

Ethical Record

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· BARBARA SMOKER'S AWARD FOR A 'LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT'



On 8 July 2005 during the international conference in Paris on "Separation of Religion and State", SPES veteran Barbara Smoker was honoured in the Sorbonne by the International Humanist & Ethical Union with the presentation by the IHEU president, Roy Brown, of a 'lifetime achievement' award for "Distinguished Service to Humanism", embodied in an engraved silver plate on a varnished wooden stand. Barbara's acceptance speech is on page 2.

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Obituary

We regret to report the death of Giles Hart (obituary appears on p22)

BARBARA SMOKER'S AWARD FOR A 'LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT'

"I understand it is customary on such occasions for the recipient to acknowledge those who helped to make the award possible - and my first acknowledgment must be to the good nuns who indoctrinated me with such *poppycock* that, once I realised I had been conned, I felt impelled to spend the rest of my life decrying it and warning others against it.

My second acknowledgment is to writers in the humanist tradition, from ancient times to the middle of the twentieth century, who helped to crystallise my emergent ideas. Among those who were still writing and lecturing in the late 1940s and early 50s was the charismatic H J Blackham; and whenever he was the advertised speaker at the quaintly named Ethical Church in west London I took to making the journey there to hear him. Then I followed him to Conway Hall - and those venues became my university.

In 1952 Harold Blackham co-founded IHEU; in 1963 he finalised the transformation of the Ethical Union into the British Humanist Association; and in 1974 he was honoured with the very same award with which I have been honoured today. He was then 71; and as he is still quietly enjoying life, at the age of 102, I am wondering if the award actually confers longevity.

My third acknowledgment is to the National Secular Society, whose members elected me as its president some 35 years ago and put up with me in that office for the next 25 years - an office that opened many doors for me. Finally, I would like to thank those of you who selected me to receive this award — for merely enjoying myself all these years and doing just what I wanted to do. Thank you so much."

CAN PHILOSOPHY HELP US UNDERSTAND RUSSIA?

Lesley Chamberlain

Lecture to the Ethical Society, 12 June, 2005

To understand the new-old world of contemporary Russia, one has to see it from a traditional Russian point of view. The country which has been struggling to find a post-Communist identity has at last touched base with old ways of authority. Though the West finds its judicial toughness hard to swallow, authority justified by the need to hold the social fabric together is what has to be understood as the reality of Russia. Indeed, it's why millions put up with Soviet Communism for so long and why many Russians hanker after a past of which they were proud.

Outrage At Khodorkovsky's Billions

It's easy to understand the outrage where money is concerned. For the past fifteen years Russians and Western observers alike have been scandalized by the huge flow of capital out of Russia, in the hands of a few super-rich businessmen who appear to have bled their old country dry. As *The Guardian* pointed out in its measured response to the outcome of the Khodorkovsky 'show trial', half the Russian people earn less than £100 a month.

But at the same time the whiff of injustice over the whole affair, with Khodorkovsky singled out because he tried to use his money to step over into politics, has made him overnight a worldwide symbol of Russia's apparent renewed readiness to default on democracy. In Russia itself he's already being seen, and likes to see himself, as a martyr for freedom. Commentators were quick to point out that whether he liked it or not, Khodorkovsky would become a rallying-point for the opposition. The complexity of the case, if Khodorkovsky and his similarly sentenced partner Platon Lebedev, succeed in taking it to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, will be a high-profile test of the intelligence of that moral-political judiciary.

The case is not so very unusual as trials of financial criminals go. As the former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev was quick to point out in the wake of the verdict, 'With his talent for tax-dodging he [Khodorkovsky] would have been behind bars in America long ago.'

But what the West finds harder to accept is the idea that Khodorkovsky and his kind have also committed a moral crime and also deserve punishment on that basis. Gorbachev spoke of the oligarchs who had 'plundered' their homeland. Treading it way carefully, *The Guardian* rightly observed in an editorial that Russia 'is a land where justice is bound to the concept of equality.'

Ideally, when and if the Khodorkovsky/Lebedev case ever gets to Strasbourg, people from right across the scale of the Russian intelligentsia would testify what Russia means in terms of a moral crime against the state. They might not succeed in justifying it internationally, but at least they would show that today's Russia is absolutely intelligible in terms of its own history and literature.

There are heartrending stories from both fiction and life, of men sent to Siberia. Their 'crimes' were often outrageous crimes *of the state* against innocent individuals whose only wrong step was to have, or be perceived to have, subversive thoughts. Dostoevsky, who wrote the terrifying *Notes from the House of the Dead* after he was exiled for membership of a subversive socialist circle in 1849, presented a picture of

suffering only Stalin's Gulag victims would better.

Khodorkovsky is unlikely to encounter such a world of penal torture. The editor of a Russian prison magazine asked for a comment on the oligarch's fate told the newspaper *The Moscow Times* that, by contrast with the past, wherever he is sent to work out his sentence, the new inmate was likely to be treated especially well by administrators hoping for favours on his release.

Dostoevsky's 'Man of Schism'

Dostoevsky meanwhile came to understand both sides of the Russian coin when, some years after *Notes*, he wrote *Crime and Punishment*. You can read that novel as a detective story with certain flaws, but you would do better to understand it as a study of what Russia means by the moral-patriotic dimension of crime. The fact that the book's hero, Raskolnikov, killed an old woman was only one of his offences. Who he was, and why he did it, mattered more. His name means, roughly, 'a man of schism' and his crime was to adopt a way of thinking likely to split the Russian social fabric. As for how he threatened to affect that split, just look at the early pages of the novel when the young law student experimented mentally with the power of 'reason'.

'Reason' in this sense, understood as a source of power associated with the democratic ideals of the French Revolution, with individualism and with atheism, was always suspect in traditional Russia because of its potential to rip an older, quasi-feudal and quasi-religious style of community apart. Raskolnikov during his European study period argues from first principles that he has every right to kill the old woman – the body of Russia, one might say. But when he regains his Russian beliefs he comes to see the wickedness of his action and repents.

When I was researching my history of Russian philosophy, martyrdom was a recurring feature. A fine thinker influenced by the French Enlightenment and also by British eighteenth-century humanism, Alexander Radishchev, campaigned against serfdom in Russia, was imprisoned by the apparently philosophy-loving Catherine the Great, and committed suicide a broken man. Twenty five years later, on perhaps the most famous occasion when 'reason' spilled over into Russian politics, the thinkers influenced by the French Revolution who wanted Russia to have a constitution were mostly bundled off to Siberia after they bungled a public protest, but a few of them were hanged. The occasion was the celebrated Decembrist Insurrection of 1825, and since it is known to every Russian school child, didn't Inna Khodorkovskaya have it in mind when she told the press she would follow her husband to his penal colony? The wives of the Decembrists, who trekked on foot to Siberia to join them, are amongst the most famous women in Russian history.

