

THE



ETHICAL RECORD



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Coming at Conway Hall

Sunday, June 6

11.00 am—**Sunday Meeting: W. H. LIDDELL** on **The Best History is Propaganda**. Tenor solos: Harvey Kesselman

Sunday, June 13

11.00 am—**Sunday Meeting: IAN RODGERS** on **The Burden of Myth: Amundsen and Scott**

Sunday, June 20

11.00 am—**Sunday Meeting: PETER CRONIN** on **The Puzzles of Hamlet**. Piano and horn: Mary Nash and Frank Hawkins

Sunday, June 27

11.00 am—**Sunday Meeting: JOYCE MARLOW** on **Gladstone and Victorian Religion**

Sunday, July 4

11.00 am—**Sunday Meeting: PETER SELTMAN** on **Early 19th Century Utopians: Fourier**. Soprano solos: Janet Cass

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THE ETHICAL RECORD

Vol. 81 No. 6

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

EDITORIAL

Community Spirit

APART from the family, the smallest social unit is probably the commune (a word we misuse in English), and next up the scale is the local community in which we live, probably for quite a long time.

It is important that this is a cohesive and co-operative environment, combining neighbourliness with social responsibility.

That this is recognised is shown by the remarkable resurgence in the past four or five years of community associations.

In many cases such bodies have brought about radical local changes, or stopped them, by passive and non-violent means.

Such groups are coalesced by the common environment, even though the components—the types of housing, number of schools and the individuals themselves—are vastly different.

A common feature of community associations seems to be a time-lapse loss of interest.

Meetings early in a group's formation are normally very well attended, but after three or four years, numbers dwindle, and only when matters of real personal importance—new housing demolition schemes, for instance—are mooted, do the numbers rise again.

In this AGM month, of all times, the community nature of our own organisation comes to the fore.

At South Place we are not only a community, held together by common purposes, but we are also participants, and privileged within the movement as a whole to be so.

Perhaps that is why our numbers remain steady, not dropping away as do people who participate in their local community by simply living there. Incredibly, we do better than many local community association meetings for attendance.

The lesson is that man is an active rather than passive creature. And that is the basis of democracy.

Natural Law and Land

BY

ANTHONY DEAVIN

"THE work we are going about is this, to dig up George Hill and the waste ground thereabouts and to sow corn, and to eat our bread together by the sweat of our brows.

And the first reason is this, that we may work in righteousness and lay the foundations of making the earth a common treasury for all, both rich and poor, that everyone that is born in the land may be fed by the earth his mother that brought him forth, according to the reason that rules in the creation. Not enclosing any part into any particular hand, but all as one man working together and feeding together as sons of one father, members of one family: not one lording over another, but all looking upon each other as equals in the creation; so that our maker be glorified in the work of his own hands."

For Winstanley, the earth was made "to be a common treasury for all"; he refers to the "reason that rules in creation" and to his wish to glorify the creator "in the work of his own hands". Which of us would disagree with the proposition that nature's gifts were intended for the enjoyment of all? This is a self-evident truth, it is a statement of Natural Law. The "reason that rules in creation" refers to the unshakeable conviction that the universe in all its parts is orderly and works according to unchanging laws. Plato, the founder of the Natural Law tradition in the West, describes this sense of order in creation and the interrelatedness of its parts thus:

"Let us say to the youth: The ruler of the universe has ordered all things with a view to the excellence and preservation of the whole and each part, as far as may be, has an action and a passion appropriate to it." (The Laws, X.)

Restatement Vital

I believe a restatement of Natural Law principles is vital for our age, and of particular relevance in connection with land. But what do we understand by Natural Law? Sir Ernest Barker's book "Traditions of civility" places the matter in very clear perspective:

"The origin of the idea of natural law may be ascribed to an old and indefeasible movement of the human mind which impels it towards the notion of an eternal and immutable justice; a justice which human authority expresses or ought to express—but does not make; a justice which human authority may fail to express—and must pay the penalty for failing to express by the diminution, or even the forfeiture, of its power to command. This justice is conceived as being the higher or ultimate law, proceeding from the nature of the universe—from the being of God and the reason of Man."

Thus we may list the beliefs implicit in natural law thinking as follows:

1. The universe and all its parts function according to unchanging laws; no occurrence is the offspring of chance.
2. Man is required to frame his laws so that they are in harmony with Natural Law.
3. It is natural for Man to be happy and to seek happiness. This state of happiness arises as a natural consequence of the harmonisation of individual actions and human laws with Natural Law.
4. Distress is the natural accompaniment of the life lived at variance with Natural Law.

For Sir William Blackstone, Natural Law is the criterion which we apply to test the validity of human law. The following is taken from his "Commentaries on the Laws of England":

"This law of nature, being coeval with mankind and dictated by God himself, is of course superior in obligation to any other. It is binding over all the globe, in all countries and at all times: no human laws are of any validity if contrary to this; and such of them as are valid derive all their force, and all their authority, mediately or immediately, from this original."

The Natural Law tradition, which acknowledges an absolute foundation for law in society, has an ancient pedigree. For us it finds its origin in Plato and Aristotle and thence to the Stoics, active 400-200 BC. It then forms the cornerstone of Cicero's writings—"De Legibus" and "De Republica" and those of the late Roman Emperor and philosopher Marcus Aurelius, AD 121-180. The Byzantine lawyers completed a compilation of law in AD 534, firmly in the Natural Law tradition:

For Justinian the foundation of all law could be expressed thus:

1. That we should live honestly.
2. That we should hurt nobody.
3. That we should render to everyone his due.

A blend of the Classical tradition with Christian theology was achieved by St Thomas Aquinas, 1553-1600, and the protestant theologians Grotius, 1583-1645, and Hooker, 1553-1600.

Nature and Revolution

In England in the mid 18th century Blackstone wrote his "Commentaries on the Laws of England" which, as we have seen, are firmly in the Natural Law tradition, while in France and America the leaders of revolution claimed to derive their authority from Natural Law, though their insistence on "Natural Rights" suggests a distortion of the traditional concept. (It would seem that "rights" would follow as the natural consequence of "rendering to everyone his due" and that the seeking of rights as the cardinal aim does not lie within the spirit of Natural Law.)

Inseparable from the Natural Law tradition is the conviction that this universal and absolute law, although elusive of definition, may be understood by the exercise of reason. Thus, the tradition takes a fundamentally optimistic view of human nature. However, a basically pessimistic view has also had its place over the centuries. Machiavelli (early 16th century) seems to have considered political power as a value and an end in itself. d'Entreves in his book "Natural Law" regards Hobbes, the 17th century English philosopher, as the forerunner and founder of that theory of law which has ignored Natural Law altogether. "Law in general is not Council but Command, nor a Command of any man to any man, but only of him whose command is addressed to one formerly obliged to obey." This is a definition of law as the command of the sovereign. That is to say "might is right" and on this basis, laws will be in a state of constant change according to the desires of the individual or group holding power at a given time. This view is in striking contrast to that of Cicero: "True law is right reason in agreement with nature; it is of universal application, unchanging and everlasting."

