

Ethical Record

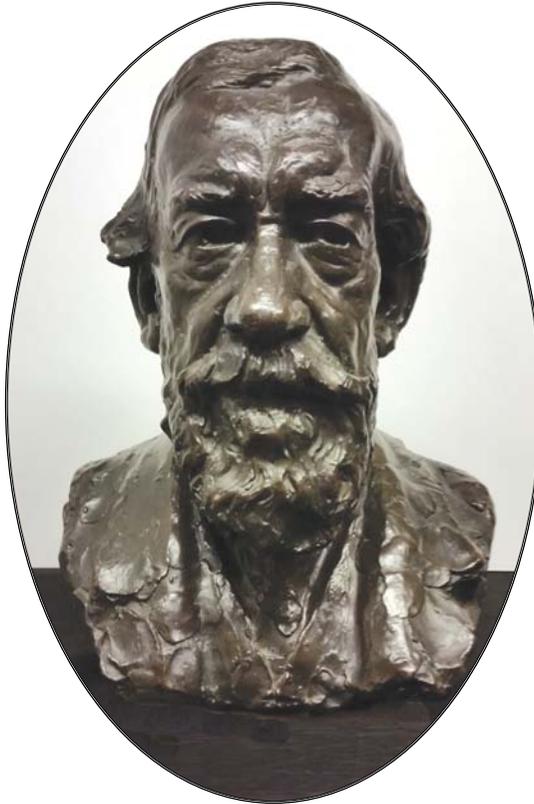
The Proceedings of the Conway Hall Ethical Society

Vol. 121 No. 4

£1.50

April 2016

MONCURE CONWAY



*Bronze bust of Moncure Conway by Theodore Spicer-Simson
Photograph courtesy of Dickinson College, USA
See article on page 19*

ARE WE OWED A LIVING?	Barb Jacobson	3
VIEWPOINTS	J.R. Jaynes, T. Rubens	10
TRIDENT RENEWAL – THE ARGUMENTS AGAINST IT	Timmon Wallis	12
BOOK REVIEW - ISLAMIC FASCISM by Hamed Abdel-Samad	Rumy Hasan	16
THE MYSTERIOUS CASE OF CONWAY'S BUST	Carl Harrison	19
FORTHCOMING EVENTS		24

CONWAY HALL ETHICAL SOCIETY
Conway Hall Humanist Centre - www.conwayhall.org.uk
25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL.

Trustees' Chair: Liz Lutgendorff; **Treasurer:** Carl Harrison
Editor: Norman Bacrac *Please email texts and viewpoints for the Editor to:*
normanbacrac@gmail.com

Chief Executive Officer:	Jim Walsh	Tel: 020 7061 6745	Jim@ethicalsoc.org.uk
Administrator:	Martha Lee	Tel: 020 7061 6741	admin@ethicalsoc.org.uk
Finance Officer:	Linda Lamnica	Tel: 020 7061 6740	finance@ethicalsoc.org.uk
Library/Learning:	S. Hawkey-Edwards	Tel: 020 7061 6747	sophie@ethicalsoc.org.uk
Hon. Archivist:	Carl Harrison		carl.harrison@btinternet.com
Programme/Marketing:	Sid Rodrigues	Tel: 020 7061 6744	sid@ethicalsoc.org.uk
Venue Hire:	Carina Dvorak, Brian Biagioni	Tel: 020 7061 6750	lettings@ethicalsoc.org.uk
Caretakers:	Eva Aubrechtova (i/c)	Tel: 020 7061 6743	Eva@ethicalsoc.org.uk
together with:	Brian Biagioni, Sean Foley, Tony Fraser, Rogerio Retuerma		
Maintenance:	Zia Hameed	Tel: 020 7061 6742	Zia@ethicalsoc.org.uk

New Members

The Society is pleased to welcome the following new members:
Samuel Ackland, Martin Archer, Martyn Cooper,
Joanne Everson, Manuel Schaefer, Virgil Yendell.

THE HUMANIST LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES

Conway Hall Humanist Library and Archives is home to a unique collection of published and archival sources on humanism and its related subjects. We are open for members, researchers and the general public on Tuesdays to Thursdays from 1000 - 1700. Our collections include printed materials such as books, pamphlets and journals as well as archival material of unpublished institutional and personal records and papers, such as manuscripts, letters and photographs. For your time and convenience it is advisable to contact the library before your visit so we can ensure the material you seek is available.

Tel: 020 7061 6747. Email: sophie@ethicalsoc.org.uk

CONWAY HALL ETHICAL SOCIETY

Reg. Charity No. 1156033

Founded in 1793, the Society is a progressive movement whose Charitable Objects are: **the advancement of study, research and education in humanist ethical principles.**

We therefore invite to membership those who, rejecting the supernatural, are in sympathy with the above objects. In furtherance of these, the Society maintains the Humanist Library and Archives. The Society's journal, *Ethical Record*, is issued monthly. At Conway Hall the educational programme includes Thinking on Sunday, discussions, evening courses and Sunday concerts of chamber music. Memorial meetings may be arranged.

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

ARE WE OWED A LIVING?

Barb Jacobson

Lecture to the Ethical Society, 3 April 2016

Interest in universal basic income, that is to say a payment to every individual regardless of work or means, has resurged in the last two to three years. It is an old idea, originally connected to the enclosures and the loss of common land people used for subsistence. It has been called a variety of names over the years: citizen's income, social credit, citizen's wage, social dividend, guaranteed income among others.

One of the first people to propose the need for an unconditional income was Thomas Paine. The hero of Moncure Conway, he mooted a version of this idea in *Agrarian Justice* in 1796, where couples would get a lump sum when they married, and people over 50 would receive a pension for life, on the basis that it would be compensation for their lack of access to land, and paid for by taxing land owners on the rents they collect. Since then many economists, thinkers and campaigners, as diverse as JS Mill, Bertrand Russell, Virginia Woolf, Friedrich von Hayek, Erich Fromm, Buckminster Fuller and Martin Luther King have supported some form of basic income.

Currently basic income is gathering a global movement, with activists in almost every country. Many are inspired by the fear of some, and hope of others, that robots will take over a large percentage of paid work and many jobs will be eliminated. Others, in the spirit of Paine, see it as a just recompense for privately-held resources which should be our common inheritance. Others see it as a way to win financial independence and recognition for people, especially women, who do the largely unpaid work of caring for others in society. Still others see it as a way to kick-start the sluggish demand we see in most economies. Finally there are those who look to basic income as a passport to freedom from a 'labour market' which is really an 'employers market' when the only options for most people are to work or to starve. As pointed out by a Haitian activist a few years ago, the idea of an unconditional, universal basic income replaces St Paul's saying that 'He who will not work, shall not eat' with 'He who does not eat, cannot work'. As such it challenges age-old assumptions about work, most particularly the work ethic.

The Work Ethic

The work ethic as we know it today: that work of whatever kind is good for the soul, and indeed is a just requirement for the privilege of eating - along with early ideas about social support, (which started in Europe in the 16th century) arose with the codification of rights over the land. During the feudal era land might be controlled by a king and his courtiers, but ultimately it was the 'property' of god, and aristocrats at least owed military protection to those who worked on it. As property rights became codified people were thrown off common lands, and in the wake of the dissolution of the monasteries in the UK and the help they gave the poor, the work ethic became a powerful excuse to not look after people who now either had no access to land, or no job in the towns. Hard work was seen as an indicator by Protestants that one was part of God's elect, and having no work was seen as a curse by God, leaving those who did

earn a living by work under no obligation to support those who did not. Although it did valorise manual labour which had been (and continued to be) scorned by aristocrats since Ancient Greece, it also justified the hoarding, rather than sharing, the fruits of one's labours.

