

Ethical Record

The Proceedings of the Conway Hall Ethical Society

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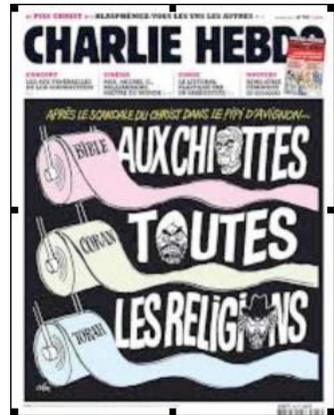
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January 2015

“THOU SHALT NOT MAKE ANY GRAVEN IMAGE” [EXODUS 20.4]

The Satanic verses in Rushdie’s ‘blasphemous’ novel allude to three pre-Islamic ‘visible’ deities, popular in 7th century CE Arabia. Mahomet’s strange idea, new to the Arabs, was of one supreme, intangible, invisible but nevertheless ever-watchful and judgmental God. However, to deter his followers from reverting to a more homely idolatry, Islam, copying Exodus, issued a stern commandment forbidding the depiction of animals and humans.

Although Russian Orthodox fervently revere their saintly ikons, often imbuing them with magic power, Sunnis, rather more than Shias, evince horror at pictures of the Prophet. The original reason was the fear *they’d* become objects of worship — but that’s not the intention and hardly the likely fate of today’s satirical cartoons. The movement of *Islamism*, political Islam, involves a fierce iconoclasm, blowing up the Bamiyan Buddhas in Afghanistan, ancient churches in Syria, medieval manuscripts in Timbuctoo and now, murdering cartoonists in Paris. The perpetrators are convinced they’ve thereby ensured their place in Paradise; but their excessive veneration of the Messenger contradicts his message - that Allah *alone* is to be worshipped.



*“Down the pan
with all religions!”*

57 Islamic states want the UN to enact laws against any criticism of religions. In a world *without* blasphemy laws, where all religions are satirised, no harm (only discomfort) would occur, because atheists will feel no animosity (maybe even sympathy) toward the faithful. However, history shows that denigrating ethnic groups results in violence against them: the Tsarist fiction *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*, both highly regarded in the Islamic world, were instrumental in the pogroms, the Holocaust and, last week, the choice of which Parisian shoppers to kill. As Marina Ingham hints (p16), the world’s enlightenment is still far away. **NB**

UKIP IS ETHICAL	<i>Anne Marie Waters</i>	3
FOR OUR CHILDREN’S EARTH... BUILDING THE SOIL	<i>Chris Rhodes</i>	6
VIEWPOINTS R. Ward, M. Page, T. Rubens, J. Tomlinson, Q. England, B. Smoker, M. Ingham, J. Jeynes		12
HOW HUMANITY MIGHT AVOID DEVASTATION	<i>Nicholas Maxwell</i>	20
FORTHCOMING EVENTS		24

CONWAY HALL ETHICAL SOCIETY

Conway Hall Humanist Centre
25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL.
www.conwayhall.org.uk

Trustee Chairman: Liz Lutgendorff; *Treasurer:* Carl Harrison;

Editor: Norman Bacrac

Please email texts and viewpoints for the Editor to: bacrac@fsmail.net

Staff

<i>Chief Executive Officer:</i>	Jim Walsh	Tel: 020 7061 6745	Jim@ethicalsoc.org.uk
<i>Administrator:</i>	Martha Lee	Tel: 020 7061 6741	admin@ethicalsoc.org.uk
<i>Finance Officer:</i>	Linda Lamnica	Tel: 020 7061 6740	finance@ethicalsoc.org.uk
<i>Library:</i>	Vacancy	Tel: 020 7061 6747	library@ethicalsoc.org.uk
<i>Hon. Archivist:</i>	Carl Harrison		carl@ethicalsoc.org.uk
<i>London Thinks:</i>	Sid Rodrigues	Tel: 020 7061 6744	sid@ethicalsoc.org.uk
<i>Lettings Officer:</i>	Carina Dvorak	Tel: 020 7061 6750	lettings@ethicalsoc.org.uk
<i>Caretakers:</i>	Eva Aubrechtova (i/c)	Tel: 020 7061 6743	Eva@ethicalsoc.org.uk
<i>together with:</i>	Brian Biagioni, Sean Foley, Tony Fraser, Rogerio Retuerta		
<i>Maintenance:</i>	Zia Hameed	Tel: 020 7061 6742	Zia@ethicalsoc.org.uk

LIBRARY NOTICE

Our part-time Librarian, Farah Wise, has left for a full-time job at the Holker Library, Lincoln's Inn. A new Librarian is being recruited.

THE CHES YULETIDE SOCIAL – LONDON DRINKS – 14 DECEMBER 2014

Upon entry, 'drinkers' were offered a glass of warm mulled wine prepared by Marina Ingham, to the sound of Derek Marcus on the piano. After sitting down, they were regaled by Barbara Smoker reciting Rupert Brooke's satirical poem *Heaven*, followed by Terry Mullins' rendition of '*Brahn' Boots*'. Next, a difficult general knowledge quiz set and mastered by the venerable Mullins. The winner was past Brain-of-Britain Ray Ward (after contending with TM that King's Cross and St Pancras constituted two not one stations).

We then had a highly satirical playlet, researched and adapted by our writer-in-residence Chris Bratcher and performed by four press-ganged attendees. We attempted to sing Barbara Smoker's anti-hymn 'All things grim and horrible' to the tune of 'All things bright and...' etc. The finale consisted of a duet sung by Evan Parker and Dominique Nevoux, not quite up to *Charlie Hebdo* standard - too scatological to print. Last but certainly not least, we enjoyed a delicious tea, with splendid sandwiches and cakes, all prepared by Diane Murray, for which we were most grateful. **NB.**

CONWAY HALL ETHICAL SOCIETY

Reg. Charity No. 1156033

Founded in 1793, the Society is a progressive movement whose aims are:

**the study and dissemination of ethical principles based on humanism and freethought
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 Conway Hall Sunday Concerts of chamber music. The Society maintains a Humanist Library and Archives. The Society's journal, *Ethical Record*, is issued monthly. Memorial meetings may be arranged.

The annual subscription is £35 (£25 if a full-time student, unwaged or over 65)

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

UKIP IS ETHICAL

Address by **Anne Marie Waters**, UKIP candidate for Basildon and Billericay
Debate at the Ethical Society, 5 October 2014

A lot of people think that democracy and liberalism are fine, until they don't agree with me. We currently have a political and academic and media elite which have decided that they don't like the democratic voice of the majority in this democracy; they don't like the conclusions the majority are coming to. Rather than try to persuade the majority to their way of thinking, they have elected instead to ignore them. Currently, our democracy is not functioning as a democracy and there are quite a few reasons for this. One of these is the European Union. Before I joined UKIP – which I didn't do with my eyes closed – I did a lot of reading about the EU, because if I am going to campaign against something, I want to understand it.

Reasons to Oppose the European Union

There are several reasons to oppose the EU; one of the main ones is that it has completely ignored several referenda from nations within it. What went on to become the Lisbon Treaty was initially rejected by referendum in both France and the Netherlands. The Eurocrats then went away and re-jigged the treaty that had been rejected by the French and the Dutch, and renamed it. As one of the authors said “What was done in the Lisbon Treaty, and deliberately, was to mix everything up. If you look for the passages on institutions, they're just in different places and on different pages”.

