An Orca interacting with Humans

Killer Whale (Orcinus orca or Orca) largest member of the dolphin family.

Have we explored to the full the brain power of animals such as the orca?
(see page 16)
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YULETIDE PARTY

The Yuletide Party held on Sunday 15 December 2002 presided over by the Chairman of the Society, Terry Mullins, was another very pleasant afternoon for all concerned and attracted a large attendance. They enjoyed the playing of Ute Bublitz who gave us a rendition on the clarinet of ‘As Time Goes By’. Barbara Smoker read a poem by Rupert Brooke and read some of her own verses from her book ‘Good God’. Donald Roum gave us Lewis Carroll’s ‘The Hunting of the Snark.’ One bright attender won the first prize in the regular quiz (devised by the Chairman) but there were three ties for the second prize requiring the Judgement of Solomon to reward all the winners.

Other entertainment featured scenes from a Pantomime on the Dick Whittington story devised by John Rayner. There was excellent food and drink including some splendid mulled wine. Our special thanks go to the Admin Secretary (Marina Ingham) and helpers who worked so hard providing the refreshments. M. Ingham also managed to find the time to take a starring part in the pantomime.

T. Mullins

THE HUMANIST REFERENCE LIBRARY

The Library at Conway Hall is open for members and researchers from Tuesday to Friday from 1400 to 1800

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

Ethical Record, January/February, 2003
May I say first of all that it is a great privilege and an honour to address this audience in one of the great institutions of London, where Hobson himself lectured, in particular since this lecture commemorates, somewhat belatedly, the centenary of his most famous work *Imperialism: A Study*, published in 1902.

To be fair to scholars of Hobson I should also, before starting, make my John the Baptist declaration of modesty. Only in my case, my modesty is compounded by the fact that there is not just 'one who is greater than me, who will come after me', but two, and I don't even know if they will come after me. They are Roger Backhouse, who has edited a fine set of Hobson's economic writings, and Peter Cain, whose book *Hobson and Imperialism: Radicalism, New Liberalism, and Finance 1887-1938* (OUP 2002) must be the definitive work putting Hobson's theory of imperialism in the context of his times. I did suggest that Peter Cain should be invited to give this lecture. Both Peter Cain and Roger Backhouse know more about Hobson than I do. I console myself that I have somewhat greater expertise in today's 'global finance' which we will be discussing in the latter part of this lecture.

**Hobson's Life and Work**

John Atkinson Hobson was born in Derby in 1858. His father owned a newspaper in Derby and could therefore afford a decent education for his sons (John's brother Ernest was to become Sadlerian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge University). After completing Derby School, John went to Oxford, where he studied 'Greats' at Lincoln College from 1876-1880. It is difficult to work out what influenced him most at the time of his studies. John Ruskin was to be a later influence. He found the Socialists whose ideas were discussed around Oxford at the time, Morris, Hyndman and Edward Carpenter 'either too inflammatory or too sentimental'.

After graduating with a Third Class Honours degree, he moved to London in 1881. His father's newspaper afforded him a modest income, but he needed to work, so he supplemented that income with intermittent earnings from journalism, lecturing and books. He fell in with Albert Frederick Mummery (1855-1895), a businessman who believed that the trade depressions which characterised the last decades of the nineteenth century were caused by over-saving. After arguing with Mummery, Hobson became convinced by his reasons. Together they wrote a book, *The Physiology of Industry* which was published in 1889. The book is an attack on the view of classical English political economy, as expressed by John Stuart Mill, that 'saving enriches and spending impoverishes the community along with the individual'. Hobson and Mummery's argument, in summary, was that the purpose of production was consumption. Therefore any saving meant that a proportionate amount of goods produced could not be sold. Mummery wrote nothing more on economics, but Hobson proceeded to elaborate this view in numerous books and articles until he died. Hobson was to argue that the main cause of over-saving was the inequitable distribution of income, because the rich with high incomes could not consume all of them. Hobson's attack on 'the ethical dignity' with which the rich invested their thrift so outraged Professor Francis Edgeworth, that he intervened with the London Extension Board to prevent Hobson from taking up a position as a university Extension Lecturer in Economics and Literature. Oxford proved to be more liberal. In his *Confessions of an Economic Heretic*, written in 1938, Hobson emphasised his isolation from the
academic milieu. For example, successive editors of the *Economic Journal*, notable among them John Maynard Keynes, refused to publish his work even though he was a member of the Royal Economic Society, which publishes the EJ. (The *Economic Journal* at the time was a much more catholic journal than it is now). Keynes made up for it later with a handsome tribute to Hobson in his *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, and Hobson reciprocated with a welcome for Keynes's new economics in his *Confessions*. But he seems to have been happy in the world of journalism and public debate, and he did teach briefly at the London School of Economics during the First World War, and he gave occasional lectures to students in American universities.

An important early influence were discussions in the progressive, rationalist circles that were known in the late nineteenth century as the 'ethical movement'. In his *Confessions*, Hobson described this influence and their activities:-

From *Confessions of an Economic Heretic* (p 55 to end of chapter)
by J.A. Hobson  George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1938

Here it behoves me to say something about the Ethical Movement which began its enlarged activities in the nineties. Soon after I came to London in the late eighties I found that my work in University Extension brought me into touch with the London Ethical Society of which J.H. Muirhead and Bernard Bosanquet were active leaders. In substance it was an attempt of a few Oxford philosophers, not content with the seclusion of an academic life, to furnish thought and leadership to movements "for the amelioration of the condition of the working classes". The men I have named, with a few others, had been associated with the Charity Organisation Society, a creation of the late seventies, which vested its reforms in the improvement of the character of the workers. But it became evident that any wider reforms of working-class character demanded a prior process of moral instruction for the upper and middle classes who had hitherto taken their social creed and charitable policy from the Orthodox Churches. Our ethical leaders rightly emphasised the need of a reasonable social and political ethics, based not on any theology but upon a rational conception of moral welfare and applied to working out the conditions of "the good life". My experience of this Ethical Society led me to regard it as excellent in its assertion of free discussion but as committed so strongly to the stress on individual moral character, as the basis of social progress, as to make it the enemy of that political-economic democracy which I was coming to regard as the chief instrument of social progress and justice.

**Hobson Joins The South Place Ethical Society**

This moral individualism was not, however, equally developed in the other ethical societies which were coming into existence at the close of the century. Nor was it applicable to the earliest Ethical Society, that of South Place which from the time of Charles James Fox,* the Corn Law reformer, had been a centre of free-thought and free speech on all the controversial issues of the age. Unitarian in its origin, it retained the name of a 'religious' society after Moncure Conway its American re-founder, became its minister. The term 'ethical' was introduced when Dr. Coit took charge in 1888. Though problems of economic reform did not take concrete shape under Conway, the ethics of social responsibility figured largely in its teaching.

My own personal association with South Place dated from 1897 and two years later I became one of its regular lecturers, figuring as a sort of middle-man between J.M. Robertson and Herbert Burrows, a committed Socialist. The wide divergence of

*Hobson must have intended to refer to William Johnson Fox, the Minister at this Society from 1817 to 1853 [Ed.]

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our views on many matters made no difficulty before an audience that prided itself upon
an "open mind". A test of this liberty of speech was afforded me when the South African
War occupied the national mind at the close of the century. Though the sympathies of
prominent members of South Place were sharply divided on the merits of the war, no
attempt was made to "boycott" the strong pro-Boer utterances made from the platform
by the lecturers, who were in agreement in their condemnation of this brutal piece of
Imperialism.

My close connection with this liberal platform, lasting continuously for 36 years,
was of great help to me in clarifying my thought and enlarging my range of interests in
matters of social conduct. Addressing audiences consisting for the most part of men
and women of the business and professional classes, with a scattering of educated
clers and manual workers, I found myself driven to put ethical significance into a
variety of current topics and events, many of which belonged to the fields of politics and
economics. But I had first to make up my own mind, before communicating the results
to others. Though such a fragmentary process had its defects, it served on the whole
to bring together what at first sight seemed widely sundered pieces of thought and
valuation, and so to give an increasing measure of cohesion to the deeper process of
intellectual order needed to carry out the humanization of economic thinking which I had
taken as my primary intellectual task.

During the 1900s Hobson became a spokesman of what was called 'New
Liberalism'. Its main policies were free trade, for the anti-imperialist reason that, as
John Stuart Mill had originally argued, free trade gives the benefit of large markets
without the need to conquer the territory of those markets; and taxation of higher
incomes to finance education, scientific improvement in technology, and pensions.
Disgusted with Lloyd George's chauvinism during the First World War, he gradually
moved to the Labour Party, where he eschewed class politics in favour of
internationalism and a welfare state supported by progressive taxation. He died in his
home in Hampstead, in 1940.

Hobson's Imperialism

Hobson's book Imperialism, A Study, published in 1902, using material published in
earlier articles, including some for the Ethical Record, is infused with its author's
disgust at the Boer War in South Africa, which he correctly identified as a commercial
intrigue by local mine-owners and capitalists to gain control over land and resources.
Although it is best known for its economic theory of imperialism, most of the book is
in fact an impassioned dissection of the political arguments for imperialism, the
"civilising mission", the "white man's burden" and so on. This part of the book is a
classic statement of how a common humanity requires us to treat with dignity and
respect people who live differently from us, or outside our country. It remains as
relevant today as a statement of internationalism as it did when it was written, a
hundred years ago.

However, the first part of the book is on the economics of imperialism. Right at
the beginning Hobson put forward a view which will come as a surprise to most of
those who routinely refer to his analysis of imperialism. Modern imperialism is not
about markets or, as Cecil Rhodes believed, about providing settlements for Britain's
surplus population. Hobson showed that the territories conquered in the last decades of
the nineteenth century provided little in the way of export markets for British industry,
and what markets there were, were certainly minute by comparison with the costs of
conquest, administration, and defence. The vast bulk of these territories were in Africa.
They provided little money demand for British goods, and were unsuitable for
European settlement. Their administration did of course provide jobs for those well-
bred young men lacking in means to secure private incomes: 'a vast system of outdoor relief for the upper classes' was James Mill's description which Hobson cites with evident approval.