Following the Decembrist Insurrection the few philosophers who existed were purged from the Russian universities and a primitive tsarist version of what would become Lenin's and Stalin's political police kept watch over the national cultural life for the next twenty-five years. Things seemed to get better in the 1860s, but by the middle of what began as a liberal decade the philosophers who purveyed individualism and freedom were once more back in exile or prison, from where they usually had the chance to escape abroad. The anarchist Bakunin got away but Chernyshevsky, the theorist of social equality who would become Lenin's favourite, stayed to write most of his works in prison. The list goes on and of course the issues were never quite so simple, but it's fair to say the Russian tradition has been built up on spectacular divorces between thinking men and their homeland, or else their willing self-sacrifice.

Lenin himself was exiled to Siberia for three years when he was in opposition, and spent almost fifteen years of his short life abroad. When he in turn took power he forcibly exiled more than fifty opposition thinkers abroad. Stalin didn't bother to exile anyone troublesome. He had them killed. But he was an aberration.

'Be Reliable, Or Else'

The authoritarian Russian norm is something closer to what Lenin took over from tsarist Russia as the state's expectation of the individuals I am calling for argument's sake 'philosophers'. But you can see them as any Russians enabled, in those days by the capacity for independent thought, in present times by the ownership of vast wealth, to rise above the condition of mass society and change it as they thought fit. Against the threat of independent thought the doublet of imperial requirement was 'be reliable, or else' and what it meant was 'stay on-side' 'don't undermine the fabric of the country'. No wonder the Soviet Union took the habit over from tsarist Russia.

Of course, both in tsarist and Soviet times, nearly all the best thinkers infringed against the code of enforced loyalty, because the repressive regimes they endured were, respectively, cruel and crueller still. Still most would have stayed in Russia to work for a more just society had they only been allowed; and most understood that the pride as well as the price of being Russian entailed a profound commitment to an equal society. The single great experience of the traditional Russian mind, nurtured by the country's literature, history, and enduring social difficulties, has been the trauma of individual freedom, as a political and moral value, set against the equal or greater value of social cohesion. If I may be so bold, Russians themselves rarely put it so clearly, because, being deeply caught up in their traditions, they don't always see their difference from the West, just as we don't see theirs.

But a Russian philosopher writing in 1993 offered what I think was such a brilliant description of the traditional mindset that it ought to be in every ministry of foreign affairs the world over:

The sense of...Russia cannot be understood separately from the fact that this society is internally disorganized, periodically inclines towards localism, to disintegration, that it has reached the proportions of schism. For this reason the striving for wholeness...in Russia... can be considered as a reaction to the negative aspects of socio-cultural development...The practical pathos of Russian philosophy is directed at preventing the falling away of the part from the whole, which has an infinite number of forms: ...the falling away of the people from authority, of the intelligentsia from the people, the individual from the collective, and so on.

There you have it, the problem for both Russian philosophy and the Russian state: the idea of what a decent Russia should be, the terrible problems of reasoning entailed in fighting for it, in struggling to keep the country coherent, and justifying the authoritarian struggle to others. In the old days they put the philosophers in prison when they threatened to go too far in the direction of freedom. Now, if the Khodorkovsky case is a precedent, they jail the men who have built up their wealth at suffering Russia's expense and threaten to make the place fall apart. It makes sense, even if that sense is painful for freedom-loving outsiders to accept. □

Note: Lesley Chamberlain's *Motherland: A Philosophical History of Russia* is to be published in paperback by Atlantic Books.

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

PREJUDICE OR REASON

Richard Baron

Lecture to the Ethical Society, 5 June 2005

My title sets prejudice against reason. It might seem that there could be no contest. Reason should win every time. That would, after all, be the only reasonable outcome. While I generally endorse that view, I will argue that our need to understand the world makes the reality less straightforward. We have to perform a delicate balancing act between prejudice and reason.

First, prejudice needs to be defined. We can recognize many examples easily enough. Most conspicuously, some people are prejudiced against other people on grounds of race, sex or creed. But I want to cover a wider field than these obvious examples, while still including them.

In the literal sense, a prejudice is a belief that is arrived at without considering the evidence for and against it: the person with the belief has prejudged the issue. That is the core of my definition, but I will enlarge it by including a belief where the person has considered the evidence, and has retained the belief even though there is no better evidence for it than for the alternatives. In the worst cases, they may retain the belief even though they are aware of strong evidence against it.

Arguments Against Prejudice: Moral And Prudential

Prejudices are generally recognized to be bad. There are two arguments against prejudices, the moral argument and the prudential argument.

The moral argument comes to the fore when the objects of prejudice are other human beings. Prejudice against a person, or against a group to which that person belongs (for example an ethnic group), shows a lack of respect for that person. It can easily be very hurtful to that person. It can seriously harm that person's prospects in life. Most moralities likely to command widespread acceptance today would say that we simply should not prejudice humans in this way.

The prudential argument against prejudice is that we get on best if we understand the world correctly. That requires paying attention to the evidence, and prejudice can easily make us overlook some important evidence. In particular, it can make us miss out on some of the best opportunities. For example, an employer who is prejudiced against a particular ethnic group may fail to hire some very talented employees. But the prudential argument can also apply when the objects of prejudice are not human beings at all. For example, someone might be prejudiced against South American wines, and might therefore miss out on some exquisite tastes.

If we accept these arguments against prejudice, we have good reason to discard each prejudice as and when we identify it. However, this can be difficult. The brain is not like a computer's hard disk, where files can be precisely and decisively amended or deleted at the touch of a button. The brain is a sticky mush, and getting a belief out of it can be like trying to get a clump of breadcrumbs out of a pot of honey using a knife.

Two Deep Prejudices

It is especially hard to rid ourselves of deep prejudices, and I will turn to these now. Deep prejudices are those that are central to our thinking, and that we could not discard without making major changes to our thoughts about many other things, or changes to our whole way of thinking. A prejudice against South American wines is not like that. It is an isolated prejudice, and we could change it without making many changes to our beliefs about other things. On the other hand, a prejudice such as the belief that only science provides reliable knowledge is likely to be a deep prejudice.

Of course someone could have a well-founded belief that only science provides reliable knowledge, having studied the evidence and considered the arguments thoroughly, but then it would not be a prejudice at all. I am only concerned with the belief when it is held without careful examination. Then it would be a deep prejudice, because if someone did stop believing that only science provided reliable knowledge, it would change many things. It would change the way in which he appraised the evidence for and against other beliefs: he would no longer only consider the sort of quantitative evidence that scientists seek. It might also open his eyes to the ways in which literature, and indeed all the arts, can teach us things about humanity. And so on.

Another example of a deep prejudice is the prejudice that British history should be read as embodying a politically progressive tendency, moving towards a liberal democracy under a constitutional monarch. This was the view attacked by Herbert Butterfield in 1931, when he called it the Whig interpretation of history. Someone who thinks like that, or who has comparable beliefs about the history of any other country, is at risk of misinterpreting quite a lot of the country's history. History is too messy, and has too many twists and turns, to be fitted into such a neat framework.

Correspondingly, someone who recognizes that she holds such a prejudice about the history of a country, and who manages to discard that prejudice, will start to think about the history of the country in a different way. Many of her beliefs about the value of current political institutions could also change. Someone who comes to realize that current institutions are not the result of an inevitable march of progress may very easily start to wonder whether they are the best possible institutions. It will then be natural to think about changing the current institutions in some way, or even replacing them.