They reintroduced the renamed treaty but this time gave no vote to the French, or the Dutch. One country did have a vote on this, and that was Ireland. The Irish people voted against it, they voted to reject it. They were forced to vote again. The second vote followed a heavily-financed campaign of fear-mongering, telling the Irish that if you don't vote for the Lisbon Treaty, you will be plunged in to poverty. The EU referred to the Irish No vote as something that needed to be “sorted out”. This is the democracy that the European Union is creating and the democracy that we are now living in. Vast numbers of our laws are made by people we haven't elected and cannot remove.

But what is the main reason that UKIP is so vilified? The number one reason is immigration. UKIP is the only party committed to a reduction in immigration. A lot of people think this is wrong, I don't. Controlled immigration is standard in most countries of the world. If you look at migration to Canada for example, it is nigh-on impossible, but we don't think of Canada as some sinister racist state. It is also very difficult to get in to the United States or Australia, but for proposing something similar, UKIP has been labelled racist and immoral.

To demonstrate that the voice of the people has been continually ignored, there is no better example than the issue of immigration. A clear majority of people in this country want immigration controlled and reduced. It is a very important issue to most. (67% in a Sky poll in 2014, Oxford University 2014 - 77% want immigration reduced). What UKIP proposes is to listen to the people in this democracy, and to respond in accordance with their wishes. It is the definition of representative democracy, and yes, it is ethical.

People not Permitted to Speak Freely

A fundamental element of democracy is of course freedom of speech. How can we implement the will of the people if their will cannot be known because they are not permitted to speak freely? One of the reasons we are no longer living in a true democracy is that people are afraid to express themselves. Freedom of speech is not just about being able to speak our minds; however, even more important, it is about the ability to tell the truth. George Orwell said that freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four. We are now limited in our ability to state such facts.

We all know what the expression ‘political correctness’ means, even though it is difficult to verbally define. I’ll give it a go: ‘political correctness’ is the notion that nobody should ever be offended by anything, nobody should ever be upset about anything (except women obviously, that is still acceptable). This is particularly true of people who happen to not be white.

So what happens if telling the truth causes offence? What happens when the truth is offensive? The answer is that the truth is suppressed. That is political correctness – and it is an incredibly bloody and incredibly dangerous thing, that is killing people. For a prime example, go up north to Rotherham.

1,400 children (at least) were raped, pimped, tortured, forced to take drugs, and passed around groups of men to be raped in what is the most appalling crime imaginable. The police knew about it, the local council knew about it, and yet it went on for decades. One Home Office researcher told the police in 2002 – the police told her not to mention it again. She was “suspended and sidelined”. Other council workers who raised the alarm had their jobs downgraded or were pushed out altogether. One woman’s research disappeared from her office. The cover up was immense.

Why did they cover it up? Because the overwhelming majority of the girls were white English working-class girls, and the overwhelming majority of the rapists were Pakistani Muslim men. This is why it was covered up, and to quote the leader of Rotherham Council, “We have to tread carefully about this, because we don’t want to upset the community”. Even Rotherham’s child safeguarding board seemed to put “upsetting the community” above protecting children from rape. This is the suppression of the truth in the name of political correctness – in the name of not causing offence.

UKIP is the only party which has consistently and vociferously demanded that political correctness has to go. Truth is what matters. We will tell the truth no matter who is offended by it, because there are far more important things than hurt feelings, and frankly, a lot of people deserve to have far more than just their feelings hurt.

Something else that is raised by the comments of the Rotherham council leader, who didn’t want to upset ‘the community’ is – what community? Who are we talking about exactly? This brings me to the next reason I left Labour and went to UKIP: multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism Kills and Mutilates

Multiculturalism kills and it maims and it mutilates. It is because of multiculturalism that we have 1,000s of women and girls in this country with butchered genitals. It is because of multiculturalism that we have battered and beaten women handed over to sharia courts. It is because of multiculturalism that we have sharia courts at all. We are not a society of equal citizens. We are a society of 'communities'. We are treated as members of a 'community' rather than as an individual. Different 'communities' are subject to different laws – including the barbaric and deeply misogynistic sharia law.

Being part of a 'community' rather than an individual places people in a perilous situation; who speaks for people within these 'communities'? Is anyone ever asked whether they want to be a part of any given 'community' or are they just placed there by virtue of race or religion – whether they like it or not? Muslim women, who are part of the 'Muslim community', are represented by men who think their husbands ought to be allowed to beat them. The men who run sharia in this country are treated as though they represent Muslim women, and the women have no say in it.

Again, UKIP is the only party to consistently oppose multiculturalism and to recognise its dangers. It is the only party to state clearly that we in this country should be subject to a single law, and equal before that law. That is what UKIP proposes, and yes, it is ethical.

I will finish by mentioning a couple of comments - gay marriage causes floods, sluts, cleaning behind the fridge. Here are a couple of other comments: "The English have a propensity for violence" – Jack Straw of the Labour Party; "When rape is inevitable, lie back and enjoy it" – Barbara Driver, Conservative Party; "If you hadn't been arrested, I am entirely satisfied you would have killed someone or caused serious injury" – the Judge sentencing a Liberal Democrat councillor for causing 14 explosions in his town, while he was a councillor. Was this front-page news? Did you even know about it?

I can assure you, had these comments been made by anyone involved in UKIP, everyone would've known. It would have been the lead story at 10 o'clock on every channel, and front page news on pretty much every newspaper. I believe that the voters of this country have been ignored by the political elite for decades and it's time for this to change. I also believe that if you ignore people democratically, they will become angry, and this may well lead to violence. It isn't ethical to take away people's voice so that they feel so disempowered that they turn to violence. What is ethical in a democracy is for politicians to listen, respond, and be honest about who they are themselves.

Is UKIP perfect? Hardly, no more than any other party. But it's the most honest party for generations – love them or loathe them, at least you know them. And yes, that is ethical.

If you have any suggestions for speakers (their contact details are required) or event ideas, or would like to convene a Sunday afternoon informal, get in touch with Evan Parker at evan.parker@warwick.ac.uk Tel nos 07403 607 046 (mob) or 0202 565 5016.

FOR OUR CHILDREN'S EARTH... BUILDING THE SOIL, SUSTAINING THE FUTURE

Chris Rhodes, author of *University Shambles*
Lecture to the Ethical Society, 9 November 2014

Earth is 'the blue planet', in consequence of its large water body, which weakly absorbs light at the red end of the optical spectrum, so highlighting wavelengths at the blue end of the range. Viewed against the blackness of outer space, a very narrow blue band can be seen to encircle the globe, which represents the Earth's atmosphere, and is so coloured because air molecules scatter blue light more strongly than they do red light. The word "earth" may also mean soil, which is the fragile living skin of the Earth. Without soil, and the overlying atmosphere, with its 20% oxygen content, life on the surface of the Earth could not exist. Certainly there would be no humans.