In Hobson's view, the real impetus behind modern imperialism is the need to find opportunities to invest the excessive saving that arises because of the unequal distribution of income. Some of the saving is taken up by the government borrowing needed to finance imperial expansion and defence. But most of the saving activated by imperialism is sent abroad to finance economic enterprise in the empire. Hence, he calculated that the investment income that returns to Britain from the empire is approximately nine times the trade that the empire generates. This in turn breeds what he called "parasitism": the class of unproductive rentiers that he saw increasingly populating London and the South of England. As a radical liberal, Hobson despised the conservative outlook of these rentiers, and the servile mentality of their servants and employees. He contrasted these with the robust liberalism of industrialists and their workers. In *The Evolution of Modern Capitalism* he put forward a very suggestive possibility that Britain would become a financial centre, and that manufacturing industry would migrate to the developing countries, China in particular.

**The Politics of Global Finance**

As an economic theory of imperialism, Hobson's *Imperialism* is of interest today principally to economic historians and historians of economic thought. Its greatest relevance today, however, is that, in *Imperialism* and elsewhere in, for example, *The Evolution of Modern Capitalism*, Hobson provided the first serious examination of the political economy of global finance. All of us by now are familiar with the use of the term 'globalisation' as a technique of brain-washing. We live, we are told, in an era of 'globalisation'. Therefore all systematic ideas based on any accumulation of experience and thought amount to irrelevant preconceptions, because an era of worldwide free trade, global brands, Hollywood soap operas, and unrestrained U.S. military adventurism abroad is upon us. At the word 'globalisation' all previous ideas and theories must be forgotten, and a world dominated by international finance must be embraced as the natural order of things.

But this is precisely why we should study Hobson. Because most of those features of globalisation, with the trivial exception of soap operas, were familiar to him. He discussed them in his work and we can learn from his insights as well as from the flaws in his arguments.

In actual fact, the extent of 'globalisation' is much more limited than its authors will admit. Free trade is largely a policy imposed on developing countries, rather than practised in the biggest markets of the world, in Japan, North America and Europe; Global brands are fashion items among the young; Hollywood soap operas are nowhere as exotic as some of the extravagant native confections put onto television screens in Brazil and Mexico; and U.S. military adventurism, however deplorable, was familiar to Hobson and condemned as much by him as it is by us today. The main features of what is called globalisation may largely be reduced to the predominance in economic and political life of international finance. We live in what I have elsewhere called an 'era of finance' in which finance takes over from the industrial entrepreneur the leading role in capitalist development. Finance becomes the most important political constituency, and is held to be a proper guide to the conduct of business, social and economic policy, and even our personal lives.
For Hobson, finance was even more important than this. It was the conspiracy behind imperialism. Various economic groups had interests which they pursued separately, other groups had ambitions and personal inclinations. All these provided the ‘motor force’ of imperialism. But they were mobilised into a consistent strategy of financial aggrandisement by the powers of finance capital. Finance, he said, is ‘the governor of the imperial engine, directing the energy and determining its work: it does not constitute the fuel of the engine, nor does it directly generate the power. Finance manipulates the patriotic forces which politicians, soldiers and philanthropists generate; the enthusiasm for expansion which issues from these sources, though strong and genuine, are irregular and blind; the financial interest has those qualities of concentration and clear-sighted calculation which are needed to set Imperialism to work. An ambitious statesman, a frontier soldier, an overzealous missionary, a pushing trader, may suggest or even initiate a step in imperial expansion, may assist in educating patriotic public opinion to the urgent need for some fresh advance, but the final determination rests with the financial power.’ (Imperialism, 1938 edition, p. 59).

Furthermore, finance benefits from every economic and political perturbation:

Was There ‘A Vast Conspiracy’?
‘There is not a war, a revolution, an anarchist assassination, or any other public shock, which is not gainful to these men; they are harpies who suck their gains from every new forced expenditure and every sudden disturbance of public credit...every increase of public expenditure, every oscillation of public credit short of (this) collapse, every risky enterprise in which public resources can be made the pledge of private speculations, is profitable to the big money lender and speculator. (Imperialism, pp. 58-59.)

Finance itself, according to Hobson, is a vast, integrated conspiracy:

‘In handling large masses of stocks and shares, in floating companies, in manipulating fluctuations of values, the magnates of the Bourse find their gain. These great businesses — banking, broking, bill discounting, loan floating, company promoting — form the central ganglion of international capitalism. United by the strongest bonds of organisation, always in closest and quickest touch with one another, situated at the very heart of the business capital of every State, so far as Europe in concerned, chiefly by men of a single and peculiar race, who have behind them many centuries of financial experience, they are in a unique position to manipulate the policy of nations. No great quick direction of capital is possible save by their consent and through their agency. Does anyone seriously believe that a great war could be undertaken by any European State, or a great State loan subscribed, if the house of Rothschild and its connexions set their face against it? (ibid. pp. 56-57).

The ‘single and peculiar race’ were of course the Jews, and a number of letters came in to the Ethical Record criticising Hobson’s comments. Hobson made clear that he was criticising individuals in their capacity of financiers rather than as Jews: Rhodes, Pierpoint Morgan and other non-Jewish financiers were equally condemned. After two major wars in Europe, the flaws in Hobson’s argument are fairly clear. Even though the second of the two wars occurred after the collapse of international finance in 1930-1931, the first of them blew up at the height of the rule of the gold standard in 1914. The ‘central ganglion of international capitalism’ whose ‘strongest bonds of organisation’ reached into every European State, proved incapable of preventing a stupid, but no less murderous, war between governments supposedly manipulated by united ‘magnates of the Bourse’.

Conflict between capitalist powers is not the only limitation of international finance in ‘eras of finance’, such as that of Hobson, or the one in which we live. The incidence of financial crises, ‘at the heart of the business capitals’ of the world, from
the Barings Crisis of 1893 to the Long Term Capital Management Crisis of 1998, shows how weak is the grasp of finance on events in the real world. The Long Term Capital Management fiasco, reveals how, even with the assistance of Nobel laureates in Economics, the 'clear-sighted calculations' of financiers proved to be numerological speculations. The trail of financial disasters is even worse in those countries of the developing world that have given themselves over to the influence of finance through financial liberalisation.

Five Mundane Reasons
I want to suggest to you that, rather than conspiracy, there are in fact five far more mundane reasons for the excessive influence of finance is our time, as in that of Hobson.

1. First of all there is social influence of financial inflation. Financial inflation occurs when credit is channelled into financial markets, causing the values of financial assets to rise. Financial inflation is usually justified by the kind of encomiums to saving which Hobson found so abhorrent and hypocritical. The wealth which this inflation confers upon individuals and firms induces a preoccupation with finance and its values, and arouses desires for enrichment through speculation. Such wealth is then attributed to the superior economic and financial insight of those so enriched: 'If you're so rich, then you must be clever.' In fact systematic studies show that virtually all wealthy people acquire their wealth through luck or inheritance. This is of course less flattering to them than the notion that their wealth is the just desert of their hard work and brains. Friedrich Flick in Germany in the 1950s, and more recently George Soros in London are examples of wealthy individuals desperate for recognition of their superior intellects. It is because the financial markets are supposed to have this unique insight into the workings of the economy that, in an era of finance, the regressive social values of the financial markets become self-evident and the ruling values of our times. Those regressive social values are the worship of financial success, the wickedness of taxes on income and wealth, the demoralising effects of welfare provision, the ethical value of saving and so on.

2. Secondly, finance appears to have the ability to put money behind projects that are considered economically or socially desirable. This is why countries all around the world have engaged in financial liberalisation, opening up their markets to international finance, in the hope that some of this money will be spent on their economic development. In Britain, privatisation and the Private Finance Initiative in public service provision, are predicated on the idea that finance can finance useful projects. In fact, in an era of finance, finance mostly finances finance. This is obvious because, in speculative markets, money is made most easily by speculation rather than by productive investment. Those countries where finance is most developed, namely the U.S. and Great Britain, have appalling infrastructure and poor records of investment.

3. Thirdly, money buys influence, and large agglomerations of money, such as those held in the financial markets, buy more influence than smaller ones held by individuals and industrial and commercial companies. In Great Britain, our financial institutions do not own newspapers, radio or television stations, as Mr. Berlusconi does in Italy. But the advertising of financial services, and the soap opera of financial news and commentary upon it ensures that the concerns of the financial markets are perceived as public issues of the first rank. The way in which pensions, and the alleged inadequacy of our saving for them, has been propelled into a seemingly endless political debate, is an excellent example of the way in which financial institutions determine the priorities of public debate.

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4. Fourthly, the sale of financial services, like politics, has a fundamentally conspiratorial ethos. While transactions are fairly anonymous, in the sense that purchases and sales of financial assets are conducted through intermediaries, confidence in the success of speculative endeavours is aroused by the creation of an impression of superior influence and connections. This is why financial institutions, going right back to the South Sea Company in 1710, have emphasised their size and displayed titled and distinguished individuals on their letter-heads. Again, Long Term Capital Management, which recruited the great and the good of Washington and Wall Street to its advisory board, showed how such connections not only gave confidence to its investors, but also ensured that such connections could secure liberal support when the group got into trouble.

5. Fifthly, there is the fear of finance. As we can see all around us, financial inflation, incidentally enriches particular individuals, but makes many more individuals financially insecure. The rule of speculative finance is punctuated by periodic crises. But this is also a potent source of influence for financial interests, because the fear of crisis makes politicians in particular keen avoid such embarrassments. In Argentina last year, the financial crisis destroyed the careers of three Finance Ministers. If there is any substance behind the 'Third Way' policies of New Labour politicians, it is New Labour's visceral fear that its policies may be derailed by sterling crises, of the kind that afflicted Labour governments in the 1960s and 1970s. This fear is greatly exaggerated, since there is every reason to believe that the financial markets are unstable irrespective of the policies of the government. But the need to maintain the confidence of the markets is a very potent way in which the regressive social values of the financial markets can be made into conventional political wisdom.