Deep Prejudices Are Essential

These far-reaching effects of discarding deep prejudices makes it very tempting not to discard them. However, there is more to our retention of deep prejudices than a lazy desire to avoid the effort of re-drawing our whole mental map of the world. Deep prejudices are essential to life. Basic, unchallenged ways of thinking help us to make sense of the world.

For example, we need to know where we should go for knowledge. The foregoing example of a prejudice in favour of science gives us one answer to that question. An opposing prejudice, that a study of literature is the best way to understand humanity, if not the cosmos, gives us a different answer. But we need

some answer to be going along with, otherwise we will not know where to start our search for knowledge.

The example of a prejudiced view of history illustrates the same point. History is meaningless and incomprehensible if it is just a catalogue of facts. We need some guiding principle that we can use to organize the facts into a coherent story. That might be a belief that the history of a country embodies a tendency to political progress, or a belief that everything should be seen in terms of class war driven by economic realities, or some other belief. Any historian will start with some general approach, rather than just thrashing about at random in a heap of facts. Of course a good historian will review her chosen approach occasionally, to see whether it is fruitful and not a source of error.

A basic belief may even be most effective as a deep prejudice. We cannot rely on a basic belief to help us to make sense of the world if we are continually worrying about its correctness. So at the risk of falling into error, we may allow ourselves to adopt deep prejudices as the most effective method of making sense of the world.

Quine's 'Continuous Fabric' Of Beliefs

We can go further in mapping out the role of basic principles in our thinking. The philosopher W V O Quine, in a 1951 essay called *Two Dogmas of Empiricism*, gave us a fertile image of our beliefs as a continuous fabric. All our beliefs are interconnected, either directly or indirectly. When we realize that our beliefs are not quite right, we have a choice about which beliefs to revise in order to alleviate the tension in the fabric of beliefs. Any belief is theoretically capable of revision.

At the edge of the fabric lie beliefs that are pretty directly connected with individual experiences, such as the belief that there is a tree ten metres in front of me. I check that belief by walking over to the tree. If I push it and find that it falls over because it is only a paper model of a tree, I simply change my belief that there was a tree there. It would be silly to look for any other belief to change, even though I could concoct some story that I had hallucinated the fall of the tree, so as to preserve my original belief that there was a tree.

Further away from the edge lie beliefs such as the belief that paper objects tend to be lighter than they look. We would need quite a lot of convincing that this was not so, especially because it is connected with a lot of other beliefs, for example the belief that a person can easily lift 500 sheets of paper and put them into a computer's printer. If we were presented with lots of heavy paper objects, there would be a tension in our fabric of beliefs. Obviously something would be wrong. But this time we would have a real choice about what to do in order to alleviate the tension. We could discard our belief that paper objects tend to be lighter than they look. But we could also discard the belief that the objects presented to us were really made of paper. They might, for example, have been made of metal disguised as paper. Then we could retain our original belief that paper objects tend to be lighter than they look.

At the very centre of our fabric of beliefs are basic logical beliefs, such as the belief that if a statement is true, it is not false as well. It would be incredibly

difficult to dislodge a belief like that. But it would not, in Quine's view, be absolutely unthinkable. Perhaps there is some deep problem with our concept of truth, a problem that might only be exposed by a very difficult task such as interpreting quantum mechanics. In that case, even basic beliefs about the relationship between truth and falsity could be at risk.

This image of our fabric of beliefs can give us a new understanding of our deep prejudices. We can see them as beliefs that are fairly central in our fabric of beliefs, not easily dislodged by isolated bits of evidence. They can be dislodged if there is enough evidence, so that discarding some central beliefs is the only sensible way to remove the tension caused by the conflict between the evidence and the more central beliefs. It would be fairly respectable to hold a deep prejudice that was held because it was needed to make sense of the world, and because there was no particular evidence against it. But it really would be contrary to reason to retain a deep prejudice when overwhelming evidence had built up against it.

The deep prejudices that I have discussed may seem to be a far cry from the shallow prejudices against groups of people, or against some wines, discussed at the start of this talk. But once they are identified as prejudices, they can be confronted by the same moral and prudential arguments. If, for example, a deep prejudice about how to construe a country's history leads some people to attack or denigrate other people, there is surely a moral argument against the prejudice. And a deep prejudice about how to understand the world may lead to serious mistakes. That would allow a strong prudential argument against the prejudice. The dilemma is that it is also prudent to make progress in understanding the world, and that requires us to take a chance on some deep prejudices. □

**DAN CHATTERTON,
ATHEISTIC, COMMUNISTIC, SCORCHER 1820-1895**

Terry Liddle

Lecture to the Ethical Society, 17 July 2005

In his history of British Anarchism, *The Slow Burning Fuse* (Paladin, London, 1978) John Quail wrote of Dan Chatterton that he deserves to be rescued from oblivion. In a period, the late 19th century, when remarkable people were common among both secularists and socialists, Chatterton was one of the most remarkable of all, a one man revolution against church and state.

Chatterton was born in August 1820 into an artisan family of fairly comfortable means in Clerkenwell in London. His mother was a Christian but Chatterton was early influenced by his father who worked as a furniture laquerer and who took the young lad to radical and freethought meetings at Richard Carlile's Rotunda in Blackfriars Road.

From an early age Chatterton suffered ill health and was sent away to be educated in Aylesbury and later Barnet. His father suffered an accident and changed his work from japaning to selling coal. Chatterton was apprenticed to a shoemaker in whose workshop he had his political education. Shoemakers were

then in the vanguard of working class politics. Without success Chatterton tried to start his own business. By 1871 he was listed as a travelling bookseller and later as a news vendor. In later years he made a slim living selling radical papers and posting bills. He claimed to have been a waiter in a coffee house and a baker's deliverer and even to have cut up a corpse for a doctor.



Dan Chatterton

Chatterton became involved in Chartism and claimed to have been badly injured in fighting between Chartists and police on Clerkenwell Green. In 1855 Chatterton joined the army, doubtless like Bradlaugh for the bounty. He spent much of his two years service in a military hospital bed.

Returning to London, Chatterton married Emma Cook, who died aged 32 in St Pancras Workhouse. He married again in 1867 to Emily Scott aged 21. Her fate is unknown; she was not living with Chatterton in his later life. Several children died young. Only one, Alfred, reached adulthood. He was disabled and lived with Chatterton. His circumstances undoubtedly put a sharp edge on his politics.

In the 1860s Chatterton was active in the Reform League participating in the Hyde Park riot of July 23, 1866. In the early 1870s he was a leading figure in the Land and Labour League. He wrote for its paper the *Republican* and spoke at its meetings. Unlike many League members he was not influenced by the Chartism of Bronterre O'Brien. Nor was he a member of the First International. He was, however, involved with the Universal Republican League.

The *National Reformer* for 26 May, 1872 reported a URL meeting in Camberwell where 'citizen Chatterton' spoke on land and money lords. It is not recorded if he spoke at Church Street in the morning or at the Rose and Crown in the afternoon. Either way the land and money lords would be in for a good tongue lashing. Chatterton always admonished the poor to revolt against their oppressors and was always saddened when they didn't.