One can see this theology being played out in the sanctioning regime ratcheted up during the latest welfare reforms. Whatever one thinks about these, there is little doubt that Iain Duncan Smith sincerely felt he was helping people by taking their money away if they didn't comply with the new rules.

What have been the real effects of these reforms supposedly implemented to foster a better 'work ethic', not only to benefits, but to rights to housing? I'd like to spend a little time talking about what I've seen as an independent benefits advisor in a local charity.

Housing

Secure, affordable and safe housing, that most fundamental human necessity besides food, is out of reach for more and more people. Successive governments have reduced the stock of social housing in the UK, mainly by privatisation through Right to Buy and the neglect to build more. The current bill before the Lords further undermines the security of social housing - both by setting time limits on tenancies, and penalising those who manage to earn a modest income by raising their rents. Extending Right to Buy to housing association tenants will further reduce the stock of genuinely affordable housing.

Go to any gathering of people under 40, and the talk is all about rents and landlords. Housing security simply doesn't exist for this generation, and it is not just because private rents are too high and social housing is all but unavailable. Tenancies in the private sector now have little real meaning for tenants no matter how much they pay. If your heating doesn't work, or there is mould, or even if the ceiling falls in because the roof hasn't been maintained - complaints about disrepair these days very often results in an eviction notice. Standards governing overcrowding, while they still exist, are all but unenforceable.

This has particularly affected flats on council estates - often originally built to space and light standards proven to promote health, those properties used for private lets are being chopped up to accommodate more people. It is not uncommon to see flats originally intended for one person or a couple stuffed with six or more people. The sharing of beds in shifts has also become common, where it was almost unheard of here 20 years ago. Housing in London has truly gone back to the Victorian age.

Outside London in particular, where little housing for childless households was built, the bedroom tax has meant a hike in the total Housing Benefit bill as people have been forced to find smaller properties available only in the private rented sector. All of this has made it more difficult for people to form and feel secure in settled communities. Many long-standing communities throughout the UK have been broken up by the combination of the welfare reforms, RTB tenants selling on to buy-to-let landlords, and the predations of developers. Claiming benefits, in and of itself, is hard work.

In the last few years, politicians of all stripes have been loudly announcing their support of ‘hard-working’ people on the one hand, while instituting policies which mitigate against people working. Those who need financial support between jobs, or because their disabilities are such that doing a job is difficult or impossible, are now plagued with extraordinary demands on their time and energies to service their claim for support.

Thousands have had that support withdrawn entirely for extended periods, often for petty infractions of the rules, or by contradictory demands made by those who run this system. Most would agree that it is impossible to attend both a job interview and a meeting at the job centre at the same time, yet many have had their support taken away for precisely this reason. Most would agree that it is difficult to find and hold down a job without access to food, shelter, transport, training and these days telecoms in the form of a telephone or computer. Yet this is precisely what we deny those looking for paid work, to say nothing of those looking to employ themselves in a creative and useful way.

Most would agree that the ability to push a button, or sit for extended periods of time, or lift a cardboard box with one hand (if not the other), are not good indications of one’s general employability - yet thousands have had support for living with serious health conditions taken away for precisely these reasons. The hard work of doctors and other health workers to diagnose and treat physical and mental health problems, which we have already paid for through the NHS, is thrown out the window by these tests. And while the shortage of doctors and nurses within the NHS is acknowledged as huge problem, thousands of trained health professionals have been diverted into re-testing people for benefits in a way which is neither medically nor scientifically proven, assessing people with conditions these professionals are not necessarily qualified to judge, using a tick-box form and a point system for each impairment.

Perverse Decisions

This is not only a huge waste of money in itself, but tribunal challenges to the decisions arrived at like this (35% successful without an outside advisor, 60-80% successful with an adviser) are a further burden on GPs and specialists. The stress it is putting claimants under is exacerbating their ailments, and causing new ones.

It also leads to perverse decisions: one woman I saw a few months ago looked as though she had just come from a concentration camp. Her elbows were nearly breaking out of her skin, and she had a sheaf of information from doctors about the physical ailment which was causing this. Her Work Capability Assessment not only claimed that she was somehow ‘fit for work’; it entirely ignored her physical problems while emphasising possible mental health issues.

These, if they had read the information provided by her doctors, were obviously a result of her devastating physical illness. Even worse than all this, the woman herself was so ashamed to be claiming benefits she told me she had cut herself off from her closest friends, and thus had no emotional support.

If a person with a fluctuating health condition volunteers at a community centre for a few hours a week, this makes them vulnerable to being labeled ‘fit’ for a

9-5 job. If someone admits to watching EastEnders for half an hour each day, they are often deemed able to concentrate on a computer screen at a 9-5 job. If they get to the assessment, no matter by what extraordinary effort and stress, this can be deemed as evidence they can go to a job every day. People are dying from this regime - at least 60 by suicide after having their benefits taken away, some thousands of their ailments shortly after being found 'fit for work'.

The waste of time is phenomenal for people without disabilities as well. Not only are 'jobseekers' expected to apply for up to 40 jobs every week (regardless of the actual number of job vacancies in their area) they are not allowed to choose training which might help them. Instead claimants are sent on pointless 'back to work' sessions which don't go beyond basic literacy and numeracy and CV writing, no matter how much education the claimant has already had. Workfare is a joke (except for those forced to do it), used by many private companies for cheap labour - and in many cases to replace paid jobs. Some may recall a court case two years ago where a trained geologist was forced to stack shelves at a museum rather than hone her skills by volunteering at a museum. That this ultimately would make her more employable in her chosen field made no difference. Between workfare and sanctions, people who need benefits face regimes worse than those doing community service for crimes. We do not expect people in prisons for more serious offences to live without shelter, food and heat - yet this is somehow reasonable for people without jobs.

On top of all this people who do manage to get through the maze of this system and find aid employment, discover that they can only keep 2-25p of every pound earned. This is a marginal tax rate of 75-98% depending on the benefit they're eligible for. Ironically this is what the Labour government was accused of doing to the wealthy in the 1970s, although these taxes were only applied to share and rental income, not income they earned through working.

People Made Less Capable

What is apparent, at least to me as a benefits advisor, is that this system makes people less capable of doing a job, or otherwise contributing to society. Young people are moving constantly from one high-rent flat to another and cannot lay down roots in a community. People who lose their jobs and can't find another one straight away are not allowed to keep their skills up by doing appropriate volunteer work, and face constant harassment. Those with physical and mental health problems face continuous demands to prove they still have disabilities, even after they manage to win approval for support. What we have now is not so much a social security system as a social insecurity system.

And this is not even to begin to deal with the insecurity faced by those who are employed with the rise short-term and zero-hour contracts. While many do want flexible hours and part-time jobs to enable care responsibilities or other unpaid work, they find they have little control over when they work. They cannot plan for the future, because more often than not they do not know from one week to the next, or even one day to the next, how much they will earn, or when they will work.

Much lip-service is paid to 'hard working people', and the social and psychological benefits of paid employment, and this is used to justify this social

insecurity. Yet when you look at the situation of people who do have jobs or small businesses, again we see that the deck is stacked against those who do paid work to earn their living.

