EDITORIAL FAREWELL

With this issue, my 2 year tenure as ER's editor comes to an end. It has been a formative two years for me, covering activities of which I had had no previous experience, and which have been both demanding and satisfying. The demands have involved meeting deadlines, dealing with incidental complications, and (often) finding adequate time for the work in what has been a pretty busy professional schedule. The satisfactions have come from mastering the main features of a wide range of articles on a variety of important subjects; from enjoying good relations with our printers and S.P.E.S. staff members; and, last but not least, from having my own views published each month on the editorial page.

In my editorials, I have been given a completely free hand — for which I am deeply grateful — and this freedom will presumably extend to my successor, Mr. David Murray. Most of my editorials have been on general political issues rather than matters specifically related to S.P.E.S., and I have continued to choose this kind of material in the absence of any voiced objections from Society members. My assumption, rightly or wrongly, has been that no expressed opposition to this editorial policy means acceptance of it.

As I have said on a number of occasions, I regard ER as one of the most important monthly publications in Britain, reflecting as it does the immense range of ideas and attitudes aired at South Place. Most editions are easily on a par with much better known journals that enjoy frequent publication e.g. The Times Higher Educational Supplement and Literary Supplement. It is therefore a pity that ER is not more widely available. Perhaps the Society will give this further thought in the future.

A word now on the 'Viewpoints' section. To repeat what I said in the AGM Report, my policy has been to consider all submissions from readers, even the most controversial and confrontational, provided a coherent argument is being presented. This approach is, I feel, essential if the Society is truly to be an open forum. As part of that openness, the right of reply always exists to views regarded as provocative. I hope this approach will continue to apply.

I am all too conscious of the fact that I have often failed to meet the objective I set myself when I became editor: to get the journal out as early in the month as possible. Delays have been due to a variety of reasons, for example, heavy workloads at the printers and difficulties in finalising the programme of events. Unforeseeable factors continue to affect timing, but hopefully they will be reduced in the future.

Finally, I would like to convey my best wishes to David Murray as he now takes over stewardship of a publication whose long tradition and consistent relevance to the issues of our time invite committed involvement.

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

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**VIEWPOINT**

Is the ‘Third Way’ — Deep Ecology — anti-Humanist?

I’m puzzled by the attitude taken by Helen Prescott, a humanist, towards rationality, technology, physics and materialist thought (June ER, The Third Way, p 16). These are blamed for the modern evils of consumerism, ecological damage etc. Actually industrial societies are not driven by the above ideas but rather by the imperious demands of profit and production. The rejected ideas are quite compatible with utilitarian principles such as minimising suffering and consideration of the consequences to sentient life of one’s activities.

The simple Gandhian life-style Helen advocates requires neither the cavalier abandonment of reason and appropriate technology — nor cynicism about the search for objective understanding of the universe and its processes, which is all that the derided ‘mechanistic’ thought means. This is called ‘anthropocentrism’! What though could be more self-indulgent than the chart on p 18, inviting us to reject scientific materialism and make biology and mental qualities such as creativity prior to physics?

Norman Bacrac:
One of the first publications in the UK of photographs from the Nazi concentration camps was Picture Post 5 May 1945, under the heading 'The Problem That Makes All Europe Wonder'. The accompanying text was organised in the form of answers to such questions as 'An individual may suffer from split personality. Is it possible that a nation can suffer in the same way?' Here is an extract from the answering paragraphs:

There is cruelty in every nation, though it is almost entirely latent until special circumstances bring it out... There are two 'selves' in all of us, and schizophrenia, or split personality, is the state which occurs when there is no longer any bridge between the two, when the whole man or woman has lost control and the shadow-self, the unconscious, can rise and become dominant. It is the unconscious, the shadow-life, which has swept to the surface in Germany. This darker life exists in every individual and every nation, but normally is controlled by the written and unwritten laws of civilised society... The scapegoat is a shadow figure on to whom we project all the tendencies and aspects of our characters that we dare not face.


The theory that underlies this explanation of Nazism is that of C.G. Jung. This text is remarkable in that it shows the ease with which the supposedly profound and transcendental philosophy of Jung can — without distortion or vulgarisation — be woven into the discourse of commonsense. It appeared two days before the surrender of Germany to the Allies; it is a sick irony that the philosophy behind it is continuous with Nazi ideology.

The usual 'reading' of Jung is far from understanding him as a philosopher of barbarism. The usual 'reading' — often unaccompanied by any actual reading — is as follows: Jung is a crucial figure in the “turning point” of Western “Being” from “Nineteenth Century” reductive materialism towards a new spiritual awareness. With him the “yang” of masculinist totalitarian rationalism has come to the terminal point of its historical cycle; he is a node through which flows forth the “yin” of a redemptive feminist relationship to the world. The process of analytic dissection has generated its own overcoming — its own terminal sterility is the soil in which is flourishing a new synthetic and holistic comprehension. As the Age of Pisces moves into the Age of Aquarius, so the “East” emerges in the heartland of the “West”.

This is the Jung of the Green Movement, of such Guardian pundits as Walter Schwarz and Ian McEwan, of much of ‘Humanistic’ therapy and the “Growth Movement”. The new religiosity which has Jung as a prophet is widespread and pervasive in our culture. It is a sensibility which has been expressed in recent talks at SPES by Peter Cadogan, John Papworth and Helen Prescott. In one sense this sensibility understands Jung. In a more important way it utterly fails to grasp the meaning of his work, for this sensibility has no self-comprehension. It fails to see that Jung does not offer a critique of an alienated world but is the other side of the same coin. It fails to see that Jung is one of the major conduits through which the components of the Nazi sensibility are held in suspension in European culture.

One of the most obviously appealing aspects of Jung is his purportedly pro-feminist
philosophy. Here Jung is favourably contrasted with the arrogant patriarch Freud, the
man who argued that woman is forever psychically crippled by nursing the wound that is
penis envy. ('Who now believes in penis-envy?' asked Peter Cadogan in his talk on Blake,
as he went on to assert that 'the star of Jung is rising as that of Freud falls' (The language
of Jung and his disciples is replete with the language of geology, meteorology and
astronomy.). The view of Freud as sexist is well expressed by Kate Millett: 'If new
ideological support were to come to the patriarchal social order, its sex roles and its
differentiated temperaments of masculine and feminine, it could not come from religion
[it]... had to come from science... To fill the needs of conservative societies... a number
of new prophets arrived upon the scene to clothe the old doctrine of the separate spheres
in the fashionable language of science... The most influential of these was Sigmund Freud,
beyond question the strongest individual counter-revolutionary force in the ideology of
sexual politics during the period.
(Sexual Politics Abacus, 1972, pp 177 - 8)

In contrast with Freud's sexism, Jung is held to value equally the masculine and the
feminine. He asserts that no man is entirely masculine, but has within him some of the
feminine, and inversely for women. Masculine and feminine are different, but complementary.
The Yang is the complement of the Yin, the rational of the intuitive, the active of the
passive, the analytic of the synthetic, the hard of the soft, the mountain of the valley....
and so on.

What Jung does is to:
1. Isolate certain characteristics of empirically existing men and women and take for
   granted certain cultural constructions of maleness and femaleness. He does not
distinguish between these two operations.
2. Extract from these a number of polarities of ideal essences.
3. Assert correspondences between terms of different polarities — the Yang with the
   rational with the masculine with the active with the high—and so on.

In no way does this break with sexist ideology. It merely presents empirical men and
women as incarnations of ideal polarities. The fact that he claims that no man is 100%
masculine is neither nonsexist nor profound. It may be a big deal for the Guardian
"New Man" to go to a men's workshop to learn how to cry. It is no big deal to the very
traditional men of the Royal Marine special forces who are routinely advised to have a
good weep if their mates are killed and not to 'go along with that bollocks which says that
real men don't cry'.

Kate Millett does not discuss Jung. His actual comments on the role of women should
make him a serious rival for her award of 'the strongest individual counter-revolutionary
force'. Jung does not merely present a sexist psychology of gender, but pronounces on
gender politics with a dogmatism and ferocity nowhere to be found in Freud. Here are
some of his comments on the 'separate spheres' from 'Woman in Europe' (1927). (Unless
otherwise stated all works of Jung cited are in The Collected Works vol 10, trans. R. F. C.
Hull, 2nd ed., 1970. Date in brackets is of first publication, references * are to paragraph
numbers.):

women...have begun to take up masculine professions, to become active in politics,
to sit on committees etc, we can see that woman is in the process of breaking with
the purely feminine pattern of unconsciousness and passivity, and has made a
concession to masculine psychology...Certainly the courage and self-sacrifice of
such women is admirable...But no one can get round the fact that by taking up a
masculine profession, studying and working like a man, woman is doing something
not wholly in accord with, if not directly injurious to, her feminine nature. She is
doing something that would scarcely be possible for a man to do, unless he were a Chinese. Could he, for instance, be a nursemaid or run a kindergarten? 