**Instability Endemic In the System**

I have argued that international finance has great economic, political and social power, but that it is not the conspiracy that Hobson thought it was. The proof that it is not a conspiracy lies in the very financial instability that seems to be endemic in the system of unregulated finance. It is a peculiar conspiracy that periodically undermines itself with a crisis. You may of course believe that these crises serve merely to crush the political opposition and distract us from the true nature of the conspiracy. But this seems paranoid and on a par with the extreme beliefs about masonic or Jewish conspiracies behind international finance.

What can be done about global finance? Indeed, does anything need to be done about global finance? After all, those classic liberals, Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, had argued that finance is no different from any other kind of business, and should therefore remain as little regulated as possible.

Arguably something does need to be done to avoid recurrent financial crises and their devastating effects on investment and economic development. These crises are then used to impose on governments and the rest of society those regressive social values that emanate from the financial markets: the worship of financial success, the wickedness of taxes on income and wealth, the demoralising effects of welfare provision, the ethical value of saving. Financial crises, we are repeatedly told, arise because of an insufficient devotion to those values, because vested interests in the public services insist on taxing wealth and income in order to provide those services, thereby undermining 'enterprise' and the 'financial soundness' of the state. It is clear that the present arrangements are not satisfactory. They are based more on the financial requirements of international banks and financial institutions, and the preservation of rights to financial speculation than on the need of households, firms and governments.
for an efficient financial system. The International Monetary Fund that refinances governments in financial crisis, at great expense in the past to social welfare provision, has only recently taken to insisting that banks and financial institutions should bear some of the losses arising out of international financial crises. But their insistence on maintaining the integrity of a speculative financial system means that the losses borne by financial investors will always be limited.

Hobson himself believed that a progressive system of taxation and the welfare state could remove the excessive saving and underconsumption that lay at the root of this peculiar socio-economic formation in which the dominance of global finance seems to co-exist with strong tendencies towards economic stagnation. However, financial inflation since the 1970s has made the regressive social values of the financial markets into the ruling ideas of our time, whether expressed as a 'new' ideology of Thatcherism, or New Labour, or Reaganomics in America, or just plainly reactionary conservatism. It is clear that Hobson's progressive welfare state, which came into being after the Second World War, could not survive underfunding because of low taxes, and the requirement that 'public resources...be made the pledge of private speculations', i.e., privatisation.

My own belief is that we need to understand what makes the financial markets move, stabilise them and, by stabilising them, eliminate the financial speculation that distracts business and distorts government finances. I do not have time today even to indicate how this may possibly be done. I will just say that most ideas on this have not been well developed. However, it is clear to me that some stabilisation of the financial markets is an essential precondition for progressive economic and social policies. Given the regressive social values of the financial markets, any financial instability will always be deemed proof positive of the 'manifest unsoundness' of any progressive policies, as they were in the 1970s and the 1980s. Only by removing such instability can we move safely towards the welfare state stabilisation of the economy that Hobson advocated.

References

CHARLES WARD’S BOOKLET FREE ON REQUEST

Thanks for publicising my booklet Jesus’s Gospel or No Theology Required, (ER Nov 02). May I point out that it goes beyond mere explanation of confusing Gospel incongruities?

Its central aim is to vindicate acceptance by an atheist, and independently of Jesus’s historicity, a catena of ethical perceptions. These, gradually forged through personal reflection and research, inspired me not only in my days of faith, but continue to do so after more than thirty years as a humanist. Copies are free on request and frank comment invited.

Charles Ward - 7 Valley Court, Beechwood Gardens, Caterham, Surrey, CR3 6NR

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I HAVE FAILED TO MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE
Harold Hillman
Lecture to the Ethical Society, 12 January 2003

How I Failed To Advance Socialism
During the Second World War, my late brother, Ellis, and I, who were children, used to attend the Left Book Club in Finchley Road. By then, the Nazis had attacked the Soviet Union - despite the Non-Aggression Pact between them of two years before - and most people of the left were what we called ‘Stalinists’, or ‘fellow travellers’ of the British Communist Party. We fell in with a group of Trotskyists, the Revolutionary Communist Party. I never joined them, but was persuaded by them that Stalin was a murderous dictator. The reason I did not join them was that I simply did not believe that Leon Trotsky would have carried out much less repression than Stalin did. Nevertheless, at that time, anyone who said openly that the Soviet Union was a dictatorship was labelled a ‘Trotskyite’ by the Coalition Government of Churchill and Attlee, and a ‘Hitlerite’ by the Communists. I was labelled by my headmaster as a Trotskyist, and kept out of University for two years as a consequence.

When the Revolutionary Communist Party broke up in 1948 amid much recrimination, the argument was, ‘Will we achieve Socialism more quickly by joining the Labour Party and making it Socialist from within?’ - the ‘entryist’ tactic, or ‘Will it be achieved more rapidly by forming a powerful separate party, outside?’ - the ‘revolutionary’ view. Although I supported the latter view at the time, I shared the excitement after the 1945 election, when Attlee’s Government nationalised the mines, the railways, shipping, gas, electricity, and water. It also introduced the National Health Service and social security for all.

However in 1949, the Korean War started a severe slide of the British economy. At that time, the British Empire was largely intact, and Britain was the largest exporter in the world of cars, ships, machine tools, and many other manufactured goods.

In 1951, I visited New York and worked in a furniture factory for 10 weeks to pay for my stay. I gave several talks at meetings of the Independent Socialist League, trying to persuade them that, although the Labour Party was progressive, it was not Socialist. I then became the London correspondent of the weekly Labor Action, and sent it weekly articles for 6 years on any subject I chose.

The various Trotskyist and Socialist groups at that time were characterised by a belief that Trotsky would have done a better job than Stalin, that his works were the divinely inspired authority on Socialism, that the decision of the leader was best enforced by the fist, and that their group was the only legitimate one of the 57 varieties. In 1965, I joined the Independent Labour Party, whose Secretary was then the saintly Wilfred Wigham, whose wife, Kathleen, in Blackpool, is still in touch with us. I wrote regularly for the Socialist Leader until the I.L.P. disbanded. Wilfred, Kathleen, Elizabeth (my wife) and I, resigned. Its other members subsequently joined the Labour Party.

We now have a Labour Government which is privatising the hospitals and London Underground, which is wrecking the Post Office, which has abolished grants and subsistence to students, which has not reversed Tory anti-trade union policies and which rivals the Tories for sleazy deals with big business.

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All my efforts for Socialism have had no effect. They have largely been reversed. Britain is in the clutches of the city. Most of the left-wingers in Parliament have been bought off with Government jobs. Mr Blair is going to introduce a totally unworkable anti-hunting bill, so that it may be allowed to continue. Socialism is now a dirty word in the Labour Party. I have failed to advance Socialism.

How I Have Failed To Advance Humanism
I first really faced the absurdity of religion in 1950, when I was having coffee with an Imam in Algiers. We were talking about Algeria’s struggle for independence. He said to me ‘Of course, this problem would not exist, if everyone became Muslim’. Not long before, the same sentiment had been expressed to me by my religious teacher at school. Of course, I was in no position to argue, but I did then realise that each religion indulged in special pleading to its followers, and no serious dialogue was possible between, or with non-believers.

The first article I wrote for the Freethinker, in 1953, was entitled ‘Stalinism, a new religion’ and since then I have been writing, on and off, about religion. Like many humanists, I am undecided about religion, posing these questions: are religions such rubbish that we should not waste our time attacking them, rather, should we spend it developing a humanist philosophy and ethic? Or, is it our duty to attack religions wherever they appear, because both in the past and in the present, their overall effects have been so malign? Should we assume that some religious people are intellectually honest, and want to try to resolve massive contradictions in their own beliefs? Is it kind to try to remove the illusions of good people, whose religions do not harm others?

With some oscillations of my views, I have written articles showing that one has to be intellectually dishonest to be religious, that the same mechanism of conformity exists in science as in religion, that the Ten Commandments do not apply to women, that the Lord’s Prayer contains anti-Christian sentiments, that religious people who are proud of their traditions must take on the responsibility for crimes of their religions. The biggest problem here is that while it is intellectually dishonest of religious people to believe in contradictory ideas, it may be patronising on the part of humanists to regard religious people as too dishonest or of too low intellect to want to think about contradictions in their beliefs.

During the last 40 years or so, respect for religion and religious beliefs has diminished vastly in this country. Most people are not sure about god, miracles, parables or morals. All humanists would love to believe that this has been due to our devoted educational programmes. However, I cannot persuade myself of that. Loss of belief, in my view, has been due to the enormous success of capitalist consumerism. This has resulted in a total lack of interest of the public in religion, despite the massive religious propaganda in schools, on television, on the radio, in churches, in scouts, in the armed forces, and everywhere else. The average person regards theoretical questions concerning theology, beliefs, ethics and morals with total indifference.

Thus in a population of 58 million people in Britain, only about 5-6 thousand are members of humanist or atheist groups. This is not to denigrate the magnificent work of our directors, secretaries, education officers, lecturers, etc. Despite these, in a period of collapse of religion in most advanced countries, humanism and atheism have not taken its place. Here again, we have failed.

How I Did Not Completely Fail To Advance Human Rights
Amnesty International started in 1961. I was already disillusioned with major party
politics, and I liked the idea of helping individual prisoners of conscience. If you help one real prisoner, you have done a more efficient action than marching around Trafalgar Square, speaking from a ladder in Manette Street, handing out leaflets at a conference, or asking an M.P. awkward questions.

Amnesty tries to get prisoners of conscience (non-violent political or religious people exercising the rights enshrined in the UN Declaration of Human Rights (1948)) released by writing letters. It helps to get them freed months or years earlier than the authorities intended; it tries to stop torture; it campaigns to stop executions; it sends relief to families, and carries out many other activities. We had letters from families of prisoners in the Soviet Union, Rhodesia, Greece, Spain, East Germany, South Korea; sometimes there was no reply. What we did was often not successful.