Over the past 40 years or so taxes have shifted away from corporate profits, capital gains and rents. This is income which is not earned directly through work, but taken as an entitlement by those people who happen to own property, capital, plant or patents. Often these rentiers' ancestors were those who originally benefited from land enclosures. Taxes on this free income used to be as high as 80-90%, and are now down to 20% or less - while taxes on income earned through one's own labour hovers around 30%, and high earners have recently seen the threshold for the 45% tax rate go up, while even that rate has gone down from 50%. Recent rises in the tax allowance have masked the fact that the allowance made before national insurance is collected has not gone up, and remains at around £8600.

Hidden Wealth Off-shore

This is of course before we consider the huge gains the already wealthy and large corporations make by hiding their money and ownership off-shore or by juggling profits and loans between countries to avoid taxes. The wealth thus hidden is estimated to be some 31 trillions of dollars worldwide, with an estimated £34 billion lost to the British treasury via taxes thus avoided. The system is basically saying that if you can afford a battery of accountants and lawyers to lay these loopholes for you, it's quite acceptable to hoard your wealth (whether you worked to earn it or not) without needing to pay anything back to the society you live in. Indeed in these circles you are considered eccentric or foolish if you do pay taxes.

Then there is the inverse relationship between how useful your work is, and how much income you can get for it. By 'socially useful work' I mean work which would be missed, or which would endanger the functioning of society if it went undone. At the bottom of course is the most important work of looking after others - work which within families is entirely unpaid.

When it is paid, this is usually at the lowest rates and under the most insecure conditions. In the middle (and often also on low incomes) are people like nurses, refuse collectors, teachers, builders, local public employees, farmers, transport workers, office cleaners - themselves increasingly working under precarious, zero hour contracts.

Among the professions, journalism is the most obviously de-valued category - much paid work has been swept away by the rise of the internet. Here again though the inverse rule applies: Boris Johnson, for example, is said to net £275k a year for his weekly Telegraph opinion column (which of course we all need to read); while people who are doing the hugely necessary investigative work into the functioning of government and business are now for the most part working freelance, and struggle to eat and pay their rent. The rates for freelance journalism have plummeted: you're lucky these days to get £80 for 1000 words where 30 years ago the rate was 2-300 pounds. More and more people who do this vital work depend on the patronage of their readership via donations, yet publicists are often highly paid.

Corporate office workers might get a decent rate of pay, but again this is often in inverse proportion to their direct involvement with the day-to-day functioning of the corporation they work for. With the proliferation of middle management positions, even if they are relatively well-paid, many suffer from the anomie of feeling as though their work counts for nothing. Thus the huge popularity of David Graeber's essay on bull-shit jobs a couple years ago - and the growing recognition that much of what we call 'work' does not need to be done.

At the top of the income scale we largely see people who, if they packed up and stopped working tomorrow, hardly anyone apart from their immediate family would notice. Indeed I wonder sometimes, especially in the case of property and commodity speculators, arms dealers, and many members of national government whether elected or not, whether the work they do might be better left entirely undone.

Winner-take-all System of Copyrights

Then there is the question of the winner-take-all system of copyrights and patents. No one does this in a vacuum, no matter how smart and talented, no matter how hard they personally work on their creations. If they do not have the direct support of their families, or government research grants (paid of course by taxpayers) or what used to be an actual social security system, they live in a society which one way or another has supplied their needs. From the mothers who changed their nappies, to the farmers who supply their food, society has supported their efforts to develop the skills and learn the information which contributed to their ideas or creations.

Yet in the case of artists or independent inventors one creation can be enough to set them up for life, and their heirs for the next 70 years - although more often than not their work is actually owned by corporations. It is no wonder that large corporations are so keen to buy the copyrights to popular back catalogues, and to extend patent rights to even the human discovery of plant and animal genes certainly not 'invented' by us. It is a license not only to collect rents on those discoveries and creations, but also to control the use of what could be breakthroughs for all society. With no 'work' at all.

While cash lottery winners are envied and often praised for their luck, those unlucky enough to be homeless or have to claim benefits are despised. We are all subject to a lottery at birth. We have no control over where, and to whom, we are born. Some people successfully overcome the disadvantages they have faced in this lottery, almost always with the support of family, and until recently with the support of a social security system and free education. Statistics show that most individuals however, no matter how hard they work, do not - and with the advent of our social insecurity system, decreasing wage levels and increasing personal debt, this is increasingly so. Wealth and income inequalities are wider than they have been for 100 years, and while services and benefits have been slashed for the poorest and for even 'average' waged workers, the wealthiest have increased both their wealth and their control over resources, many without lifting a finger.

So do we really have a work ethic, which applies to all? I would say no - we have

something which is used to harass those who cannot do or find paid work, the poorest and most vulnerable among us, who more often than not still struggle to make a contribution to society and those around them. This ungenerous attitude means that the next Einstein or JK Rowling is probably stuck stacking shelves at Poundland, wasting their education if they had one. This denies all of us the fruits of talents and ideas that might otherwise benefit all. Meanwhile we leave the entitlements of the wealthy untouched - whether they actually did work their way into that position, or were born into it.

Most people are already working too hard - whether to survive poverty, or to maintain a position of relative comfort. Often their efforts are entirely focussed on getting a wage, no matter whether that activity contributes to, or hurts, the health and wellbeing of themselves, those around them and/or the environment we all share. While the Protestant work ethic might have been an advance on the aristocratic disdain for any form of work, it is arguable whether this 'ethic' has ever been used for truly ethical ends. More often than not it has been used to browbeat people into accepting longer working hours, for less security, to defer a passion which might aid society in the interests of individual survival. And ironically, the work ethic really applies only to people without other forms of income.

Productivity Falling

And it is literally counter-productive. The number of people employed might be going up but actual productivity is going down. The UK, famous for its cultural creativity when artists, actors and musicians could develop their talents on the dole, has lost its place as a leader in these fields now that only children of the wealthy can afford creative activity. One of the striking results of recent pilot studies of basic income is that people's economic activity goes up - not so much in jobs, but by employing themselves in small business. Social insecurity leads not to a strengthening of anyone's work ethic, but to a banalisation of work. Whether the technological jobs apocalypse as hyped in the press actually happens or not, what is certain is that there is no ethical - or even practical - reason any more for people to hoard money or control over resources. The robots - or rather the people who own them - need to be taxed fairly so that all might share in the benefits of current technology, and hopefully make advances on it.

Basic income for me is one way of doing that. In the 1930s Robert Heinlein, in his first novel *For Us, the Living*, called it a 'Heritage Payment' in recognition that all of our creations and discoveries build on those of our ancestors, a few known but mostly anonymous - and any profits from these should go into a common pot to be shared by all. The world, or at least those who control our money and resources, certainly do owe all of us a living - and from that we can build a better one.

The Philosophical Society of England

www.philsoceng.uk - Registered Charity Number: 1140044

OTHER MINDS: WHY DO THEY MATTER?

Jane Heal Cambridge University

Saturday 28th May 2016 2.00 pm - 4 pm at Conway Hall

This talk is open to all - we hope you will join us

VIEWPOINTS

Our Politically Corrected National Anthem

Even those who don't mind living in the permanent state of infantilism that support of an unelected, nonagenarian wealthy horse loving aristocratic female as Head of State in a supposed European democracy would suggest, need an inclusive National Anthem. Yet to call for everyone to beg a non-specific God/deity to 'save' said oldie is ridiculous. (Is that treason?)