Soil consists of a mineral component, which is generally a mixture of sand, silt and clay. Since soils vary considerably in their composition, they may be compared universally using a 'soil texture triangle' (Figure 1):

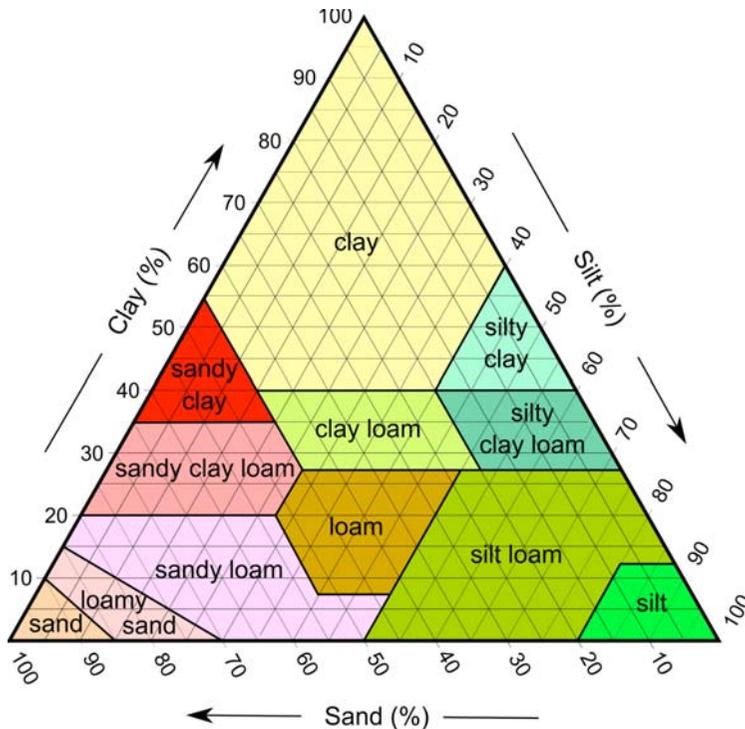


Figure 1. Soil-texture triangle, showing the composition of the clay, sand and silt mixture of minerals that make up different types of soil. Soil organic matter is not included in the diagram, although this is a vital component of a healthy, fertile soil.

A good fertile soil is a loam, which, as represented in Figure 1, has an approximate composition of 20% clay, and of the order of 40% each of silt and sand. These terms do not reflect the chemical composition of the three components, but their particle size. Thus, sand grains are of the order of millimeters or less in diameter, while clay particles are of nanometer dimension; particles of silt are of a size somewhere in between these orders. Soil also contains organic material, referred to as soil organic matter (SOM), or soil carbon (SC). This ranges from identifiable plant components, to their more indistinct decomposition products, created by passage through the bacterially replete bodies of earthworms, and by the actions of the other creatures, and microbes that live within soil <http://ergobalance.blogspot.co.uk/2014/04/deep-down-and-dirty-science-of-soil.html>. The mass of the living creatures themselves is also accounted in the reckoning of SOM.

A Billion Microbes per Teaspoon Soil is indeed both fragile and living. It is fragile because it is prone to degradation, principally by erosion. It is living because it contains an amazing number of different species within it, collectively termed the soil food web http://www.sciencereviews2000.co.uk/blog_v2/view/science-progress-news/62/soil-erosion-climate-change-and-global-food-security-challenges-and-strategies/806#.VFDC3xbyVco.

It is thought that a single teaspoonful of soil may contain a billion microbes. A major source of soil erosion is deforestation, which may occur naturally, e.g. through forest fires, or by human actions, to clear land to grow commercial crops on, e.g. soya beans in South America. Slash and burn methods are employed on a smaller scale by groups of farmers who are poor and need to feed their families. More exquisite methods are sometimes employed to clear ground of trees, shrubs and all else, e.g. the process of ‘chaining’ where a ship’s anchor chain, maybe 400-600 feet in length, is strung between two 50-100 tonne tractors. If 2 inches in diameter, such a chain will have a weight of 7-10 tonnes <http://www.sotra.net/products/tables/weight-for-studlink-anchor-chain>, and so, by driving the tractors, the chain is dragged along the ground, where it simply rips out anything in its path by the roots.

Soil that has been so denuded is vulnerable to erosion, all the more so when it is left uncovered as a result of monoculture cropping, and during the winter, when the erosive elements of wind and water are at their most forceful. While erosion is the major (85%) cause of soil degradation globally, other impacts are important, e.g. compaction, crusting (hardsetting), loss of nutrients, contamination, salinization and loss of biological life in the soil. Once the productivity of the land has been lost, the strategy is to move on and clear yet more forest. According to the United Nations, one third of the world’s cropland has been abandoned over the past 40 years due to degradation and desertification <http://www.giz.de/expertise/downloads/giz2013-en-german-national-report-unccd.pdf>, while 52% of the land used for agriculture is moderately to severely affected by soil degradation <http://www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/WCD/DLDD%20Facts.pdf>.

More Population Coming

44% of the world’s food production systems and 50% of its livestock are considered to be vulnerable to climate change, while 12 million hectares of crop

land are lost per year (23 hectares per minute), where 20 million tonnes of grain might have been grown. All of this against an estimated requirement to produce 60% more food by 2050, not only to match a population that is predicted to increase from around 7 billion now, to 9.5 billion, but that there is a rising 'middle class' who are likely to have greater expectations from their diet, i.e. want to eat more meat, which is far more land-intensive to produce than growing crops to be eaten directly <http://ergobalance.blogspot.co.uk/2014/04/the-soil-land-water-climate-honey-bees.html>. Thus, we are destroying the productivity of that same land from which we demand a relentless increase in production: two powerful forces pulling in opposite directions, with an inevitable 'give' at some point.

There is a close connection between soil and water. In the natural order of things, water evaporates from plants and wetlands (evapotranspiration), rivers and oceans, forming clouds in the atmosphere from which rain falls. The rain is absorbed through the soil surface (infiltration), and is taken up by movement through the soil (transmission): when the rates are high for both processes, the soil acts as an effective 'sponge' and can absorb large amounts of water <http://agroecologygroup.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Briefing-on-flooding-soil-and-farming-pr.pdf>. When the soil becomes compressed, e.g. by heavy farm machinery or over-intensive grazing, a process called "compaction", the water cannot enter it so easily and tends to move elsewhere, as 'runoff'. Water runoff contributes to soil erosion: when the soil is unable to retain water, it runs off the surface taking large amounts of soil with it. This soil ends up downstream in rivers (silting-up) where it creates bottlenecks and causes the water to back up. Since it is in the surface layers of the soil that nutrients, e.g. phosphate, are concentrated, essential fertility is lost from the soil in the process.

Soil may also be eroded to below the optimum rooting depth of plants, which stunts their growth. Production of maize has expanded in the U.K. since the 1970s <http://anewnatureblog.wordpress.com/2014/02/06/lost-in-the-drainage-maize/>, mostly grown to feed cattle. The stubble is left over autumn and winter, and is not ploughed into the ground, meaning that fine soil is exposed to be washed downstream, when the impacts of wind and rain are at their strongest. Regions in the South West of England, including the catchment that drains into the Somerset Levels <http://ergobalance.blogspot.co.uk/2014/02/flooding-on-somerset-levels-and.html>, have some of the greatest concentrations of maize crops in the country, and it has been estimated that some 50% of the sediment in the Tone and Culm rivers are from soil eroded from fields of maize grown to feed concentrated and highly producing dairy herds.

Uplands, if well-managed, can absorb large quantities of water, and planting trees and shrubs has a hugely positive effect in reducing the volume of water that ends up downstream. Rather than intensive grazing, which can urge soil compaction, a loss of vegetation and increased soil erosion, less intensive and all year round grazing can help to improve the soil structure and its overall quality. The presence of **soil organic matter** (SOM) is a critical feature of good soil structure and its ability to retain nutrients and water. This improved soil structure also enhances the ability of soil to absorb and hold water, so that a high SOM content can make a dramatic effect in the capacity of soil to hold and transmit

water, while the loss of SOM has a large and detrimental effect on the holding capacity of soil for water and its ease of becoming compacted. In simple terms, a good soil is like a springy sponge, and in its ability to hold water, not only is runoff retarded but the lower lying aquifers are able to recharge, so preserving supplies of freshwater, as well as mitigating surface flooding.