Chatterton was also in the Patriotic Society, which having been evicted from the Hole in the Wall near Hatton Garden, purchased what became the Patriotic Club in Clerkenwell Green (now Marx House). He also served on the general committee of the Anti-Game Law League.

Chatterton's first pamphlet (1872) was in support of Metropolitan police officers who were agitating for a pay rise. It became a diatribe against all social and political privilege. Chatterton argued that once the police and army started to think for themselves they would join a popular revolt.

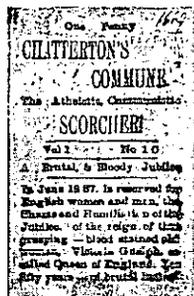
For the next twenty years there followed a stream of pamphlets, increasingly intemperate in language and wild in appearance. All were militantly atheistic and denounced the evils created by gin and gospel. The royal family and capitalist politicians were favourite targets. Victoria, he said, should become a washerwoman and Gladstone a bus conductor.

In an 1882 open letter to the Prince of Wales, Chatterton wrote: "... the revolution of the belly without brains, a revolution that will sweep you, Prince, and the entire gang of royal lurchers into the ranks of labour or off the face of the earth, like the vermin you are." The Windsors don't have such critics nowadays.

The Commune In England

The nearest he came to a political programme was in his pamphlet *The Commune in England*. Everyone over 20 would elect a senate to draft laws to be submitted within a month to referendum. These laws would have included free secular state education and nationalisation of land.

Chatterton was an active freethinker and had an exchange of letters with the Archbishop of Canterbury which was published in *The Times*. Amongst the publications he hawked were the *Freethinker* and the *National Reformer*. He was also involved in advocating women's rights and family limitation in his pamphlet *Babies and Bunny Rabbits*. He was an active worker for the Malthusian League.



*Chatterton's
Commune*

Around 1885 he established his own penny publication *Chatterton's Commune* which was often printed with odds and ends of type on flimsy yellow paper. Hand printed, it had a run of 100 copies. 'We are too hot for hell', he wrote, and 'Too mad for Hanwell'.

Chatterton was a powerful orator although many of his interventions were not well received. At a meeting organised by the Clerkenwell Branch of the Social Democratic Federation he threatened to decapitate the guest speaker Lord Brabazon. At a meeting at the Autonomie Club in 1890 the description by William Morris of the beauties of a socialist society had no effect on him. He merely remarked that hanging was necessary for the public good. EP Thompson deleted any mention of Chatterton from later editions of his biography of Morris.

Chatterton drifted towards the newly formed anarchist groups. He sold *Freedom* and spoke from the platform at a meeting to celebrate the Paris Commune and from the floor at a meeting addressed by Peter Kropotkin.

In a pamphlet Chatterton had written: 'Oh if there be a hell and the atheists are damned and double damned, at least give me warm quarters and respectable companions.' Chatterton wanted to be cremated. To fund this he sold photographs of himself at a shilling (5p) each. Alas he was to be disappointed. He was buried in a common grave in St Pancras cemetery in Finchley. The funeral ceremony was conducted by Robert Forder, a prominent secularist and radical publisher. Forder himself would be buried in a common grave.

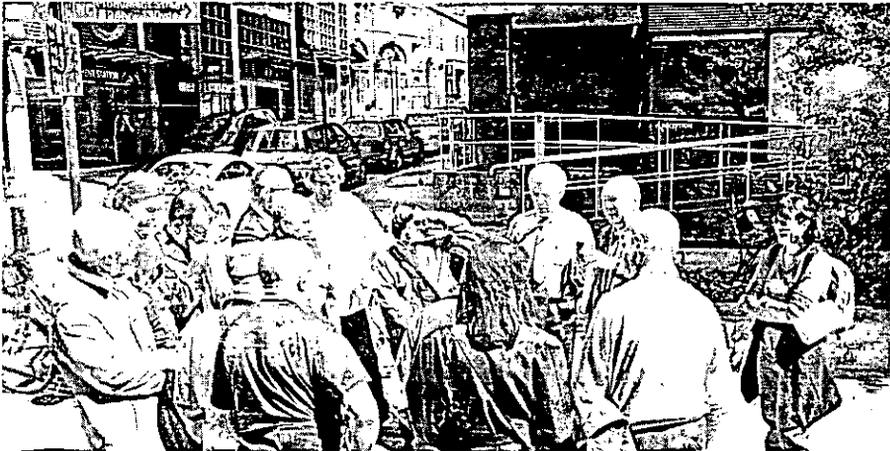
Sadly, we only know of Chatterton because of his habit of placing his writings in the British Museum. He was an eccentric but he was the sort of eccentric that secularism and socialism need. Without extremists like Chatterton there is a danger we will fall into the trap of wanting to offend nobody, even those who roundly deserve to be offended. □

MITHRAS IN LONDON

A walk for the South Place Ethical Society, 15 May 2005

Conducted by Mike Howgate

On 17 September 1954, the head of the Romano-Persian God Mithras was discovered in the archaeological excavation of a temple on the site of what is now Bucklersbury House near Bank in the City of London. This was the last day of the excavation and the site was due to be demolished the very next day. A report in the *Sunday Times* produced a flurry of letters to the paper and the Prime Minister of the day, Winston Churchill, became involved. It was decided the dig would continue for several more months and that then the temple remains would be moved to their present site in Queen Victoria Street. The excavation became the 'Time Team' of its day and on the first day it was open to the public it attracted ten thousand city workers to watch the progress of the dig. The resulting media sensation popularised London archaeology like nothing before or since.



Meeting at the Monument

Mithras, a god of Persian origin, was adopted by the Romans at some time in the first century C.E. It was an exclusively male cult with worship in temples which simulated the cave in which the god slew the primordial bull in order to bring life to the earth. The initiate could rise through seven levels including Raven, Lion and 'Bride of Mithras' to become Pater. The Mithraic feast was a major ceremony and was likened by Christians to the Eucharist. Several other similarities to Christian belief led to the severe suppression of Mithraism by Christians in the fourth century when theirs became the official religion of the Roman Empire.

1. The first stop is in the archway below the tower of Saint Magnus the Martyr on Lower Thames Street. This was the original site of London Bridge and up against one of the pillars is a wooden piling from the Roman waterfront. The Thames was much wider then than it is today and Lower Thames Street is probably on the line of the northern shore.

2. Opposite Cannon Street station and set into the wall of the 'Overseas Chinese

Banking Corporation' building is the 'London stone'. This was a Roman milestone and possibly the point from which all roads were measured in the province of Britain.

3. We then proceed to Bucklersbury House which was the site of the Mithraeum excavated in 1954. Bucklersbury House contains a series of casts of some of the most prominent remains of the excavations. The originals are on display in the Roman Gallery of the Museum of London along with previous discoveries at the site. The North and South foyer areas also display fine etched glass scenes by the artist John Hutton (circa 1958). John Hutton, despite doing many works of an ecclesiastical nature, (his major work being the great glass screen at Coventry Cathedral) was a confirmed atheist.