What is never mentioned is that it was originally anti-Catholic. Where it says 'frustrate their knavish tricks' has been altered from the original 'frustrate their Papish' tricks. This was In 1745 or thereabouts i.e. after what is called the Jacobite uprising. This was when so-called Bonnie Prince Charlie 'invaded' Scotland with Roman Catholic troops. They were soundly i.e. bloodily defeated at the 1746 Battle of Culloden. BPC was carried 'over the sea to Sky' before eventually reaching Rome where he died a sad alcoholic.

As for the music – it really is a dirge. How can anybody with any musical sense abide it? It is always a pleasure to hear 'Land of my Fathers' sung by the Welsh, 'Scotland the Brave' from those north of the border and especially the Marseillaise (very rousing) by the French. The stress is wrong in this dirge, being on the first syllable. I was pleased Jeremy Corbyn was brave enough not to sing it. The best tune would be Dame Ethel Smythe's "The March of the Women", (with different words).

Jennifer R. Jaynes

More on 'The Party of the 90%'

In reply to the text by Professor Tim Bale, "Politics Should Not Move To The Left" (*ER*, March 2016), I offer the following points:-

Though Tim's text is a riposte to my own, "Politics Should Move To The Left," (also *ER*, March 2016), I do agree with him on two issues. One is that what he calls "the market" should not be relied on to provide health, education and military security. The other is that a significant degree of material redistribution can be achieved through government schemes for savings and benefits.

However, with his other arguments I must take issue. When he speaks of "the market" as being the best distributor of society's resources, he is referring to a context which, if examined closely, will be seen to be one in which the power of big companies predominates. This is a crucial consideration, because from it stems realisation of the immense peril to society's democratic processes posed by mega-corporate power.

The putative 'Party of the 90%' to which I refer in my text is fully aware of this danger and is determined to combat it, though always through electoral and parliamentary procedure. Indeed, it sees no other way of maintaining democratic institutions than by such action. Further, in pursuing its objectives, it regards the dissemination of knowledge and the encouragement of debate as pivotal. Given this outlook, it simply has no choice but to advocate it, directly and

unequivocally, as electoral policy. To do otherwise would be to undermine its principles. While Tim is probably correct in saying that the majority of British voters are at present antipathetic to this viewpoint, the questions must be asked:

(1) To what extent is this antipathy due to ignorance of the magnitude of corporate power—and power which is not just economic but also political, bearing in mind its influence on government policies?

(2) To what extent is this ignorance the product of conventional and traditional ways of thinking propagated by the wealthiest elements in society, especially through their connections with the mass-media?

If these questions are asked, it will be seen that Tim's (apparently) accommodationist attitude toward public opinion, and his advocacy of only those policies compatible with whatever that opinion happens to be at any given time, are unsatisfactory. The general mentality always needs to be informed by knowledge and stimulated by adventurous debate. These activities are essential to genuine democracy.

These points return us to what was said earlier about the inescapability, for the Party of the 90%, of articulating to the electorate what it sees as the clear and present danger of corporate power, and its aim to combat that power—partly through the spreading of information and the encouragement of debate. What should never be forgotten is that a significant part of political progress is change of an historic character; and this requires transformation in way of thinking.

Tom Rubens – London N4

Religion as Anxiolytic

Sigmund Freud suggested religion was a universal obsessional neurosis. This seems very likely to me, especially 'God' as a projected father figure. Many people have unsatisfactory actual fathers and have found it comforting to imagine a father in the sky who accepts rituals and worship.

Modern religions may not wish to accept the essential childishness of such beliefs but I think this is implicated in the psychology of religions. Archbishop Welby's supposed father drank excessively so his 'son' had a psychological need to imagine a superior father. He then *identifies* as a needy son and finds it psychologically helpful to behave as a child.

The obsessional part shows as continually repeated rituals such as prayers. These rituals are Anxiolytic, that is, they help to reduce anxiety. This would then apply to all the monotheistic religions. The difference between Eastern and Western religions according to Erich Fromm is that the westerner wishes to *know* God, hence arguments about beliefs and doctrines, whereas eastern religionists want to *be* God.

Jennifer R. Jaynes

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

TRIDENT RENEWAL – THE ARGUMENTS AGAINST IT

Timmon Wallis

Programme Manager for Peace & Disarmament at Quaker Peace & Social Witness

Lecture to the Ethical Society, 8 May 2016

Trident is Britain's nuclear weapon system. The government likes to refer to it as the nuclear 'deterrent', but whether or not it actually works as a deterrent is an open question which we shall consider in a moment. What cannot be disputed is that Trident is a weapon system, designed and ready to be used as means of destroying entire cities and killing millions of people.

Deterrence is nothing other than a threat to inflict punishment for doing something we don't want somebody to do. It is hoped that the threat alone will be sufficient to prevent that person from doing whatever it is we don't want them to do, but the threat is only ever effective if we are ready, able and willing to carry out that threat. Even then, as we all know from parenting as well as from the criminal justice system and from many other everyday applications of deterrence theory, the threat may or may not work.

Is Trident A Credible Deterrent?

In the case of nuclear deterrence, the late Sir Michael Quinlan, who was the undisputed 'master' of deterrence theory in the UK, made it very clear that 'weapons deter by the possibility of their use and by no other route'. In other words, for Trident to act as a deterrent, the government has to be ready, able and willing to use it as a weapon. That is why David Cameron made it very clear when the issue came up only a few months ago that if the circumstances required it, he would press the nuclear button.

Now whether he actually would or not is another question. And whether the Russians or the North Koreans or whoever else *believe* he actually would or not is yet again another question. In the case of Russia, which is and always has been the only realistic target for Britain's nuclear weapons, we are talking about a country which has roughly 10,000 nuclear weapons as compared to the UK's 200 or so nuclear warheads available for Trident.

Those 200 warheads are capable of causing an unbelievable amount of death and destruction. Just one Trident submarine has more destructive power on board than all the bombs dropped by all the countries in WWII combined, including the atom bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Most if not all of Britain's 200 nuclear warheads are at least six times more powerful than those two atom bombs which utterly destroyed the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and killed more than 250,000 people in those cities.

However, does anyone really imagine that the UK could launch a nuclear attack on Russia without Russia launching a nuclear attack back at the UK? In what sense is it a deterrent to threaten the leaders of Russia with a massive nuclear attack when those very leaders could launch an even more massive nuclear attack on the UK that would leave the entire country a smouldering pile of cinders?

Since Trident is, in fact, assigned to NATO, it is meant to act as a deterrent, not only against a Russia attack on the UK, but against a Russian attack on *any* NATO country, for instance Estonia. But is it realistic to think that a British Prime Minister would press the nuclear button, knowing that doing so would almost certainly result in a massive nuclear retaliation against the UK, all for the sake of protecting a ‘far away country’ such as Estonia?

These are just a few of the many unanswered questions raised by the theory of nuclear deterrence. We are told that nuclear weapons deter. We are told that they have ‘kept the peace’ for the last 70 years. We are told, as recently as last November, by Britain’s highest ranking general, that Trident is protecting the UK ‘every second of every minute of every day’ and that we need to retain Trident indefinitely as an ‘insurance policy against an uncertain future’.

The Truth About Nuclear Diplomacy

But is there actually one shred of evidence to show that nuclear weapons have deterred any country from doing anything they would otherwise have done at any time in the last 70 years? Even the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which is still assumed by most people to be the final blow that ended WWII, may have had surprisingly little to do with the Japanese decision to surrender in August 1945. It is now increasingly clear from the historical archives that Japan was on the verge of surrender by that point anyway, and that the only condition -which the US refused to accept - was that the Emperor remain on his throne. Once Japan *did* surrender, the US let the Emperor remain anyway. But in the meantime, far more decisive in ending the war than the dropping of the atom bombs was the Soviet declaration of war and invasion of Japan which took place at the same time.