As a point of note, however, in some locales that were inundated during the 2013/2014 winter, in the U.K., even after the surface flood-waters had been pumped away, flooding still remained a problem due to ‘groundwater pressure’, where the raised water table pushes up through the ground, and up through the floors of houses that have only floorboards as their ground-level barriers, rather than solid concrete.

Roosevelt’s Warning In a 1937 letter to U.S. State Governors, urging soil conservation laws, President Franklin D. Roosevelt wrote, “The nation that destroys its soil destroys itself.” This was around the time of the dust bowls that arose in the northern United States and Canada, where former prairie lands had been turned over to farming. The impact of ploughing, loss of prairie grasses, and drought literally caused the soil to blow away. The resulting effects on the populations were dramatised by John Steinbeck in his *Grapes of Wrath*, where some 2.5 million people were displaced as they made their way toward California, looking for work and for land on which they could grow food. Good soil has been described as ‘the real World Bank’, meaning that it is the one thing, of all things, that we must invest in. Without soil we have nothing.

The main critical factor in mitigating soil erosion is to keep it covered throughout the year. In Utah and Montana, it has been demonstrated that ground cover has a profound protective influence, and for uncovered ground some 17 tonnes of soil/hectare/year can be lost www.cuttingcalifornia.org/bca/research/Ecology%20of%20Soil%20Erosion.pdf.

This amounts to an annual loss of soil depth of about 1 mm, and at this rate, about one inch of soil would be lost in 25 years. However, this decreases markedly with increasing ground cover, so that it is nearer 1 tonne/ha/year for 100% coverage. At around 0.1 mm/ha/yr (about the thickness of a human hair), this implies that it would take 250 years to lose that same inch of soil. Under natural conditions, soil is created at a similar rate to that at which it is eroded, and it takes 200-1,000 years to form an inch of soil, depending on climate. Thus, by covering the ground, the rate of erosion is brought back to the natural balance point, rather than it being lost at 10-40 times the natural rate, as it is on agricultural lands presently.

Some ways to protect and regenerate soil

The emphasis is on Permaculture and the Transition Towns movement, so to move from the global village to a village of globes, i.e. to more resilient, self-sufficient localised communities.

- No bare ground. Reforestation (*Plant Trees!*). Planting cover crops (peas, beans, buckwheat, clover, etc.)
- Building Soil Organic Matter (SOM). No-till farming.
- Shielding the soil through the use of sand fences, shelter belts, woodlots and

windbreaks. *Plant Trees!*

- Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration: “reforested” *five million* hectares barren land (Niger) → 40 trees/hectare.
- Protecting forests: soil/carbon plus ‘lungs of the Earth’.
- Mulch from pruned trees, and straw to cover fields: increasing soil-water retention and reducing evaporation.
- Plant Trees!* Help soil to absorb water, reduce flooding.
- Building the “Soil Food Web” (one billion microbes in every teaspoonful of soil).

Permaculture.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Permaculture>

- Permaculture = Permanent (Agri)Culture.
- Seeing the whole picture, and placing design elements together to support one another.
- Companion planting; no-till, building soil structure, efficient use of water, smaller PNK inputs; capturing carbon; best use of light; exploit 3rd dimension.
- ‘Three sisters’: bean + corn + squash. Plants mutually support each other.

Forest Garden (Principle of ‘layers’).

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forest_gardening

A forest garden is designed on the principles of a natural forest, with a mutually supportive arrangement of plants (Figure 2), and soil flora and fauna. The different heights that the plants grow to and the approximate symmetry between this and the root-depths, enables an optimum harvesting of the available sunlight, and the water and nutrients at different soil-depths. In a food-forest garden, plants are chosen to yield edible produce.

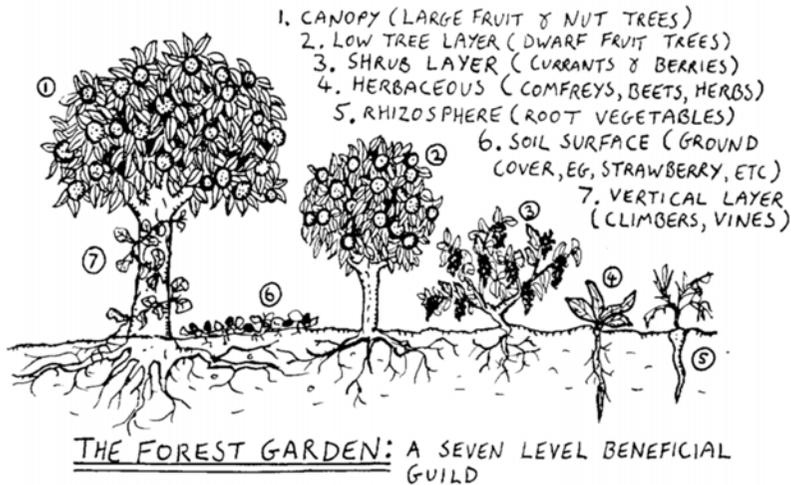


Figure 2. A forest garden is a beneficial arrangement of plants etc. that exploit the 3rd dimension, both above ground and below it, in terms of the different rooting depths of plants. Such an arrangement can be highly productive.

A forest garden can be grown even in spaces that are not immediately obvious for food to be produced, e.g. the Reading International Solidarity Centre (RISC) roof garden (Figure 3), which is a superlative example of urban permaculture.



Figure 3. ‘RISC Roof Garden’... yes, it’s really on the roof of a building in Reading town centre, growing in just a foot of soil!

The world’s woes... (the changing climate).

- Carbon emissions – climate change.
 - Peak oil/Globalization. Population: 9.5 billion by 2050.
 - Declining resources: water, oil, gas, coal, uranium, metals, phosphorus.
 - Land degradation: soil erosion – desertification. One third of global arable land abandoned from erosion in the past 40 years.
 - Health: Obesity - sugar in diet, lack of exercise. Unemployment. Community? ‘Nature deficit disorder’?
 - Increasing poverty: rising food costs - imported fertilizers – unfair global trade practices.
- Unstable global economy. Resources: the real limits of growth?

All are symptoms of a single problem – excessive (once-through) consumption

- PRESENTLY: ‘The sins of the fathers’, an impoverishing scenario where finite resources are exhausted year on year, and the Earth is increasingly polluted by those same processes that consume them, e.g. carbon emissions.
- GROWTH: ‘growing our way to hope’, where growth is possible, if not globally, on the local scale. Resource-resilience, as opposed to resource-depletion.

- Using permaculture, we can provide much of our food and materials on the local scale, with greatly reduced inputs of crude oil, natural gas, fertilizers, and freshwater.
- Soil is rebuilt from carbon taken out of the atmosphere, thus acting to ameliorate climate change. A win-win situation!
- Currently our universities are educating a generation for a future that won't exist: <http://www.rba.co.uk/UniversityShambles/>.
- Far fewer universities. Many will transform to teach more practical subjects. More local colleges and schools.
- Need to introduce life-skills from early school.
- We'll need more electricians, plumbers, carpenters, bricklayers, mechanics, cooks, farmers and gardeners. NOT 50% university graduates.
- 'Transition Education' – schools, colleges, universities – rooted in sustainability, will provide the re-skilling to build self-reliant communities, and enable us to escape from global collapse: climate, economy, resources.
- Transition Towns movement: bottom-up ('grass roots') approach, based around building resilient, more self-sustaining communities (less reliant on central government).