South Foyer (Cannon Street entrance). Above the reception desk is a head of Seraphis, the Greco-Egyptian god of the underworld and fertility. The curly hair and beard are particularly well detailed. On top of the head is a corn measure, or modius, a symbol of fertility, which is decorated with three olive twigs bearing leaves and fruit. The emperor Septimus Severus adopted Seraphis as his 'cult' god and also affected a similar hairstyle. In cases on south wall, which cannot be seen from the outside, are copies of a colossal Head of Mithras and a small Bacchus group. Above them are engraved glass panels by John Hutton depicting scenes of Roman Londinium.



Seraphis

East Foyer (Walbrook entrance). High on the north wall is the head of Athena / Minerva which would have been crowned with a Grecian helmet of gilt bronze.

North Foyer (Bucklersbury entrance). Above the reception desk is the head of Mithras. This beautifully carved head of the Romano-Persian god wearing his Phrygian cap and with his eyes cast upwards in ecstasy and averted from the plunging knife would have been part of a life size bull-slaying scene. The neck had been broken before burial, probably by Christian desecrators.

Above the entrance is an exceptionally fine series of engraved glass panels by John Hutton depicting Mithras as Bull-slayer with attendants, other gods and personifications of the elements, winds, seasons, etc.

In the centre Mithras, staring forwards, plunges his knife into the bull while a dog and snake lap at the blood. On the ground to the rear a scorpion nips the bull's testicles. The exact relevance of these figures is unclear, though part of the symbolism may be astrological, Mithras being Orion with Taurus (the bull), Canis (the dog), Serpentes (the serpent) and Scorpio (the scorpion). Mithras' killing of the bull probably represents a sacrificial life-giving renewal and is the most frequently illustrated of the deeds of Mithras.

To the right of Mithras are Sol (the sun god), Cautes, a companion of Mithras holding a upwards pointing torch, symbolising light and life, the East Wind, the

Goddess Diana, two unknown figures, Air and Earth, Lachesis (spring?) and Clotho (summer?) and the North Wind. To the left are Luna (the moon goddess), Cautopates, a companion of Mithras with a downwards pointing torch symbolising darkness and death, the West Wind, the Goddess Venus, Seraphis, Minerva, Fire and Water, Winter and Autumn, and the South Wind.

4. Outside the North entrance and to the left is the reconstructed Walbrook Mithraeum on a podium slightly above street level. The orientation is incorrect but the basic outline of the temple can easily be made out. The nave is flanked by two isles which would have held benches on which the initiates could recline. The small size of the Mithraeum indicates that the congregation was tiny and probably confined to a military and mercantile elite. The sculptures were discovered in small pits in the floor in which they had been deliberately concealed probably to preserve them from further desecration.

5. Behind and below the Mithraeum is a Bull-slaying scene in tiles commissioned by Boddingtons the brewers. Note the bull has been emasculated and the scorpion is missing!

6. Guildhall courtyard and Art Gallery; The courtyard has the outline of the Roman Amphitheatre of about 80 CE marked out and some of the remains of the walls can be seen exposed in the basement of the Art Gallery.

7 The foundations of the S.W. corner of the wall of the fort of Londinium with a square tower can be seen here. The town wall heads off in a south westerly direction towards Newgate, with a culvert easily visible near the junction.

8. The originals of the Bucklersbury House casts can be seen in the Roman Gallery of the Museum of London together with other finds from the site including a miniature bull-slaying scene surrounded by a band bearing signs of the zodiac but you have to get down on your knees to see it!

In addition there is a large marble group of the bull-slaying scene in room 69 of the British Museum. Further afield a Mithraeum can be seen in situ at Carrowburgh Fort (Brocolitia) near Chesters Fort on Hadrian's Wall. The finds from this site including an altar to Mithras with pierced sun-rays around his head and a fantastic, and unique, "Egg-birth" of Mithras can be seen at the University Archaeological Museum, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, which also houses an excellent reconstructed Mithraeum. □

VIEWPOINT

Determinism, Causality And Free Will

In his 'Determinism and Prescription' (*ER*, June 2005), Tom Rubens unfortunately displays the worst characteristic of most academic philosophy today and regrettably makes two glaring errors, also typical of academic thinking. The worst characteristic is to make philosophy almost unintelligible. For anyone new to the subject, his piece will, I fear, seem just gobbledygook. Compare it, say, with the simplicity of the writings of Hobbes, Locke, Hume and even Bertrand Russell, and readers will know what I mean.

Then, his first major error is equating 'determinism' and 'causality'. They are *not* the same, although most academics today make them so. Causality is the general principle that every effect must have a cause. If I go into a shop to buy a loaf of bread, it is almost certain that I do so because I need it: the cause is the need, the effect is buying the bread. On the other hand, there is an unpleasant illness known as Irritable Bowel Syndrome, the cause of which doctors admit they do not know. But the fact remains that, even though its cause is not (yet?) known, it is caused by *something*.

Determinism is quite different. The great eighteenth-century French scientist and philosopher, Laplace, put it thus:

"We ought ... to regard the present state of the universe as the effect of its anterior state and as the cause of the one which is to follow. Given for one instant an intelligence which could comprehend all the forces by which nature is animated and the respective situation of the beings who compose it - an intelligence sufficiently vast to submit these data to analysis - it would embrace in the same formula the movements of the greatest bodies in the universe and those of the lightest atom; for it, nothing would be uncertain and the future, as the past, would be present to its eyes."

As probably every *Ethical Record* reader knows, Napoleon responded by asking Laplace where God was in his scheme; to which the great scientist replied, "I have no need of that hypothesis." Since there is no possibility of such an 'intelligence' (or God), it follows that such a total knowledge of all the forces acting in the universe and the whole future is impossible. That is determinism.*

It is here that Rubens makes his second, and equally common, mistake. This is that quantum mechanics has destroyed the principle of causality. This is not the case at all. What quantum mechanics disproves is *determinism*, because all predictions of events in the sub-atomic world can only be probabilistic. *But they are still causal*. (See my book. *Out Of This World*, chapters 9 and 10, for more detail). If one particle is fired and hits another, all the Schrodinger equation can tell the experimenter in advance is that the outcome is a set of probable positions and energies of the target particle. *Causality is not lost*; only that the outcome - position and energy, is not absolutely certain. Causality still operates: the collision still makes the target particle adopt a new position and a new energy; but these can only be known with certainty once the collision occurs and the outcome is measured. In the same way, it can be said that I will go for a walk tomorrow, but in which direction or how far can only be guessed. Only when I have actually taken the walk will the precise information be available.

Rubens is correct, however, in rejecting the view that a moral act can only be made through 'free will'. Since every action has a cause, there is no such thing as absolute 'free will', only partial. We are all conditioned partly by our situation. And this leads to a more important point; that the individualism implicit in the term, 'free will', must also be rejected. Our acts are partly determined by the civilisation in which we find ourselves; and they are likely to be at a higher moral level the higher the moral level of that civilisation. The future lies in our hands, not only individually but collectively.