...A man should live as a man and a woman as a woman. (*245)

The nature of the injury that a woman may do to herself by working in a 'masculine profession' is spelt out later:

She develops a kind of rigid intellectuality based on so-called principles, and backs them up with a whole host of arguments which always just miss the point in the most irritating way, and always injects a little something into the problem that is not really there. Unconscious assumptions or opinions are the worst enemy of woman; they can even grow into a positively demonic passion that exasperates and disgusts men, and does the woman herself the greatest injury by gradually smothering the charm and meaning of her femininity...such a development naturally ends in profound psychological disunion, in short, in a psychosis. (*245)

This is a view of women which might be expected from a Royal Marine — but from the man who is prophet for a nuclear pacifist and for a minister of the new spirituality? (Rather: might be expected by a nuclear pacifist from a Royal Marine; I have more respect for the intelligence of the military.) This is the view of woman expressed in the cartoons of the American Tom Nast at the end of the last century; in the first decades of the present one, in *Punch*; and, over the last two decades, by the likes of Jak, Gibberd and Cummings. It is the view of a sensibility which regards feminism as pathological and as the corruption of eternal essences and values. It is a view which must logically demand the 'emancipation of woman from the women's emancipation movement', which was one of the slogans of the NSDAP (from Alfred Rosenberg, *The Myth of the Twentieth Century*, in Nazi Culture ed. George L. Mosse, Schocken NY, 1981, p 40). It was echoed in Ayatollah Khomenei's promise that 'The Islamic Revolution would free women to return to their traditional roles.'

Part of the appeal of Jung is that he seems to speak of ideals, of essences and of spirituality but does so in terms that are earthy, homely and commonsensical. He seems to be the solid peasant, in touch both with the soil and with the mountain peaks. One of the staples of Nazi rhetoric was the weaving together of the "spiritual" with the everyday. (See Adorno's *The Jargon of Authenticity* which discusses the language of NSDAP-member Martin Heidegger, author of *Being and Time*, another admirer of the peasant and a favorite writer for Deconstructionism) Jung's voice is that of a robust common-sense: 'no one can get round the fact'. Here is another 'fact' that, for Jung, 'no one can get round':

Even today, the European, however highly developed, cannot live with impunity among the Negroes of Africa; their psychology gets into him unnoticed and unconsciously he becomes a Negro. There is no fighting against it. In Africa there is a well-known technical expression for this: 'going black'. It is no mere snobbery that the English should consider anyone born in the colonies, even though the best blood may run in his veins, 'slightly inferior'. There are facts to support this view. (ibid: *249)

This 'fact' is cited in support of the claim that unmarried women in Europe are having a deleterious effect on the morals of married women: 'through a million subterranean channels creeps the influence that is undermining marriage' (ibid *251)

Jung was as certain of racial essences as he was of gender essences. The 'channels' by which racial effluvia operated were for Jung, not merely 'subterranean' but very terrestrial, earthy even:
Just as, in the process of evolution, the mind has been moulded by earthly conditions, so the same process repeats itself under our eyes today. Imagine a large section of some European nation transplanted to a strange soil and another climate. We can confidently expect this human group to undergo certain psychic and perhaps also physical changes...even without the admixture of foreign blood...The greatest experiment in the transplantation of a race in modern times was the colonisation of the North American continent by a predominantly Germanic population...Boas has shown that anatomical changes begin already in the second generation of immigrants, chiefly in the measurements of the skull. (‘Mind and Earth’ [1927] *93 - 4)

Again:

the skull and pelvic measurements of all the European races begin to indianize themselves in the second generation of immigrants. That is the mystery of the American earth. (‘The Role of the Unconscious’ [1918] *18)

For Jung, the Earth has a psyche which resonates with the collective psyche of humanity. For him, earthquakes are not mere geological events but the protests of a hurt mind:

We are reading with horror about the enormous destruction and the great loss of life [in the Chilean earthquakes of 1960]. It seems that Mother Earth is involved in a similar predicament as mankind, although the scientific mind does not sympathise with such coincidences. (letter to Miguel Serrano, 16 June 1960. In C. G. Jung and Hermann Hesse - Two Friendships, Miguel Serrano, RKP, 1966, p 69)

The ‘coincidences’ with both the Nazis’ love for ‘Blood and Soil’ and Greenery’s fetishisation of ‘Gaia’ are obvious.

So for Jung, the spirit is in a mysterious relationship with the earth (perhaps a relationship of synchronicity?) But for a race to have an authentic relation with the earth it must have a settled character, it must be based on work on the soil. His views on race, blood and soil echoed such pronouncements as that of the Reich minister for agriculture Walther Darré:

...the blood of the people is the formative element of its culture...among our peasants are customs which have survived for a thousand years...it is here that the ground of Volkdom is to be sought, rather than in the bloodless abstractions of the scholars’s desk. (Mosse, op cit, p 148)

It follows from this that any race which lacks a healthy relationship with the soil will be liable to a certain cultural rootlessness, to valuing the abstract over the concrete, the new over the traditional, money over landed wealth, intellect over commonsense. Both for Jung and for Nazi ideology there is just such a race: the Jews. This is Jung on the Jewish spirit, in his discussion of the remarkable effect of the American soil on the skulls and pelvices of European immigrants:

The layer of culture, this pleasing patina, must ...be quite extraordinarily thin in comparison with the powerfully developed layers of the primitive psyche...Christianity split the German barbarian into an upper and a lower half...as the Christian view of the world loses its authority, the more menacingly will the ‘blond beast’ be heard prowling about in its underground prison...This chthonic quality is found in dangerous concentration in the Germanic peoples. The Jew has too little of this quality — where has he his own earth underfoot?...As a rule, the Jew lives in amicable relationship with the earth, but without feeling the power of the chthonic...This may explain the specific need of the Jew to reduce everything to its material beginnings...I can understand very well that Freud’s and Adler’s reduction of everything psychic to primitive sexual wishes and power-drives has something about it that is beneficial and satisfying to the Jew, because it is a form of simplification...But these specifically Jewish doctrines are thoroughly unsatisfying to the Germanic mentality; we still have a genuine barbarian in us who is not to be trifled with. (‘The Role of the Unconscious’ *16 - 19)
Not surprisingly, such remarks as these resulted in Jung being accused of anti-semitism. His own reply is in 'A Rejoinder to Dr Bally' (1934). Some defences by his followers are in: Aniela Jaffe, 'C.G. Jung and National Socialism', in From the Life and Work of C.G. Jung; Volodymyr Walter Odajnyk, Jung and Politics; Edmund D. Cohen, C.G. Jung and the Scientific Attitude; Ira Progoff, Jung's Psychology and its Social Meaning.

The defence is as follows: Jung indeed believed that there were fundamental differences between the psychology of the Jewish and the Aryan race. But he also believed that there was a different psychology for the Chinese and the Eskimo, he made no differential judgement of value. Edmund D. Cohen writes:

It was fashionable in those days to view man as highly plastic, and governed by a small number of simple principles, like inanimate bodies in Newtonian physics. Cultural traditions were thought of as a superficial acquisition...Intellectuals wanted to leave their cultural traditions behind...To stress cultural specificity was to uphold unjust caste and class distinctions...Behaviorism, Freudian psychoanalysis, and socialism shared this system of assumptions in common...Jung was far ahead of his time in seeing there is truth and virtue in having a Jewish, a Germanic, a Chinese, or a Black psychology. (pub. Littlefield, Adams and Co, New Jersey, 1976, pp 108 - 9)

To the extent that Jung made favorable remarks about the Nazis, these were the result of a political naivety excusable in a psychologist who wanted to regard new cultural developments in a favorable light. Anyway, to the extent that Jung held views that are deplorable, these must be seen as personal eccentricities and not central to his work.

Such defences present a show of robustness. But they fail to quote at length Jung’s assessment of ‘Jewish psychology’. Here is a passage from sixteen years after the above quoted from him:

The Jews have this peculiarity in common with women; being physically weaker, they have to aim at the chinks in the armour of their adversary....The still youthful Germanic peoples are fully capable of creating new cultural forms that still lie dormant in the darkness of the unconscious of every individual — seeds bursting with energy and capable of mighty expansion. The Jew, who is something of a nomad, has never yet created a cultural form of his own and as far as we can see never will...it has been a grave error...to apply Jewish categories — which are not even binding on all Jews — indiscriminately to Germanic and Slavic Christendom. Because of this, the most precious secret of the Germanic peoples — their creative and intuitive depth of soul — has been explained as a morass of banal infantilism, while my own warning voice has for decades been suspected of anti-semitism. This suspicion emanated from Freud. He did not understand the Germanic psyche any more than did his German followers. Has the formidable phenomenon of Nationalism Socialism, on which the whole world gazes with astonished eyes, taught them better? Where was that unparalleled tension and energy while as yet no National Socialism existed? Deep in the Germanic psyche, in a pit that is anything but a garbage-bin of unrealisable infantile wishes and unresolved family resentments. (‘The State of Psychotherapy Today’ 1934 *353 - 4)

Events 'synchronous' with this text were: The Reichstag had passed the Enabling Act; at least fifty concentration camps were operative; the works of Freud were being burnt on bonfires; the citizens of Germany were 'gazing' at the spectacle of Jews scrubbing the streets of their cities with buckets of hot sulphuric acid. The attempt to exonerate Jung of complicity with these crimes is as morally disgusting as the attempt by the 'revisionist' historians to deny that Auschwitz was a death-camp; it is considerably more dangerous.