VIEWPOINTS

When War Is Justifiable

With the greatest respect to Barbara Smoker, I must disagree with her that international warfare can never be justified (*ER*, December, pp 20-21). She says she was always horrified by war. The same, I hope, applies to every decent person, and my attitude to war is, I trust, that of all such people: that it is a dreadful and appalling tragedy which should be avoided if at all possible. But some wars are, I believe, justifiable and necessary, and one such was what we call the Second World War (I concur with the view that it was in fact two wars which happened to coincide).

Two of the most populous, technologically and economically advanced and militarily powerful countries in the world, Germany and Japan, had fallen into the hands of aggressive, militarist, expansionist regimes which aspired in one case to dominate almost the whole of Europe (Hitler envisaged Berlin, renamed 'Germania', being declared the capital of a German-dominated Europe in 1950) and in the other almost the whole of eastern Asia. They were not amenable to negotiation and persuasion and I have no doubt that there was no real alternative to their military defeat.

I am somewhat baffled by Barbara's assertion that the 1939-45 war was unnecessary because the Nazi regime would have collapsed eventually anyway. No doubt it would, but only in the sense that no totalitarian regime can last forever (consider the Soviet Union), and at one time it and its allies and sympathisers (Italy, Spain, etc.) controlled almost the whole of mainland Europe and seriously aspired to invading Britain. I hope Barbara thinks we would have been justified in defending ourselves then! Similarly, Japan occupied vast areas of eastern Asia, extending into parts of India, and although Barbara says much about Japan she doesn't say what should have been done about its regime and whether she thinks it too would soon have collapsed.

If the German and Japanese tyrannies had been confined to their own people and countries, leaving them to their own devices would perhaps have been justified, just as nowadays no-one seriously suggests invading tyrannies no matter how much evidence emerges of how appallingly they treat their own people, but the Germans and Japanese overran many other places, ill-treated their people dreadfully, and in one case threatened Britain and in the other were in a strong position to threaten Australia and New Zealand. There was, surely, no alternative to opposition by force.

The Falklands War was also justified. A military regime which had murdered thousands of its own people sought to distract attention and arouse support by invading and occupying territory whose population overwhelmingly wanted to remain British (99.8% in a referendum in 2013). Again there was, I believe, no alternative to military action: as Enoch Powell (not a man for whom I had much liking) said at the time, “We must go to war”, and he was right. Argentine governments seem to reach for their emotional, ‘patriotic’ claim to the Falklands whenever they want to avert attention from other things: quite recently, when the country had economic trouble, the President, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, again began sabre-rattling over the Falklands.

Finally, I must point out that Barbara’s reference to “the German rockets V1 and V2” is at fault. The V1 wasn’t a rocket; it had a pulse-jet, an early and primitive form of jet engine.

Ray Ward - London

UKIP and Immigration

I am not and never have been a member of UKIP, and I agree or sympathise with some of the comments reportedly made by Tom Rubens (*ER* November, pp 17 – 19). However, I disagree with, or have doubts about, others. Mr. Rubens focusses to quite an extent on UKIP and immigration. But, as I understand it, UKIP is against uncontrolled mass immigration, not immigration *per se*. The EU’s freedom of movement rules seem designed politically to weaken national identity and cohesion in the interests of a supranational bureaucratic state.

Mr. Rubens does not mention the crisis in the Eurozone, an integral part of the EU. He attacks UKIP partly because of people associated with it. But does this mean, then, that the Labour Party was discredited because some of its members served the interests of Soviet totalitarianism, or that the Social Democratic Federation was discredited because it was founded, led and largely funded by a wealthy City businessman who accepted ‘Tory gold’?

Martin Page - East Finchley

{The above paragraphs replace their incomplete printing in the Dec ER (p. 18) [Ed]}

Replies on UKIP

A. Reply to Rummy Hasan:

A sizeable part of his letter is given to showing findings of national polls, in which decisive majorities of the people questioned said they supported immigration controls. Along with these findings, UKIP’s support for controls is emphasised. However, what is needed is evidence that the majorities cited were in favour of the *specific* controls which UKIP advocates, and which I listed in my Address (describing them as “virulent”).

Hasan will remember that I said that I myself supported controls, though not of the extreme kind that UKIP calls for. There are many people who share my viewpoint. Hence precision is needed in identifying which exact area of the pro-control lobby supports UKIP. Such precision is not achieved by simply trying to link percentages in nation-wide polls with percentages of UKIP votes in various elections. Impressive though the cited examples of UKIP's electoral performances undoubtedly are, those performances would, arguably, have been even more striking, had they fully reflected the national poll percentages.

Also, two thirds of the polls referred to date only to 2011. Hasan may have forgotten that the Manchester University study of people's opinions on immigration, which I cited as showing much more favourable attitudes to immigrants—yet about which he is so dismissive—claims that a large-scale change in attitude has occurred *since 2011*. And, even regarding the 2014 poll figures which he quotes, only 47% definitely thought that immigration was bad for the economy.

Finally, on Hasan's point that all the major political parties, not just UKIP, support big business and receive donations from it: yes—absolutely correct! But this fact, seen from the standpoint of the genuinely democratic and majoritarian politics which UKIP alleges it represents, constitutes an enormous problem: and one that UKIP is part of.

B. Reply to Martin Page:

I repeat the point made in my reply to Hasan, that I am in favour of certain immigration controls. In connection with UKIP's criticism of the EU's bureaucratic power, its financial situation and its over-regulative tendencies: I regard these criticisms as perfectly valid, and would just add that it isn't only UKIP that is making them. Criticism of UKIP does not imply non-criticism of the EU. Nor, in turn, does criticism of the EU necessarily entail the argument that Britain should leave the Union.

Tom Rubens - London, N4.

Nuclear Greener than Green

David Williams sets out much of *The truth about climate change* (ER Dec 2014) and, very likely, *nothing but the truth*. For myself, I don't find he comes near enough to *the whole truth*.

The whole truth must include what every schoolboy should know and quantum mechanics proposes, which is that nuclear energy is a million times, or more, as dense as chemical energy. In other words, energy released when an atom of uranium fissions is a million times more than when an atom of carbon is oxidized. In summary, nuclear energy is a million times greener than green.

More of 'the whole truth' must include relevant history of attempts to harness nuclear energy. Interested people can conclude that a first nuclear era is just about ended. Its failure, very evident at Hinkley Point C, is to provide electricity that is affordable. All existing nuclear power plants are associated with a technology based on solid nuclear fuels, namely Pressurised Water Reactors (PWRs).

The PWR uses water to cool fuel rods in reactor vessels at a hundred times or more atmospheric pressure. They may overheat. Reactor cores can melt down. After one or two percent burn-up the solid fuel, whether rods or pellets, inevitably poisons itself and the fuel must be replaced. Replaced fuel rods and even pellets can be re-processed or stored – both procedures difficult and costly. This inappropriate technology was hastily adopted during the cold war in the attempt to obtain plutonium for weapons and to power submarines to deliver them.

Molten Salt Reactor (MSR) technology, which avoids almost all of these problems, fell victim to perceived military requirements during the cold war period and was then an unattractive alternative technology with expected adverse effects on the established nuclear industries. It is imperative for the next nuclear era that it is re-established. This will require wide public understanding leading to determined political will. This requirement for understanding is especially acute in respect of the regulatory regime, set in stone by virtue of international agreements, and hugely costly.

Each new reactor proposal, whether pilot scale or industrial, carries with it likely regulatory costs of £100 million or more, currently borne entirely by the entrepreneur. This is for an industry that can be shown to be, even with rather unwise choice of technology, two orders of magnitude, or more, safer than other human activities (consider, for example cycling in London).