Hyman Frankel - London

**Determinism, the thesis that the universe evolves in a unique way, is not dependent on the existence of God, as Laplace realised. [Ed]*

Ethical Record, July/August, 2005

THE SIGHTED WATCHMAKER

Raymond Tallis

Lecture to the Ethical Society, 3 July 2005

The story I want to tell this morning is part of a much wider exploration of human consciousness from a philosophical standpoint. The fruits of this exercise in philosophical anthropology are described in a trilogy of books I have published over the last two years with the Edinburgh University Press. In just under 1,000 pages and a mere half a million words, I have attempted to make the distinctive character of human, as opposed to animal, consciousness both visible and explicable.

The trilogy is the latest product of a 40 year quarrel with myself - or, to be more precise, with the fundamentalist Darwinian I became at the age of 15. At 15 I finally shed the my religious beliefs, and having discovered science, decided that I was a 'biological materialist'. This was at first liberating; and then it seemed less so, as it became clear that it offered no basis for freedom, for purpose or even for self-respect. It seemed that, like many others, I had escaped from a prison built out of religious myths only to find myself in another prison: I had moved on from religious fatalism to physical determinism.

To be honest, I never really believed that we humans were entirely embedded in the material world. Everyday experience of human life seemed to be against it. Nevertheless, I found it difficult to justify the assumption that we were somehow set apart from nature. In pursuing my quarrel with myself in this trilogy, therefore, I have tried to put my finger on the unique character of human beings, and to explain their profound and obvious differences from all other sentient creatures.

What Is A Human Being?

The question of the fundamental nature of human beings invokes two kinds of conflicting response: put very crudely, a scientific answer which says that, in the last resort, we are biological organisms; and a humanist one, that insists that we are self-conscious moral agents. The first response, which appealed to my 15 year old self, relishing the sense of superiority that comes from newly acquired cynicism, locates us firmly in the natural world, reducing us to evolved organisms. This view appears currently to be in the ascendent. Evolutionary ethics, evolutionary psychology, and sociobiology have penetrated widely even through the human sciences and, beyond them, to pop culture. The claim that we are 'just animals' is a highly developed expression of something unique to human culture.

There is, of course, a profound paradox at the heart of this triumph of "biologism": its naturalistic view of humanity is itself a highly developed expression of a distinctively human culture. After all, nothing could be less animal-like than to arrive at a opinion, collectively argued and collectively agreed upon, about one's own nature. There is clearly something very special, indeed unnatural, about a living creature that has a theory of living creatures; an animal, in short, that is capable of formulating and propagating ideas of the kind such as Darwin first advanced in *The Origin of Species*.

How Can We Accept Darwinism Without Succumbing To Darwinitis?

Acknowledging the exceptional nature of human beings, while not at the same time denying what Darwinian thought tells us about our origins, presents a challenge. How shall we accept Darwinism without succumbing to a Darwinitis that “biologises” us and consequently undermines human agency, overlooks the complexity of the human self, and reduce ethics to adaptation to survival; without denying the difference between non-human living organisms which merely live and persons who seem actively to lead their lives?

My position is that while we humans, or our bodies, are indeed pieces of nature, and we have something of the carnal machine about us, we have (by entirely natural means) transcended nature so that our possibilities are not to be defined by the constraints we see operating in the natural world.

Let me go back to Darwin for a little more scene-setting. The *Origin of Species* famously destroyed one of the most influential arguments in favour of the belief in an Intelligent Designer of the universe. The 18th century theologian William Paley had argued that the exquisitely organised complexity of living creatures was proof of the existence of a designer. After all, if we had come across a watch, we would immediately infer the existence of a watchmaker:

the watch must have had a maker: ..there must have existed...an artificer or artificers, who formed it for the purpose which we find it actually to answer; who comprehended its instruction, and designed its use. William Paley 1802

Living creatures were many times more complex and intricately matched to their functions than any watch or other human artefact. Darwin, however, suggested an alternative watchmaker to a conscious, superintelligent Designer: namely, the operation of unconscious natural selection over hundreds of millions of years. This biological process was ultimately a convergence of physical processes, as Richard Dawkins has described in his wonderful *The Blind Watchmaker*:

All appearances to the contrary, the only watchmaker in nature is the blind forces of physics...A true watchmaker has foresight: he designs his cogs and springs, and plans their interconnections, with a future purpose in his mind's, eye. Natural selection, the blind, unconscious, automatic process which Darwin discovered and which we now know is the explanation for the existence and the apparent purposeful form of all life, has no purpose in mind. It has no mind, no foresight, no sight at all. If it can be said to play the role of watchmaker in nature, it is the blind watchmaker.

Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker* 1986

Samuel Butler put this more succinctly when he said of Darwin that ‘he banished mind from the universe’. However, this is not quite true: for there are still human minds operating in, and shaping, parts of the universe. Darwinism, therefore, leaves something unaccounted for: the emergence of us sighted watchmakers.

Are Human Beings Then Not Part Of Nature?

If there are no sighted watchmakers in nature and yet humans are sighted watchmakers, in the narrower sense of making artefacts whose purpose they envisage in advance, and in the wider sense of consciously aiming at goals, then humans are not part of nature - or not entirely so.

How did the blind forces of physics bring about (cognitively) sighted humans able to see, and identify, and comment on the 'blind' forces of physics, even to notice that they are blind and utilise them to engage with nature as if from the outside, and on much more favourable terms than those which govern the lives of other animals? How did we get to be so different?

This question causes a lot of discomfort - unnecessary I shall explain presently. Unnecessary or not, it has prompted many writers actually to deny that there are sharp differences between humans and the natural world. So we need first to reaffirm that we are as different as we seem to be. Actually, this difference should hardly need stating even less require demonstration. Is it not blindingly obvious that we are creatures who do things deliberately, in a way that no other animal does? To reiterate: while Darwin may have banished mind from the natural world, no-one could overlook its operation in human life. Our behaviour is not reducible to reactions to stimuli, to pre-programmed tropisms, or to expression of unreflected upon instincts.

Staggering Differences

One pointer to this distance from other creatures is that our most of our actions in daily life, however concrete, typically make sense only with respect to frameworks, of which we are conscious, which incorporate many layers of abstraction. Think - really think - of all the steps you took to get to this talk this morning, beginning with the moment when you decided to come. There are innumerable implicit frames of reference that make sense of the seemingly simple act of buying a can of beans. None of which has any counterpart in the life of beasts.

Even so, this does not stop certain writers sociobiologists, fundamentalist Darwinians et al - from trying to minimise the staggering differences between us and beasts, because they believe that Darwinism requires it. If these minimisers convince themselves, it is because they have become, as the philosopher Wittgenstein would say, bewitched by their own language. They have got so used to re-describing what goes on in ordinary human life in such a way as to make it sound like what goes on in ordinary animal life, that they no longer notice themselves doing it.