Ethical Record, July/August, 1991
That the anti-semitism in Jung is invisible to his followers is because they, Jung and Nazism share a matrix of common assumptions: of the corruptive nature of modernity; the necessity for a ‘spiritual’ revival to redeem humanity from the soul-less hell of a machine civilisation; that Europe after 1918 was in a state of chaos; that harmony and balance are the constitutive categories for a healthy psyche and society. Not only was Jung’s assessment of Freud implicitly that of Nazism, but their ideologists castigated Freud in precisely the same terms. The following is from an address by the psychotherapist Kurt Gauger to a Medical Congress for Psychotherapy in 1934; he delivered it wearing the uniform of the S.A.:

What we miss in Freudian psychoanalysis is a system of values... The scientific materialism of Freudian psychoanalysis is closely related to the economic materialism of the Marxists... Fidelity, love, comradeship, honor — heroism, Volksdom, homeland as words with philosophical weight... have no place in the world view of materialism... The road of Jung looks forward. Freud asks: Whence? Jung asks: Whither? Freud is the scientist, only the scientist; Jung is an ethicist. One could also call him a seer, in the deepest and most reverent sense of the word. Jung is the poet among psychologists... Jung’s psychology is a daimon-ology.... Freudian psychology incorporates all the advantages and dangers of the Jewish spirit, Jungian psychology all those of the Germanic soul. (Mosse, *op cit* pp 217 - 8, 23 - 4). Gauger and his milieu are discussed in *Psychotherapy in the Third Reich*, Geoffrey Cocks, OUP, 1985

Attempts to exonerate Jung from his complicity with Nazism are either lies, they miss the point or they themselves demonstrate the continuity between his work and Nazi barbarism.

Aniella Jaffe tells us that:

After the fearful abysses of the Nazi regime had become known, Jung revised his hopeful and expectant attitude and was pitiless in his public criticism. (Hodder and Stoughton, 1972, p 87)

What he actually wrote was:

...one is at a loss to imagine how anything quite so monstrous ever came to power. But we must not forget that we are judging from today, from a knowledge of the events which led to the catastrophe. Our judgement would certainly be very different had our information stopped short at 1933 or 1934 [Who is the ‘we’ that is speaking here?] At that time, in Germany as well as in Italy, there were not a few things that appeared plausible and seemed to speak in favour of the regime. An undeniable piece of evidence in this respect was the disappearence of the unemployed, who used to tramp the German highroads in their hundreds of thousands. [Jung the seer is incurious as to where they disappeared to]. And after the stagnation and decay of the postwar years, the refreshing wind that blew through the two countries was a tempting sign of hope... it is just conceivable that Hitler himself may have had good intentions at first, and only succumbed to the use of the wrong means, or the misuse of his means, in the course of his development. (*After the Catastrophe* 1945 *420*)

‘Stagnation and decay’ are just the terms in which the Nazis characterised the Weimar Republic formed by those they called ‘the November Criminals’.

Jung’s model of the psyche is of an Heraklitean entity where a development generates its own complementary opposite in the endless flux of opposites. For him, the conscious and the unconscious are in a relation of complementarity, such that disorder in the conscious calls forth images of order from the unconscious. It is a kind of meteorology of the psyche.
which is understood as a thing; it is complemented by a kind of psychology of the Earth, which is understood as a person.

This hallucination leads him to the following comment on the years following the German Revolution of October/November 1918:

I was able...to observe how the uprush of the dark forces deployed itself in the individual test-tube... There was often terrific suffering and destruction; but when the individual was able to cling to a shred of reason...a new compensation was brought about in the unconscious by the very chaos of the conscious mind... New symbols then appeared, of a collective nature, but this time reflecting the forces of order. There was measure, proportion, and symmetrical arrangement in these symbols, expressed in their peculiar mathematical and geometrical structure. They represent a kind of axial system and are known as mandalas.

(The Fight with the Shadow' 1946 *450)

The ‘forces of order’ who threw the dying Rosa Luxemburg into the Berlin canal — a freikorps proto-Nazi gang — would perhaps have been surprised by such a ‘spiritual’ appreciation of their swastikas. But they and the NSDAP saw themselves in precisely the same terms as did Jung.

Carl Jung shows in a way that could hardly be clearer what the real politics of the proponents of the ‘Third Way’ actually concretise as. It is a feature of the shallowness and intellectual dishonesty of the ‘alternative’ culture that this central moment of his work is made collectively unconscious.

Appendix — Reply to Adrian Williams, ER, March 1991

Williams writes that my talk was ‘selected’ and ‘unbalanced’. Rather than merely assert this, he should himself select some evidence to ‘balance’ the case.

He goes on to say that ‘mysticism...appears to consist of methods to get personal experiences of wholeness in the world. As such, it is harmless.’ I agree. I am all for personal mystical experiences. It seems to me obvious that a quarter-healthy society would encourage and value such methods, would indeed develop an aesthetic of them; together with a phenomenology of the varieties of ‘mystical’ states — whether induced by meditation, yoga, martial arts, mountain climbing, psychoactive chemicals, eroticism or neuro-electronic interfacing. But the plain fact is that the denial of gender oppression and the class struggle was one of the central planks of Nazi rhetoric: Hitler’s ‘I see no parties, only Germans’.

Williams goes on: ‘Jung’s present-day supporters would not repeat his paternalistic ramblings’. But they do repeat his evaluation of women, of racial psychology and of the pre-Nazi period. Additional examples to those above will be found in the works cited.

It is curious that whilst Freud is criticised for being ‘a man of his time’ (all those neurotic middleaged Viennese Jews) just this phrase is used to exculpate Jung. It is an absurd argument; firstly because it would excuse Hitler; secondly because it ignores the fact that what Jung stood for — patriarchy, the rolling-back of the Enlightenment, superstition tarted up as science, a world where the exploited accepted their place in the scheme of things — was fought against by many people ‘of his time’: feminists, libertarian educationists, sexual radicals, council communists, anarchists, Trotskyists, surrealists, secularists ....

Ethical Record, July/August, 1991
Williams tells me that ‘Jung’s ideas have to be taken at face value and worked on in their own terms’. Why? Anyway, whether they are taken at their surface or their depth, they speak for repression and barbarity.

Yes, Marx did ‘make derogatory remarks about Jews’. He did so in letters and one MSS (Theses on Feuerbach). They did not inform the central categories of his work. Though if Adrian would like to argue for this I commend to him Julius Carlebach’s Karl Marx and the Radical Critique of Judaism, RKP, 1978. It would be a real achievement to show that Marx’s extravagant praise of the capitalist mode of production in unleashing the power of combined labour and preparing the way to the actualisation of the human essence was really an attack on Jewish usury. In attempting this Williams will be handicapped by the fact that his comprehension of the work of Marx is zero — though here he has the advantage over his mentor George Walford, whose comprehension would have to be expressed as a negative number.

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**TACKLING CREATIONISM**

*Talk given to S.P.E.S. on 3rd 1991*

by MIKE HOWGATE

The Association for the Protection of Evolution, A.P.E. for short and Ape-men to its detractors, started life at the back end of 1983 by accident. I read a short notice in the listings magazine *Time Out* to the effect that U.S. style fundamentalists were about to get a bill before Parliament advocating “equal time” for Creationism in school science classes. I went along to the meeting expecting hundreds to be there. I was not disappointed — Until, that is, the first speaker got into his stride. It was obvious that I was at a creationist rally, but by then I was hooked. At question time my hand shot up, so did that of one other person, the one who had placed the Ad. Over tea and biscuits in the morning break I forgave him the deception and A.P.E. was born.

Both having been in serveral organisations previously, we realised that to be effective A.P.E. had to take seriously its mission of preventing the spread of Creationism in Britain. But we could afford not to take the Creationists seriously; thus the first rule of A.P.E. was that all members had to have a sense of humour. The second condition of membership was that active intervention in Creationist meetings was mandatory — no sleeping partners, back seat drivers or honorary members, no matter how exalted. We even rejected a prominent academic who wished to become a member by instituting a third condition: That membership of A.P.E. and having a seat on the General Synod of the Anglican Church were incompatible. The academic concerned retains to this day his seat on the Synod.

It wasn’t long before we had our first real battle. A member of the Creation Science Movement advanced the opinion that the British Museum of Natural History had been covering up evidence which ran counter to evolutionary theory. The case in point was a fully human skeleton preserved in solid rock, which the C.S.M. member, a Mr Cooper, claimed was a true relic of the flood although found in rocks that he claimed were of the Miocene period i.e. 25 million years old. We went to the Museum, discussed this with the members of the Anthropology Dept., checked the references, even examined the specimen. Then we attended Cooper’s lecture.

