "ultimately" boring, being (for the present) insoluble problems.

JOHN JACKSON

Thame, Oxon

# South Place News

## New Members

We are pleased to welcome: Mr D. Gibbard, Hucclecote; Mrs R. Parry, SW7; Ms S. Beswick, NW3; Mr C. Stanley, NW3; Ms A. Bridges, W2; Mr P. Marwood, SE19 and Ms S. Brown, SE19.

## Obituary

*As we go to press, sad news arrives of the death of Dr John Lewis, an Appointed Lecturer since 1965. Tributes are invited.—Ed.)*

We regret to report the death of Miss M. Everitt of Southwold.

## Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the Society will take place on Wednesday May 26 at 7.0 pm (Refreshments at 6.15 pm). Please note the change in the Rules made at the last SGM. Nominations for election to the General Committee need to be received by the Secretary not later than the second Sunday in April. Resolutions for the AGM likewise. This was done in order to meet the printing schedule for the Annual Report.

## Sunday Social

Sunday, March 21, 3 p.m. Marthe Sinha on "India", followed by tea, 10p.

## Film

Lisa Monks is organising a group to see "Odd Man Out" at the Holborn Film Society, Holborn Library, Theobalds Road, on Friday March 5. Coffee on fourth floor before film starts at 6.30 p.m.

## Erratum

Two printers' errors were contained in last month's article "The Jewish Humanist" by Otto Wolfgang.

The reference on page eight (third para) to Cyprus should read Cyrus, and the asterisk on the fourth line from the bottom of page eight should have been on the ninth line from the bottom of page seven, with reference to Rahab.

## "Bring and Buy" Event

Sunday 4 April, 2.30 to 5.00 p.m. in Small Hall, admission 5p. Tea available 15p, in the Library from 4.00 to 5.00 p.m. All proceeds for Members' amenities in the Society. Please make this a success by bringing in saleable items, bric-a-brac, books, etc., to the Hall Manager or the Head Caretaker from Sunday 28 March until 10.30 a.m. Sunday 4 April, or arrange by telephone with Mrs. Ray Lovecy 529 6735.

## Theatre Party

A theatre visit has been arranged for Saturday afternoon, April 3, to see "The Beggar's Opera" by John Gay. Meet at the Vanburgh Theatre, Malet Street, WC1 at 2.15 p.m. Tickets 20p obtainable from Edwina Palmer on Sunday or Tuesday evenings at Conway Hall.

## Ramble

John Brown will lead a ramble, on Saturday, March 13, to Strand-on-the Green and Hogarth's house at Chiswick. Meet at Gunnersbury tube station 2.45 p.m. Tea at Hammersmith.

## **Kindred Organisations**

The annual dinner of the **National Secular Society** takes place on Saturday, April 3, at the Pavour's Arms, Page Street, Westminster. The guest of honour is to be Edward Blishen. Other speakers will be Nicholas Tucker, Diane Munday and Nicolas Walter. Barbara Smoker, president of the NSS will be in the chair.

The NSS is also holding a public meeting on "Religious Opposition to Sexual Freedom", on May 7. The venue is the Kent Room, Caxton Hall. Speakers will include Renee Short, MP, Diane Munday and Caroline Woodruffe.

## **"Expressions of Humanism"**

An exhibition will be held at the BHA Annual Conference, Walsall, next July. Various classes for group and individual work. Send SAE for details and entry form to BHA Exhibition, Margaret Chisman, 50 Tuddenham Road, Ipswich IP4 2SP.

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*Continued from page 2*

### **Tuesday, March 16**

7.00 pm—**Discussion** introduced by **Peter Hunot**. Subject: **Possibilities in Communication**

### **Thursday, March 18**

6.30 pm—**Bridge Drive** in the Library

### **Saturday, March 20**

3-6.00 pm—**Country Dancing** (jointly with Progressive League)

### **Sunday, March 21**

11.00 am—**Sunday Meeting: PETER CRONIN** on **Whitehead, Russell and Romanticism**. Soprano solos: Hedone Faulkner

3.00 pm—**Sunday Social**. Guest: Marthe Sinha

6.00 pm—**Bridge and Scrabble**

6.30 pm—**Concert: Jaye Consort**. Byrd, Gibbons, Jenkins, Lawes, Purcell

### **Tuesday, March 23**

7.00 pm—**Discussion** introduced by **Gerard Morgan-Grenville**. Subject: **The Theory and Practice of Alternative Technology**

### **Sunday, March 28**

11.00 am—**Sunday Meeting: PETER SELTMAN** on **Early 19th century French Utopians (1) Babeuf**. Tenor solos: Harvey Kesselman

3.00 pm—**Forum: Humanism—Positive or Negative?** Panel of speakers and showing of BBC "Open Door" television programme on SPES

6.00 pm—**Bridge and Scrabble**

6.30 pm—**Concert: Rasoumovsky String Quartet**. Mozart G K387, Bartok No 3. With Peter Wallfisch: Dvorak Piano Quintet

### **Tuesday, March 30**

7.00 pm—**Debate** to the motion: **Things have to get Worse Before they get Better**

### **Sunday, April 4**

11.00 am—**Sunday Meeting: AUDREY WILLIAMSON** on **William Morris and the pre-Raphaelites**

# South Place Ethical Society

FOUNDED in 1793, the Society is a progressive movement which today advocates an ethical humanism, the study and dissemination of ethical principles based on humanism, and the cultivation of a rational religious sentiment free from all theological dogma.

**We invite to membership** all those who reject supernatural creeds and find themselves in sympathy with our views.

At Conway Hall there are **opportunities for participation** in many kinds of cultural activities, including discussions, lectures, concerts, dances, rambles and socials. A comprehensive reference and lending library is available, and all Members and Associates receive the Society's journal, *The Ethical Record*, free. The Sunday Evening Chamber Music Concerts founded in 1887 have achieved international renown.

Services available to members include Naming Ceremony of Welcome to Children, the Solemnisation of Marriage, and Memorial and Funeral Services.

*The Story of South Place*, by S. K. Ratcliffe, is a history of the Society and its interesting development within liberal thought.

Minimum subscriptions are: Members, £1 p.a.; Life Members, £21 (Life membership is available only to members of at least one year's standing). It is of help to the Society's officers if members pay their subscriptions by Bankers' Order, and it is of further financial benefit to the Society if Deeds of Covenant are entered into. **Members are urged to pay more than the minimum subscription whenever possible, as the present amount is not sufficient to cover the cost of this journal.**

A suitable form of bequest for those wishing to benefit the Society by their wills is to be found in the Annual Report.

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## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

TO THE HON. REGISTRAR, SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY  
CONWAY HALL HUMANIST CENTRE  
RED LION SQUARE, LONDON WC1R 4RL

Being in sympathy with the aims of South Place Ethical Society, I desire to become a Member and I enclose as my annual subscription the sum of £..... (minimum £1) entitling me (according to the Rules of the Society) to membership for one year from the date of enrolment.

NAME .....  
(BLOCK LETTERS PLEASE)

ADDRESS .....

OCCUPATION (disclosure optional) .....

HOW DID YOU HEAR OF THE SOCIETY? .....

DATE ..... SIGNATURE .....

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*The Ethical Record* is posted free to members. The annual charge to subscribers is £1. Matter for publication should reach the Editor, Eric Willoughby, 46 Springfield Road, London E17 8DD, by the 5th of the preceding month.