Here's a couple of examples. Supposing you invite me out for a meal. Having learnt that you have just taken on a big loan for a house, I choose the cheapest items on the menu and falsely declare that I am full after the main course, so as to spare you the expense of a pudding. A chimpanzee reaches out for a banana and consumes it. Evolutionary psychologists would like to say that both the chimp and I are doing similar things: we are exhibiting "feeding behaviour". This identity of description, however, obscures huge differences between the chimp's behaviour

and mine. Here's another example. I decide to improve my career prospects by signing up for a degree course which begins next year. I have a small child. I therefore do more baby-sitting this year in order to stockpile some tokens. Daisy the cow bumps into an electric wire and henceforth avoids that place. It could be said that both Daisy and I have been exhibiting learning behaviour. Again, I think you will agree, the difference between the two forms of behaviour is greater than the similarities.

Those who wish to obliterate the gap between humans and other beasts not only try to make human behaviour beast-like. They also describe animal behaviour anthropomorphically, making it seem to be human-like. We are all familiar with Walt Disney- like descriptions of animals that impute to them all manner of abstract or factual knowledge and institutional sentiments for which there is evidence only in human beings. This exemplifies an wider error that I have christened the Fallacy of Misplaced Explicitness that enables thinkers to speak of squids classifying the contents of the world, wasps grieving for their young, and even artefacts such as thermostats making judgements.

Indeed, even those who are not in the grip of Darwinitis, might feel that, since we are animals in so many respects, it seems a kind of unsentimental honesty to say that we are just like animals in all respects. Like animals we are ejected from our mother's bodies at birth and like animals we die of physiological failure; like animals, we eat, defaecate, copulate, fight and so on. But this is beside the point; for it does not follow that we eat, defaecate, copulate, fight etc like animals. Every seemingly animal need or appetite - for food, water, warmth - is utterly transformed in humans. And many of our strongest appetites - for example, for acknowledgement of what we are in ourselves, for abstract knowledge and understanding - are unique to us. Only humans come to lectures on the distinctive features of being human.

So I believe that humans are profoundly different from other beasts. But that doesn't mean I think that humans, uniquely among earth's creatures, fell from the sky. I am a good Darwinian. Moreover, I am impressed by the fact that we share 98.4% of our DNA with chimpanzees - though not over-impressed; after all, as many have pointed out, we share 50% of our DNA with a banana and, even more importantly, the expression of genes is intimately dependent upon the context in which phenotypes find themselves.

I do not, however I believe it necessary to repudiate either Darwin or the biological basis of human life in order to defend the human exceptionalism. There is however a challenge to be met: how shall we reconcile what Kenan Malik in his (wonderful) *Man, Beast and Zombie* characterises as 'a vision of Man as a natural being' - just like monkeys and rabbits and so on - 'with an understanding of him as a conscious agent' utterly unlike monkeys and rabbits. How shall we explain how humans can be both part of nature and yet at a unique and very complex distance from it? How can we make sense of the fact that we are products of evolutionary process and yet sufficiently awake to, and distanced from, that process to write books such as *The Blind Watchmaker*? □

(to be concluded in the Sept. ER)

SPES ANNUAL OUTING, 26 JUNE 2005
BLETCHLEY PARK AND WHIPSNADE TREE CATHEDRAL
Victoria Le Fevre

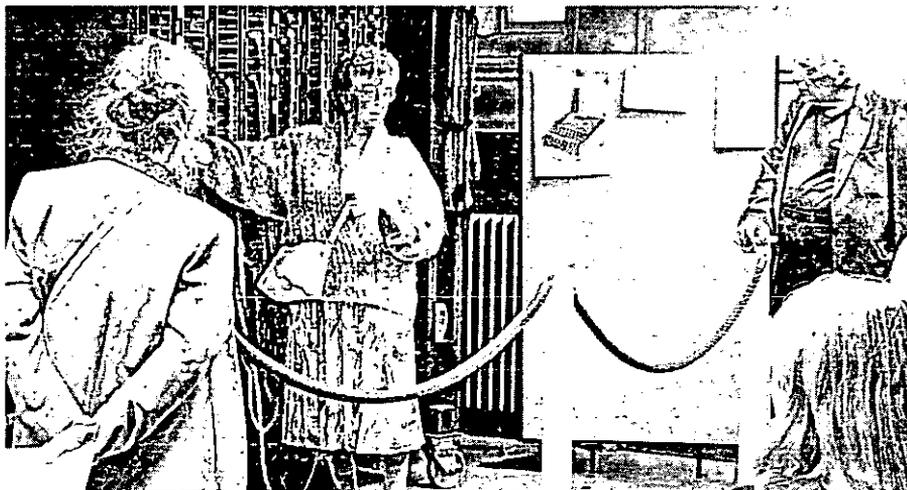
The SPES Annual Outing was to two very different sites, though both are in a sense war memorials.

Our first destination was the now-famous Bletchley Park, a Buckinghamshire mansion acquired by MI6 in 1938 as a communications centre. In the ensuing task of breaking the codes produced by the Germans on Enigma and Lorenz machines, extraordinary mathematical and logistical talents worked to create the world's first programmable electrical digital computer and to develop an encrypted internet. It is only in recent years that the official secrecy which obscured these achievements has been abandoned.

Our introduction to, and tour of, the site was provided by Ruth Bourne. Members may recall that Ruth gave a lecture to the Society in February this year regarding her wartime work at Bletchley. We had particularly wanted Ruth to be our guide as she is not only knowledgeable, but enthusiastic and approachable.

The Bletchley estate was styled uniquely and idiosyncratically by financier Sir Herbert Leon in the late nineteenth century and the original chocolate box buildings were put to incongruous uses during World War Two. The turreted tower played host to a radio station (the original 'Station X'); the innocuous tack room saw the first breach of the Enigma code in early 1940 by Turing; while in the chilly fruit store, Turing and Gordon Welchman pursued pioneering computer research.

We were shown various of the Huts built during World War Two to accommodate codebreaking teams and associated technological work. A particularly vivid glimpse into wartime life at Bletchley Park was provided when



*Ruth Bourne explaining the Turing Bombes
(with a photo of the Enigma machine on the wall)*

Ruth took us into Hut 11, which housed the Turing *Bombes* – electro-mechanical machines designed to work through the 17,576 possible Enigma key settings, changed by the Germans every twenty-four hours. (A detailed description of the complex work undertaken here is given by Ruth in the *Ethical Record* for March 2005.)

Visiting Hut 11 brought home to us the primitive conditions in which people were obliged to work. Obviously the *Bombes* were in near-continual use, and as a result the room, with its thick walls and tiny windows, was exceptionally hot. The shift patterns worked by the Wrens were also punishing. No wonder they called Hut 11 the ‘hell-hole’!

Ruth then showed us what remains of F Block – once an imposing bomb-proof complex, now a couple of concrete steps on a lawn. F Block was the home of Colossus, the world’s first programmable electronic computer, developed by Tommy Flowers to decypher the codes produced by the Lorenz machine which were used by Hitler and the top echelons of the Abwehr.

After the tour, some of us returned to the Mansion and heard an excellent and accessible lecture by Frank Carter regarding Max Newman’s calculations of the principles on which the Lorenz machine worked. The calculations were accurate to the extent that a ‘Lorenz machine’, correct in all salient technical detail, could be built in Britain. (The real Lorenz machine would not be seen by the Allies until April of 1945.) It was because decyphering the Lorenz messages took so long that Newman, inspired by a pre-war thesis of Turing’s, worked for the production of a computer to do the job. The first machine, Robinson, relied for its calculations on the synchronization of fast-driven paper tapes, which kept breaking. Flowers solved this problem with Colossus, which used valves and did not require the synchronization of tapes.