Since then, the world has come perilously close to a third world war – and nuclear Armageddon – on at least 13 occasions. The most well-known of these was the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. This is often touted as the best example of nuclear deterrence working successfully. President Khrushchev of the Soviet Union was installing nuclear missiles in Cuba which could threaten the US mainland in a matter of minutes. President Kennedy of the US threatened him with all-out nuclear war if he did not remove these missiles. President Khrushchev backed down and removed the missiles, so the threat ‘worked’.

This popular version of the Cuban missile crisis does not take into account however, that prior to the Soviets installing nuclear missiles in Cuba, only minutes away from the US mainland, the US had installed Jupiter nuclear missiles in Turkey, only minutes away from landing in the heart of Russia. The Cuban missile crisis was not resolved because Khrushchev unilaterally backed down. It was resolved because President Kennedy agreed to remove the US missiles from Turkey if President Khrushchev would remove the Soviet missiles from Cuba.

Furthermore, what the Cuban missile crisis tells us about deterrence is that even at a point in history when both sides in the Cold War had enough nuclear weapons to completely annihilate the other, *neither* side was actually deterred by the other from carrying out increasingly provocative military activities. In what

sense was Khrushchev deterred by all those US nuclear weapons if he was prepared to risk annihilation of his own country in order to have a few nuclear missiles installed in Cuba? And most significantly, how was President Kennedy deterred by all the nuclear weapons the Soviets had pointing at him if he was willing to bring the world to the brink of nuclear war simply in order to face down his Soviet counterpart over a comparatively minor issue like this?

Since the end of the Cold War more than 25 years ago, historians looking more objectively at the Cold War years and especially those with access to Soviet archives and other newly available information are increasingly dubious about claims that NATO and the nuclear deterrent are what prevented the Soviets from invading and conquering Western Europe or kept the Cold War from turning 'hot'.

According to George Kennan, former US Ambassador to Moscow and one of the key architects of nuclear deterrence and the US policy of 'containment' during the Cold War years, 'the Soviet Union had no interest in overrunning Western Europe militarily and would not have launched an attack on Europe in the decades after the Second World War even if nuclear weapons did not exist'.

In fact there are many, many plausible historical explanations for why the Soviet Union did not attack the UK or other NATO countries without needing to invoke nuclear deterrence as an explanation. The simple fact that nuclear weapons have existed since 1945 is not in itself a sufficient explanation for why they have not been used since 1945.

For a start, the European Coal and Steel Community, which eventually became the European Union, has had a profound effect on the peace and stability of Western Europe since 1945. The United Nations and the many other instruments and institutions of international law that have come into being since 1945 must also be taken into account when trying to understand and explain why the world has evolved the way it has since the second world war.

The Better Angels of Our Nature

Stephen Pinker, in his recent book, *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, argues quite convincingly that humanity has become less and less violent over a period of many thousands of years and this process, like many others, has been speeding up over the last century. On this reckoning, we might be expected to reach a point when human beings simply find it unacceptable to threaten and kill each other on the kind of scale we saw in the last two world wars. Perhaps we have already reached that point.

As we saw in the parliamentary vote against bombing of Syria in August 2013, the British public has grown weary of involvement in wars and bombings that appear to achieve very little and may actually make the UK less safe rather than safer. Even when that vote was overturned in December 2015, the justification for bombing and the arguments being made indicate a level of scrutiny and concern for the possible impact of bombing on civilians and other such considerations that would not have been taken seriously even as recently as the Falklands War in 1982.

The present government is called to account for every civilian death in Iraq, Afghanistan or Syria. They must present every attack as a ‘precision’ bombing and even claim to target individual ‘terrorists’ for assassination. And yet the whole premise of Trident is to wipe out entire cities at one go – women, children, the elderly, the infirm; schools, hospitals, prisons, churches, museums, playgrounds, fall-out shelters – all are presumed acceptable ‘targets’ for a weapon of mass destruction that cannot distinguish the innocent from the guilty

Since the mass fire-bombing of cities in WWII and the dropping of atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the international laws of war and the international institutions for prosecuting both countries and individuals for breaking those laws have been considerably strengthened and clarified. The Geneva Conventions of 1949, the additional protocols of 1977 and a range of other treaties and conventions make it absolutely clear that the deliberate targeting of non-combatants and the causing of unnecessary and prolonged suffering to combatants are illegal and unacceptable, even in situations of total war.

The International Court of Justice gave an advisory opinion on the legality of nuclear weapons in 1996, which allowed countries like the UK a very small window through which to claim that the use of nuclear weapons *might* be legal. That window, however, does not apply to Trident. So long as Trident is considered purely a ‘deterrent’ it remains by definition a weapon of mass destruction that would cause indiscriminate and disproportionate civilian casualties as well as unnecessary and prolonged suffering to combatants from the radiation.

The UK Boycotts Multilateral Disarmament Talks

Any use of Trident as it is currently configured would be illegal under international law. But in any case, the UK is breaking international law by continuing to develop and upgrade Trident while at the same time refusing to take part in multilateral efforts to get rid of all nuclear weapons. As a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1968, the UK promised to negotiate ‘in good faith’ and ‘at an early date’ the complete elimination of its nuclear arsenal. In 1995 it signed an ‘unequivocal undertaking’ to fulfil that commitment.

Yet, the UK government has for decades, along with the US and other nuclear weapons states, boycotted multilateral disarmament talks, blocked disarmament initiatives in the UN Security Council and voted against literally hundreds of disarmament proposals being voted on each year at the UN General Assembly. Other countries are now moving forward, without the UK and other nuclear states, to create an international treaty that would ban nuclear weapons on the same basis as landmines and other weapons of mass destruction have been banned. Therein lies perhaps our best hope for an eventual shift in UK policy and the eventual abolition of all nuclear weapons.

THOMAS PAINE SYMPOSIUM, Sat 11 June 2016 0930-1630

1 Wimpole Street, London W1G 0AE, £15 (concs £10)

Speakers: **Bill Speck**, Chair of the Thomas Paine Society, **Alasdair Smith**,
Jonathan Clark, **Steve Poole**, **Richard Whatmore** and **Paul Myles**

BOOK REVIEW - ISLAMIC FASCISM

by **Hamed Abdel-Samad**

(New York: Prometheus Books, 2016, 255 pp., ISBN 978-1-63388-124-2)

Review by **Rumy Hasan**

During the parliamentary debate on 2nd December 2015 on the bombing of Islamic State targets in Syria, Shadow Foreign Secretary Hilary Benn made an impassioned speech in favour of the government's motion. A key reason he provided was that Islamic State were "fascists and fascists must be defeated". This was a rare instance of a leading European politician utilising the epithet 'fascism' to describe a Muslim organisation; it is almost always applied to white racist groupings with sympathies to Hitler's Nazis and Mussolini's Fascists.

The Egyptian-German writer Hamed Abdel-Samad would doubtless agree with Benn that IS is a fascist organisation, but argues that the label should be applied to *all* Islamist groups – hence the title of his new book *Islamic Fascism*. He is not alone in this: others such as fellow Egyptian, activist and novelist Alaa Al Aswany, the Algerian dissident Mohamed Sifaoui, Lebanese-Palestinian journalist (now deceased) Samir Kassir, and writer Christopher Hitchens (also deceased) have made the same argument.