The view taken by Hobbes links with that of Hegel and thence to Marx. It is the belief that there can exist no connection in society between what "ought to be" and what "is". For Hegel the mystical State is the "ethical whole", the State is a sort of incarnation of God in history and the progress of history is a movement towards a perfection embodied in 'Ein Volk', or the "ethical state". Marx took up the idea of historical progression and the

mechanism of class conflict to explain the mechanism of this progression. Unchanging principle is denied as the proper basis of law, which becomes the vehicle whereby one class seeks to dominate another; such a view is an expression of hate. These ideas are now coming to full fruition; the world becoming rapidly darker as a result. Hence my assertion at the beginning of this lecture that a restatement of the Natural Law position is vital at this time.

In England our legal system developed in the Natural Law tradition, although this is perhaps not generally realised. Let us take as an example a description of the development of the law by precedent given in Kemp's book "Law in the Making". The judge quoted is Yelverton in 1469:

"The question before the court has never arisen before . . . when a novel case arises upon which there is no previous decision they must resort to the law of nature which is the ground of all laws. Now the first principle of the law of nature is that the judgment should be as beneficial as possible to the Common Weale."

It has been established that no person may be imprisoned except by judgment of the King's courts. Quoting from Sir Alfred Denning's book "Freedom and the Law":

"This freedom is safeguarded by the most famous writ in England, the writ of Habeas Corpus. Whenever any man in England is detained against his will, not by sentence of the King's courts . . . then he or anyone else on his behalf is entitled to apply to any of the judges of the High Court to determine whether his detention is lawful . . . in 1771, when the coloured slave James Sommerset was held in irons on board a ship lying in the Thames and bound for Jamaica, Lord Mansfield declared his detention to be unlawful. 'The air of England is too pure for any slave to breathe, let the slave go free.'"

Law and Civil Rights

Thus we take it for granted that the Law should guarantee our civil freedom; it is "natural". However, freedom cannot be considered complete if a man is bound by unfulfilling or degrading work, or if he has no work at all, or in the extreme case is starving to death. It is in the realm of what we may term "economic freedom" that we have lost our way. Inadequate economic freedom leads to tensions and imbalances in society which destructive forces are able to exploit. The regeneration of our civilisation is dependent upon a restatement of Natural Law principles in a form appropriate to the time.

In particular just Laws must be established which govern the use of that most vital of elements—Land. But what are the principles in Natural Law which should guide our consideration of man-made law in relation to land? A hint is given in our own Common Law tradition according to which we are not entitled to ownership but an "estate", an abstract entity meaning a "stand" or time in the land which cannot be owned since it belongs to the Queen. In principle the Queen holds the land in trust from God on behalf of her subjects. For practical purposes, both our common law and civil law acknowledge the right to absolute ownership in land, not simply its use for a limited time.

The Natural Law position in respect of land may be stated thus: Man has been given the use of the four elements—earth, air, fire and water. They are not man made, but are essential to life. Natural Law requires that the elements be freely available for the enjoyment of all. Human laws formulated to be in harmony with Natural Law would guarantee equal access by all members of the community to the elements. In practice, it is the earth, or land, whose ready availability to all is the most difficult to establish, for land by its very nature is solid and can be expropriated by the

few to the detriment of the many; this is what occurred during the Tudor and 18th century enclosures. This should not be taken to imply that improvements in farming were not desirable. Enclosure of the communally farmed fields and the commons facilitated impressive increases in production, but the common title to the land, and hence a right to a proportion of the production was lost. The rich became richer and the dispossessed drifted to the growing industrial areas to find work. Here are the seeds of our present dilemma: individual freedom and economic servitude; discontented masses in the industrial areas and depopulation in the rural areas. There is now but 2.6 per cent of our population on the land. And all this from a denial of a fundamental tenet of Natural Law: that the earth was made "to be the common treasury for all". There is justice in our difficulties, for as was stated earlier in the discussion of the basic tenets of Natural Law thinking: distress is the natural accompaniment of the life lived at variance with Natural Law. Man reaps the reward of greed. One is reminded of ancient Judaic Law:

"The land shall not be sold for ever, for the land is mine, for ye are strangers and sojourners with me." (Leviticus, Chapter 25.)

What we require is the guaranteed use of the land which we choose to work; we do not need to own it. It is important to realise that production of any kind arises as the result of two distinct contributions: that which is given and that which is the result of our own work. For example, if I grow vegetables, I am given the sun, air, rain and earth and the totality of the processes of nature which enable plants to grow. That is the first contribution to production. Secondly, I must work, and that is my contribution. If I work equally efficiently in different places the production will be different according to the variation in the "natural advantages" of the place where I am working. In the example given there will be differences in climate and soil fertility. In economic language we say that the site values are different. A different sort of example would be that of a shop; the turnover from the same amount of effort will clearly be much greater in the centre of a city compared with a remote village. The difference is clearly due to the presence of the community. This division of production into two parts is what we need to understand clearly in order to formulate man-made law in respect of land so that it is in harmony with Natural Law. We seek to realise the requirement that the land shall be freely available to all.

Community Land Bill

The user of a piece of land should pay to the community its due, which is that part of the production which is given, i.e. that part created by the community or other natural advantage not of the occupier's own making. Having given the community the part of the production due to it, a man is at liberty to take for his own use the results of his labours. This part due to the community can be assessed, will be related to the value of the land to the community, and must be rendered whether the land is put to use or not. Thus, men will be encouraged to take exactly that amount of land that they can use to maximum advantage, no more and no less. Further, since a man would be allowed to take for his own use the results of his labours, the more industrious a man the more he would gain from his labours. This is surely just; production of diverse kinds would be encouraged. No payment would be due to the community for land, called "marginal", which enjoyed no natural advantage.

In this way marginal land, such as poor hill pasture, would be kept in production without cumbersome and inefficient recourse to subsidy. The situation at the moment is that tax is levied by the community on production and this always bears most heavily on the margin. That this is so may be appreciated by considering the effect of a tax on production on the

viability of a hill farm compared with one on rich land. Relevant taxes on production in this case would be those on petrol, agricultural equipment, feedstuffs, etc. Such taxes would be relatively insignificant for the farm on rich land but an onerous burden for the farm on poor land. Thus human institutions may prevent production where the means for production are available. Human institutions are the cause of poverty, not the provisions of nature.

I have outlined the principles of Natural Law, which if applied, would make the earth "a common treasury for all". The time has come for that application and the realisation of Winstanley's vision.