We did nearly everything wrong — our questions were too technical and went right over heads of the audience. We were too polite and allowed Cooper to wriggle off the hook several times. We had nearly lost the day when a fellow creationist asked Cooper the key question: “Who says this skeleton is 25 million years old”? Cooper was flummoxed,
he blurted out that no scientist believed the specimen was older than a few hundred years, and although he thought the skeleton should be from the Miocene — he didn’t believe in the Miocene anyway. In the general consternation we offered to take a collection to have the specimen Carbon-dated. The assembled Creationists were not amused, but we had hit home. A rival creationist group, the B.C.S. (Biblical Creation Society) subsequently distanced itself from Cooper. Even more importantly, we had learned to pitch our criticisms simply, forthrightly and repeatedly. More complicated and fuller refutations we reserved for bigger fish or written debates.

Our second series of interventions were also full of lessons. There were against the nearest and most serious Creationist organisation in Britain: the ‘Newton Scientific Association’. The N.S.A. prided itself on being strictly scientific, never having recourse to Biblical arguments. This de-biblicised message was specifically aimed at the University population. The truth was rather less than the claim. Most of their arguments were either variants of the Argument from Design, mainly from an information technology slant, or relied on disputed areas of scientific knowledge as evidence that scientists cannot agree; whereas they themselves all agree on creation, giving an appearance of certainty in a morass of “just theories”. For the rest it was just a mass of lies about geology and the fossil record. This time we came prepared. At the first meeting Alan, the other Apeman, had really shown up the speakers as blustering bluffers. So this time they were ready for them but they were also ready for us and at tea break Alan and a friend were bustled out of the door by a squad of heavies. Fortunately I wasn’t at the scene and wasn’t recognised, so I bided my time until questions at the end of the session. I agreed that they could always win the day against evolution with totalitarian strong-arm tactics.

What, I asked the person who ran the meeting hall, was his position on their tactics? He didn’t say, but that was the last time the N.S.A. appeared at that venue, or anywhere else for that matter. The Lord obviously smote them down for their un-Christian act. Lesson: always have a witness and a tape recorder.

A final example from the A.P.E. experience is in the use of the scientific press, in this case Nature, to hold key speakers up to ridicule before their peers. In the works of Professor Edgar Andrews: “Finally, we are astonished that you should include, as part of the conference report, a private conversation over tea, between one of the A.P.E. representatives and Dr. David Gower. The ethical lapse is the more serious since Dr. Gower is seriously misreported as admitting “unenthusiastically” that he ascribed genetic defects to the Fall and that sexual communication by pheromones has to do with ‘lustful temptations’. These serious misrepresentations of a senior university academic are, to say the least, deplorable.” We seemed to have hit the right spot. Dr. David Gower seems to have gone into retirement as a creationist speaker. The senior members of the movement are quite happy to espouse scientific sounding nonsense to gullible students impressed by their academic positions. But they would rather their colleagues didn’t know about their lapses. In such cases we aim to give them as much publicity as possible — where it really hurts.

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**BECKETT AND THE DEUS ABSCONDITUS**

*Test of a talk given to S.P.E.S. on Sunday May 5th 1991*

by JOHN GOOD

Beckett’s is a world without God but it is haunted by the absence of God. There is a moment in one of his plays, ‘Endgame’, when one character at the point of saying the Lord’s Prayer, says “The bastard, he doesn’t exist”. Of course that is partly a joke: there

*continues on page 14*
SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY
The Humanist Centre, Conway Hall
25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL
Telephone: Secretary 071-831 7723 Hall Manager 071-242 8032

PROGRAMME OF EVENTS

Lectures and forums are held in the library and are free (collection).

JULY

Thursday, July 11
at 7 pm Playreading-discussion: BARBARA SMOKER introduces a group reading of Shaw’s ‘The Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet.

Sunday, July 14
at 11 am Lecture: Marxism And Religion. DAVID MURRAY

at 3 pm Lecture: Anarchism And Religion. NICOLAS WALTER. Today’s speakers examine the idea and practice of religion in relation to the subject of their special interest and study, marxism and anarchism respectively.

Thursday, July 18
at 7 pm Special Lecture: Scepticism And The Paranormal, by PAUL KURTZ, Professor of Philosophy at the State University of New York and Chairman of CSICOP (the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal).

Sunday, July 21
at 11 am Lecture: Ethics In Law. ROSS CRANSTON, Professor of Law and barrister, adviser to the Labour Party on legal affairs, author of ‘Regulating Business’ and ‘Legal Foundations of the Welfare State’ discusses the question of ethics in public affairs.

at 3 pm Forum: Is Quantity A Straight-Jacket For Science? MURIEL SELTMAN, mathematician, reviews the history of the use of mathematics and in particular the use of number, and asks whether science and practice have been limited by our ideas of quantity.

Lectures resume Sunday, October 6 at 11 am.

Sunday, September 29
at 2.30 pm The SPES Annual Reunion

SPES invites members of its kindred organisations, including the British Humanist Association, the National Secular Society, the Progressive League, the Rationalist Association, to participate in this event.

*Keynote speaker *Refreshments *All welcome

BRITISH HUMANIST ASSOCIATION

B.H.A. Annual Conference — “The limits of Tolerance” at Roehampton. 19-21 July. For more information on both of the above, contact B.H.A.

14 Lambs Conduit Passage, London WC1R 4RH
Tel: 071-430 0908

Ethical Record, July/August, 1991
SHAW SOCIETY
Afternoons at Shaw's Corner, Ayot St. Lawrence, Herts.
At 6.15 pm, the ‘curtain'-raiser, written by Benny Green, read by Toni Kanal will be
followed by a Shaw double-bill:
“MAN OF DESTINY” and “HOW HE LIED TO HER HUSBAND”
Coach (on Sunday only) from central London £6.50 return. Tickets £7 at the ‘door’, or
£3.50 in advance from Barbara Smoker (Tel: 081-690 2325 for details).

PROGRESSIVE LEAGUE SUMMER CONFERENCE
August 3rd — 10th 1991, at Wye College, Kent
Lectures, Discussions, Country Dancing, Music and Poetry.
Single rooms, tennis, swimming.
Detailed programme and booking form from
Joan Miller,
Flat 7, Rose Bush Court,
35 Parkhill Road, London NW3.

National Secular Society Annual Outing.
Sunday 8th September
Pick-up points at Camden Town and Nr. Trafalgar Square. 9.30 & 10.00 a.m.
Tickets £11.50, including entrance fees.
Contact The Secretary, NSS. 702, Holloway Road, London N19 3NL Tel: 071-272 1266.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY
Registered Charity No. 251396
Founded in 1793, the Society is a progressive movement whose aim is the study and dissemination
of ethical principles based on humanism, and the cultivation of a rational and humane way of life.

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

At Conway Hall there are opportunities for participation in many kinds of cultural activities,
including discussions, lectures, concerts and socials.

A comprehensive reference and lending library is available, and all members and associates
receive the Society’s journal, The Ethical Record ten times a year.

The Sunday Evening Chamber Music Concerts founded in 1887 have achieved international
renown.

Memorial and Funeral Services are available to members.

Minimum subscriptions are: Members £6 p.a.; Life Members £126 (Life Membership is available
only to members of at least one year’s standing). It is of help to the Society’s officers if members pay
their subscriptions by Bankers Order, and it is of further financial benefit to the Society if Deeds of
Covenant are entered into.
are absurdities of that ilk throughout Beckett’s works, in the novels, short stories, poems and plays. Beckett is a virtuoso of absurdity and delights in mocking human inconsistency. Anyone who knows Dublin will recognise the black humour and the comic blasphemy in his early work, especially in the poem “Whoroscope”, in the stories of “More Kicks than Pricks” about low life in Beckett’s native city, and in the adventures of the eponymous hero of “Murphy”, who spends much of his life in a rocking chair and lives in London on the earnings of a prostitute. Those works were published in the 1930’s in London and Paris at a time when Ireland was far more Catholic than it is today.

A middle class Protestant born in 1906 and educated in Oscar Wilde’s old school and university, Beckett lived for most of his life in France, from his early twenties until his death at the age of 83. The Paris of his time was dominated intellectually by the early modernists and surrealists and dadaists and later by existentiaests. He was the most influential figure in the school of the “anti-novel” and the theatre of the absurd. From the time during World War II when he switched from writing in English to writing in French, he was claimed by the French as their greatest prose writer, even when he took to translating his French works into English and his English originals into French.

Although a Protestant Dubliner like Bernard Shaw, Beckett was in many ways his opposite in his attitude to religion in general and to the Catholic version of it. Unlike Shaw, Beckett came from a prosperous background. He was fifty years younger than Shaw; Beckett was only fourteen when the Irish won their independence and he benefitted from a magnificent education in a British type public school and at Trinity College, where he was one of the most brilliant students in its history. His early writings are saturated with the influences of the Catholic Ireland of the twenties and early thirties. A gifted linguist, at the age of 22 he was appointed reader in English at the élite Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris while Jean Paul Sartre was a student there. Shaw rejected both his Protestant heritage and the Catholicism despised by the Protestant Ascendancy of his time, became a rationalist and then evolved a sort of religion of his own based on a version of creative evolution and a sort of Bergsonian “élan vital” or Life Force. Beckett became a disciple of James Joyce and his collaborator and amanuensis. Beckett was an immensely learned writer steeped in European Catholic culture acquired through his education and long residence on the Continent.