Bletchley Park receives no public funding. Some SPES members expressed their concern that the government spares no money for the site of such extraordinary human achievement but can fund current, controversial military enterprise.

Everything is open to interpretation, of course. In the official Bletchley Park souvenir guide, the Duke of Kent celebrates activities at Bletchley Park as having laid the foundation for our current relationship with America and likens the issues facing the Bletchley Park joint staffs to those facing us today.

Before returning to London, we visited Whipsnade Tree Cathedral, a site belonging to the National Trust but run by the trustees of the WTC Fund. It might seem odd that a group of Humanists should visit an attraction created in ‘Faith, hope and reconciliation’ and at which religious services are held. However this site is not consecrated and was planted on the scale of a medieval cathedral by one E. K. Blyth as a memorial to friends lost during the Great War. This was an unpretentious, tranquil place. Pam and John Ward, prominent among the site’s trustees, gave our party a guided tour, and their love for, and dedication to, the project was most touching. □

Thanks to Ruth Bourne and to Pam and John Ward for a most enjoyable day.

GILES HART (1949-2005)

We at SPES were extremely distressed when we realised that Giles Hart, 55, one of our occasional lecturers, had been on the No. 30 bus blown up at Tavistock Square in the 7/7 bombings. A mathematics graduate of Royal Holloway College, his day job was with British Telecom but his spare time was devoted to Humanism, the cause of freedom and a wide range of interests.

In particular he had been Treasurer and inspirational fund-raiser, later Chairman, to the Polish Solidarity Campaign in the 1980s with SPES member Karen Blick. He had met his Polish wife, Danuta, through this involvement; they had two children. He had been Vice-Chairman of Havering Humanists until the recent death of the Chairman, SPES member Eugene Leviné, when he took over the position but for a tragically brief time. He was Chairman of the H.G. Wells Society and a long-standing supporter of the Anti-Slavery Society.

He gave 3 talks to SPES, the first in January 1999 on 'Campaigning in Britain for Freedom in Poland'. In October 2000 he spoke on 'Science Fiction and the Short Stories of H.G. Wells' (*ER* June 2001) and in June 2002 on 'I Don't Agree with That: 12 Conventional Wisdoms Challenged' (*ER* July/Aug. 2002). He had been due to talk on Lewis Carroll to Havering Humanists on the evening of his death and about C.S. Lewis in the autumn Ethical Society programme.

A secular funeral was conducted by his cousin, a Church of Scotland pastor at the South Essex Crematorium on 26 July, after which he was awarded, posthumously, the Polish Order of Merit by a representative from the Polish Embassy for services to Polish democracy.

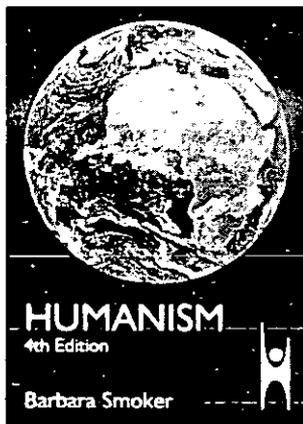
Not only is Giles yet another victim of religious violence but it was ironic that this explosion was at Tavistock Square where every year on 15 May a ceremony celebrates conscientious objectors and the cause of peace.

Jennifer Jeynes

NOW OUT - THE NEW EDITION OF *HUMANISM*

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Copies of Barbara Smoker's previous book, *Freethoughts* (239 pages) are still available from her @ £10, post free.



EUGENE LEVINÉ (1916-2005)

Seventy years as a foreigner in England was the title of the last public lecture that Eugene Leviné gave, a few weeks before he died nearly eighty nine years old. He had been in failing health with decreased mobility for some years but his intellect remained as clear as ever. When he was just seventeen Eugene, 'Genia', came to England, not because his mother was Jewish, but because of his teenage political activities.

His father was Eugene Leviné who was shot in 1919 as leader of the short lasting Bavarian Räterepublik (Rat = council or soviet). Leviné's final speech is still quoted "We communists are all dead men on leave". The son Eugene Leviné grew up in Berlin in the shadow of his father and at fifteen was already a group leader in the Young Communists. Genia was doubly marked—as he said "Hitler came and I went".

In England Eugene studied medicine until he was interned on the Isle of Man, but after his release he broadcast for five years in his good *hoch deutsch* accent for the German overseas news, while running a war-time first aid post in the centre of London. Teaching was his natural profession. Generations of biology students have benefited from his clear lectures and his wise advice on academic and emotional problems. He taught genetics to pupil midwives and for several years was chairman of the Essex Midwives.

However his real interest was political history. He gave guest lectures in England and Germany on the rise of Hitler and allied subjects. One session in Munich lasted four hours. His metier was with the after lecture questions. Every group has a *besserwisser*, a better knower, who thinks he can flummox the lecturer. Genia never failed to confound those who thought they had a better knowledge of the subject. Do you mean King Ludwig the second or mad King Ludwig of Bavaria? for example.

Eugene Leviné, the father, was born of a baptised Jewish family, so such religious education that Genia had came from his Protestant grandmother. It did not take. He served for many years on the Education Committee of the British Humanist Association and from 1977 was Chairman of the Havering and District Humanist Society where he smoothed over many problems. He had the ability to give balanced council on any subject. Even the day before his death in hospital he was calming two nervous ladies who were afraid of their impending operations. Genia had unflinching good manners and many local acquaintances referred to him as 'a proper gentlemen'. They did not know, as his familiars did, of his constant use of a particular four letter word.

Genia is survived by his son Peter from his first wife Doreen, his grandson Jan, his great granddaughters Josephine, Maya and Olivia and by his second wife of fortyfive years, Katie Frith-Leviné.

Note: Eugene Leviné was a member of SPES and gave three lectures at Conway Hall. His account of the situation in Germany in 1919 was printed in the *Ethical Record*, June 1994. A memorial meeting for him was held on 30 July 2005 in Hornchurch. [Ed.]

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1430, Sunday 25 September

Keynote Speaker,

Ms Azam Kamguian

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Secularism and Women's Rights in the Middle East

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1900 Debate: **THIS HOUSE BELIEVES THAT THE CHRISTIAN GOD IS A MYTH.**
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Opposer: **the Revd Sandy Miller** of Alpha Course and Holy Trinity Brompton.

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- the study and dissemination of ethical principles based on humanism,
- the cultivation of a rational and humane way of life, and
- the advancement of research and education in relevant fields.

We invite to membership those who reject supernatural creeds and are in sympathy with our aims. At Conway Hall the programme includes Sunday lectures, discussions, evening courses and the renowned South Place Sunday Concerts of chamber music. The Society maintains a Humanist Reference Library. The Society's journal, *Ethical Record*, is issued ten times a year. Funerals and Memorial meetings may be arranged.

The annual subscription is £18 (£12 if a full-time student, unwaged or over 65).