(Summary of a lecture given on March 7)

William Morris and the Pre-Raphaelites

BY

AUDREY WILLIAMSON

NEARLY 100 years ago William Morris lectured on art and socialism to the South Place Ethical Society. It was a new idea of socialism he was now propagating, one in which art was supported by the State and the State itself had moved on from the more or less static party system to revolution along new Marxist lines. In this he had leapt ahead of his early beginnings in the Pre-Raphaelite movement, which insofar as it had any social or political significance based it on the Christian socialism represented by Thomas Carlyle and the critic who supported the Pre-Raphaelite painters, John Ruskin.

The Pre-Raphaelite movement was a revolt—not only against the stultifying traditions of the Royal Academy but also the new industrial era of slum and factory. In the 18th century it had still been possible to look on the Industrial Revolution in a romantic light. Wordsworth in 1788 was still able to write in *An Evening Walk* of those . . . to whom the harmonious doors Of Science have unbarred celestial stores, and Erasmus Darwin, grandfather of Charles Darwin, wrote a long poem, *The Botanic Garden*, in 1789 "to inlist Imagination under the banner of Science". But Darwin had theories of art as well as science. "The further the artist recedes from nature, the greater novelty he is likely to produce. . . . Reynolds makes even portraits sublime."

It was just this "sublimity", this recession from nature and concentration on portraiture, which was to produce the revolt of the Pre-Raphaelites in the next century. But in the meantime some artists did actually, like the poets, find romanticism in the "Black Country". Wright painted Arkwright's cotton mill in 1783, Joseph Wright of Derby produced attractive pictures of quarries and furnaces, and even Turner romanticized the Coalbrookdale limekiln.

It was William Blake who revolted, not only against the Academy's founder, Sir Joshua Reynolds—whom he labelled "Sir Slosshua", a nickname the Pre-Raphaelites adopted—but the whole growing menace of what he termed the "satanic mills". The new Victorian society of the wealthy capitalist created enormous areas of poverty and slum. In 1848 revolutions against this new industrial society swept Europe; and it was the same year that several young painters revolted in their own way against the darkening environment and the equally dark brown varnish of academic portraiture. Calling themselves the Pre-Raphaelites, and inspired in part by the long-dead Blake and his pellucid water colours, they proclaimed a new cult of nature and a return to the pastel colouring of the painters before Raphael:

Italian painters like Botticelli and Flemish ones like the medieval Van Eyck. The inspiration was quite largely literary and Keats, Shakespeare and other poets provided many of the subjects painted. There was an attempt to naturalize even the Bible's subjects, and also to bring back an outdoor scenic element.

The original three Pre-Raphaelites, Rossetti, Holman Hunt and Millais, all very young men, all had different qualities and styles and they soon drew in other painters, sculptors and writers, who made new contributions to the movement. In the end it included not only painting but most forms of literature and design. In many ways Dante Gabriel Rossetti was the major inspiration of the movement; nevertheless, Rossetti in his turn was influenced by a slightly older painter named Ford Madox Brown, who had worked on the Continent where he had imbibed ideas from a young German group known as the Nazarenes.

Rossetti was the son of an Italian emigré, who had been exiled for revolutionary political views. Perhaps in reaction to this he became the least politically-minded of the group, the propagator of "Art for Art's Sake". It was he who brought in the mystic element, derived both from Blake and from the poetry of Dante. Rossetti also wrote much poetry which was an inspiration to the other artists. The other two original members were Holman Hunt and John Everett Millais. Hunt had a religious strain and Millais was technically the most brilliant of the group. It was his meticulous draftsmanship of leaves and flowers, in the background of his famous picture *Ophelia*, shown in 1852, which crystallized the new "back to nature" outlook of these young artists.

Blasphemous Display

A storm of vituperation met their first efforts. In particular Millais' *Christ in the House of his Parents* was attacked for blasphemy, for he showed the boy Christ in the realistic surroundings of Joseph's carpenter's shop, without the customary halos. It was, however, in 1851 that the abuse of Hunt's innocuous Shakespearean picture, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, in *The Times* inspired John Ruskin to write to the paper in the Pre-Raphaelites' defence; and it was Ruskin's economic writings which were to give the first socialist slant to the movement.

Although criticism never ceased, the Brotherhood grew and attracted discriminating patrons. Two of the most famous recruits came in a few years later, when William Morris and Ned Burne-Jones, both students at Oxford, saw their first Millais picture and began to read Ruskin. They then scraped an acquaintance with Rossetti in London and Rossetti roped them in, with several others, on an Oxford project of painting murals. Here a red-haired, revolutionary young poet named Algernon Swinburne joined them—the *enfant terrible* of the group; an avowed atheist, like Shelley, and an admirer of the Italian rebel exile, Mazzini. Swinburne, or "Little Carrots", as they called him, was to represent the revolutionary side of the Pre-Raphaelite work in his poetry; breaking through the Victorian moral fetters in a new way, and dedicating a set of sonnets—*Songs Before Sunrise*—to Mazzini. Mazzini had been a co-founder with Garibaldi of the brief Roman Republic of 1849 and he is commemorated in the character of Mazzini Dunn—a son named by "freedom-loving parents"—in Bernard Shaw's play *Heartbreak House*. An even greater influence on Shaw was William Morris. And indeed it was, in the long run, the versatile genius and enormous vitality of Morris that left the greatest impact on our own time. It can be felt in our schemes to preserve the environment, one of his major campaigns, and in whole areas of social justice which were stamped with his particular brand of socialism, freethinking, and ideal of "art for the people".

His was the main driving force and imagination behind The Firm, as they

called it, a commercial firm started by the Brotherhood to execute stained-glass windows and textile, wallpaper and tile designs. In the end it included Kidderminster-woven carpets and all sorts of dyeing experiments, as well as the beautiful book-productions of the Kelmscott Press.

This press, mainly sustained by Morris and Burne-Jones, issued copies of some of the greatest works of literature, from Chaucer and More's *Utopia* right through to Morris' own Utopian novel of the future, *News from Nowhere*. Morris' novel was a fantasy of the future, not a prophecy; but its vision held basic truths and it included a detailed prevision of the General Strike of 1926, which took place 30 years after Morris' death.

What Morris evolved from Ruskin and Carlyle was the ideal of work; work not just as a painful means of acquiring daily bread, but as a joy to the creativity of human beings. "I do not mean work in the sense of bread", Ruskin wrote, "I mean work in the sense of mental interest". The Pre-Raphaelite movement had crystallized it in Madox Brown's famous picture *Work*, showing all classes of society around a group of workmen in Heath Street, Hampstead.

Morris' revolt against the factory machines was a revolt against the reduction of human beings to mere slaves of deadeningly repetitive labour. It was Ruskin's "division of labour" again. Morris was born a rich man; but he had a childlike quality and no sense of class. And his reaction to poverty and slave labour was to become one with the workers. In the 1890s his vast vitality was burning itself out but this alone caused his concentration on the Kelmscott Press. He remained a Marxist to the end and though he gave financial support to parliamentary candidates like Hyndman and George Lansbury, he never himself compromised by accepting the move into Parliament. He had taken the great leap from the paternalistic socialism of Ruskin and Carlyle and when he read Karl Marx's *Capital* he recognised at once the similarities of vision to those in More's *Utopia*. He never, like Shaw, joined middle-class socialist societies like the Fabians and in the end he left even the Socialist League whose paper he had edited, and formed his own Hammersmith Socialist Society. Here Shaw, Keir Hardie and others were speakers. The influence of Morris on Shaw can be traced in many of his writings and Shaw's immense admiration can be seen in the articles he wrote on Morris' death.