David Williams' contribution has, I very much hope, given an ethical dimension to this. He has given every one of us – whether or not able to formulate the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics – a clear ethical obligation to become equipped to enter into some sort of debate about these matters.

Jasper Tomlinson

P.S. I have secured government funding for an ongoing study of the feasibility of setting up and operating a pilot scale demonstration MSR. See www.energyprocessingdevelopments.com for more info). **JT**

The Ethical Society's Promotion: "Ethical without Religion"

Jim Walsh's explanation for the Trustees' failure to adopt the Resolution of the 2013 AGM (*ER* Dec 14, p 15) looks strange to me. There is a reference to the "need to be able to be flexible." It was confirmed at the 2014 AGM that the Resolution does not put a legal obligation on anybody, but there is an ethical obligation on the Trustees and staff to try as far as reasonable to follow the wishes of the membership. The Resolution makes clear the difference between marketing Conway Hall to produce revenue and the Ethical Society for events that relate in some way to ethics. It is obvious that if, for good reason, some publicity does not comply with the letter of the Resolution, that is not a problem.

Jim states, "...the fact that our membership numbers are increasing indicates that our current marketing strategy is extremely successful." In fact, the membership section of recent annual reports shows that when the *Conway Hall* branding (only putting *Ethical Society* in very small print at the bottom of publicity) was introduced the number of new members went down. It only increased as joining online became possible and encouraged.

At the 2013 AGM, and in a letter to the Trustee Chairman and three letters to Jim Walsh, I suggested we adopt a slogan in line with the BHA, NSS and many other organisations to ‘beef up’ our printed stationery and publicity. In our case the slogan could be “Ethical without Religion”. My suggestion has been completely ignored.

I would like to remind readers that in the November 2011 *Ethical Record*, Jim Walsh wrote, “Put very simply, the amazement I felt at discovering that there was such a thing as an ‘Ethical Society’ galvanised me to apply for the role of Chief Executive Officer.” So why, since before he wrote that, has he been so keen to hide the words ‘Ethical Society’ in very small print at the bottom of publicity?

Quentin England – Edmonton

Our Promotional Material

On page 15 of the current Ethical Record I see that Jim Walsh justifies the Trustees’ rejection of the wish of a general meeting of our members that the name of the Society should appear on all our promotional material. He quotes the amazing comment of one of the Trustees that “Ultimately our revenue comes from the Hall and not the Society”. As I pointed out at the AGM, it was the Society, through its members’ donations from ninety years ago, that built the Hall. Moreover, it is the Society, not the Hall, that was accorded charity status, enabling us to hire out our premises without paying corporation tax – provided, of course, all the profit made is devoted to our charitable objects.

Barbara Smoker - Bromley

Paris, France: Liberté Egalité Fraternité

On Sunday, one felt very emotional watching the multitude of men and women gathered at the Place de la République, guarded by thousands of police officers. Not less so was seeing the line of Heads of States holding hands in a symbolic gesture of solidarity after the killing of 4 peaceful citizens in a Jewish supermarket and 12 journalists and cartoonists including the policeman, in the office of *Charlie Hebdo*. In homage, banners were held by many with the words ‘Je suis Charlie’. A similar mark of respect and sympathy was very much in evidence in London, given the number of French residents living in the capital – and the *entente cordiale* between the two nations. A vigil took place on Trafalgar Square and the French flag could be seen in front of the National Gallery.

How does one reconcile freedom of expression, exposing the many ills and abuses prevailing in our society, without causing offence and personal anger? Remember the Fatwa demanded by the Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran on Salman Rushdie for his *Satanic Verses*, followed by the many more recent examples of brutal killing of hostages in the name of Allah. This is the crux; it will continue to be the subject of debates all over the world as the threat of terrorism has gone global. Some of the comments heard were mixed: Did the sharp cartoons printed in *Charlie Hebdo*, which could be compared to similar English cartoons seen in some of the national newspapers, and particularly the magazine *Private Eye*, go too far? But why are these taken so seriously when they are meant to be amusing

and, to some extent, disrespectful of the establishment? This is what satire is and has always been.*

France, which has a high population of Moslems and Jews, is in a state of flux with serious problems of identity and cultural difference; hence people of various religions are worried about the future. The ludicrous and harmful speeches of the National Front leader, Marine Le Pen, have contributed to this crisis, along with her popularity, a phenomenon also witnessed in several countries of central and Northern Europe, with the rise of the extreme Right. The Humanists still have a big job to do.

Marina Ingham – West Hampstead

*Eg Rabelais, Zola {Ed}

1000 Lashes in 20 Sessions for Blogging

This should be satire but unfortunately is not. A very brave man, Raif Badawi, has received his first weekly dose of public flogging in Saudi Arabia for the ‘crime’ of starting a blog with liberal views.* Who is close friends with the Saudi rulers? Why none other than Prince Charles, who is set to be our next unelected head of state when the present unelected incumbent dies.

**His second 50 lashes have been postponed*

Republic, which campaigns for an elected head of state, is calling on Charles to condemn the flogging and distance himself from the Saudi royals. *Republic* has pointed out previous hypocrisy by Charles in selective reference to human rights issues. If we have such a low opinion of ourselves as to think we deserve him as our ruler, we really are a right load of Charlies.



Raif Badawi

Jennifer R Jeynes - Hampstead

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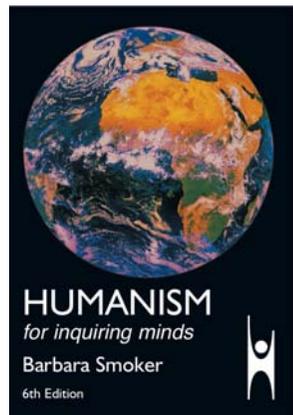
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HOW HUMANITY MIGHT AVOID DEVASTATION

Nicholas Maxwell, Emeritus Reader, University College London

Lecture to the Ethical Society, 14 December 2014

The future of humanity is threatened by grave global problems. There is the problem of war, over one hundred million people having been killed in countless wars during the course of the twentieth century (which compares unfavourably with the twelve million or so killed in wars during the nineteenth century). And we have not done very well so far in the 21st century.

There is the obscenity of the arms trade, the massive stockpiling of armaments, even by poor countries, and the ever present threat of their use by terrorists or in war, whether the arms be conventional, chemical, biological, or nuclear. There is the sustained, profound injustice of immense differences in wealth around the globe, the industrially advanced first world of North America, Europe and elsewhere experiencing unprecedented wealth while something like a fifth of humanity live in conditions of abject poverty in the third world, hungry, unemployed, without proper housing, health care, education, or even access to safe water. There is the long-standing problem of the rapid growth of the world's population, pronounced especially in the poorest parts of the world, and adversely affecting efforts at development.

There is the problem of the progressive destruction of tropical rain forests and other natural habitats, with its concomitant devastating extinction of species. Humanity urgently needs to discover how to create a sustainable world industry and agriculture that does not wreak havoc on the environment; attempts do this have, so far, proved ineffective. There are problems of pollution of air, sea and earth, and problems of depletion of finite resources. And over everything hangs the menace of climate change, threatening to intensify all the other problems – apart, perhaps, from population growth. (As the climate warms, millions will die. They are dying already.)

But it is worse than that. It is not just that our efforts to tackle global problems seem pathetically inadequate. Far worse, much of our efforts seem devoted to *intensifying* our problems. We know that if we continue to emit carbon dioxide at anything like the rate we do at present, we are heading towards disaster. Does this mean we cut back on emissions? All sorts of measures are introduced, but CO₂ emissions actually increase – or only fail to increase because of the world economic recession. High up on the agenda of every government of every nation is economic growth; but it is economic growth, as conducted at present, which leads to higher CO₂ emissions – even if this need not be if power, industry and transport were run on different, more sustainable lines.

