

Ethical Record

October-November-December 2017

Vol. 122 No. 6

The Proceedings of the
Conway Hall
Ethical Society

BEATING THE HELL OUT OF

Fake News

by Sander van der Linden

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The Oxford dictionaries declared "post-truth" word of the year in 2016, reflecting "circumstances in which objective facts

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You Won't Believe What Happened When a Young Woman

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The *Ethical Record* is now quarterly. After many years as a monthly publication, a decision was taken to prioritise the accessibility, reach and immediacy of the Ethical Record's online content.

Please see the *Ethical Record* section of conwayhall.org.uk for regularly updated content, additional articles and also take a look at the online archive, where every issue published since 1895 is available in digital form.

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

Humane Halloween

Guest Editor: **Scott Wood**

The doorsteps of Britain became bereft in September as school children stepped off them and headed to school. The next season cycles towards us as the sun ducks down further in the sky.. As soon as the children were locked in to the new term, terrible things were wheeled out in the Poundstretchers and Poundlands of London. Glaring, grimacing, blood-smeared things with skulls exposed. Halloween has arrived and these raw-heads and bloody-bones are just the beginning.

I'm not always thinking about this sort of thing. This year I wanted the March for Science in April to take place so much that I acted as a marshall for it, for the first time. I've hosted discussions on fake news and a talk titled Conspiracy Theories are for Losers. I have no truck with the supernatural and I see the paranormal as an expression of human culture rather than gaps in our understanding of nature (mostly).

However, in September I was plotting ghost walks, I announced a day of folklore and witchcraft at Conway Hall for the 18th of November (The Haunted Landscape –we had around 400 attendees last year) and I have my own family rituals for the 31st of October. I am one of the majority of people who can't keep out of the gloomy toy cupboard that is Halloween.

The days darken and get colder. The green softness of summer and the presence of the Sun are retreating and the year is decaying leaves, bare wood and night consuming days. Our tastes, at least for

autumn, darken accordingly. It's a time when ghosts can be discussed with less embarrassment; Not that a lot of people are embarrassed by ghost stories but now is the time our interest can become overt.

Ghosts may speak to us about our mortality but I think they are currently somewhere between a rare beast people stake out with heat vision cameras and an ethereal link to past and place. Ghosts haunt a place and they haunt for a reason, creating a link to the history of old stones and mortar.

For the adults there is the licence given in wearing masks and dressing as witches or vampires for parties. Children break boundaries by trick or treating. In assumed identities they can pass through the night, gaining gifts in a custom that has echoes in far older folklore such as guising, Mischief Night and Plough Monday.

Folklore is not, as it is often thought, a conscious repetition of something old. The past informs how we behave at certain times but if the desire to go out into the night was not there, the lore that provides the justification for these seasonal celebrations and a narrative frame to place around them would not exist. Belief in the physical reality of these things is not needed to engage with all of this. The dark and mystery of the autumn night is there for us to personify and acknowledge in our games, rituals and stories.



Scott Wood is a writer on folklore, place and the paranormal and the author of *London Urban Legends: The Corpse on the Tube*. He is host and co-organiser of the London Fortean Society, co-host of the Fortean Podcast and runs the series of cultural talks at Conway Hall under the banner New Lands.

forteanlondon.blogspot.co.uk/

Beating the Hell Out of Fake News

Sander van der Linden



The Oxford dictionaries declared “post-truth” word of the year in 2016, reflecting “circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief”. The rise of “fake news” has undoubtedly played a central role in this debate. Although there is much to be concerned about, the title of my public lecture (and this article) is meant to inspire a collective determination to stand tall against the challenges that lie ahead. Yet, in order to understand how to effectively respond to the issue of fake news, I propose an agenda that explores three core themes; 1) identifying the problem, 2) evaluating the societal consequences, and 3) exploring practical solutions.

1. IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM

What is fake news?

Some time ago, I was invited to speak at Wilton Park by the United Nations Special Rapporteur for the protection of freedom of opinion and expression. The meeting was attended by many different parties all attempting to answer a deceptively difficult question; “What is “fake news”? Most attendees agreed that the term is clearly not new. However, no clear definition exists and establishing the boundary conditions of what does and does not constitute “fake news” proved more challenging than anticipated. For example, does simple human error count as “fake

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news”? How about satire, misinformation or propaganda? Since then, I have given this question quite some thought, and heard many people, including colleagues, use the terms “misinformation”, “propaganda”, and “fake news” interchangeably. Yet, I believe that this deprives the discussion of an important degree of contextual nuance.