He was profoundly marked by that ethos, even in reacting against it. It could be argued that any artist, any intellectual born in Catholic southern Ireland, even a Protestant like Beckett, who chooses or is drawn to the culture of France, Italy or indeed of Europe as a whole, is fated to absorb a great deal that is outside the Anglo Saxon atmosphere of the British Isles. Beckett’s writing is filled with echoes not only of the Authorised Version and Shakespeare but also with allusions to and resonances of, for example, Dante and Thomas Aquinas. The imagination and sensibility of Beckett’s master Joyce were saturated with the Jesuit influences of his education. To this day Jesuit scholars claim Joyce, the lapsed or ex-Catholic whose motto was Milton’s “non serviam” (I will not serve), as one of their own. What is fascinating is that Beckett, a fellow Dubliner but protected from Catholic if not from Christian influences by a Protestant background and education, should have shared so much with Joyce. One supposes that it must have been partly their common exile in Europe, their ex-patriate experience of a lifetime particularly in Paris, which affected them. Writers from English speaking countries take on the colouring of their place of exile.

Joyce, through Daedalus in “A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man” (Daedalus means maker) speaks of the artist as a kind of god who creates a reality and discovers his own nature in the act of creation — as the Judaic God did, according to some interpretations of the Bible and of Genesis especially. Joyce in writing “Ulysses” is
credited with creating "the world as book" and re-inventing language, especially in *Finnegan's Wake*. Joyce never abandoned sense and meaning and humanity even in his most extreme innovations. But Beckett insisted on the absurdity and meaninglessness of the universe. The prose work, "Comment C'est" — the pun "to begin" of the French title is lost in the English translation "How It Is" — is in a sense an account of Adam at the moment of his emergence from dust. Behind the work lies Genesis, but it is an absurdist Genesis, making a world that is futile and meaningless. That is the negation of Shaw's interpretation of Genesis, of Shaw's substitution of creative continuous evolution for instant creation by divine fiat, Shaw believing that man can discover meaning and that if he fails the divine purpose will be fulfilled by another effort of the creative will through man's successors (superman?).

The Dadaist and Surrealist culture of Paris and its "Lost Generation" which survived World War I probably influenced the young Beckett in the late 1920's and explains to some extent the difference between the ambience of his writing and that of Joyce in the expression of their attitude to the Christianity of their time. There was something positive, of "yea saying" in Joyce's life-long breach with the Catholicism of his childhood and adolescence. His work is full of its language, its imagery, its superstitions, its liturgy, even when he mocks it as Rabelais did. His vitality and humanity is on a par with that of the Catholic Church of his time. The Jesuits recognised in his very blasphemy what they claimed as the tribute of disbelief to the power of belief. Joyce referred often to the hold of the Catholic Church's symbols over the imagination of artists such as he was. Beckett on the other hand, growing up in the Irish Protestantism already stigmatised by Shaw as devoid of spirituality and used principally as an instrument for the maintenance of Ascendancy privilege, must have experienced that religion in an even later stage of deliquescence in the Irish Free State or Eire. There is savagery in Beckett's derision of the rituals and consolations of the Christian religion. An example is the parodic Adam and Eve in the scorched Eden of "Happy Days", of which the very title of the play is an ironic expression of the play's subject, with Winnie (Eve) buried up to her shoulders and later to her neck and rambling on to her silent almost immobile husband with fragments of imperfectly recalled religious or literary phrases. Beckett's very first published work, "Whoroscope" mocks biblical prophecy, consisting as it does of lying prophecies.

One clue to Beckett is earlier still, his M.A. thesis at Trinity College on Descartes. Descartes is commonly credited with being the founder of modern rationalist philosophy, at least in its formal sense, as an intellectual method of discovering the nature of reality. The Cartesian formulation "I think, therefore I am" continued to influence Beckett's writing. Rationalism à la Descartes rejected belief in an undemonstrable God (although Descartes retained the Deity as a world-maker who set the machine in motion). But Beckett was incapable of leaving it like that. Many, maybe most, rationalists are comfortable in a Godless universe which can be explained only, if at all, by rational scientific means, but Beckett for reasons which were buried perhaps in his psyche, in his temperament, was not content with that position. He could never escape from his horror at the human condition in a desacralised universe. The universe he presents in his work is appallingly depressing, although it is often redeemed by his humour. The pessimism of the early works is lightened by wit and linguistic skill; in fact they are great fun, especially if you can appreciate the Rabelaisian learning. But Beckett's mood darkenend with maturity, and perhaps as the result of his experiences in France during the war, when he was on the run from the Gestapo because of his part in the resistance. But his paroding and distortion of the language of philosophy and religion and of all forms of knowledge strikes one as almost pathological. Beckett's view of man's estate reminds one of Swift's, another Dublin citizen, nicknamed the "Mad Dean" (of St. Patrick's Protestant Cathedral) whose scatological picture of humanity includes creatures like Nagg and Nell, the senile Struldbugs who live in dustbins in "Endgame". Beckett's play "Endgame"
must be one of the most desolate pictures of imagined hell ever created. Its setting is a
room like a human skull of which the two eyes are windows high up on an otherwise blank
wall and look out on a post-nuclear desert and a dead sea. Compared to that hell Dante's
hell is cheerful, Milton's lively and even Jean Paul Sartre's in "Huis Clos" ("In Camera")
positively entertaining.

It is significant that Sartre rejected the prose trilogy, "Molloy", "Malone Meurt" and
"L'Innomable," Beckett's first major work written originally in French, although later
translated by the author into English. Beckett refused to participate in Sartre's
"Littérature engagée". Sartre's novel of the absurd, "La Nausée" appeared in 1938, the
year in which Beckett's English language absurdist novel "Murphy" was published, but
their paths diverged. Beckett derided the pretensions of reason and rationalism with the
relentlessness with which he mocked what he saw as the illusory consolations of
philosophy or religious faith. Sartre's existentialism was as bleakly rigorous as Beckett's
absurdism, but Sartre acted on the assumption that it was man's responsibility to create
his own meaning in an absurd universe without a god.

In some ways the writer Beckett most resembles is Blaize Pascal, the brilliant
mathematician and experimental scientist who became a mystic and devoted the last years
of his life to religious thought and writing. Jean Anouilh, the leading French dramatist
among Sartre's contemporaries, noticed the affinity between the atheist Beckett and
Pascal the mystic when he said, after the first performance of "Waiting for Godot" in
Paris in 1952, that it was like watching a "performance of Pascal's Pensées by a troop of
circus clowns". Perhaps a lifetime spent in France imbued Beckett the southern Irish
Protestant with the Kierkegaardian Christian angst which Sartre acknowledged as an
influence on his own existentialism, although it led him to atheist conclusions. If
blasphemy, as Brendan Behan said, is "the comic verse of belief", Beckett's early work
may have been inspired by lingering traces of the religious faith of his family and public
school education. A very youthful short story turns Dante's "Divine Comedy" into a joke
and contains the ironic remark, "She had it from God and therefore he could rely on its
being accurate in every particular".

Beckett had a horror of the human condition, an intense consciousness of the isolation
of man in a universe that is indifferent to suffering. He had an awareness of the abyss of
space and time that reminds the reader of other writers in a pessimistic line that goes back
at least to Shakespeare, creator of the first truly modern existential angst-written
protagonist, Hamlet, to whom there are many allusions in Beckett's writing.

The world-wide fame that lifted Beckett from obscurity in the French avant garde, after
the performances in almost every important language of "Waiting for Godot" in the
1950's, transformed him into a sort of ikon, a guru. His tramps acquired the symbolic
power of archetypes. President Havel of Czechoslovakia said in a TV programme that
when he was in prison and received a letter from Beckett, it was "as though a god had sent
a message to him". The Nobel prize for literature and other honours showered on this
obscure exile, who wrote anti-novels and plays that appeared to defy every dramatic
convention, must have puzzled the bien pensant. Communist regimes banned Beckett as
the quintessential expression of bourgeois decadence. Now "Waiting for Godot" is
performed in Russia and its former satellites.