Governments seek security, build up their armies and defence in order to procure security, provoke suspicious neighbour nations to do likewise, and thus increase insecurity and the danger of war. Banks seek wealth, and plunge the world into debt, recession and poverty. Progress is eagerly sought, and the outcome is industrial, agricultural and population growth beyond what the planet can support. Natural habitats are destroyed, species annihilated, land and sea polluted.

The Nightmare Twist in Science

We seem trapped in a vicious nightmare in which what we strive to achieve, our finest and most passionately sought aspirations and ideals, are transformed, as we draw closer to them, into ugly and dangerous monstrosities, threats to our very existence. What we love the most turns out to do us the most harm.

A key example of this nightmare twist is science. Modern science has been pursued, ever since its birth in the 17th century, with the passionate conviction that science will better the lot of humanity. Unquestionably, science has met with quite astonishing intellectual success in improving our knowledge and understanding of the universe, and ourselves as a part of the universe. And modern science and technology have been of immense benefit to humanity. In countless ways, those of us fortunate to live in the wealthy, industrially advanced parts of the world have had our lives enriched beyond the wildest dreams of people living only a couple of centuries ago. Modern science has made possible the modern world.

At the same time science has helped to create all our current global problems – or at least has made them possible. Science and technology have led to modern industry, agriculture, transport, armaments, medicine and hygiene. And these in turn have led to global warming, population growth, destruction of natural habitats and rapid extinction of species, the development of extreme inequalities of wealth and power around the globe, pollution of earth, sea and air, depletion of natural resources, the lethal character of modern war, the increasing threats posed by the spread of modern armaments.

No wonder many conclude, not just that we cannot make things better, but all our efforts to do so, however nobly and energetically pursued, are doomed just to make things worse. A typical example of someone who thinks along these lines is the very popular writer John Gray who, in book after book, article after article, has argued that progress is illusory, all our efforts to transform the human condition inevitably ending in nightmare.ⁱ

Is there anything we can do to escape this nightmare or even our noblest efforts to make things better ending up making things worse? There is. In order to make progress towards a better world we need to *learn* how to do it. And for that, in turn, we need *institutions of learning rationally designed and devoted to helping us learn how to solve our global problems, how to make progress towards a better world*. It is just this that we lack at present. Our universities are devoted to the pursuit of knowledge. They are neither designed nor devoted to helping humanity learn how to tackle global problems – problems of living – in more intelligent, humane and effective ways. That is the key disaster of our times, the crisis behind all the others: our failure to have developed our institutions of learning so that they are rationally organized and devoted to helping us solve our problems of living – above all, our global problems. Having universities devoted almost exclusively to the pursuit of knowledge is, as we have seen, a recipe for disaster. Scientific knowledge and technological know-how have unquestionably brought great benefits to humanity. But they have also made possible – even caused – our current global crises.ⁱⁱ

‘Knowledge-Enquiry’ Dominates Today

Academia, as it exists at present, devoted primarily to the pursuit of knowledge, is the outcome of efforts to create a kind of academic inquiry that is rationally organized and devoted to helping humanity achieve what is of value in life, solve problems of living, make social progress towards as good a world as possible. The idea that the fundamental social or humanitarian goal of rational inquiry should be to better the lot of humanity goes all the way back to Francis Bacon in the 17th century. And Bacon helped inspire many of those who created modern science. His writings were inspirational in the creation of the Royal Society in Britain. Natural science – or natural philosophy, as it was known in the 17th century – was pursued in part in the passionate belief that knowledge acquired would help transform the human condition for the better.

The idea was further developed by the Enlightenment of the 18th century, especially by the *philosophes* of the French Enlightenment. Voltaire, Diderot, Condorcet and the rest had the fundamental and profound idea that it might be possible to learn from scientific progress how to achieve social progress towards an enlightened world. In developing this immensely important idea, the *philosophes* took it for granted that, in order to put this idea into practice what one needed to do was to develop the social sciences alongside the natural sciences.

So the *philosophes* set about creating the *social sciences* alongside the *natural sciences*. They brought into existence, or developed, economics, sociology, psychology, anthropology, political science, history, the study of law, culture and custom. What the *philosophes* initiated or developed in the 18th century, others – such as J .S. Mill and Karl Marx – further developed throughout the 19th century, often outside universities until, in the early 20th century social science was built into academic inquiry in universities all over the world with the creation of departments of social science: economics, sociology, anthropology, psychology, political science.

The outcome is what, by and large, we have today, academic inquiry devoted, in the first instance, to the pursuit of knowledge – or *knowledge-inquiry* as we may call it. There are two basic ideas inherent in knowledge-inquiry.

- (1) The primary task for academic inquiry is to acquire knowledge and technological know-how. First, knowledge must be acquired. Once acquired, it can *then* be applied to help solve social problems.
- (2) In order to be of value to humanity, knowledge must be objective, factual and reliable. This means only those considerations relevant to the assessment of knowledge can enter the intellectual domain of inquiry – evidence, valid argument, experimental results, factual claims, empirically testable theories and the like. Values, ideals, emotions, desires, human hopes and fears, human aspirations, expressions of joy and suffering, policy and political ideas, ideas about how to live – all these must be excluded from the intellectual domain in order to ensure that objective knowledge of fact is obtained. Almost paradoxically, expressions of human aspirations and suffering must be excluded from the intellectual domain, from scientific and

scholarly papers, books and lectures, so that objective, factual knowledge is obtained, alone of human value. If this strict censorship is not observed, knowledge will degenerate into mere propaganda and ideology, and will cease to be of real benefit to humanity.

Knowledge-inquiry, as summarized in (1) and (2), dominates the academic enterprise today. Not all academic work accords with the edicts of knowledge-inquiry, and by no means all academics agree with these edicts. Knowledge-inquiry is, nevertheless, massively influential. It is the dominant paradigm for academia, the only well-known idea as to what constitutes rational inquiry. It is almost unconsciously taken for granted by most academics. It is important to note that knowledge-inquiry does allow that academia may well discuss the *application* of knowledge to help solve social problems. Medicine, biology, engineering, geography, sociology, economics, psychology, political science, the study of international affairs, even though primarily concerned to acquire knowledge, all have applications to human life. Departments of public policy, peace, environment, risk, development, global governance do explore social problems and how they are to be solved. Discussion of what may be called 'problems of living' is not excluded from academia, but it has only a secondary role, in accordance with (1) and (2). The primary task of academic inquiry is to solve problems of *knowledge*, not problems of *living*.

Knowledge-inquiry is, however, an intellectual and humanitarian disaster. It is damagingly irrational in a wholesale, structural way. This is the key disaster of our times. It is the gross, structural irrationality of academia that is, in the long term, responsible for the development of our current global problems, and responsible for our incapacity to solve them.

What The New Enlightenment Got Wrong

It all goes back to blunders made by the 18th century Enlightenment. As I have already said, the *philosophes* had the magnificent idea that it might be possible to learn from scientific progress how to achieve social progress towards an enlightened world. But in developing and putting this idea into practice, they made disastrous mistakes, and it is from these mistakes, built into the intellectual/intellectual structure of universities today, all over the world, that we still suffer today.

In order to put the Enlightenment idea properly into practice, the following three steps need to be got right.