Some Striking Similarities

Abdel-Samad makes the case that the similarities between fascism and Islamism are striking: "Fascism's ideology corrupts its followers with hatred and resentment, partitioning the world into friends and enemies and threatening those who oppose it with retributions. It opposes modernism, Enlightenment values, Marxism, and Jews, while glorifying militarism and self-sacrifice – even martyrdom. Modern Islamism shares all these qualities, having emerged simultaneously with fascism in the 1920s". Abdel-Samad lambasts 'experts' who fawn over 'moderate Islamism', claiming it to be compatible with democracy. On the contrary, he asserts that deep down Islamists despise democracy and consider it a little more than a route to power.

A chapter is devoted to the Muslim Brotherhood, formed in Egypt in 1928, whose reformist pretensions must be debunked. Its slogan (or five pillars) 'Allah is our objective; the Qur'an is our constitution; the Prophet is our leader; jihad is our way; death for Allah's sake is our highest goal', according to Abdel-Samad make it a fascist organisation. Indeed, this reasoning stems from the Prophet Mohammed who, as well as subjecting his opponents to fear and terror, sowed seeds of intolerance at the heart of Islam with its "power-crazed god opposed to all others, never to be questioned and stopping at nothing to uphold his own power. Its first moments were those on which the earliest form of Islamic fascism was born".

Abdel-Samad further argues that the close affinity is attested by the fact that leading Islamists were sympathetic to European fascists. Hassan al Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood revered the militarism of Mussolini; Amin al Hussein, the grand mufti of Jerusalem, resided as Hitler's personal guest during World War II; and the Indian Abu Ala Maududi enthusiastically spoke of the "brilliant and strong leadership of Hitler and his comrades".

Abdel-Samad's Poor Understanding

Yet, he maintains that the enmity between Muslims and Jews is a family feud, rooted in Abraham's disputed legacy and the sovereignty of each school of monotheism. This is an odd family feud given that Mohammed had proclaimed that 'the [last] hour will not be established until you fight with the Jews'.

While Abdel-Samad shows good understanding of Islam and makes a persuasive case of Islamism being a form of fascism, he displays poor comprehension of two issues that he dwells on: the Arab-Israeli conflict and the situation concerning Muslims in modern Europe. Regarding the first, he simply ignores the fact the 750,000 Palestinians were forcibly removed from their homeland when Israel was created in 1948. Hence Arab opposition to Israel stems rather from this reality than over religious disputes. He goes on to view Hamas and Hezbollah as being fascist groups without recognising that both are national liberation organisations fighting the Israeli occupation of Palestinian and Lebanese lands.* Moreover, he does not realise that Hamas was created with the help of the Israelis (back in the 1980s, Israel favoured Palestinian Islamists over the PLO); and that neither Hamas nor Hezbollah have designs on a global jihad.

Abdel-Samad also displays a wilfully poor understanding of modern multi-ethnic Europe where large numbers of Muslims have settled in several European countries – many in segregated ghettos. Everywhere, Muslims have made demands on the host society so that they can practice their faith unimpeded, as if they are living in a Muslim country. Hence, with a rising Muslim population has arisen a concomitant increase in the number of mosques, madrassas, the veiling of women, men in Islamic attire, halal food, and curtailment of freedom of expression so that Muslims and Islam are not slighted.

It is this reality of 'parallel lives' that has generated concern about the willingness of Muslims to integrate into secular, western societies, and contributed to the present overwhelming opposition to large-scale immigration. Furthermore, it has led to the formation of significant political forces whose raison d'être is opposition to Islam, the apotheosis of which is PEGIDA, (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the West) founded in Germany in the Autumn of 2014, and with branches in many other countries, including the UK. The PVV (Dutch Freedom Party, currently leading in the polls) and AfD (Alternative für Deutschland) in Germany (the third largest party after only 3 years of existence) are also avowedly anti-Islam.

While Abdel-Samad recognises the existence of such organisations, he does not come to an understanding as to the reasons for their rise and popularity. Nor does he come to terms with former head of the German federal bank (Deutsche Bundesbank) Thilo Sarrazin's bestselling book *The Abolition of Germany*, which is a coruscating critique of the influence of Islam in Germany, in which he "warns that Muslim immigrants are exploiting the German social system and degrading educational standards". Abdel-Samad, rather than

*A political organisation (eg the IRA, ISIS) may have nationalist aims but include terrorism in its method of achieving them. {Ed.}

grappling with what the likes of Sarrazin are suggesting and why their ideas have attracted such support in politically correct Germany, simply does not like such interventions from native Europeans – and his appeal to ‘liberal multiculturalism’ patently ignores that it is this which is a core problem. He then goes on to make the preposterous comparison of Sarrazin with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan – a head of state – whom Abdel-Samad rightly castigates, asserting forcefully “whenever the likes of Erdogan seize the reins of power, their masks fall away”. Though he does not make it clear, given his book is entitled *Islamic Fascism*, he is suggesting that Erdogan’s policies are fascistic in character.

Despite its limitations and contradictions, this is a bold book with important insights. With Islamist movements now in existence in many parts of the globe, with invariably malign effects, the need to understand their character is of profound importance. In this endeavour, Hamed Abdel-Samad has taken an important step which others need to follow.

CONWAY HALL ETHICAL SOCIETY

No Gods No Masters:

London’s Radicals, Secularists, Suffragists and Pacifists

Course Tutor: David Rosenberg

Thursday 3rd May - Thursday 23rd June,
6.30pm - 8.30pm

This eight week course will look at some remarkable people and movements who spoke up and campaigned for progressive ideas and social change in London from the 1790s-1940s. It will tell their individual and collective stories, explore how they popularised their ideas, and influenced each other, visit sites of protest, and consider their lasting achievements.

It will be taught mainly through interactive classroom sessions organised on a thematic basis. It will use written and visual materials, include archive materials from the Humanist Library paired and group discussions, and include three guided walks – in Fleet Street, Clerkenwell, and Bloomsbury, where a number of the people and movements being explored were active.

It will pay particular attention to individuals who had a connection with the South Place Ethical Society and Conway Hall.

David Rosenberg is an educator, writer, teacher trainer and tour guide. He is the author of *Battle for the East End* (Five leaves Publications, 2011) and *Rebel Footprints: a guide to uncovering London’s radical history* (Pluto Press, 2015) He has led guided walks on London radical history since 2007. www.eastendwalks.com

Cost: £100, £75. concessions (Members, Over 65s, Students (full-time), Employment and Support Allowance or Jobseeker’s Allowance)

THIS COURSE IS NOW FULLY BOOKED

THE MYSTERIOUS CASE OF CONWAY'S BUST

Compiled by Carl Harrison

In the years after 1900 Moncure Conway, now in his 70s, lived principally in Paris, occupied with writing and the peace movement. Despite growing feelings of disillusionment, he continued to enjoy social life, including the friendship of some of the young artists working in Paris. The American Edward Steichen, experimenting with colour photography, produced an atmospheric portrait of him.

Conway also befriended a young English sculptor, Theodore Spicer-Simson, and his American artist wife Margaret. Margaret painted a miniature of Conway, exhibited in Paris in late 1907 around the time of his death. But of most significance for the Society and Conway Hall is a bust of Conway that Theodore produced. Theodore Spicer-Simson (1871 -1959) was developing a particular skill in portrait sculpture and went on to considerable success, especially with his many portrait medallions. Conway admired his work, thinking he had 'a rare power of putting life and expression into clay and bronze and marble: it amounts to genius', and sat for a 'life size bust' by Spicer-Simson in late 1903 or early 1904. The result was much admired: the artist asserting that it had 'highly satisfied Dr Conway, his family and friends', and a subsequent reviewer praising the way he had caught Conway's air of 'intellectual melancholy ... [recalling] not unworthily the famous Hellenic idealization of Homer'.