Accepting the Kierkegaardian view that man's existence is both pathetic and comic,
and relentlessly exploring the consequences of that view, Beckett never took the religious
"leap of faith" to escape from those consequences. Nor did he accept philosophically the
obligation to political action and commitment which was the Sartrian atheist alternative,
in spite of Beckett's participation in the French resistance or his many acts of solidarity
with the oppressed. Humour lightens the pessimism although it is usually black humour,
e.g., the tramp Vladimir's remark, "Do not despair, remember that one of the two thieves
was saved; It's a reasonable percentage,"; or Murphy's, "The sun shone, having no

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alternative, on the nothing new,”; or “doomed to hope unending”. Beckett’s innumerable allusions to, and deliberate quotations and misquotations and distortions of, the Old and New Testaments are part of the warp and woof of his oeuvre. He can’t stop alluding to the God whose non-existence for him is as axiomatic as it was for Nietzsche. Although Molloy’s remark “Christ never laughed as far as we know” can be interpreted in a hostile sense, numerous characters in Beckett’s work are identified with Christ in different ways, for example Hamm with the bloody Veronica napkin over his face in “Endgame”, and Estragon in “Waiting for Godot”, who says “All my life I have been comparing myself to Jesus Christ”. One suspects a similar tendency in Beckett himself. There is in his work a frisson of religious horror and disgust which is absent from rationalists like Shaw or Voltaire. Beckett’s protagonist is the compulsively reasoning man in a-rational, amoral world.

A glimpse of Beckettian theology is discernible in the English language anti-novel “Watt”, written early in World War II while Beckett was working as a farmhand and on the run from the Gestapo. The anti-hero at one point says, “the only way one can speak of nothing is to speak of it as something, just as the only way one can speak of God is to speak of him as though he were a man, which, to be sure, he was in a sense, for a time”. Murphy the eponymous hero of the first Beckett novel, is an ex-theology student, but Watt is a latterday Cartesian man who believes that the real is the rational and the rational real. Watt (his name is significant) is on the way to Mr Knott’s house (a common but interesting name in the context), a vague deity with a “fascia of white light”. Watt reminds the reader of an argument of logical positivism, i.e., the impossibility of making meaningful statements about what cannot be verified. The compulsive journey of Watt to the house of Mr Knott (note the spelling and the double pun), like Beckett’s preoccupation with the blank where the religious put a deity and the humanists put mankind, reminds one of the linguistic philosophers who argue that God is an essential element of language, of discourse, created by language itself, by man’s linguistic capacity, which in turn reminds one of Genesis, “in the beginning was the word and the word was God” — as though the acquisition of articulate language coincided almost biologically with the human instinct to invent a transcendent being. Typically of Beckett’s personae, Watt never gains any knowledge of his employer Mr Knott after he reaches the house: “from Mr Knott’s voice nothing was to be learnt. Between Mr Knott and Mr Watt no conversation passed”. There is here an echo of the silence of the infinite spaces in Pascal. There is a parallel with K’s unsuccessful search in Kafka’s The Castle for meaning in an absurd and inexplicable world. Watt is an incurable Cartesian who won’t give up the search for reasonable explanations. It is fascinating in this connection to recall that Thomas Aquinas, the official philosopher of the Catholic Church, was an Aristotelian who argued that a reasonable God created a meaningful universe. This view remained influential down to the time of the 18th century deists; not even Voltaire and Diderot escaped its effects. Beckett seems to have been temperamentally incapable of adjusting to the painful evidence that the apparent cruelty of the universe, of life preying on life, is simply natural and non-volitional like gravity or the appetites that ensure survival and reproduction. Beckett once mentioned that he had lived for years opposite an abattoir in Paris and, to an interviewer who assumed that his gloom arose from an unhappy childhood, replied that he had had a very happy childhood. We know that he was a fine athlete and rugby player and that Wisdom record that he distinguished himself as a member of the Gentlemen of Ireland Cricket Eleven! “Just look about you,” was his response to a demand for an explanation of his pessimism. Despite the bleakness and savagery of Beckett’s later work, the man himself was invariably described as kindly and courteous by those who knew him. An episode in one of his fictions referring to the feeding of live frogs and young birds to rats in a barn inspires the comment, “It was on those occasions, we agreed, that we came closest to God”. That reminds one of Lear’s

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comment, "as flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods; they kill us for their sport". Beckett characterised the anger attributed to him as the "rage of the whisky at the decanter" (man's awareness of his personal transitoriness compared with the relative permanence of his surroundings).

The rational Voltairean Shaw insisted on the influence of the Life Force, of the creative instincts, and remained sane. Watt sticks to reason and it leads him to insanity. The end of that road is the concluding part of the Beckett Trilogy: the "Unnamable" is pure mentality in conformity with the Cartesian definition of man as a being that thinks: "I could suppose that I had no body, that there was no world or no place I could be".

Beckett constantly parodies the language of Christian dogma and ritual in his Trilogy. Molloy compares his progress to Christ's via dolorosa, "a veritable Calvary with no limit to its stations and no hope of crucifixion". Moran obeys Youdi's order through Gaber to find Molloy: "I'm still obeying if you like, but simply from force of habit. and the voice I listen to needs no Gaber to make it heard. For it is within me and exhorts me to continue to the end the faithful servant: I have always been of a cause that is not mine and patiently fulfil in all its bitterness my calamitous part, as it was my will, when I had a will, that others should". This could be the voice of suffering Everyman which in some interpretations is identifiable with a mythical universal Christ, one highjacked by St. Paul and after him by the Church Universal that took over from the Roman Empire. As Malone says, in the paradoxical way of Beckettian characters, "it is better to adopt the simplest explanation, even if it is not simple, even if it does not explain very much".

"The Unnamable", characterised by critics as a "cosmo-epistemological comedy" is preoccupied with contingency, "did I wait somewhere for this place to be ready to receive me? Or did it wait for me to come and people it?" Describing himself as the "teller and the told", "The Unnamable" says, "it has not yet been our good fortune to establish with any degree of accuracy what I am, where I am, whether I am words among words of silence in the midst of silence".

Moran, a pious Catholic, obeys Youdi — the Judeo-Christian deity? — but comes to doubt the existence of the messenger Gaber, but he continues to fear Youdi and obey his command even if Youdi's command has diminished to an interior voice.

"Waiting for Godot", described as a metaphysical farce, uses old music hall gags, e.g., hats that shift from head to head, stinking shoes, crude knockabout and pratt-falls to exploit the tragi-comic human situation. The very title suggests the theme. Originally written in French, the play is somewhat softened in Beckett's own translation of the work into English but enough survived of the original to produce a shock effect on the English audience in 1956, when it helped change the direction of English drama. The two shabby tramps mocked their audience as Shakespeare's fools mocked their betters; parodying their actions and aspirations. Performances of the play included one in by prisoners San Quentin prison, who saw their own situation reflected in it. The play became a cult. The entire action consists of a hopeless wait for someone unidentified. Audiences laughed and shuddered without understanding what the play meant. Vladimir (the philosopher) puts on his hat to think and Estragon, who is pre-occupied with his smelly boots, dances. When the master and slave Pozzo and Lucky arrive, Vladimir puts his hat on Lucky's head to make him think. The name Godot is as ambiguous in French as in English, although it also a genuine surname. Pozzo, the rich lord who arrives when Godot is expected, says that the tramps are "imperfect likenesses" of himself. Pozzo boasts and acts as though he were God, tyrannising and humiliating his slave Lucky. Lucky, an Everyman buffoon, mocks all human achievement. His three page speech in response to the command to think, unpunctuated and apparently unintelligible, is in fact a summary of the play's themes: erosion of time, relativity of facts, futility of human activity, faith in God, proof through reason. To quote a few lines, "for reasons unknown, beyond all doubt, but time will tell, in the light of labours unfinished, in spite of the strides, given the
existence of a personal God who loves us dearly and suffers with those who are plunged in torment...it is established beyond all doubt that man wastes and pines wastes and pines the skull fading fading...etc.” The broken record speech, which ends only when the other characters throw themselves on Lucky to stop the intolerable monologue, produces an overwhelmingly powerful dramatic effect. The leafless tree near which the two friends wait interminably for Godot faintly suggests a tree of life and in Act 2 it even has a few leaves. Pozzo, the false Godot, needs an audience in order to exist, as well as a victim, his slave Lucky.

It was seriously argued in England in the mid-fifties that ‘Waiting for Godot’ was essentially religious and even Christian because of its numerous echoes of the Bible and its rejection of both liberal and Nietzschean philosophies. There was an extended correspondence in the Times Literary Supplement as well as a leader on the subject. The biblical references are, however, always mocking. Estragon mentions the Holy Land but the thought of the Red Sea makes him thirsty. Lucky is called an old and faithful servant and a good angel although he is a humiliated slave. Vladimir says “hope deferred maketh the something sick”, compares his via dolorosa to Christ’s, adding “but they crucified quick.” The small boy who arrives near the end of both Acts to announce that Godot will not come today but may come tomorrow, seems to suggest that the wait is indefinite. The two tramps talk of giving up waiting and leaving but they don’t move as the curtain falls. The time of waiting is spent in discourse. Vladimir the intellectual who harps on his hat, says, “We always find something Didi (Estragon) to give us the impression that we exist”, a parody of Descartes’ “I think therefore I am”. “Waiting for Godot” is amusing and because of the two tramp friends there is a certain humanity about it.