I was Chairman of the Hampstead Group, Regional Representative for S.E. England, Chairman of the Guildford Group. When I was on the Executive in 1970 - 1980 we had 2,500 members, now there are 170,000.

Trotskyists said that helping unjust regimes by making them less cruel was delaying the uprisings against them. We said that if you are being tortured or awaiting execution, you could not wait until the revolution came. Amnesty has released thousands of people, stopped hundreds of executions and stopped torture in a few countries. However, there is probably more torture today even than in the Middle Ages, because there are more people. Torture is routine in about half of the 180 countries in the world. Capital punishment is still widespread, although a diminishing practice.

I have also been personally involved in trying to stop the use of the electric chair in the U.S.A. Only 5 States have it as the only method of execution. I have shown that it burns the prisoner alive and is extremely painful. That view is gradually becoming more widespread in the U.S.A., and some States have given up the death penalty altogether.

I have also been involved in ‘Freedom to Care’, a whistleblowing organisation, mainly concerned with public services, CAFAS, the Campaign for Academic Freedom and Standards, which supports academics, teachers and public servants who have been victimised, and ‘Physicians for Human Rights, U.K.’, which uses medical expertise to prevent derogations of human rights.

In human rights, I have not completely failed in that a very few individuals have benefited from the activities of my colleagues and myself. However, millions more have not. We are relatively powerless against the torturers and executioners of China, Russia, Zimbabwe, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkmenistan, and those whose trade would suffer if the abuses of their governments were exposed.

I was also Chairman of Surrey Association of University Teachers in the 1980s, when the University shrank its staff by one quarter. We negotiated deals for all members of staff for early retirement and lump sums. They all accepted the deals, then the University turned on me, and took away my tenure and tried to close my laboratory in 1988. I fought them; a question was asked in Parliament and - although my tenure was taken away - I continued to work full time, until I retired aged 65 in 1995.

Cell Biology and Neurobiology
I have been working in three areas of research - neurobiology, cell biology and resuscitation - since 1956.
In 1960, I found that the isolated retina reacted to light, and in Sweden, in 1962, I developed a method for measuring the quantity of phosphate liberated from ATP - (an important source of energy) - when light hit the retina. I subsequently found that it was the ATP itself, which was sensitive to light, sound, electric current, centrifugation and cations. I had difficulty in publishing a paper I submitted, so I looked into the theory of the effects I had found.

Gradually, I realised that the theory I had been analysing was relevant to most of the procedures in biochemistry. It concerned fundamental laws of thermodynamics. I concluded that one of the most important procedures used in biochemical research all over the world, simply ignored these laws.

When you are young, and you find something which might be of importance, you think about it a great deal, and, meanwhile, consult any professional colleague, authority, or Nobel prize winner, especially if they were prepared to show you how you were wrong.

If you ask any biochemist, cell biologist, or physiologist anywhere in the world, what happens in the nucleus of a cell or in the cell membrane, he or she will tell you - as he or she instructs students - that the information given is based on a procedure, known as subcellular fractionation. It was the validity of this procedure which I was questioning. First of all I asked what are the steps of the procedure then, how might they affect the answer, then what are the assumptions inherent in the use of the procedure, and, finally, what are the minimum control experiments which would have to be done, to persuade me that what was found in the test tube at the end of the measurements reflected the properties of the cells in the body of the living intact person or animal. I was so horrified by the results of my analysis that I decided to look at 5 other well-known techniques - histochemistry, electron microscopy, use of radioactive isotopes, chromatography and electrophoresis. Each of these procedures suffered similar misfortunes - the biochemists had never tested the effects of their procedures on the results of their experiments, so that there was a real danger that their results reflected the effects of the complex and powerful procedures, rather than the properties of the intact tissues themselves.

I wrote a book about this in 1972, and I had considerable difficulty in obtaining its publication.

The Problem Of The Electron Microscope
One of the techniques that I looked at in detail was electron microscopy, which is widely used for examining the structure of cells. It was first used in the 1940s, since it can magnify cells 100,000 to 150,000 times, whereas the light microscope magnifies 1,000 to 1,200 times. A large number of new structures was found in cells with the electron microscope. However, in order to look at cells, one has to kill them and deposit heavy metal salts on them, and one looks only at the deposit. The cells could not survive the heat, vacuum and X-rays in the electron microscope. I concluded that all the new structures found using this instrument were caused by the electron beam and did not exist in the living cell - they were artefacts.

Thus, I had shown to my own satisfaction that six of the major techniques used in cell biology should not be used until all the relevant control experiments had been carried out, and that the structures seen by the latest instruments were artefacts. It is worth noting that, today, an electron microscope costs about one million pounds, the
personnel operating it cost £25-30,000 per year and the consumables £3-5,000 per year. Having spent all this money, universities, colleges and institutes have to believe the results produced by the instrument.

I also showed that there are not four different kinds of brain cell, but only two. Neither Professors Blakemore, Rose, Greenfield, nor any major neurobiologist, have been prepared to enter into dialogue with me about this.

My reservations about research procedures in biochemistry, electron microscopy and neurobiology refer not only to our understanding of normal cells, but to all basic research in such diseases as Alzheimer’s disease, cancer, multiple sclerosis, Huntingdon’s disease, schizophrenia, muscular dystrophy, etc. If my analysis should prove correct, hundreds of thousands of research workers, using millions of pounds, and spending their whole lifetimes, may be - indeed probably are - wasting their time.

I have given this talk for several reasons. Firstly, I would like to inform any honest research worker that she or he may very well have to pay heavily for intellectual honesty; she or he may well not obtain a Ph.D., a lectureship, a professorship or a grant to carry out their research. For the same reason, I would like to give courage to any research worker who is prepared to take these risks.

Secondly, I want you to resist cynicism among, not only scientists, but all thinkers, when they react to people who raise awkward questions.

Thirdly, whereas today ‘dissidents’ may find it difficult to obtain jobs and grants, they are unlikely to be tortured, exiled or killed in most advanced countries as they would have been during the Middle Ages.

Fourthly, although I have failed to change the world significantly in respect of socialism, humanism, human rights, cell biology and vegetarianism, I still think that it is the right thing to do however illogical that thought may be.
This is the second of two talks on philosophical aspects of "animal rights". Last time [October ER] I opposed Roger Scruton's view of the moral status of animals, with particular regard to hunting. He took the view that because animals were incapable of being moral, we could have no obligations towards them, save for the fulfilment of certain expectations given to household animals. This talk will look at the opposite end of the spectrum: principally, Peter Singer's view that to downgrade the status of animals involves the thought-crime of species-ism; and his view that we ought to be vegetarians, quite apart from any dietary or economic benefit to ourselves. The issue of principled vegetarianism is a live issue for myself, as I am not one; and I want to see what can be mustered to defend my own eating habits. Attenders should note that I say here more than I did in the delivered talk.

Australian Peter Singer, b 1946, became the philosophical doyen of the Animal Rights movement with his book Animal Liberation [2nd Ed, Pimlico; 1995]. A Green activist in Australia, I believe he is currently also Professor of BioEthics at Princeton. He is co-founder and president of The Great Ape Project, an international effort to obtain basic quasi-human rights for other primates. His classic work is largely a presentation of the dreadful treatment of animals, particularly in factory farming, animal testing, and field sports. We, at least, can now take what were once revelations as read. Singer's philosophical case is in the first chapter; and his rebuttal of contrary arguments is in the last. His actual contention on the status of animals is very simple, although I found it somewhat obscured by his explanations of what it is not.

Peter Singer’s ‘Principle Of Equality’

He says that there is "a basic principle of equality", requiring equal consideration, that should be applied, to "all beings, black or white, masculine or feminine, human or nonhuman". The basic element is "the taking account of the interests of the being". The contrary attitude, of "bias towards the interests of one's own", is labelled according to the determinant of the bias: e.g., as to race, racism, and as to other species, species-ism.

Equal consideration does not imply equal treatment or provision. As Singer, and Monty Python in that great Humanist classic, the Life of Brian, point out, it is pointless to argue for the right of men to have abortions. Fully taking account of the interests of the disadvantaged may imply "affirmative action" which is outside my compass. Singer says that his principle is a moral idea, not an assertion of fact as to actual equality. The sexes, and all individuals, have differing capacities; the same is patently between species. The more sophisticated discriminator may argue not on grounds of race or species per se, but on grounds of IQ, and the like [committing, I presume, IQ-ism]. If some such fact were proved, Singer thinks his principle would not be vulnerable to it. On what, then, does his principle rest?

Singer quotes with approval Bentham's short shrift with natural rights, as "nonsense", and "natural and imprescriptible rights" as "nonsense upon stilts". Singer thinks that arguments, like those by Scruton, to show that rights, say, depend on playing a part in a community, or other moral behaviour in which animals cannot participate, are therefore irrelevant, and he need not get into controversies over the meaning or existence of rights. Bentham, whom Singer regards as a Founding Father of Animal
Rights, "talked of rights as a shorthand way of referring to protections that people and animals ought to have". Bentham said "The question is not, Can they Reason, nor Can they talk? But, Can they suffer?"!

Singer’s claim rests on the possibilities for suffering. Although he had conceded that some people, and of course, species, will differ in sensitivity to pleasure and pain, the suffering that sentient creatures by definition can feel is not in their interest, irrespective of what they are. He is in effect saying that, whatever the phenomenology of the suffering may be, the meaning and implication of the term, and hence what we have to take into account, is the same.

A Context: Three Levels Of Rights
I have gone to his supporter, the American philosopher, David DeGrazia’s book, Animal Rights: A very short introduction, for a context to Singer’s principle, and for what further elucidation he can give it. As to context, DeGrazia suggests there are three increasingly strong senses of "animal rights". The ‘mere moral-status’ sense acknowledges that animals enter the moral equation, such that they should be treated well for their own sake, but human interests override in a clash. The ‘equal-consideration’ sense rates their interests equally, but they [like we] have no absolute rights. Finally, the ‘utility trumping’ sense gives them, and us, certain vital interests, such as liberty, that, irrespective of the wider good, are sacrosanct.