Computer Prophecy

Morris was prophetic on the inevitable development of the machine society; not against machines as such, but what capitalism does with them. The age he foresaw was the age of the computer. Samuel Butler too had foreseen this when he made his lost civilisation in his Utopian novel, *Erewhon*, destroy the machines and ban their use. Butler's influence on both Shaw (who acknowledged it) and Morris was probably considerable. In many ways Morris was a man of his age, even though he admired the best in medieval craft society. His many poems and translations of the Nibelungenlied were, after all, not simply an individual interest. Wagner in Germany had already been working on the same materials and it was part of the century's revolutionary heritage. Perhaps, too, it was a wide European reaction to the whole growing drabness in clothes and surroundings in the Victorian industrial age. The young Pre-Raphaelites burst into colour not only in their pictures but in their long hair and clothes. It was Tennyson who had first disinterested the medieval *Morte d'Arthur* and refashioned it as *Idylls of the King*. What began for some of the others as an escape, became for Morris a challenge to change not only the outward trappings of society, but its inward functions. He went right back to More's agriculture communist state, *Utopia*, and forward to the modern Welfare State. "I don't want art for a few, any more than education for a few, or

freedom for a few", he had written. The education and the freedom would, after his time, come more easily than the art; but his battles for preserving the environment and our artistic heritage are part of the cultural legacy he left us.

(Summary of a lecture given on April 4)

Evolution and Moral Values

BY

CLEMENT BROWN

THE *Ethical Record* of October 1975 published a piece by me under the title of *The Dark is Light Enough*. It began as a defence of what seemed to me an unjustified attack on a modern school of philosophy, but developed into a wider exposition of how I see the whole scene of material and human evolution. I have been favoured with several comments on this piece including criticisms of points of detail. One of these interests me particularly. My critic writes, "I do not agree with the Waddington view of ethics. Something is not good simply because of its fitness to survive. Goodness and survival value are not tautologous concepts."

My two quotations from Prof C. H. Waddington, a leading animal geneticist who died in 1975, were "An existence which is essentially evolutionary is itself a justification for an evolution towards a more comprehensive existence" and "We must accept the direction of evolution as good simply because it is good according to any realist definition of that concept". I do not think that Waddington is here saying that goodness and survival value are identical concepts, but that there neither is, or in his view ever can be, any better definition of goodness than the one he gives. I support him in this. All atheists reject the concept of divinely established moral laws, but many attempt to substitute some moral or social values which they feel can be rationally supported.

On the whole I do not go along with them. The only moral value I believe in is the widening of one's sympathies, either by love or by understanding, if these elements are ever separable. Ralph Hodgson in the *Song of Honour* spoke of:

Dog loyalties to faith and friend
And loves like Ruth's of old no end.

I think here I must quote a little more from Waddington, "The general character of the course of evolution does not seem so morally offensive that we cannot accept it. Of course the good is different in different societies and particular cultures which regress may be actuated by principles at variance with the cosmic process. But in the world as a whole, the real good cannot be other than that which has been effective, namely that which is exemplified in the course of evolution. It should be noted that this, if you will, cosmic fatalism does not imply a fatalistic attitude to the evolution of any particular section of the world, for example, of the society of which one happens to be a member."

Basically, this is to see the conflict between social systems and the differing ideologies in much the same light as the competition between plant and animal species. Those which survive today are a very small fraction of those which have existed in the past. These, like the dinosaurs, had their day, and a very good day it was for them while external circumstances were in their favour. An identical attitude can be taken to the Roman empire,

the feudal system, or any social or ethical set-up which appeared to work sufficiently well for a time in the past. Today things are different, and it is in the present that we live. I said, and I repeat, that the atheist's substitute for religious faith is simply a long historical view, with his own sympathetic involvement in it.

We do not need to pass any moral judgments on any of the past. People did what they did because it seemed to them the appropriate, even the "right" thing to do. So the sects burnt their opponents at the stake and, in general, do not appear to have unduly doubted the morality of their actions. Their standards are not ours, and it is with today that we are now concerned. Of course social systems and ethical ideas are still as much in conflict now as ever they were. Those who use the gun and the bomb seem genuinely to think that they are helping a cause. I, and not only I, disagree. The less militant can be just as devoted to their concepts of a cause. Edward Carpenter wrote, "For a brief space it is granted to us, if we will, to enlighten the darkness that surrounds our path. We press forward, torch in hand, along the path. Soon from behind comes the runner who will outpace us. All our skill lies in giving into his hand the living torch, bright and unflickering as we ourselves disappear into the darkness."

We serve a cause, our cause, as best we know, though individual ideas and approaches are necessarily much in conflict. I believe it is good that this should be so, that out of the clash of opinions finally emerges a new consensus with, by definition, a better survival value. The time scale is long. The permissive society of today, in sexual terms, is not a new idea to those of us whose memories go back half a century. But the general moral condemnations of the Victorians are passing, and show no prospect of returning in Western society. These are facts, and T. H. Huxley wrote, "The scientist has to sit down before facts like a little child".

I do not myself see that there is any intrinsic conflict between a basically hedonistic position, and a sense of wider moral values which is usually considered more ethically acceptable. I do, if I can, what I want to do. As a person with a relatively wide mental vision, I automatically include in my wants a large perspective of relationships. I realise that other people do not. That to throw a brick through a window or kill a person they dislike, are their kinds of hedonism.

My answer is the hope that in the longer run they will come to share my wider vision, and, in the shorter term, society must control them in whatever way it deems necessary.

Considering World Problems

As thinking individuals we are inevitably involved to some extent with the problems of the evolving world. For the sort of mental pain some of these give us, the Germans have a word, *Weltschmerz*, which was much in vogue when I was young. For an English translation I like best a couplet from F. W. H. Myers' poem *St Paul*:

"Desperate tides of the whole great world's anguish
Forced through the channels of a single heart."

John Donne said, in different words, the same thing—"No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friends or of thine own were; any man's death diminisheth me, because I am part of mankind; and therefore never send to ask for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee."

So, should we be eternally sad because we continually hear of death, disease or accident happening to those we know and love? Not at all. As Emerson says in the concluding paragraph of his essay on *Love*, "There

are moments when the affections rule and absorb the man, and make his happiness dependent on a person or persons. But in health the mind is presently seen again—its overarching vault, bright with the galaxies of immutable lights and the warm loves and fears that sweep over us as clouds must lose their finite character and blend with God, to attain their own perfection. But we need not fear that we can lose anything by the progress of the soul. The soul may be trusted to the end. That which is so beautiful and attractive as these relations must be succeeded and supplanted only by what is more beautiful, and so on for ever."