“Endgame” on the contrary is almost unendurably cruel and painful. The biblical echoes are omnipresent in the language and mise en scene. The play begins with Christ’s last reported words, “It is finished”. The appalling tyrant Hamm with the bloody Veronica handkerchief over his face actually repeats the words Eli, Eli, Father, Father, attributed to Christ on the cross. Hamm says to his servant Cloy “What do you see on your wall? Mene, Mene?” (From Daniel, “God hath numbered the days of thy kingdom and finished it.) Nagg, Hamm’s father, the “cursed progenitor” who lives in a dustbin, tells a story with a slightly Jewish touch of humour exalting a well-made pair of trousers above the imperfectly created world. Endgame is a tissue of ironies. Hamm, son of Noah, is also a Prospero of his little kingdom where he tyrannises over Cloy-humanity, who turns his telescope towards us the audience after examining the desolation beyond the windows and reports, “I see...multitudes...in transports of joy”. “Things are livening up,” say Cloy and asks “What is there to keep me here?” “The dialogue,” replies the tyrant. One is reminded of the guru role imposed on Beckett himself by the intelligentsia. There are constant references within the play to the play itself, and by implication to the involvement of the audience in the human comedy, reminding us in a Shakespearean way that all the world’s a stage. When Cloy spots a small boy through one of the windows in the skull-like Golgotha of a room, Hamm hopes it is not a subplot. One remembers that Christ was crucified on the place of the skull. The play begins and ends with an implied or possible resurrection as well as a consummation — the tragicomedy is endless. An American scholar suggests that the five brief laughs that signal the opening of the action related to Christ’s five wounds. Clov begins by lifting sheets from inert objects on the stage revealing the three characters who come to life on the stage, Hamm and his parents Nagg and Nell in their dustbins. So Clov’s “it is finished” is ambiguous. The sighting of the boy is a cue for Clov to go. But it is uncertain if he will go. The boy who actually appears in Waiting for Godot at least bears a message to go on waiting. There is something strangely moving about the child’s arrival. But in Endgame the audience is denied even a glimpse of hope.
The word 'crucifixion' appears in the Authorised Version of the Bible of 1611, but the latter was translated from the Vulgate by St. Jerome in 405. The original Greek texts have since been lost, but St. Jerome's translation into Latin was from the original Greek, and gives an indication of what must have been said in the original Greek and Hebrew.

The Greek word for 'crucifixion' does not differentiate between what we can call Crucifixion, and driving a stake into the heart of a person tied to a tree. However, John 19, verse 34, tells us that "one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his (Jesus's) side, and forthwith came there blood and water". Of course, if Jesus was dead on the cross, his body would not have bled when penetrated by a sword. Was he then really dead? If not, how could he have been resurrected?

Present understanding of the original meaning of the Bible is influenced by St. Jerome's translation into Latin, and the subsequent views of the Church of a millennium ago — the Church Latin Scholars —, and the 47 theologians from Westminster, Oxford and Cambridge, who used the Vulgate as their text for the King James I Authorised Version, which came out in 1611. However, our best clues as to the intention of the original authors comes from the Vulgate, whose translators saw the Greek texts.

It is believed that the first of these texts were the Epistles of St. Paul, written during his imprisonment between 50 and 60-64, when he was martyred. The Gospel of Mark was written about 68 from Rome, after the martyrdom of St. Paul and St. Peter. Matthew was written about 70 and he had sight of the Gospel of Mark, as did Luke, who wrote towards the end of the 1st century. The Revelation of St. John was written at about the same time. An attempt has been made to resolve discrepancies in details between the different Gospels by supposing that there was an original text, given the name ‘Q’, or that there were two original sources of evidence.

In the Old Testament, 21 miracles are attributed to Moses, 3 to Joshua, 7 to Kings, 3 to Elijah, 16 to Elishah (including inventing mouth-to-mouth resuscitation), and 3 occurred during the Babylonian captivity. In the New Testament, 40 miracles are recorded, including 5 in the Acts of the Apostles. However, the Oxford Etymological Dictionary (2nd edition, 1989, edited by R.W. Burchfield) tells us that "The Latin word 'Miraculum' in this sense, though common in patristic and later theology, is foreign to the Vulgate, in which the Greek word rendered 'miracle' in the English Bible, meaning 'sign', 'wonder', 'powers', or 'mighty works', is translated by 'signum', 'prodigium' and 'virtus'." None of these words imply anything supernatural. A 'miraculum' was simply a 'wonder', such as a beautiful mountain or a colourful sunset.

There are only two Parables in the Old Testament, on the deadliness of sin, and on the unproductive vineyard. However, there are many Parables about Jesus. Matthew contains 11, Mark 12 and Luke 16. Matthew and Luke have 3 in common, and Matthew, Mark and Luke 7. We are told that "the locality in which many of the Parables were uttered is hinted at in the persons and actions of the stories." However, 'parable' originally meant comparison, and there was no suggestion that the parables, when written, were not believed by the writers to be literally true.

Legends were stories read out in Churches and to children to illustrate the deeds of heroes and saints as examples of how to live an upright life. The word 'Legend' is a gerund of the word 'legere', to read. There is no suggestion that the legends recounted untrue events or supernatural interventions in the early theology.

The concept of heresy arose probably with Theodosius I (379-395); in Cunctos Populos (Cod. Theod. XVI i.2), he wrote:

"According to the apostolic teaching and the doctrine of the Gospel, let us believe the one
deity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, in equal majority and in a holy Trinity. We authorise the followers of this law to assume the title of Catholic Christians; but, as for others, since, in our judgement, they are foolish madmen, we decree that they be branded with the ignominious name of heretics... They will suffer in the first place the chastisement of divine condemnation, and in the second place the punishment, which our authority, in accordance with the will of Heaven, shall decide to inflict”.

In ‘Nullus haereticus’, 381 (Cod. Theod. XVI v.6), Theodosius says “Let them be entirely excluded even from the thresholds of churches,... If they attempt any disturbance,...they (should) be expelled outside the walls of the cities, so that the Catholic churches throughout the world may be restored to the orthodox bishops who hold the faith of Nicea.” (Bettenson, H. Documents of the Christian Church. Oxford University Press, London, 1943).

Priscillian, the Bishop of Abala, taught Manichean Gnosticism, and was probably the first person to be executed for heresy in 385; this was on the grounds that his (very ascetic) teaching led to immorality. In the reign of Theodosius II in 382, heresy was made a capital offence.

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), the distinguished theologian, in Summe Theologica, ii Q xi, Article III, answered the question as to whether heretics should be tolerated, as follows: “I reply that... two considerations are to be kept in mind (i) on their side, (ii) on the side of the Church; (i) there is the sin, whereby they deserve not only to be separated from the Church by excommunication, but also to be shut off from the world by death... (ii) But on the Church side, there is mercy... after a first and a second admonition... The Church gives up hope of his conversion and takes thought of the safety of others, by separating him from the Church... by excommunication, and, further, leaves him to the secular court, to be exterminated from the world by death.”

This justification was often used for the Inquisition, which lasted for 900 years, until 1812, and cruelly claimed the lives of 10,000,000. Many of them were burned alive, or tortured to death; others were implicated by those suffering torture, or were members of their families. A person accused by the Inquisition on the evidence of anyone including women, minors and mentally ill people — none of whom was qualified to give evidence in other cases — did not even have the right to know the charges against him or her. In 1400, Henry IV enacted the ‘Law about Burning Heretics’. The last person in Britain burned for disbelief was a Scottish medical student in Edinburgh in 1694.

Such repressive measures ensured that, in Christian countries until the Renaissance, everyone believed the literal truth of everything in the Old and New Testaments, or publicly avowed that they did. Even today, the fonts of religious knowledge, the Pope, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Metropolitan of the Russian Orthodox Church, etc., believe in miracles and parables. Do they believe that the events described in them actually happened?

The word ‘heresy’ comes from a Greek Word, meaning the ‘act of choosing’ or ‘the choice of attachment’. Josephus (37-95) used the word in that sense, as a neutral word without disparagement, but later Christian writers used it as a term of abuse.

My conclusion is that the earliest Greek writers of the Gospels were describing events which they believed to have occurred. When the Renaissance questioned fundamental beliefs, theologians changed the original meanings of the words now translated as miracles, parables, allegories, symbols and legends to permit their followers to weaken the beliefs that such events actually happened. They used new meanings fashioned in the late 1st and early 2nd millenia as bridges between truth and untruth. This was necessitated probably most cogently by Charles Darwin, who showed that the Genesis account of creation was unlikely to be a true description of events which took place in 6 days. Religious people had to obfuscate the distinction between whether the events really happened or not, by changing the meaning of the words to describe them. I am suggesting that leaders of the Judaeo-Christian-Moslem religions have been forced into this casuistic strategy by the growing scepticism of the majority of their followers.

It is worth adding that this fairly deliberate strategy is not confined to religious beliefs. It is widespread in politics and science as well, but that is another story.
THE KEY TO SECULAR SEXUAL MORALITY:
FULFIL, ACCEPT AND RESPECT

Summary of a Sunday afternoon lecture given on May 26th 1991
by FRANCIS BENNISON


Sex is the thing our society most gets wrong. That is why my book is dedicated to those not entirely happy in their sexuality. It spells out a system of secular sexual ethics which is not my own personal idiosyncratic system, for of what interest or use would that be? No, the object of the book is to describe the ethical system actually practised by the majority of people in our western society who reject religious teaching on sex. They do not believe that anything goes. On the contrary, most of them are highly moral folk. The only trouble is that no one so far has stopped to write down the moral system they practise and believe in.