DeGrazia concedes that the principle of equal consideration rests on nothing outside itself. He suggests that it boils down to a compelling presumption: we should give comparable interests equal moral weight, irrespective of the possessor of the interests, unless there is a relevant difference between the beings that justifies unequal treatment. In this way, the onus of proof falls on the discriminator. Of course the whole argument may rear its ugly head again, in typical philosophical fashion, in a new guise, over what may count as "relevant differences". Singer / DeGrazia would say that there are no relevant differences, in that any varying capacity to suffer is factored into the comparison of interests that we should perform; and what else is relevant? Be that as it may, I have difficulties with the proposition as a determining principle, because it seems to me to be fairly useless and implausible in cases of conflict of interests, particularly between humans and other species.

A Sheepish Tale
Suppose a car driver has an accident in an unavailing attempt to avoid hitting a sheep that crosses a moorland road unserved by a mobile ‘phone transmitter. [See, it is a contemporary, if increasingly thus improbable, story]. Both sheep and driver break a leg and are suffering. I arrive on the scene, and the vet and the doctor, are, of course, in opposite directions. We can, for the sake of argument, make it two injured sheep, such that their suffering, which constitutes their “interest” for Singer, in some computational sense outweighs that of the driver. Nevertheless, I run for the doctor: of course I do.

DeGrazia accepts as much in the following: "Equal consideration for all sentient beings is compatible with different specific obligations to them. Thus, the common conviction that we have much stronger obligations to assist humans in distress than animals in distress does not necessarily contradict equal consideration. After all, positive obligations are largely discretionary in the sense that we may choose whom to help. That I choose to help famine-threatened Ethiopians rather than Salvadoran refugees no way implies that I think refugees deserve less-than-equal consideration. Similarly, that I give to human causes much more than I give to animal causes does not
imply the judgement that animals deserve less-than-equal consideration."

But that one has different specific obligations to individual members of a species does not explain, as he puts it, the common conviction that we have much stronger obligations to assist humans. Helping one bunch of humans rather than another in equal distress has no similarity with consistently favouring human rather than animal causes, which may imply that animals deserve less.

**An empty principle?**

I cast the story in terms of relief of suffering to match DeGrazia’s comment, and it could equally be one of negative obligations, or harm; of a driver having a choice between hitting another car whose occupants are likely to be injured but not killed, and ploughing into the sheep. Or I may be driving in Africa, and the sheep of the story may be a species of primate crowding the road on the scrounge for food. [I hasten to agree these are not equivalent situations. One may even begin to make judgements that the apes in question were ‘sensible’ enough to be aware, to some extent, of the risk to themselves.] That I choose to help or not harm my species rather than another may of course reflect the bias that Singer is trying to eradicate; but it is virtually impossible to know. If, as DeGrazia accepts, I am right to make such decisions, whether or not [as he put it] it is a matter of ‘greater obligations’, then, in my view, Singer’s ‘equal consideration’ becomes a pretty empty call. It is unclear what it amounts to in practice. Is ‘taking account of the interests of the being’ and giving it ‘equal consideration’ no more than a requirement to recognise what you will be doing to the other creature irrespective of species, and to factor it into your decision?

Great efforts are made in the literature to show that choices like those in my stories do not overturn the principle of equal consideration, provided I make them in a particular way. I am not really discriminating against animals, when I am factoring the differing complexities of human and ruminant life into deciding the lot of beings whom I equally consider. The alternative is seen as the ‘sliding scale’ view, that animals and their suffering deserve consideration according to their cognitive, emotional and social complexity. This seems to me a more natural view of the judgements I make. This is seen as species-ist, because I am discounting the sheep’s suffering because it is felt as a sheep. But the result is the same, whether I find reasons for my choices within the terms of the principle [possibly by watering down "comparable interests"], or whether one calls the result unequal consideration. Is not species-ism in practice just a label for undue regard for animals, whether viewed on or without a sliding scale?

Is species-ism is on all fours with racism? In a purely logical sense, it can be made to be, yes. But substitute a row of Black Africans for the primates at the roadside in my example, and the difference is plain. Any preference given to Whites over Blacks must be as whites. It is only when preferences over other species involve cruelty or carelessness, or indifference to their suffering, do we think of invoking species-ism.

Now, revenons a nos moutons. Suppose the vet eventually gets round to the sheep, puts it out of its misery, and I take the carcass home, and in due course eat it. Is that wrong? It is not the eating, per se, that is possibly wrong, and I need not be a species-ist in holding this view. The objection, to my mind, to eating human flesh [aside from what little we know of the quality of the meat] in the same circumstances, what one might call passive cannibalism, is the human custom and need for reverence for the relics of the dead [that has also produced the brou-ha-ha about the dissection of Prof von Hagens’ ‘bodyworks’ corpse]. It is the interests of others that prohibit it,

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except in extremis. Maybe, if our ancestors had refrigeration, that need could have been met, and after a decent interval, who knows? The mourning of our dead, incidentally, neatly captures much of what is different in quality about human and non-primate animal life.

To be more serious. First, we should concede all the cruelty arguments, and all the evidence of it that Singer brings forth. We should give animals that are farmed a fair life as they would conceive it: pigs must be satisfied, if not always "in clover".

Strip out the secondary reasons for not eating meat. I will not dwell on these, because they are essentially prudential, or are concerned with possible moral obligations to others than the animal in question. Sure, eating cattle is an inefficient way of converting protein, but this only matters if the ground would otherwise be put to growing a crop that would be eaten. Destroying rainforests as habitats or climate controllers, whether to raise animals or houses, is of course a wrong that requires a powerful justification and no alternative.

The remaining, and big, issue is taking the life of the animal. I think it is too simplistic and artificial to isolate this final event in its life as inherently not "taking account of the interests of the being". We have to set it against the absence of life it would have had if it had not been edible, even if edibility is not an "equal consideration" in our treatment of humans. [This may explain my earlier extended expression of doubts about that notion] Attendees cogitated on the possible suffering in "natural" deaths. I think this is largely irrelevant, because the moral challenge is the taking of life, when it is not done to prevent future suffering. The justification for intending to take the animal's life is the equal and dependent intention that the animal pre-exist. The consumer has both these intents by proxy. Thus, in my view, it is definitely wrong to kill a wild animal, over whose creation one had no decision to make: the reverse of Scruton's position.

Enabling The Existence Of Beings

Singer’s concentration on suffering omits the benefit of a satisfactory life of whatever span. He re-enters the fray on this. In the first edition of his book, he thought that the idea required us to think that bringing a being into existence confers a benefit on it, and benefiting [or harming] a non-existent being was nonsense. But wisely he has changed his mind, because of his pro-abortion views in cases where a defective child would be born into suffering. The truth of it is that enabling a being to come into existence is as such neutral, to the extent that we cannot predict its likely future quality of life, which is when the benefit or not is conferred; although, of course, we have a moral obligation from the time of that enabling.

He also has the bizarre idea that meat-eaters defend the loss of life to the individual animal by its sequential replacement in life; which of course pays no regard to the animal killed. That an animal replaces another is irrelevant: the defence is purely in terms of that animal, as above. If it were the case that humans could only be made room for and supported in life if they were to be culled, [which is the stuff of some science fiction], then the same argument would apply [so I'm not being speciesist!] In the human case, we would have to recognise that many might not want to have been born in those circumstances; but animals cannot take in their remote futures.

If one moves away from Singer’s concern with the interests of the being, then the utilitarian argument of simply greater numbers of animals applies. Each extra animal suitably raised adds to the sum of animal contentedness. Only a few animals would
have life in 'wild-life' parks, with horrendous transitional problems for animals stranded out of husbandry. I did not mention in the talk [perhaps fortunately] that we should argue that vegetarians ought to buy, if not eat, ‘cruelty free’ meat if they can’t stomach it, to support a greater population, as well as the practical one that the larger the market for it, the quicker will be the change in husbandry practice. The reply might be that a greater human population might be supported by living off pulses: but isn’t that a touch species-ist?!

How should they die?
We must ensure that animals’ slaughter should be minimally traumatic [and would that were the case, as Jennifer remarked, for humans wanting euthanasia]. Again, it does not seem to me to be relevant what the myriad circumstances of an animal’s death in the "wild" might be, or whether we are "putting them down" to eat or through old age. The biggest difficulty here has been the criminal centralisation of abattoirs, and the callous mode of their operation, which is driven by mass consumption, and the low status of the occupation. It may be that all this leaves Prince of Wales’ Trust farms and smallholdings as the only acceptable environment for animal husbandry, and very expensive meat; possibly [though I would not concede the point] only hill sheep and farmyard fowl: but that is not the point of principle. Singer, after all his strictures, does concede that that sort of meat eating may be defensible.

I am sure that the Ethical Record’s correspondence columns will be open to considered contrary views – in addition to those put in our ensuing lively discussion. It may just salvage my food and street cred, for you to know that I have done my bit in protesting against McDonalds; but for the secondary reasons of the right to fair criticism, decent treatment of employees and other animals; ecology; opposition to child-targetted advertising, junk food, and the market imposition of that alien and gross architecture and eating habits called, euphemistically, cultural imperialism. I could go on and on...

References
1. Bentham, Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation, Ch 17

2. 2002: Chapter 2. This excellent book, of comparable length to Scruton’s Animal Rights & Wrongs, is part of an Oxford Univ paperback series of very short [and cheap] introductions to a wide variety of topics in philosophy, science and the humanities. Unbeknownst to me at the time, it encapsulates much of my argument against Scruton. The choice of DeGrazia [a professor at George Washington University] to write it is a result of his major work, Taking Animals Seriously: Mental Life and Moral Status, Cambridge, 1996.

3. Ibid, p30. DeGrazia’s argument is intended to meet a line espoused by Mary Midgely, that the degree of our bonds with other people and animals governs the degree of consideration we should give them.