Although cast in the theistic imagery in which Emerson believed, this exemplifies exactly the same belief in the inevitable evolution of spiritual values which I hold myself and have described above. And so to Waddington again, "We may hold that the changes brought about by evolution will always be, in some sense, an improvement".

Looking Back

It is necessarily to a longer time scale that we must look for our real hopes. Man, whose origin goes back to three million years or more, has only known for ten thousand anything we can seriously call civilisation. And the dinosaurs held their sway for a hundred and forty million years. Meanwhile, for those of us in the here and now, it is on the twin pillars of hedonism and a larger dedicated sense of values we must make our dual stand.

As an expression of the pure thrill, of being alive, Rupert Brooke's *The Hill* has always caught my imagination.

Breathless we flung us on the windy hill
Laughed in the sun and kissed the lovely grass
You said "Through glory and ecstasy we pass
Wind, sun and earth remain, the birds sing still
When we are old, are old". "And when we die
All's over that is ours, and life burns on
Through other loves, other lips" said I,
"Heart of my heart, our heaven is won, is now.
We are earth's best, that learnt her lesson here
Life is our cry, we have kept the faith" we said,
"We shall go down with reluctant tread
Rose-crowned into the darkness."

This can be married with the authentic ultimate in devotion, Ruth's "Whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge, thy people will be my people and thy God my God".

A full life must include both, does in fact include both, and it is my belief that both have evolutionary survival value, because both are genuine adaptations of ourselves to our environment. And so to Waddington again, "One can approach the subject of ethics with the aim of reaching a state in which good action is as spontaneous and unthinking as the heartbeat or the movement of the lungs in respiration".

There is a personal hedonism and a wider approach, which can be seen as two steeds which must be ridden as a team, and our problem is simply to learn the tricks of this. We must solve it each in our own way. I would conclude with perhaps my favourite Emerson quotation "Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of our own mind".

This article was submitted by the author some weeks before his death. We publish it here by way of tribute to a valued contributor.—Ed.

For the Record

BY

THE GENERAL SECRETARY

Breaking New Ground

People in significant numbers don't join *South Place* (although we have no serious complaint on that score) nor do they join any of the "kindred societies" that for the last ten years or so have used the umbrella word "Humanist" to identify themselves.

It bears thinking about. Our labels, whatever we may say about them, are interpreted as badges of some kind of sectarian identity. This means that good intelligent people, no longer interested in religious dogmas and weary of party-political exclusiveness, no more turn to us than anyone else. But there is more to it than that.

Can I put the problem another way? One constantly meets excellent people who are Catholics, C of E, United Reform, Quaker, Methodist and the rest who have much the same values, in practice, as the best of humanists. Some of them number among our own occasional lecturers. But because of our respective labels we do not, and will not, attend each others' meetings and join each others' societies. The labels are still critically divisive but there has been an important change. The old dogmas and those old authoritarian priestly relationships that we used to associate with the dogmas have now very largely departed and in most of the churches we get a people-are-people-are-people situation rather like our own at *South Place*. This does not make them any less religious *but the religion has changed*, sectarianism is on the way out. This is true even at the extreme end of the spectrum, among the charismatics!

Given that England is in a pretty poor state and that things are likely to get worse before they get better, there is clearly a case for people who have come to substantially the same conclusions (no matter by what route) to put their heads together to solve problems and do something about them. The *names* we give to our ultimate religious or political positions matter little and look like mattering even less. The old categories that divided us are falling away. It is a time for new beginnings and for making new use of old foundations.

There is a time-honoured formula for dealing with this problem—it is the use of the *ad hoc* principle of association. It simply means that people come together for this or that particular purpose and no other and when they have done what they want to do then that is that—their formal organised association comes to an end and everyone goes their own way. This is *not* the *South Place* principle (we are a standing congregation committed to the idea of "belonging") but the 'sixties and 'seventies has seen a widespread flowering of the *ad hoc* notion. It works because it enables people of all persuasions and of none (if that is possible) to work together to some good purpose.

I remember the heyday of the nuclear disarmament movement in the early 'sixties. The Committee of 100 and CND were thriving in great style. There were sit-downs all over the place and the road to and from Aldermaston was choked every Easter by the great March. Yet the Committee of 100 (after 1961) and CND had no members—they only had "supporters". Everyone was welcome and no questions asked. It all depended on the currency of a great idea—and it worked.

The first *South Place ad hoc* experiment was in the 1830s—it was called the *Fox Circle* and it met not in the Chapel but in the house of Fox and Eliza in Bayswater. It usually met on one evening every week and was not, of course, limited to members of the Chapel. In fact it became a

famous and distinguished gathering that made its mark on the history of the period. Conway followed in the same tradition and his house was a focal point in the same way. He actually started to organise formally on the *ad hoc* principle and convoked an impressive conference, the documentation of which is still significant today.

But, of course, neither Fox nor Conway had Conway Hall at their disposal so in a sense our opportunities are greater than theirs—if we can see them! We have seen Conway Hall as a Centre, we sometimes call it *The Conway Hall Humanist Centre*, but giving a thing a name avails it little. Perhaps if we were to think more of the substance—What would we like to see happen in Conway Hall that is wider than *South Place* (and “Humanism”)?—we then would be taking up the *ad hoc* principle again and we might make great things of it. There are one or two things happening already that seem to indicate the way ahead. The subject is well worth serious consideration.

Sundays in June

Bill Liddell promises to be suitably controversial on the 6th with *The Best History is Propaganda*—an interesting thesis with some warrant in Thucydides himself. We have had a lot of interesting discussion of myth in recent months and Ian Rodger, who investigates this kind of subject in depth in order to write scripts for TV, will look at the conflicting myths of Scott and Amundsen not only from their historical accuracy but from the point of view of what they can do to our thinking. My generation was brought up on the myths of Scott and Lawrence . . . Were we well brought up? Peter Cronin will be with us on the 20th to consider *The Puzzles of Hamlet*. Are we out of the Victorian era yet? Personally I doubt it. Marx and Freud were both of that era and they are still very much with us. Gladstone was a very different character and Joyce Marlow will talk about him and Victorian religion on the 27th. She was an actress for 15 years and then took to writing. She has several books published and her next one will be on Gladstone. We owe her introduction to Audrey Williamson. Peter Seltman gives his final lecture on the French Utopians—Fourier—on July 4th.

AROUND THE SOCIETY

□ A very sad report to begin with. On 4 November 1974 I conducted the wedding of Peter and Geraldine Simpson. They were a beautiful couple—most of you have seen them because it was they who, with Denis Campbell as Officiant, recreated the ceremony on TV as part of our *Open Door* programme. Six months ago a baby was born, a beautiful baby that is doing well. But not so the mother. Geraldine is dead. She was afflicted by that appalling and inexplicable ailment, pre-natal and post-natal depression. Eventually she found her life impossible and ended it. Denis conducted the funeral in the week following Easter.