The Bust of Conway

Spicer-Simson made several casts of the bust. The sources (including Spicer-Simson himself who habitually used the term 'replicas' when referring to the various casts) make it difficult to determine with absolute certainty the exact number and their histories, but what follows is a best attempt. In his memoirs written 50 years later Spicer-Simson states: 'I made a life-size bust of Conway and three replicas were cast in bronze; one was given to Dickinson College, Pennsylvania, by Andrew Carnegie; another to South Place Chapel, London; and the third to the Authors' Club in New York.'

This statement seems definitive but unfortunately still allows for some ambiguity in interpretation, and is difficult to correlate with contemporary records. However it is clear there were at least one plaster and three bronze casts. Certainly copies of the bust were exhibited on three occasions during 1904. A plaster cast was exhibited at the Paris Salon of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts in early summer 1904. It is quite likely this was also the 'plaster replica' he offered to South Place later in the year. This is the only copy we can identify with certainty as plaster, and its fate is unknown.

Spicer-Simson himself recounts how (also sometime in 1904 but unfortunately he doesn't say exactly when) he and two painter friends mounted a private exhibition of their work, including one of the Conway busts, at the Elysee Palace Hotel in Paris. This, he says, was bronze, in which case it was the first bronze cast. The third showing in 1904 was at the St Louis Purchase Exposition, or 'St Louis World's Fair' in the USA, where a copy of the bust was exhibited from 30 April to 1 December. This copy then passed to the Author's Club of New York, of which Conway was President. Spicer-Simson says it was 'given' to the

Club, while the South Place Magazine (August 1905) says it was ‘purchased’. Spicer-Simson, still relatively young and establishing his career at that point, was rather coy about his charging policies, so this small discrepancy is perhaps understandable. None of the contemporary sources specify the material of this copy, but from subsequent events it was probably bronze, most likely the same bronze cast shown at the private exhibition in Paris.

Offer to South Place

Late in 1904 Spicer-Simson wrote to South Place Ethical Society offering a ‘plaster replica’ of his Conway bust for South Place Chapel. This cast, which was then with the artist’s cousin Lawrence Halsey in South Kensington, may well have been the plaster copy exhibited at the Paris Salon earlier in 1904. By coincidence Spicer-Simson’s approach coincided with the presentation to the Society by Frederick Millar of another plaster bust, of Thomas Paine. This bust (not to be confused with a second handsome bust of Paine, presented to the Society by Mr I Perkoff in 1937, which still graces the Library at Conway Hall), had been lent previously for display in a large exhibition on Paine mounted by the Society in 1895. It was described as ‘by Vago ... copied from an engraving by Sharp of the lost Romney picture’.

Already in the Society’s possession was a third bust, of the Chapel’s earlier noted minister, William Johnson Fox MP, by the important mid-19th century English sculptor Thomas Earle (1810-1876). Little is currently known about this bust, other than that it was probably of plaster and was said in 1905 to have ‘belonged to the Society for many years’.

The sudden arrival of two new busts of Conway and Paine, created a flurry of interest in the Society. By February 1905 a ‘Bust Committee’ was considering the possibility of having the two plaster busts painted in white, terra cotta or bronze (at an estimated 12s 6d each) and displaying all three in the Chapel. In addition an early enquiry was made to Spicer-Simson as to the possibility of putting his Conway bust into ‘more durable form’. He was naturally delighted to offer ‘strictly confidential’ prices of £25 for bronze and up to £150 for marble.

By May an appeal had been launched for subscriptions to a Special Fund to raise the £40 required to purchase the bronze, clean the other two busts, and mount all three on brackets ‘to form an interesting link with the past in our Chapel’. The committee was careful to stress its desire to meet the costs ‘without drawing upon the General Committee for funds’, and also that the price of the bronze bust ‘in no way represents its value, and that it is practically a gift to the Society from the sculptor’. Spicer-Simson was equally keen not to have the cost divulged, as ‘in reality’ (he said) his selling prices were £200-£300 for marble and £150-£200 for bronze. He also asked for the plaster copy to be returned to his cousin, which was agreed, but with care not to do so ‘until we see the bronze bust’!

The bronze was cast in Paris over the summer, delayed by the caster to the annoyance of Spicer-Simson who, knowing ‘how impossible it is to rely on these men’, had already allowed an extra month beyond the promised delivery date. It was shipped to South Place in the last week of August. On Tuesday 6th November 1905 the Society’s ‘usual monthly soiree’ was given over to a

‘reception and view’ of the three busts, together with a framed portrait photograph of his late wife, Ellen Dana Conway (still in the Library), sent by Moncure Conway, newly set up together in the Chapel. Speeches were made by Dr Richard Garnett, Keeper of Printed Books at the British Museum and contributor of many articles to the Dictionary of National Biography, who spoke on WJ Fox, John M Robertson on Conway and South Place, and Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner on Paine. Moncure Conway himself was at sea en route from France to New York, but a warm letter was read out, ending on his ‘sense of bereavement when I think of my happy years in London’.

A Bust for Dickinson College

Around the same time or soon after, Spicer-Simson cast a third bronze for Conway’s alma mater, Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. This, Spicer-Simson says, was given to the College by the philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, although (according to Conway himself) it was accompanied originally by a plaque which read: ‘Artist: Spicer-Simson, Paris’ and ‘Donor: WF. Havemeyer’. William Frederick Havemeyer Jr was a prominent New York art collector and friend of Conway so it is likely he was in fact the donor. On the other hand Carnegie was also a friend of Conway, who had been a guest at Carnegie’s Scottish castle.

Carnegie paid to build Conway Hall, initially a preparatory school, later a hall of residence, at Dickinson College. And Conway was instrumental in obtaining photographs from which Spicer-Simson produced a medallion of Carnegie. So perhaps both he and Havemeyer had a hand in it. In May 1906 the Dickinson College bust was reported placed ‘in the Chapel of Conway Hall’. Conway saw it there ‘set up ... on a fine white marble pillar’. It was later moved to the College library, but without its pillar. Happily the bust is still preserved in the modern library, built on the site of the College’s Conway Hall after its demolition in 1966.

The original bronze cast, shown in Paris and St Louis and then given to or purchased by the Authors Club of New York, had a chequered later history. On the night of 14-15 November 1907 Moncure Conway died in Paris of a stroke. Finding Mrs Spicer- Simson’s address among his belongings the authorities contacted Theodore Spicer-Simson, who identified the body and, with Edward Steichen, organised its cremation and the shipping of the ashes to New York. There on 14 December 1907 a memorial service, attended by 150 mourners including Andrew Carnegie and Conway’s successor-elect as President of the Authors Club, was held in the house of his son Eustace Conway. Afterwards Eustace wrote thanking Spicer-Simson, adding: ‘The cast of your bust stood behind the speaker ... with evergreens behind it, and looked very fine. Would it be very expensive to have our cast in marble?’

No marble copy seems to have been made, but at the Winter Exhibition of the National Academy of Design in New York, in December 1910, Theodore Spicer-Simson exhibited several pieces including a ‘Portrait Bust of Dr. Moncure D. Conway’, described in the catalogue as belonging to Eustace Conway. It is most likely all these references are to the Authors Club bust. Unfortunately the Authors Club disbanded in 1973 leaving very little evidence

behind it, so the exact relationship between the Club, Eustace Conway, and the bust, remains unclear, as is what happened to it subsequently.