5. Refers to the McLibel trial. For a unique insight into the protagonists and their arguments, try to see McLibel, a wonderful documentary by English director Franny Armstrong, available on video from www.spannerfilms.net
HUMAN RIGHTS FOR IRAN TOO?
Arman Farakish
Iranian Civil Rights Committee
Address to the Ethical Society, 10 December 2002, Human Rights Day

In Iran: There is no freedom of association, organization or speech. There are no non-Islamic opposition parties, no trade unions, no women's organizations, no independent newspapers. And if you want them or try to organize them, they arrest you, torture you or even kill you.

In Iran: There are no union rights, no right to strike. Labour activists are suppressed. Minimum wage is a quarter of the official poverty line. There is no unemployment insurance. Many workers have not been paid for months.

In Iran: Women are 3rd class citizens. Sexual apartheid rules. Women are banned from a wide range of social economic and political activities; Islamic veil is compulsory. Women are separated from men in busses, universities and many public places. Husbands and fathers are their guardians, at home and outside. Women cannot travel, even within the country, without permission from their male guardians. They have no right to divorce, or custody of their children. The list is endless.

In Iran: Intellectual dissent and non-Islamic religious expression are suppressed. Atheism and secularism are punishable by death. Religious 'cleansing' and suppression of non-Moslems is the norm. Bahais are routed. Jewish people live in constant fear of fabricated charges of espionage for Israel. Christians are second-class citizens.

In Iran: There is no right to a fair trial. No right to an attorney, No presumption of innocence, No limits to imprisonment without charge. Arbitrary arrests, torture, forced or fabricated confessions, death in custody are usual practice.

In Iran: Children have no rights. Children are the property of the elders and the Islamic state. They are sent to war, to work, to the gallows. 5 year olds work at furnaces. 9-year old girls may be legally married off. 13 year olds may be (and have been) legally condemned to death.

In Iran: Homosexuals are executed. Pure and simple. ... The list is endless

Help change Iran!

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Ethical Record, January/February, 2003
A LETTER FROM CANADA
Ellen Ramsay

The new year in Canada began with the good news that the country has joined others in ratifying the UN’s 1997 Kyoto Accord on climate change. The vote in the House of Commons took place on December 10, 2002 with the favourable result of 195 votes to 77, with the Liberals (the governing party), the Bloc Quebecois and the New Democratic Party (our Labour Party) winning over the opposition Alliance party and the Tory party. This is indeed good news not only for Canada but for the planet as Canada holds the inauspicious record of having the highest level of fossil fuel consumption per capita than any other country - this doesn’t sound so ominous if one considers the overall lower population (Canada emits 2% of world emissions of carbon dioxide) and the fuel consumption related to the extremes of temperature in the country.

The need to address climate change was brought to light by statistics showing that Canada’s far northern territory of Nunavut (formerly the Northwest Territories) recorded the warmest temperatures in the past two decades compared to the last 1,000 years. As a result, the Inuit people of the territories experienced delays in the cariboo hunt this year. Climate change is linked globally to an increase in natural disasters including flooding, drought, fire and melting ice and Canada has experienced all of these. In 1998 an ice storm in Quebec caused 5.5 billion dollars in property damage which explains why insurance companies in Canada have joined the medical community, writers, environmentalists and unions in calling for the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. Canada has committed itself to a 6% reduction of 1990 carbon dioxide emissions by 2012 which means that current emissions must be cut by 30%.

The bill on carbon dioxide changes met with vociferous condemnation from the conservative Alliance (formerly Reform) Party and the Conservative government of the oil rich Province of Alberta. Matters are complicated in Canada by a federal-provincial tug-of-war over environmental concerns. Natural resources are actually a provincial jurisdiction under the constitution as the provinces are quick to point out. Alberta has vowed to continue its opposition in the courts and has passed its own provincial bill describing carbon dioxide and methane as ‘non-toxic’.

Environmentalists who are in favour of Kyoto have not offered much praise to the Liberal government of Jean Chretien despite ratifying the accord because they say he has done little for the environment during his term in office. They believe he is more concerned with gestures of good will since he has announced that this will be his last term as PM. Kate Hampton of Friends of the Earth (London) has said that the Canadian government has a history of broken promises on the environment citing Chretien’s attempts to get environmental credits (exemptions) from Kyoto as her example, and indeed this is corroborated by Canadian environmentalists who have pointed out that the PM has reduced his prospective cuts from 240 megatons promised in 1997 to 170 megatons today. Local environmental activists protested Alberta’s opposition to the Accord by scaling the roof of the Premier’s house in Calgary and erecting a solar panel.

Meanwhile according to polls 77% of the Canadian population support the Kyoto accord. The majority of Canadians take the opposition’s figures of job losses, lower income and rise in fuel prices with reservation and have made the environment a national concern.
IS THE GENETIC MODIFICATION OF FOOD PLANTS ALWAYS BAD?

Donald Rooum
A paper read to the Ethical Society on 1 December 2002

I consider, first, the fear of genetically modified crops, and second, the way in which genetically modified crops may benefit the world.

Six countries in southern Africa are afflicted with famine, as the result of prolonged drought. The USA has offered relief in the form of maize, including some genetically modified maize. Three of the countries have accepted the offer with thanks. Two countries have accepted, only on condition that the maize is distributed as maize flour, not as whole seeds. The reason they give is that people given seeds may plant some, and if their maize includes GM maize they will not be able to sell it in Europe, owing to popular opposition. One country, Zambia, has refused the American offer, because President Mwanawasa maintains that GM food is poison. He prefers to let people starve.

The Guardian columnist, George Monbiot, wrote in November 2002:

The president of Zambia is wrong. Genetically modified food is not, as far as we know, 'poison'.

But the fact is that many people in Britain believe that GM food is somehow poisonous, and that George Monbiot is one of those, along with propagandists employed by Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, the Soil Association, and The Ecologist magazine, who have encouraged this superstition. Propagandists invented the very effective ‘Frankenstein food’ cartoon image. When Dr Arpad Pustai claimed that he had caused growth defects in rats by feeding them on genetically modified potatoes, Monbiot proclaimed that Pustai had ‘released . . . the truth’ (Guardian 13 February 1999), and did not publicly withdraw when Pustai was shown to be a fraud.

It is alleged against genetic modification, that it is putting the world seed trade into the hands of global capitalism, but the fact is that world seed trade has been in the hands of global capitalism for more than sixty years. The world’s richest and most powerful global seed merchant is and remains Pioneer Hi-Bred International, a firm which has grown rich, and continues to grow richer, producing high-yielding seeds with older breeding techniques. It is experimenting with genetic modification, but does not yet offer genetically modified seed for sale.

Effect On The Environment

The most reasonable complaint against genetically modified food is that growing it damages the natural environment. This is especially true of herbicide-resistant crops, which allow arable land (and its surroundings) to be drenched in weed-killer. Most of the land in America is wilderness, and farms there are regarded as open-air factories. Nearly all the land in Britain is farmed, and a walk in the country here means a walk through farmland. Vastly increased use of herbicides in Britain could produce an environmental disaster.

Some fears for the environment are doubtful. It is said, for instance, that pollen or seeds from genetically modified food plants may interbreed with wild relatives, as if this would cause a disaster. But all cultivated food plants may interbreed with wild relatives, and the offspring do not thrive in the wild, because they need the extra nutriments provided by cultivation. This is as true of genetically modified farm plants

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as of traditional breeds. (Environmentally dangerous plants are wild plants from other countries, imported for show in gardens, such as prickly pear in Australia in the 1930s, and Australian swamp stonecrop now covering wild places in England.) Fear for the environment must be what causes George Monbiot and various environmental NGOs to oppose genetic modification. Perhaps they think people in general do not care about the environment, but do care about being poisoned, and so encourage the superstition that genetically modified food is poisonous. I can see their problem, but I would like them better if they did not tell lies.

In any case, anti-GM campaigners go on about the environment, or ‘the ecology’, without really knowing or caring about it. An environmentally damaging process is paper-making, using chemicals to get lignin out of wood, and dumping the poisonous residue in a sewage works (lignin is the stuff that makes old newsprint yellow and brittle). Poplar was genetically modified to be deficient in lignin, and a stand of modified poplar trees planted, consisting entirely of female trees (not producing pollen), and in any case intended to be cut down before they were old enough to flower. The trees, at Bracknell in Berkshire, were destroyed on 12 July 1999 by anti-GM activists who left notices saying ‘GM damages the environment’, but this was just ritual. The crop they destroyed could only have benefited the environment.

Royal Drivel

An important motive for opposition to genetic modification was best expressed by His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales:

I happen to believe that this kind of genetic modification takes mankind into realms that belong to God, and to God alone... Do we have the right to experiment with... the building blocks of life? We live in an age of rights - it seems to me that it is time our Creator had some rights too.

This drivel was originally published in the Daily Telegraph, then reprinted with approval in The Ecologist. Can any rational person still respect The Ecologist?

Turning now to the good that genetically modified crops may do. Agriculture in the ‘developed world’ already produces vast surpluses, so that farmers are being subsidised not to grow food. We do not need genetic modification to increase yields here. But most people do not live in the ‘developed world’. Small farmers, including subsistence farmers, produce about 70% of the world’s food. In many parts of the world, small farmers advance deforestation by clearing virgin land to feed the growing population. It would help both the poor and the environment if they had higher yielding and/or more nourishing crop varieties, to provide more from existing farms. But some who would like to help are against the free distribution of improved varieties, not for humanitarian or environmental reasons, but simply because they have been persuaded to oppose GM crops in all circumstances.

The most forward-looking experiments in genetic modification are designed, not just to improve yields, but to improve the nutritive values of crops. And some of the inventors of extra-nutritious varieties are eager to get them to the poor who need them most.

‘Golden rice’ is genetically modified rice incorporating a gene for a beta-carotene native to daffodils. Beta-carotenes are precursors of vitamin A. They do not naturally occur in rice, and among subsistence rice farmers, vitamin A deficiency causes a hundred thousand children per year to go blind. The inventors of golden rice...
have assigned their patents to the global seed merchant Syngenta, but they have made it a strict condition of the contract that seeds are distributed free to subsistence rice farmers. One of the inventors, Ingo Potrykus, has persuaded the owners of 78 related patents to waive royalties for this humanitarian purpose, and varieties are now being developed in the Philippines at the expense of a charitable foundation [information from Nature, 409/551 February 2001]. Of course we would prefer rice peasants to have a more varied diet, but GM will at least improve their lives.