□ And another sad note. The benefit concert to be organised by the London Society of Magicians for the widow of Colin Greaves was cancelled ten days before the date set. They found that they had not sold enough tickets to make it a workable proposition. At our end the notice was a little short we know, but the date was fixed in such a way that we were unable to get it into the April *Record*.

□ The visit to the old chapel where the Society began in 1793 in Parliament Court was a great success. 44 people turned out and enough cars to get us across to *South Place* (the original street that is) in one “lift”.

We began our pilgrimage at the site of the old *South Place Chapel*, marked today by the brass plaque on the wall of River Plate House, and

then we walked over to the other side of Liverpool Street Station to where our original foundation still stands. It is now a synagogue. There will be a full description of the tour in the *Record* later.

□ Two or three years ago I mentioned the community supplies people in Kentish Town where *bulk* supplies of things like brown rice, red beans, lentils, honey etc, could be bought at a fraction of the price one has to pay in the shops. One or two members took me up on it. You might like to know that the same enterprise has now moved to Tolmers Square off Camden Road and opposite to, and a stone's throw from, the Euston Tower of Capital Radio. They are open on Saturday afternoons from midday to 4.0 pm. The people who are running the store are part of the "alternative society" scheme of things we so often talk about in our meetings. It is good to see something actually being *done* about it!

□ Denis and I have officiated at dozens of weddings and funerals over recent years but we have yet to be asked to perform a naming ceremony. We have had some enquiries about it and I have just had the text duplicated so people can see it if they so wish—an SAE to me and you will get it by return.

□ At our Forum on nuclear and other sources of power we had David Elliott of the Open University to open the discussion. At the invitation of one of our members, Mr George K. Young, no less than three of the key men of the Atomic Energy Authority turned up to put their side of the story and the result was a rather remarkable dialogue. It was an interesting new departure. In our non-political atmosphere, without fixed positions, without formal resolutions and without the press (except the *Record*) it was possible to have a very free and full exchange between what is, I suppose, the Establishment and a leading critic. The boffins turned out to be good mixers and stayed for tea! Someone has called this "the third room" situation. We may have stumbled on to something important.

□ Our kitchen in the Library now features England's largest whistling kettle! David and Lynda Gerassi were married in the Library recently and offered to provide something by way of appreciation. I mentioned a whistling kettle to them and they found one that is not on sale in London! Its extra large proportions are specially designed for thirsty Northerners—and now for *South Place*.

PETER CADOGAN

FORUMS

Poet as Prophet

DONALD GOULD introduced this forum on the "Poet as Prophet". He began by saying that many people's attitude towards poetry was coloured by their experiences at school. He contrasted this very limited outlook on poetry with the fact that many people wrote their own poetry at some stage in their lives. The pity of it was that most people had a low opinion of their own poetry when they compared it to poems published in books.

Mr Gould said that there were many poets whom he could have chosen to illustrate his theme but he had decided to choose Blake and Shelley. Because their poems were frequently used in school, the words of their poems were common knowledge but the underlying ideas were often little understood.

The speaker then went on to say that the simplest, and often the most

effective, form of poetry is the ballad. It had a directness which other forms could not match. He read a very effective ballad by the Cornish poet, Charles Causely, to illustrate his point.

Another point made by Mr Gould was that Shelley is a somewhat neglected poet when compared to Blake. Shelley's range of ideas was limitless and he instanced the prefaces to "Queen Mab" as a good place in which they could be studied. He read from a poem about the Peterloo Massacre of 1819 to show Shelley's concern with social themes.

Mr Gould touched on the important point of publishers and the publication of poetry; publishers, for clear economic reasons, tended to ignore the prophetic poet. Such poets tended to publish their own poetry; William Blake is a good example. He ended the first part of the session by reading some of his own poems.

Next Bob Thomas, who happened to be in the audience, was invited to read some of his own poems and these were warmly welcomed by the audience.

In the discussion which followed, the question of publishing one's own poetry was raised. It was clear that not many poetry books were being published through the orthodox channels. But a new world of publication was being opened up. Duplicated and photographed copies of one's own work were easy to produce at a low cost and with very limited runs.

Another interesting point made was "What goes to make a poet?" It was suggested that many true poets concentrate on fiction for purely economic reasons.

Mr Gould suggested that unlike prose, poetry was concerned primarily with words, and more especially with the sound of words. Good poetry approximates to music; it could be almost wordless in content if the sounds were right; good poetry was the most immediate and direct form of literary expression.

One speaker asked whether the ballad was the one basic form of all poetry. Mr Gould replied that it was never out of favour; ballads had been written in all periods and places.

The social content of poetry was another question raised. It was suggested by one speaker that a poem on a social theme was of more value than one describing the economy. But it was pointed out in reply that there are as many different themes in poetry as there are poets.

The relationship between music and poetry was another point raised. A speaker pointed out that Blake's songs were originally sung by the poet himself. In our own day we had seen the influence of rock music and jazz on contemporary poets.

A.W.K.

(Report of a Forum on December 7)

Health, Ethics and Social Responsibility

THIS FORUM was introduced by Dr David Stark Murray, a long serving and prominent member of the Socialist Medical Association. At the beginning of his talk he made the point that ethics are not static. They are not eternal laws drawn up by professional groups, but are something which arise within society and are continuously changing. Even within churches, which exist to establish a code of ethics which shall be standard for all time, there are subtle shifts of emphasis. Witness the various pronouncements of the popes over the centuries.

Changes within societies lead to ethical discussions; this is where the subject of health comes in. It cannot be unrelated to the general problems of society. For example the recent doctors' strike concerned health and salary problems generally. But there was an especial responsibility where

doctors were concerned for they had power over life and death. They had the ethic of always doing good and never doing harm.

The past history of the medical profession and the British Medical Association was not a model of enlightenment and progress. Almost every change in the running of the health services of this country had met with their opposition. There had been two great battles in this century between the doctors and the State. In 1911 and 1945.

This latter conflict had had a very peculiar result. The doctor was not a State salaried employee; he was, in reality, a private contractor. He was obliged to give a 24 hour service to the patient. Dr Stark Murray believed that this was an obsolete system and should be replaced by a proper salaried State system.

Because of the large number of Catholic doctors in the National Health Service, there was slow progress on certain fronts. There was an uphill fight in the field of abortion for example, and the problem of euthanasia has not been squarely faced. The speaker felt that this was something people could be left to decide for themselves.

Another field in which there had been a slow change of attitude was that of transplants. Only a short while ago these had been looked upon askance, but now they were readily accepted by the medical profession and the public alike.