Nothing is heard after 1910 until suddenly in January 2006 a bronze bust of Moncure Conway appeared on the online site of an auction house in Chester, New York. Although wrongly attributed to another artist, it was clearly one of Spicer-Simson's casts. The auctioneer stated its provenance as 'Thomas Paine National Historic Museum, New Rochelle, NY'. This is properly the Thomas Paine Memorial Museum, run by the Thomas Paine National Historical Association, founded in 1884.

Moncure Conway published the first comprehensive biography of Paine in 1892, and was the first elected President of the Association. So it is appropriate the Association should have a bust of him, but how and when it acquired it has not yet been made clear. The circumstances by which the Association disposed of the bust, apparently after a mishap with the Museum building, are equally murky, but this must be the same bust that nearly a century earlier belonged to the Authors Club of New York or Eustace Conway. At the online auction in 2006 it was bought by a collector and remains in private hands in the USA.

Mysterious Disappearance of the Ethical Society Busts

The subsequent history of the Society's Conway bust is even more mysterious – in fact after 1927 it doesn't have one! For 20 years the three busts of Paine, Conway and Fox looked down on the life of the Society from the South Place Chapel wall. Then in 1927, as the Society prepared to leave the Chapel for Conway Hall, photographs were commissioned that show all three, and the portrait of Ellen Dana Conway. In the new building a niche was prepared to display the bust of Conway in pride of place directly opposite the main doors – the first thing visitors would see on entering the building. The niche is there, but there is no bust, and no conclusive evidence that it was ever there.

A thorough trawl of all the available sources: published accounts, archives and pictures, has thrown up precisely nothing. Possibly the bust never made it to Conway Hall, or perhaps more likely it was put in place, removed subsequently for some reason and not replaced. What appears to be, in the base of the niche, the end of a metal rod that could have supported the bust, lends some support to the latter theory. But either way it is lost, as are the two plaster busts of WJ Fox and Thomas Paine that accompanied it at South Place. At least we do know these made it to Conway Hall.

A water colour of Peter Cadogan lecturing in the Library in 1977 shows them perched on either corner of the fireplace surround. There is also an anecdotal reference to one of them (Paine?) being placed in the niche intended for Conway in the foyer and then dropped and broken. But firm evidence for that, or any evidence of the fate of the other (Fox?) bust is lacking.

Modern Technology to the Rescue

So the end result is that we know now a good deal about the sculptor Theodore Spicer-Simson, Moncure Conway's friendship with him, and the bust of Conway he produced. Of the three bronze casts, only that at Dickinson College has had

a peaceful history. Of the other two, one in the United States has led an itinerant life but at least is still safely in existence. The other, which should be occupying pride of place at Conway Hall, must be presumed long lost, together with the plaster busts of Fox and Paine that sat with it at South Place. If it were not so irrational, one might suspect a jinx!

But that's not quite the end of the story. Thanks to the wonders of modern technology it is now possible to recreate lost objects such as this through 3D printing (as illustrated by the creation of a replica of the Arch of Triumph destroyed by ISIS in Palmyra). Using the cast at Dickinson College as a template plans are afoot to make a new copy of Spicer-Simson's bust of Moncure Conway and restore it to the niche originally designed for it at Conway Hall. If all goes to plan it should be on display later this year.

The research for this paper was a group effort – thanks to Jim Walsh, Sophie Hawkey-Edwards and Trent Burton.

Sources

d'Entremont, John, *Southern Emancipator Moncure Conway, The American Years 1832-1865*, Oxford University Press 1987

Dickinson College, Archives and Special Collections, Moncure Daniel Conway collection register, MC 1999.6, biographical note (retrieved online)

Harrisburg Telegraph, 14 May 1906 (retrieved online)

Head, Alfred, Peter Cadogan lecturing on non violence action and idea, watercolour 1977, Conway Hall Library and Archives, PT21

Jenack, William J, *Estate Appraisers and Auctioneers*, New York, USA, catalog 8582, 8 January 2006 (retrieved online)

National Academy of Design, *The Annual Exhibition Record of the National Academy of Design, 1901- 1950*, Madison, USA, Sound View Press, 1990

New York Public Library, Manuscripts and Archives Division, Guide to the Authors Club collection, MssCol 161 (retrieved online)

Smithsonian Institution, American Art Museum, Art Inventories Catalog, control no. 9D870013, notes by Richard J McGrath on bronze bust of Moncure Daniel Conway, 2006 (retrieved online and via Dickinson College)

Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, *Catalogue Illustré du Salon*, Paris, 1904 (retrieved online)

South Place Ethical Society Archive, Bust Committee correspondence 1904-1905, Conway Hall Library and Archives, SPES/1/12/8/1-12

South Place Magazine, June 1905, August 1905, January 1906, February 1908

South Place Monthly Record, January 1928

Spicer-Simson, Theodore, *A Collector of Characters: Reminiscences of Theodore Spicer-Simson*, University of Miami Press, 1962

Universal Exposition, St Louis, USA, *Official Catalogue of Exhibitors*, 1904 (retrieved online)

University of Miami Special Collections, catalogue of Theodore Spicer-Simson collection, ASMO185 (retrieved online)

University of Miami Special Collections, Theodore Spicer-Simson collection, ASMO185, folder 22, letters from MD Conway to Mrs Margaret Spicer-Simson and associated papers 1902-1907 (Copies in Conway Hall Library and Archives)

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

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

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

THINKING ON SUNDAY

MAY 2016

Sunday 1 No meeting

Sunday 8 **TRIDENT RENEWAL – THE ARGUMENTS AGAINST IT**
1100 **Timmon Wallis**, Quaker Peace and Social Witness,
author of *The truth about Trident*

Sunday 15 **WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT PRISONS** says **Andrew Neilson**
1100 Director of Campaigns, Howard League for Penal Reform

Sunday 22 **PANAMA PAPERS, GLOBAL ELITE AND DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT**
1100 **Neil Faulkner, U of Bristol**. Author of a *Marxist history of the world: from Neanderthals to Neoliberals*

Sunday 29 No meeting

JUNE

Sunday 5 **HOW DAVID HUME BECAME THE FIRST MODERN HUMANIST**
1100 **Amyas Merivale**, Blackham Fellow

Sunday 12 **EU REFERENDUM DEBATE**
1100 **Takis Tridimas**, Chair of European Law, Kings College London

CONWAY HALL SUNDAY CONCERTS

Artistic Director: **Simon Callaghan**. Ticket £10 (free for 8 – 25s)

Full details on: www.conwayhall.org.uk/sunday-concerts/

Concerts start at 1830 unless specified

- May 1 **MUSIC AND THE COMMUNIST IDEA**
A talk by musicologist **Roderick Swanston** 6.30pm. Ticket £5
- 8 **Eeden Quartet** Schubert: Quartettsatz D703; Mendelssohn: Quartet Op.13;
Debussy: Quartet Op.10
- 15 **Artea Quartet** Schubert: Quartet D810 'Death and the Maiden';
Quartet D887
- 22 **Allegri Quartet** Mozart: Quartet K465 'Dissonance';
Alec Roth: Quartet No.2; Brahms: Quartet Op.51/1
- 29 **Maggini Quartet** Mozart: Quartet K590;
Malcolm Arnold: Quartet No.2 Op.118; Brahms: Quartet No.3, Op.67