I can best describe the book by saying what it is for, and what it is against.

To start with, it is for sex. It is for the acceptance of sex, for giving respect to sex, and for sexual fulfilment. It is for fidelity. It is for human happiness, achieved by promoting the joy of sex. It is for the idea that from the days of nappies and carry-cots children are sexual creatures, and can be ruined for life by the denial of their sexuality. It is for the principle of female self-rule, or a woman’s hegemony over her own body.

What is the book against? It is against sex-negativism, prudery, dislike of the body, and discrimination against people on the ground of their sexual orientation. It is against the Sleaze Law, the titillating society, the Henry Moore syndrome, and the appalling standard of the sexual services provided for us.

At the heart of the book is the Code of 60 clauses in which are spelt out what I believe to be the principles on which most of us act. These are discussed one by one in the body of the book, and then set out together at the end. There are 20 chapters, of which the first eight deal with the general ethical principles governing the subject.

At the start of the book it is suggested that secular morality is based on reason and conscience. We all have a duty of ethical understanding, that is to study and absorb moral principles. We also have a duty of ethical action, requiring us to live our lives according to those principles once we have decided what they are. Both these duties should be taught to our children.

The book goes on to deal with the basic moral duty of sex-acceptance, the reverse of the sex-negativism induced in us by the teachings of the Judaeo-Christian religion. Our culture says no to sex because our culture is sex-negative. It is sex-negative because it believes that SEX IS BAD. It is bad because it is dirty, animal, base and unseemly. Submission to it is weakening, and wears out the body. It produces unwanted children or unpleasant abortions. It spreads disease and endangers relationships. It is unaesthetic. It is unspiritual God hates it.

The rejection of sex causes sex-guilt, which again is harmful. The nudity taboo robs us of our natural bodies and fosters prurient curiosity: sex disorders and dysfunctions ensue. The remedy is a whole-hearted acceptance of sexuality by all, particularly anything to do with the rearing of children.

Next the book turns to a vital part of its message, the duty of sexrespect. Here is the proposition by which this is expressed.

Since sexuality is the source of all human life, and is of profound emotional concern to all human beings in the living of their lives, we should treat our own or another’s sexual organs, functions and desires with respect, even reverence (the duty of sex-respect). We should therefore not commit any act that degrades or trivialises them.

Finally in this opening part of the book come two chapters dealing with the duty of
sex-fulfilment. First, sexual need and the nature of the orgasm are explained. Then sexual joy is discussed, exemplified by that wonderful poem of Browning's *De Gustibus*.

The book goes on deal with the provision of various kinds of sexual services. It argues that the following services are required by society.

1. **Education and training.** Services dealing with all aspects of sex education, and training in sexual techniques. The former goes on being the subject of fierce battles. Training in sexual techniques continues to be unavailable, even for payment.
2. **Facilities for orgasm.** Comforts offered by what the Sleaze Syndrome calls courtesans, madams, prostitutes, strumpets, harlots, whores, models, callgirls, gigolos, hostesses, rentboys, escorts, relief masseuses and so on.
3. **Enhancement of the orgasm.** Practical aids, such as porno magazines, vibrators, lubricants and sex videos, which help to ensure (for those who need them) that the orgasm, whether within or outside marriage, and whether solo or accompanied, is as rich and fulfilling as it can be made.
4. **Introduction services.** Where a person lacks a suitable sex partner, introduction services help him or her to find one. Often the law prevents this however. It is one of life's tragedies that for almost every person deprived of sexual fulfilment there is, somewhere unknown, another, who, if discoverable, would be a perfect match.
5. **Services to deal with unwanted pregnancy.** Provision of moral forms of contraception, sterilisation, and abortion.
6. **Information services.** Information on the availability, quality and price of the services just described.

Do we get these services in the required quantity and quality? No. A restrictive system of law and social practice inspired by sex-negativism ensures that we do not. We all pay the penalty imposed by what I call the Sleaze Law, which the book expresses as follows: *prohibition of a strongly demanded service merely ensures its provision at a debased level and high social cost.*

It is commonly objected that it is immoral for sex services to be provided for money: This is a strange objection, since our society functions on the basis that people's demands will be met by commercial enterprise. Our food, our houses, our cars, and almost everything else we consume are provided in this way. It is irrelevant that the demand for sexual services concerns an intensely intimate and personal part of our lives. All such intimate areas are commonly served by commercial interests, from cradle to grave. What ought to concern us is not that commercial interests supply any of our sexual wants (and make a profit out of it), but that they are prevented by legal rules and social attitudes from supplying more of them — and at a reasonable price and to an adequate standard.

The chapters in my book on the duty of sex-fulfilment go on to add a plea for understanding of categories of people who are often thought to have no sexual needs at all, or at least none that society should bother about. These include the old, the physically or mentally handicapped, people in closed institutions such as hospitals or prisons, and those serving in the armed forces.

After a chapter on sexual acts, and the important topics of the need for consent, the immorality of sexual harassment and the vexed question of sado-masochism, the book turns to the area of marriage, pair-bonding, fertility and child rearing. This of course bristles with ethical problems, which the book does its best to explore constructively. Should society tolerate the growing fad for producing children out of wedlock? Is secular marriage a necessary and valuable safeguard for the offspring of a union and its stability? What is the place of fidelity as a concept? What of incest? What of contraception and abortion? Are the pro-Life campaigners justified in what they do, or are they wantonly, even immorally, spreading guilt and distress?

Two chapters follow which deal with a very hot potato: infant sexuality and child abuse. It is the book's contention that the way we treat infants from the sexual point of view implants in some of them the seeds of later neurosis, sexual crime and marital disaster. In most infants it implants the seeds of later unhappiness. The book explains how this happens, and what we can do to prevent it. A sexual revolution is called for. What form should it take?
I believe we need to accept that people are sexual creatures from the earliest age, and rear them accordingly. With our infants we must be open and welcoming about bodily parts and bodily functions. We need to drop the old idea that sex is "dirty", and that the flesh lusteth against the spirit. The flesh and the spirit are equally parts of the human make-up, and equally deserving of our respect. We must reject the craven doctrine of Ignore and Deny.

So we ought to educate our children about sex, and train them in sexual techniques. We must be prepared to see them enjoy sex, and help them to do this. At the same time adults must not exploit children for their own ends, or use them selfishly for sexual gratification. Respect for the child's sexuality must be an aspect of respect for the child itself.

The final chapters of the book deal with three more contentious moral areas. What are the ethics of homosexuality, the ethics of prostitution, and the ethics of pornography? The chapter on homosexuality starts with three simple precepts.

1. It is not immoral to have sex with a person of the same gender.
2. It is immoral to discriminate against a person on the ground that he or she is a homosexual (whether practising or not).
3. It is not immoral to advance the view that homosexuality is a natural condition rather than a remediable disorder, that homosexuals are to be encouraged to enhance their life-style, or that a good family life is possible for homosexuals and others (including children) associated with them.

Then follows an account of the history of the wicked attitude known as homophobia. Why is it wicked? Because, like racism, it dismisses a person for something that is natural to a him or her, and that he or she cannot help. Homosexuals exist. Whether the reason is environment or heredity, or a combination of the two, they have the right to say to the rest of society: "I am here: I function in certain ways: accept that".

It will not surprise you, bearing in mind what I said earlier about the Sleaze Law, that the chapter on the ethics of prostitution argues that this can be moral. Often, in the way it is forced to operate in our society, it is undoubtedly immoral. Women, boys and even men are wickedly exploited. There life-style is often sordid. Many are subjected to the iniquitous pimp system. They are harassed by the police and pestered by do-gooders who disapprove of what they do. All that can and should be changed.

When it comes to pornography, what is the moralist to say? Reject it out of hand? I don't think so. As with the rejection of God, we first need to ask what the term means. For the purposes of the book, I start by saying that pornography is sexually explicit material, whether written, visual, or aural. That answers the question in one way, because even Mrs Whitehouse would hesitate before saying that all sexually explicit material is immoral. What about the statue of Adam by Michaelangelo? what about a medical textbook? What about the demure drawing of a little boy in a child's sex education manual?

Using this initial definition of pornography the book goes on to divide the material up into five categories, as shown by the following precept. Different moral criteria apply to each category.

Pornographic, that is explicitly sexual, material can be divided into: (1) non-erotic material; (2) perverted or debased material, (3) stimulative or erotic material, (4) educational and artistic material, and (5) political or destabilising material. Given material may fall into more than one of these categories.

My book ends with a chapter on what I call the Garden of Happy Emotions. A latter-day substitute for the Garden of Eden, it too is a difficult place to enter, for we do not have emotions: they have us. All we can seek to do is tame them, and conduce them into the sevice of our happiness. It is a worthwhile and possible enterprise.