Not Responsible

There were, however, whole fields in which the medical profession accepted no kind of responsibility. More obvious ones were the care of the aged, the handicapped and the mentally sick. Should the latter be kept in institutions which resembled prisons, for example?

Another area for serious consideration was that of new drugs. Large sums of money were being made out of them. The same drug was sold at different prices in different parts of the world. Could this be ethical? This problem didn't arise in Russia because their drug industry was run as a public service.

In the discussion which followed the question of unorthodox medicine and its relationship to the National Health Service was discussed. Dr Stark Murray said doctors are free to prescribe any drug which they think may be of value to their patients. If it could be shown that unorthodox medicine had a scientific basis, then it would be readily accepted by the National Health Service.

The question of complaints against individual doctors within the Health Service was raised. Dr Stark Murray said that things in this field were better than they had been. In the past it was difficult for doctors to give evidence against each other because there was money involved.

Another point raised was the virtual monopoly of the Health Service and the difficulty of getting second opinions. Dr Murray agreed that second opinions were important; diagnosis was often wrong and it was right that there should be a court of appeal. But it must be remembered that in some areas there is little scope for error; for example, tests which are done by machine.

Should National Health doctors have private patients? Such patients took too much time, said one speaker bitterly. Dr Murray agreed that this was a bad legacy from the past, but it would be rectified by having a full time salaried system.

Overlapping between the medical and other social services was another point. Dr Murray replied that with the spread of group practices and health centres, overlapping would be eliminated to a large extent. It was a mistake to separate health and social services.

The general responsibility for health was another topic for discussion; how far was it the doctor's responsibility and how far was it one for the individual and community at large? Dr Murray said that health was a

community thing; in a way it was indivisible, but there were individual responsibilities. We shouldn't spread our own germs around to others. The doctor has the responsibility of correctly diagnosing your illness, but it is for you to see him first.

A.W.K.

(Report of a Forum on March 14)

REVIEW

CELIA SEVITT's delightful and stimulating exhibition, which closed at Conway Hall last month, has received wide publicity in London newspapers. A variety of techniques, oils, etchings and aquatints, silk screen printing, crayon, pastel and pencil drawings was matched by a wide scope of subject matter, landscapes, townscapes, people, abstracts, as well as delightful marriages between nature and design.

The exhibition creates a sense of keen observation of natural and man-made forms and the vividness of colours indicates a mood of optimism. I was glad to see several of the works had red stickers including "Pregnant Woman" that, to me at least, gives a feeling of an early Picasso.

Celia has had exhibitions in Cambridge, Hull, Northumberland, Tel Aviv and Wolfsburg, Germany, and, of course, recently at the Camden Arts Centre. She has been invited to hold a one-woman show in Wiesbaden and also, with the support of the British Council, in Barcelona—and here she joins a distinguished group of exhibitors such as Henry Moore, Richard Hamilton and David Hockney. Besides having her work in a number of art galleries in this country it is also included in the public collections at the Hermitage Museum, Leningrad, and the Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris.

I hope many members of South Place will pay a visit to the exhibition and that they will enjoy it as much as I did. Our congratulations go to her for her continuing success. I think our appreciation should also be expressed to Peter Cadogan, Victor Rose and the Committee for making it possible.

MARGARET CHISMAN

DISCUSSION

Science and Social Values

THE speaker on October 14 was Professor M. F. H. Wilkins, Professor of Biochemistry at Kings College, London and President of the Society for Social Responsibility and Science.

He began by asking the question, "Is knowledge a good thing?" and recalled that in the Genesis story Adam was turned out of the Garden for eating from the tree of knowledge. The fact was, that given its great practical utility, knowledge could also be dangerous.

We have to ask the question "Is knowledge being misapplied?". Over the last 100 years the effect of science has been to demolish religion. But has this left a vacuum? And, further, has science had a dehumanising effect on the modern world? In the Middle Ages the outlook was quite different. The world was assumed to have a fixed order and everyone was in their proper place—the poor were always with us and God, the King and the Pope headed a hierarchy in which people knew their place. Man was held to be essentially evil and the victim of his passions. Salvation, therefore, was only possible by the grace of God. Economy was firmly based on land. There was a single religion, organised by a single church and its beliefs were based on revealed truths held to be beyond question.

Since the Renaissance, Reformation and the rise of modern industrial capitalism the whole situation has moved away from stability towards turmoil. With capital instead of land, and freedom of movement and manipulation that this made possible, the individual was able to transcend hierarchical barriers. At the same time the Newtonian revolution directed attention to observation and reason and so gave the individual a comparable freedom of action.

By the 18th century with its belief in liberty, equality and fraternity, the idea became current that man was essentially good, the exact opposite of the medieval view. It was then believed that the road to perfection was signposted by reason and the way ahead lay through increasing knowledge of the laws of nature. Just as Newton had brought heaven and earth together, so Darwin then integrated man and animals.

However, the French Revolution led to some disenchantment. The worship of reason in practice led to the Terror and out of disillusionment came the romantic movement—the return to intuition, revealed knowledge and mysticism. The power of science, however, was not to be denied and the age of reason rolled over the age of romance.

Mysticism Revival

Today, once again, there is a new romanticism and a mood against science, an interest in Eastern religions, philosophies and the existentialism of Kierkegaard. We have learnt that thought is not a pure disinterested exercise. We are all conditioned by our social and economic circumstances and this applies to the realm of science as to everywhere else. It follows that when we are conditioned we are *ipso facto* limited by that conditioning. In traditional theory the scientist has an open and enquiring mind. In practice he, like everyone else, is governed by conditions of work, money, prestige and advancement. The products of science tend to become pieces of property, in most respects not unlike material assets as such.

What are we to do about this to ensure that genuine enquiry has a future? Firstly, we can become aware of the nature of conditioning itself and how the factors of insecurity, apprehension and ambition can cloud the vision. Secondly, we can become more aware of the systems of thinking in the context of which we sort things out. We inherit packages of traditional religion, political assumptions and ideals. These can affect the process of scientific enquiry unless we are aware of the nature of the limitations they impose upon us.

Thirdly, we might remedy the situation in which scientists are trained to do a particular job, but not trained in the understanding of the nature of science itself and how its objectives are geared to and limited by society. Science is immensely valuable, but it is after all only one aspect of thought and experience.

Professor Wilkins concluded by suggesting a number of potential remedies. The first lay in the direction of alternative technology, i.e. the use of natural forces of energy that are in everlasting supply—that of wind and tides—as well as the opportunities opened up by recycling. Secondly, there was the new emphasis on environmental studies, of living in harmony with nature and of the ecological investigation of our resources and how best to use them.

Thirdly, there was the new interest in preventive medicine and of the use of science to solve problems of hazards at work. Finally, there was the widespread interest in decentralising science and in its public and professional accountability. It is important not to be propelled and inhibited by fixed beliefs. We need a certain passion, to avoid being trapped and to ensure a clear vision.