The present domination of world agriculture by global corporations might be changed by genetic modification, incorporating apomixis genes into high-yielding varieties of crop plants. Apomixis in plants is the equivalent of parthenogenesis in animals. The plant eggs turn into seeds without being pollinated. Plants which reproduce by apomixis include dandelions, brambles, garlic and lemons, so the genes are not rare. Experiments are underway to introduce apomixis genes into maize. The highest-yielding varieties of maize are F1 hybrids which do not breed true, so growers have to buy new seed every year. If apomixis can be introduced into such high-yielding plants, and growers get access to them, the global seed merchants will lose their main source of income.

They will want to buy up the patents for apomixis incorporation, to keep their monopolies for another twenty years. If we don't like global monopolies we must be ready to oppose them, which means we should learn the facts about genetic modification, not just oppose it superstitiously.

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**VIEWPOINTS**

**The Breadth of Humanism**

Harry Stopes-Roe's talk "The Breadth of Humanism" (12 January 2003), provoked the following thoughts. As we Humanists consider that one aspect of atheism is the realisation that the quality of human life is not determined by supernatural influences, but is entirely dependent upon the policies that mankind adopts with respect to the exploitation of the earth's limited resources, should not we Humanists be attempting to agree the political, social, and economic policies that are compatible with Humanism?

If we review the internal and external wars and the extensive poverty often resulting in starvation that has been the history of peoples whose policies have been determined to a considerable extent by religious prescriptions, are we prepared to continue passively to endure the inevitably destructive consequences of existing policies, and not to put forward the more rational approaches to the problems of existence that the philosophy of Humanism would produce if applied to practical problems?

In short, is it not time that we moved on from the examination of our own entrails, and our derision of the absurdities of belief in supernatural entities, to the study of how a society could be organised to avoid the strife and misery that are the inevitable consequences of the adoption of the prescriptions of Christianity and similar religions?

If any members have any sympathy with the above ideas, they could be invited to prepare papers on various aspects of proposed policies, for discussion by other members. If any members wish to participate in this activity, I hope that they will communicate with the Ethical Record so that we can get something started.

John Rayner - Wembley, Middlesex

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Explaining Existence
Patrick Lewin is a delightful speaker, and his proposal that "there is more to existence than sheer contingency" (ER December 2002) is brilliantly conceived and elegantly argued. But his attempt to answer the question, Why is there something and not nothing, appears absurd, in the technical sense of contrary to reason.

It is as if a brilliant mathematician were to go on searching for a whole number $n$ other than 2, such that $a^n + b^n = c^n$, after Fermat's Last Theorem had been solved, and the existence of such a number $n$ had been proved to be logically impossible.

It has also been proved logically impossible to explain why there is something and not nothing. The proof is set out in Bertrand Russell's, *Human Knowledge: its scope and limits*, but I am told that Russell was not the first to describe it. Unlike Fermat's Last Theorem, it is easy to follow and requires no special training. Stop worrying about the meaning of existence, and pay attention to the meaning of explanation. Then comes a simple syllogism:

To explain something means to explain it in terms of something else.
By definition, there is nothing else than the whole of existence.
Therefore it is impossible to explain the whole of existence.

To explain space-time in terms of the Eternal, or the natural in terms of the Supernatural, or "this universe or multiverse having something, in it or about it or both, which is not contingent", is not to explain existence as such, but at best to explain some parts of existence in terms of other parts.

We need better reasons for believing in a non-contingent, non-detectable "something". Patrick Lewin neatly presents the cosmological, teleological, and ontological arguments, but I suspect that his real reason for believing is one he prefers not to express in an intellectual gathering, because it is not an intellectual reason. He finds it emotionally unsatisfactory to conceive of a universe in which the contingent is all there is.

About the Word 'God'
Gandhi said 'The truth is God'. I have always liked that. But why bring God into it? This country's founder-philosopher - Francis Bacon - in his essay 'On Truth' simply called it 'the sovereign good of human nature'. That is good enough for me! Put more poetically the truth is the Holy Grail to be for ever sought and never found - the delight is in the seeking. The truth is a sacred object, like love, beauty, forgiveness and the brotherhood of humankind. We know this from the depths of our experience. (If we don't know it, we are just lost souls!). We also know their opposites: lies, hate, cruelty, ugliness, tyranny and injustice. There is no need to evoke the supernatural.

Human kind was animist or polytheist until c.6000 years ago when kings created the first empires in the Middle East. The new kings needed a mandate. It could not come from the common people who were to be enslaved, it could not come from aristocrats (chiefs) who were to be led - there was no option but to invoke Divine Right and for that purpose they needed a monotheistic faith - a single godhead. Thus Pharoah's God, who was transformed into Jehovah after the Exodus.

We, as a species, are some five million years old. God, only 6000 years old, is a new boy. Religion is as old as *homo sapiens*. Monotheism is yesterday. Yet we have to appreciate that a person's religion is a very important subject - calling for the most
sensitive treatment. It is like sex and one's private income - mostly taboo - and rightly so. Blake said that Christianity would get its chance when Churches had perished - and we are getting closer to that condition. Church attendance is less than 10% and going down. That means that we are approaching the beginning of a new religious renaissance sans the supernatural and the monotheistic. Our opportunity!

I have come up with a simple answer to the terminological problem. I just no longer use the word - God. I use words like 'divine', 'sacred', 'spiritual', but claim no supernatural sanction for any of them. The human experience is reference enough.

Peter Cadogan - London NW3

Theology in the Geology Department
I have recently finished reading The Dating Game; One Man’s Search for the Age of the Earth by Cherry Lewis. It is about the geologist, Arthur Holmes, (1890 - 1965) who was largely responsible for discovering the true age of the Earth, and also for getting the theory of Continental Drift to be widely accepted.

During the 1920s, when Arthur Holmes was head of the geology department at Durham University, there was much religious control over the university, in the shape of the Bishop of Durham, to such an extent that every student was obliged to sit a theological exam, even if theology was not one of the subjects he was studying. The exam would be set by the Bishop, but would be marked by the Head of the Department.

The above book says, "Holmes was considered a very fair man by his students. One year the question was ‘What significance do you attach to the minor prophets?’ When a student simply answered ‘NONE’, Holmes gave him full marks! Not because he was an atheist himself but because he considered that the student had answered the question he had been set, and that the examiner was at fault for not setting the question he wanted answered."

David Wright - London, E5

No religion here, thanks
With reference to the brief article ‘The Concept of a Rational Religion’ (ER, Nov 2002) I have to confess I did not read it. The words ‘Rational Religion’ put me off. In much the same vein I am put off by the idea that the words ‘Religion’ and ‘Humanism’ should be linked. Words have, as some know, both definition and connotation. Definitions frequently have limited value for the acquisition of genuine knowledge, often leading those that consult dictionaries to tautologous confusion. Look up the words 'Spirit' and 'soul' and you will find you are in a useless cycle of definitions from which you will learn nothing except that they are synonyms.

Rather than try to bring about a change of meaning of the word 'religion' as Don Liversedge seems to desire, let us all try to use our imaginations to search out from the rich English vocabulary available to us as few words as possible that will not only convey our meaning unambiguously but also open up the possibility of seeing our subject of conversation in a new light.

When I was a boy at school I was taught the meaning of the words 'erg,' 'calorie,' 'metre' etc which served as a sure foundation throughout my early scientific life. Even when some were replaced, they held their same meaning. These words, and others that have been used in science since, have only one unique definition. If they had more, chaos would reign in the physical sciences. I wish we had the same discipline in the use of other words but unfortunately we haven't. Some would argue that we are the

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richer for this verbal confusion and certainly, in the case of humour, with its possibility for both homophony and double entendre, I would agree. But except in such specific cases I believe it insults both the possible range and beauty of the English language and exhibits linguistic laziness to attempt to give multiple meanings to words rather than search out better and more appropriate ones to use. Languages evolve and we should be brave enough to discard words that no longer have meaning for us and invent appropriate new ones as Shakespeare did.

The word 'religion,' to the vast majority of people who use it, refers to one of the many faith systems of the world. Such systems, we learn, are those which display a "belief in, recognition of, or an awakened sense of, a higher unseen controlling power or powers, with the emotion and morality connected therewith: rites of worship: any system of such belief or worship: devoted fidelity: monastic life:" and so on. I would submit that Humanism as I understand it does not fit this description. Humanists are at pains to point out that we have no equivalent to religious leaders who tell us what to think, no sacred texts, no second-hand revelations, no demands on us to believe in ghosts or spirits other than those we can put in a glass, nor do Humanists conduct their lives by prescribed rules.

Whatever individual secularists want to call themselves I hope that no secular organisation to which I presently owe allegiance will consider itself a religion.

Ralph Ison - Farnham Royal

A FREETHOUGHT HISTORY RESEARCH GROUP

The aims of the proposed FHRG are to stimulate British freethought research at local and national level, while emphasising the former; create a source material database; preserve material and encourage publication of research. Many places such as Deptford had secular halls or institutes. Perhaps the buildings still exist, or descendants live in the area from whom archive material could be had.

The FHRG could publish newsletters detailing ongoing research, pinpoint information sources, review books of interest, advertise meetings and gatherings, etc. An annual conference could be held where papers could be read and discussed, and later published in an annual journal.

Forming a FHRG would be problematic but not impossible. We know there is a band of potential supporters. If you are interested get in touch. Feel free to copy and distribute this to appropriate people and groups. Donations are welcome, cheques payable to “T. Liddle”.

FHRG 83, Sowerby Close, Eltham, London, SE9 6EZ, tliddle@freeuk.com

RICHARD DAWKINS’ BOOK LAUNCH

Richard and his wife Lala will read from his new book

A Devil’s Chaplin and other essays

7pm Thursday 13 Feb, Inst. Educ, Bedford Way
Tickets £7/4 Tel: 0870 420 2777

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We have come together this morning to say goodbye to Peter Sydney Heales, and to commemorate and celebrate his life.