First, the progress-achieving methods of science need to be correctly identified. **Second**, these methods need to be correctly generalized so that they become fruitfully applicable to any worthwhile, problematic human endeavour, whatever the aims may be, and not just applicable to the endeavour of improving knowledge.

Third, the correctly generalized progress-achieving methods then need to be exploited correctly in the great human endeavour of trying to make social progress towards an enlightened, wise, civilized world.

Unfortunately, the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment got all three steps wrong. They failed to appreciate that the basic aims of science are profoundly problematic, it being important for science to try to improve its aims and

methods as it proceeds. Having failed to capture the progress-achieving methods of science correctly, they naturally failed to generalize them properly, so that they become fruitfully applicable to all worthwhile problematic endeavours, and not just the one endeavour of acquiring knowledge. It is not just in science that basic aims are problematic: this is true in life too. In life we need to try to improve problematic aims, and associated methods, as we act, as we live.

But most disastrously of all, the *philosophes* got the third step wrong. They failed completely to try to apply aim-improving methods, generalized from science, to the immense and profoundly problematic enterprise of making social progress towards an enlightened, wise world. Instead, they sought to apply a seriously defective conception of scientific method to *social science*, to the task of making progress towards, not a *better world*, but to better *knowledge* of social phenomena. They developed social inquiry, not as social *methodology*, designed to help humanity achieve what is of value in life, but rather as social *science*, designed to help academic experts improve knowledge of social phenomena. And it is this ancient blunder, developed throughout the 19th century and built into universities in the early 20th century with the creation of departments of social science, which is responsible for what we have today, knowledge-inquiry, in part responsible for the generation of our global problems.

What do we need to do now, in the second decade of the 21st century, to correct the three blunders of the 18th century Enlightenment?

We Need Wisdom-Enquiry

The outcome of correcting the three blunders of the *philosophes* is a kind of academic enterprise very different from knowledge-inquiry – what, by and large, we have at present. It would be a kind of academic enterprise more *rigorous* than knowledge-inquiry, of greater *intellectual integrity and value*, and far more *effective* in helping humanity solve problems of living, and make progress towards a better world. I call this new kind of inquiry *wisdom-inquiry*. It is what emerges when the basic Enlightenment idea is developed and put into practice correctly, without the disastrous three blunders made by the *philosophes*.

I repeat: *the* crisis of our times, the crisis behind all the others, is our failure to have developed a kind of inquiry rationally designed and devoted to helping us solve our problems of living, make progress towards a good, wise, enlightened world – or, at least, towards as good a world as possible. Instead of creating *wisdom-inquiry*, all we have managed to do is create *knowledge-inquiry*, a botched version of wisdom inquiry.

It is important to appreciate, however, that academia as it exists today, the outcome, by and large, of putting knowledge-inquiry into practice, is a defective version of what we really need: wisdom-inquiry. The task before us is not to create something entirely new, untested, with nothing more to guide us than an abstract philosophical argument. We do not need to leap into the dark blindfolded, as it were, hoping for the best. Rather, our task is to correct quite definite blunders in the structure of academia that we have inherited from the past – blunders we have failed so far to get properly into focus and so put right.

We already possess a kind of inquiry created to help us make progress towards a wise, enlightened world: our problem is that we fail to see that the design is defective, and urgently needs to be put right.

Notes

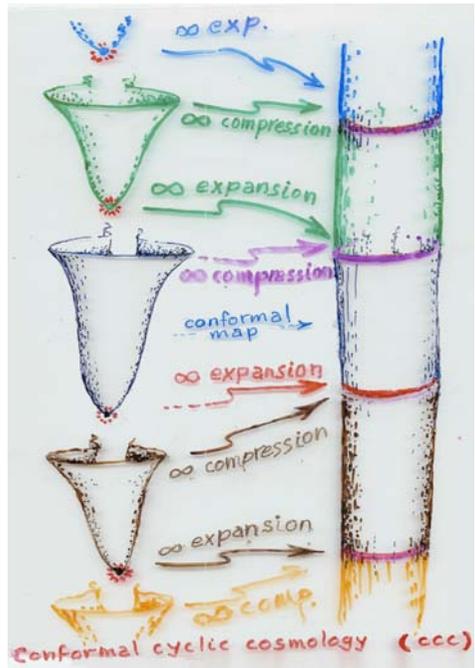
i See for example, Gray, J., *Heresies: Against Progress and Other Illusions*, 2004, Granta Books.

ii The argument that follows was spelled out in great detail long ago in my book *From Knowledge to Wisdom*, 1984, Blackwell; 2nd ed., 2007, Pentire Press. See also my *The Comprehensibility of the Universe: A New Conception of Science*, 1998, Oxford University Press; *Is Science Neurotic?*, 2004, Imperial College Press; *How Universities Can Help Create a Wiser World: The Urgent Need for an Academic Revolution*, 2014, Imprint Academic; *Global Philosophy: What Philosophy Ought to Be*, 2014, Imprint Academic.

See also my articles available online at www.ucl.ac.uk/from-knowledge-to-wisdom and <http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/view/people/ANMAX22.date.html>

ARE WE SEEING SIGNALS FROM BEFORE THE BIG BANG?

CHES has published the text of the 81st Conway Memorial Lecture given by Roger Penrose in 2012. This 56 page booklet includes 24 coloured plates drawn by the author. The text outlines Penrose's speculative theory that our present universe, which has existed since the 'big bang' 13.8 billion years ago, is one of a possibly infinite series of such universes, termed aeons by Roger Penrose. The booklet may be obtained from the retail shop at Conway Hall at £12 per copy (with a discount for CHES members).



Showing the succession of aeons

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Conway Hall Ethical Society, 25 Red Lion Square, Holborn, WC1R 4RL.

Tel: 020 7405 1818 Website: www.conwayhall.org.uk

For programme updates, email: programme@ethicalsoc.org.uk

Admission to Thinking on Sunday events is free for members of CHES and £3 (£2 conc) for non-members. For other events, no charge unless stated.

January 2015

Thursday 22 1900 LONDON EX-MUSLIM MEET-UP GROUP and CHES present:
SCIENCE AND REASON IN AN AGE OF UNREASON.
How and why irrationalism achieved its towering status in Pakistan, India and the diaspora – and how to combat it.
Physicist Pervez Hoodbuoy.
All welcome

LONDON THINKS EVENT

Thursday 22 1930 A conversation about life, the universe and everything between vicar **Giles Fraser**, geneticist **Adam Rutherford** and bible researcher **Francesca Stavrakopoulou**
Chairman: **Samira Ahmed**
Wine from 1830. Tickets: £15 (£5 concs. & CHES members)

THINKING ON SUNDAY

Sunday 25 1100 **CAN NANO-TECHNOLOGY SAVE THE WORLD?**
Douglas Paul

February

Sunday 1 1100 **THE ETHICAL AND ECONOMIC CASE FOR SOCIALISM**
Jerry Jones

Sunday 8 1100 **GOD TALK: A CONVERSATION**
Anthony O'Neill and Dominique Nevoux

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25 January 1830 **New Zealand Chamber Soloists** (piano trio)
Haydn: Trio HobXV/25 'Gypsy';
Beethoven: Trio Op.70/1 'Ghost';
Dvořák: Trio Op.65

1 February 1830 **Edinburgh Quartet**
Haydn: Quartet Op.17/4;
Mendelssohn: Quartet Op.44/2;
Elgar: Quartet Op.83

8 February 1830 **Werther Ensemble**
Beethoven: Piano Quartet Wo36;
Mendelssohn: Piano Quartet Op.2;
Walton: Piano Quartet