The Chairman quoted something from Kierkegaard that the speaker had shown him during the interval. "Knowledge is an attitude, a passion;

actually an illicit attitude. For the compulsion to know is just like dipsomania, erotomania, homicidal mania, in providing a character that is out of balance. It is not at all true that the scientist goes after truth. It goes after him. It is something he suffers from."

P.C.

(Report of a Tuesday discussion held on October 14)

Viewpoint

The Archbishop's roads

It is difficult for me to reply to Dr Lovecy's statement on the Archbishop (Dr Coggan). I do not accept the church or Christianity in their support of the State and the right to own the land and the means of production. Economic inequality is an injustice to *all* mankind and opens wide capacity for the development of human greed, envy, injustice and abuse of power. During the last 2,000 years the church and State have participated in the exploitation of man and the material resources of the land and thereby have been responsible for the placing of power and the abuse of power in the hands of the few.

These anti-social acts have by example led to the degradation of the people and for many, death. And morality becomes a dangerous bedfellow.

At the beginning of the Chartist movement, the whole of England was owned by a few hundred families, plus of course the church and the State. It has taken the people 200 years to lever some of the land away from these people but much of this land is being exploited by new owners by industrial means and the church when it has surrendered land for whatever reason, has re-invested its money in the companies with the best and safest return, and thereby got between the producer and the consumer.

If the Archbishop identifies himself with moral and social responsibilities, perhaps he will persuade the church and the State to return the land to the people and distribute wealth on a equalitarian basis, then I am certain that much of the greed, envy, injustice will vanish overnight and abuse of power be dispersed.

Once these things have been accomplished morality will have established itself on firm grounds and it is down this road that I would the Archbishop and the majority of people go.

Bromley, Kent

VICTOR S. ROSE

Solzenitsyn

What kind of message does Peter Cadogan expect from history? In his article on Solzenitsyn, it is precisely those values which he derides; pragmatism, compromise, common sense, that have guided the political life of this country. Has any other nation done better?

J. ADDISON

London W12

In the Beginning

There is a third possibility for how the finite universe came into existence, but it is not that mentioned by Barbara Smoker in the November *Ethical Record*. Conjuring up cyclic and oscillating universes is pointless when the present one began millions of years ago, is likely to continue in being many more millions of years, and its origin has not yet been determined. Could not the "cause" of its coming into existence be an "uncaused"?—the source of which we could never have or need any intellectual knowledge.

"Eternal" has but one meaning, therefore my October letter clearly stated there was no beginning to the most primordial form of universal stuff that science considers to be the originating power that brought the finite universe into existence, namely "energy". Science does not tell us what caused and causes "energy".

As to "evolution leading somewhere" as scientists admit. Barbara Smoker confuses the evolution of the Earth and universe with the evolution of that which is upon the Earth, two different things. Long before the universe and Earth have returned to "energy", the evolution of mankind will have reached a far higher stage than at present; Man's intellectual power will have expanded and his physical form have become so modified that Man may be more a creature of "mind" than body.

That there may be "life" of a kind on other planets is far more likely than there having been any "big bang".

Of all the foregoing, more in my book *The unknown God*, about to be air-mailed to England to find a publisher.

SYDNEY UPTON

Torrens Park, South Australia

Religious Humanism

In the May *Freethinker* Peter Cadogan ends his latest contribution to the long argument about religious humanism by stating that "it is important not to trivialise a serious argument". In the May *Record* he spoils his comments about the Humanist Council by stating that "there are some Humanists who go out of their way to deny that religious humanism is possible". It is surely as important not to falsify as not to trivialise a serious argument. No Humanists deny the possibility or authenticity of religious humanism, though most Humanists doubt its validity or value. Of course let us "start by respecting each other's positions", but also by getting them right.

NICOLAS WALTER

London N1

● "There are some Humanists who go out of their way to deny that religious humanism is possible", say Peter Cadogan (May *ER*), and he goes on to associate South Place with his own religious position. No one objects, of course, to his using the Society's journal to voice a personal opinion (provided it is not too space-consuming), but it is a very different matter when he pretends to be representing the Society's traditional collective opinion. It is traditional only if one excludes the past 80 years.

Even now, in spite of the fact that since the General Secretary made his religious views known a number of old members have left the Society and the new ones tend to be disproportionately on the religious side, I doubt if a ballot among the members would bear out his claim to represent the majority view.

BARBARA SMOKER

London SE6

The General Secretary replies: For the umpteenth time! People who join our Society declare on their application form that they are in sympathy with the objects of the Society which are there clearly specified as "the study and dissemination of ethical principles and the cultivation of a rational religious sentiment". This has been the position since 1895. My personal views, one way or the other, are essentially irrelevant. Four people, to the best of my knowledge, have left the Society because they recognised that the Society's position was not theirs. They deserve respect for their integrity.

South Place News

New Members

We are pleased to welcome the following: Mr M. Edwards, Norway; Ms P. Waddams, Somerset; Mr M. Rees, Cambridge; Mr T. Bristol, WC1; Ms S. Graham, WC1 and Mr R. Keeling, Essex.

Deaths

We regret to report the deaths of Clement Brown and Mr K. Gluck, USA.

Mr Brown was a keen member of the Society and a contributor to this journal.

Sunday Meetings

As from June there will be a slight change in the form of Sunday meetings. We normally begin with a musical item, a vocalist or an instrumental duet. From this month there will be no music on the second and fourth Sundays. There will be a Reading instead. We are inviting volunteers to make up a reading roster—if you are interested will you give your name to the Chairman of Meetings on a Sunday?

July 4th and the Bi-Centenary of 1776

On Sunday 4th July, at 3.00 pm, there will be a meeting in the Hall organised by the Thomas Paine Society with the support of *South Place*. The subject will be *Thomas Paine and the Fight for American Independence* and the speakers: Michael Foot, Audrey Williamson, Peter Cadogan and possibly Prof Aldridge.

All-day Ramble

On Saturday June 12, meet at Butterwick, Hammersmith to board at 10.48 am Green Line Coach 715 to Guildford (Return Fare £1.10p). Bring packed lunch. Walk over Downs and through woods to Clandon Park, and if desired visit the 18th century House, National Trust Property, or wander in grounds and have picnic. Walk to Burnt Common for return journey. Total distance approx seven miles. Leader: Mrs L. L. Booker. (Tel: 743-3988.)

Seeking Coit

Any member or friend who has a copy of Stanton Coit's book *Social Worship* is requested to contact the General Secretary at Conway Hall.

Society Activities

Most society meetings and social functions are suspended for the summer recess, starting again in September with the annual reunion. Members in doubt about the particular activity should contact the General Secretary.

Reminder

Members changing addresses are reminded that they should inform the Society of their new address as soon as possible. Delivery of this journal will otherwise be delayed.

Kindred organisations

The 1976 annual conference of the **British Humanist Association** will be held in Walsall on July 30. Full details from the BHA at 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London W8 5PG.

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.

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

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.