As you know, Peter was a humanist, and so our ceremony for him will be a humanist one. May I say, as a humanist myself and a friend of Peter's, how privileged I feel to have been asked to lead it for you.

Peter's death on 10 December was sudden and unexpected, and all his friends and colleagues share the shock, the sorrow and the great sense of loss that his family are experiencing. But we can all share too the strength and the comfort that come from our many happy memories of Peter - memories that will stay bright in our minds. The words of the poet, Brian Patten, surely express our feelings now. He wrote:

"How long does a man live, after all?
A thousand days, or only one?
One week, or a few centuries?
How long does a man spend living or dying
And what do we mean when we say, gone forever?
A man lives for as long as we carry him inside us,
For as long as we carry the harvest of his dreams,
For as long as we ourselves live
Holding memories in common, a man lives."

Peter was born in March 1931, his parents' only child. He was brought up in Muswell Hill, in North London, but at the outbreak of the Second World War he was evacuated to Hemyock in Devon where he stayed with relatives for about two years. During that time Peter enjoyed the freedom he had to explore the surrounding countryside, which gave him a taste for walking, which he was to enjoy on many a holiday later on. His lifelong love of music was also nurtured then by the piano lessons his Aunt Amy gave him and by his singing in the local church choir. Later in his life Peter was to sing in opera, and he was always an acute and discerning listener to live and recorded music. His collection of CDs reflects his largely classical tastes with English composers well represented. With this in mind Frances has chosen music by Elgar and Finzi to be part of our ceremony. Peter kept in touch with his relatives in Devon and enjoyed visiting them regularly in recent years.

Peter returned from evacuation in Devon to London to attend Tollington Grammar School. On leaving school Peter was called up for National Service. He spent two years in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, and this gave him a grounding in the mysteries of electronics from which he developed his skills in repairing household equipment and those which later on he was to use so successfully on computers. Whilst he was posted at Lydd Peter became involved in a social club and the local repertory theatre company. He enjoyed acting, and it brought out the talent that he was to use to such good effect in the years to come as a trainer, teacher and lecturer.
On his return to civilian life Peter tried a number of jobs before beginning work as a technical writer in which he was employed by Rotax, a company in the aviation business, and he took the opportunity this offered to learn to fly light aircraft. However, Peter was keen to broaden his knowledge and education and he went to University College, London to study philosophy under Professor A.J. Ayer, a well known humanist of course, and Peter was awarded an honours degree. We know that philosophy and humanism were to play a large part in Peter's life after this, but to earn his corn and support his family he became the technical editor of the Fire Protection Association, and then moved to the National Coal Board, where he worked on the preparation of training aids and helped develop the use of programmed instruction in the mining industry.

So Peter's successful professional career in training was launched, and in 1966 he was appointed by the London Fire Brigade as their Organiser of Studies. In this post Peter developed technical studies for the 5,000 uniformed members of the Brigade, and was particularly concerned with exploring ways in which modern teaching methods could be used to enhance the dissemination of technical knowledge. Thereafter Peter was to work for the Greater London Council as the head of their training centre. At this time Peter was also teaching philosophy as an extramural tutor of the University of London, and he was to continue teaching philosophy for the rest of his life.

When he took the job with the London Fire Brigade Peter had been married for two years, and he and his wife, Brenda, were delighted over the next three years with the arrivals of their daughters, Beatrice and Laura. Peter was a loving husband and father, always very interested in the personal development of his daughters. He was keen for them to be themselves, and supported them wholeheartedly in their own particular interests.

Sadly the marriage broke down and in due time Brenda and Peter were divorced. But a little later on fortune smiled on Peter when he met Frances - it was a chance meeting at a New Year's Eve party. They were married in 1978 and enjoyed a close and happy relationship for the next twenty four years. Peter became a loving stepfather to Frances's children, Donald, Deirdre and Fiona, and has always shown a keen interest in their lives.

There are of course other strands in Peter's full life that we may celebrate. His interests ranged widely and through them he met so many different groups of people, which was a real pleasure for him. Art was an important interest, and Peter was especially interested in drawing, painting and etching, and he developed considerable skills in these areas. He first learned to etch on activity holidays at Dove Workshops near Glastonbury, and from private tuition, and he set up his own etchings business, Demesne Studios. Many of you will have seen and admired examples of Peter's beautiful work in this field.

**Appointed Lecturer At The Ethical Society**

Humanism, both its historical and philosophical roots and its contemporary activities, was central to Peter's adult life. He was for many years an Appointed Lecturer and Trustee at South Place Ethical Society, a committee member, treasurer and some-time chair of the Humanist Housing Association, and also a member, chair and latterly the much respected secretary of the Sutton Humanist Group, as well as being the secretary for the meetings of all the humanist groups in South-East England. Those of us in the humanist movement have been taught, inspired and supported by Peter, and we know we can never replace him. But we will seek to keep his beliefs and aspirations alive by

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continuing to work for humanism and its aims which Peter espoused. We will remember that Peter lived the humanist exhortation - 'Think for yourself, act for others'.

Like most philosophers Peter was ready to consider many theories and opinions and to explore them in wide-ranging and often lengthy discussions. His skill at encouraging his students and others to develop their own views and present considered opinions was the foundation of his long career in extramural teaching. Peter enjoyed these classes and always learnt from them himself. He valued the place of extramural teaching in 'life-long learning', especially for those who hadn't been able to study philosophy earlier in their lives. He thought too that personal life experience often provides a fine screen for evaluating the utility and practicability of many a fine sounding theory.

Peter was a deep and wide thinker, from which he adopted principled views, which he adhered to, notwithstanding that sometimes they might have been contrary to accepted views. I recall for example that his studies of the Darwin family led him to believe that the greatest among them was Erasmus, Charles's grandfather, rather than Charles himself. Peter's presentation on this to the Sutton Humanist Group was very persuasive. His beliefs provided that inner core which gave him the strength to relate positively to a wide range of other people and their views. As well as being a thinker he was also a really practical man. Peter was also ever determined that when his deliberations pointed to a line of action that action should be followed up. But we will never forget that allied to his intellectual strength and his practical skills Peter had a warmth, a generosity of spirit, a caring nature, and a lovely sense of humour that has endeared him to so many.

I close our tribute to Peter with Frances’s words. She says- ‘All of us, family, friends, colleagues and students of Peter’s have been enriched by our contact with him. Saying goodbye to his physical presence we are grateful for his part in our lives.’

Shall we now hear a sonnet written by Peter, which is read by Laura.

“The night is calm within the harbour wall,
And silent sleeps the mist-enshrouded scene
Where sails, once wind be-tossed, now lie serene:
So heavily the folds of slumber fall
We must forget past griefs: who can recall
The storms that menaced us; the anguish keen
When friends were lost; the things that might have been,
When solitude so rare holds us in thrall?

We ever pass the evening time in thought,
While later comes contentment, or perchance
A quiet joy steals on and lulls to sleep.
The pangs of sorrow now recede to nought
And tranquil dreams come flooding to enhance
Our life’s most precious moments; we cannot weep."

As so the peace of death has come to our loved one and friend, Peter Heales. His ideals and hopes we treasure in our minds, and his loves we cherish in our hearts. With respect, gratitude, admiration, love and honour we commit his body to its natural end.

MUSIC: "Fear no more the heat of the sun" by Finzi.

[A note on Peter Heales' philosophy appears in the ER Dec.02 p.2 (Ed.)]

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PROGRAMME OF EVENTS AT THE ETHICAL SOCIETY
The Library, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, Holborn, WC1R 4RL.
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Website: www.ethicalsoc.org.uk email: library@ethicalsoc.org.uk
No charge unless stated - All Welcome to All Meetings

FEBRUARY 2003
Sunday 9
1100h RUSSIAN NATIONAL CHARACTER Isaac Ascher
1500h DETERMINED DICE AND AUTONOMOUS GENES Eliezer Darzi

Wednesday 12
1830h 1st Darwin Day Lecture of the British Humanist Association
WHAT'S WRONG WITH CREATIONISM? Prof. Robin Dunbar,
Dr. Stephen Law, Chair: Andrew Brown, author of 'The Darwin Wars'
Main Hall, £3 admission on the door. Doors open 1800h

Friday 14
1930h Darwin Day Event by Gay & Lesbian Humanist Association
DARWINISM AND FUNDAMENTALISM
Natural History Museum Lecturer, Mike Howgate

Sunday 16
1100h HOW RUSKIN CHANGED PROUST'S LIFE Dr Cynthia Gamble,
Visiting Fellow, Ruskin Programme, Lancaster Univ, Author Proust as Translator of
Ruskin, The Seven Lamps of Translation (2002)
14.30-1700h BOOK SALE (freethought and general, new and 2nd hand)

Thursday 20
1830h BOOK LAUNCH - The Symmetries of 11 September by SPES member
Ian Mordaunt Wine

Sunday 23
1100h GEORGE HARNEY (1817-1897) - Chartist, Republican, Atheist. Terry Liddle
1500h JOAN SMITH SPEAKS FOR SECULARISM. Video of the recent J. Dimbleby
programme when Joan battled against Islam, Judaism and Christianity

MARCH 2003
Sunday 2
1100h ETHICAL ASPECTS OF C18 & C19 POOR LAW REFORM IN ENGLAND
Dr Susan Pashkoff
1500h ETHICAL DILEMMAS - Barbara Smoker opposes political correctness:
"It is a curse on the English language, honest communication, logic, clarity
and common sense". Join the debate. Chair: Edmund McArthur

Saturday 8
1430h PAINE AND FREETHOUGHT IN THE C19 Prof. Edward Royle
Thomas Paine Society meeting.

Published by the South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, WC1 4RL
Printed by J.G. Bryson (Printer) Ltd. 156-162 High Road, London N2 9AS  ISSN 0014 - 1690