Accordingly, I have devised a simple rule of thumb to help explain subtle but important differences between misinformation, disinformation, and propaganda, at least in social-psychological terms. If we think of fake news as varying on a spectrum, then at the very left end we find “misinformation”, which is simply information that is false or incorrect, and includes human error. Misinformation coupled with a clear intent to cause harm or purposefully deceive others can be thought of as “disinformation” ($D = M + I$). In turn, on the far right end of the spectrum we find “propaganda”, which can be defined as disinformation coupled with an implicit or explicit political agenda ($P = D + Pa$). From a psychological perspective, this distinction is important because while most people can forgive simple human error, the deliberate intention to cause harm makes it a moral transgression, to which we react much more strongly, for example, think of moral emotions such as outrage.

In other words, I do not believe that the real issues that are at stake include funny memes, satire, or simple errors in news reporting. Instead, what we are concerned about cuts across two different but related challenges. First, there is a rise in efforts to purposefully deceive the public and to undermine people’s ability to form evidence-based opinions on key societal issues. Second, we are faced with navigating a new media environment, one which helps facilitate the unprecedented spread of false misinformation. In contrast to most of human history, much of the Western world currently has unparalleled access to information and the ability to fact-check claims in real-time. Post-truth refers to the startling paradox that despite this immense potential for forming evidence-based opinions, many people seem to readily accept blatant falsehoods. Although the motivations that underlie such polarized responses to “facts” are complex, it is clear that we need to address them. Let us start by assessing the scale of the problem.

2. EVALUATING THE SOCIETAL CONSEQUENCES

How bad is it?

Trust forms the basis of any good relationship, and when we examine public indicators of trust in science, it is reassuring to find that trust in science remains stable and very high, in the United States, the United Kingdom and the rest of Europe. Thus, in principle I sympathise with the view that the scale of the issue is somewhat blown out of proportion.

At the same time, I do not believe that “post-truth” is just another empty label, as there is indeed much to be concerned about. The spread of misinformation is a real threat to maintaining a well-informed populace, which forms the basis of any healthy democracy. Accordingly, the UK parliament has recently launched an investigation into the ways in which “fake news” might be undermining democracy. The conclusions of that report strike me as mixed, perhaps in part because it is difficult to quantify the scale of the problem. For example, a recent study found that only a fraction of Americans were exposed to fake news during the most recent US election, at least to the extent that it could lead to voter persuasion. However, the evidence base remains severely underdeveloped on this front.

Moreover, a survey from Pew research indicates that nearly 65% of Americans feel that fake news leaves them confused over basic facts. Interestingly, although many people feel quite confident that they would be able to tell the difference between real and fake news, a study from Channel 4 found that when put to the test, only 4% of British adults who took part were able to correctly identify false stories. Furthermore, psychological research shows that the more we are exposed to a story, the more likely we are to think it is true, this is known as the “illusory-truth effect”. In other words, if you repeat something often enough, people will start to believe it (e.g. the common myth that we only use 10% of our brains).

Echo Chambers, Filter Bubbles, and Moral Tribes

Another concern surrounds the “status of facts” in society. Instead of attending to evidence, people seem retreat into their cultural tribes and respond solely based on how they feel about an issue. I would

say that on the whole, this is an inaccurate characterisation of human psychology. People selectively attend to information all the time, and this is completely normal, we simply cannot pay attention to everything so we hone in on the stories that are most interesting and relevant to us. On the more extreme end of the spectrum we find “motivated reasoning”, which is a defensive process that involves actively rejecting evidence that contradicts deeply-held personal convictions. Yet, people also have a strong motivation to hold accurate perceptions about the world. These different motivations can be in competition. Accordingly, the more important question is therefore one about context.

Unfortunately, social media platforms cause these fairly normal processes to go into overdrive. Most UK adults now consume their news online, and greater access to information via online news and social media fosters selective exposure to ideological content, resulting in a so-called “echo chamber” of like-minded opinions. Echo chambers limit exposure to views from the “other” side, and as such, they can fuel social extremism and group polarization. In addition, social media platforms such as Facebook use algorithms to selectively tailor newsfeeds and specifically recommend content based on a user’s previous click behaviour, resulting in “filter bubbles”. Importantly, the majority of the public is still not aware that they are the subject of so-called

“microtargeting” campaigns, i.e. companies and political campaigners pay Facebook to target users with specific profiles with messages.

It is difficult to produce “hard” evidence that echo chambers and filter bubbles are harming democracy. For example, Facebook has claimed, based on their own analyses, that the echo chamber effect is overhyped. Yet, there are some important discrepancies between the types of data that are available to the scientific community and social media companies. For example, scholars can typically only access publicly available data, which means that we only see a tiny snapshot of the behaviour of millions of people who are engaging with (fake) news stories on social media platforms. Without transparency and independent scientific evaluations, we remain limited in our ability to evaluate the full scope of the problem.

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A Vaccine Against Fake News

I initially started thinking about the vaccine metaphor when I came across some interesting work that showed how models from epidemiology could be adapted to model the viral spread of misinformation, i.e. how one false idea can rapidly spread from one mind to another within a network of interconnected individuals. This led to the idea that it may be possible to develop a “mental” vaccine

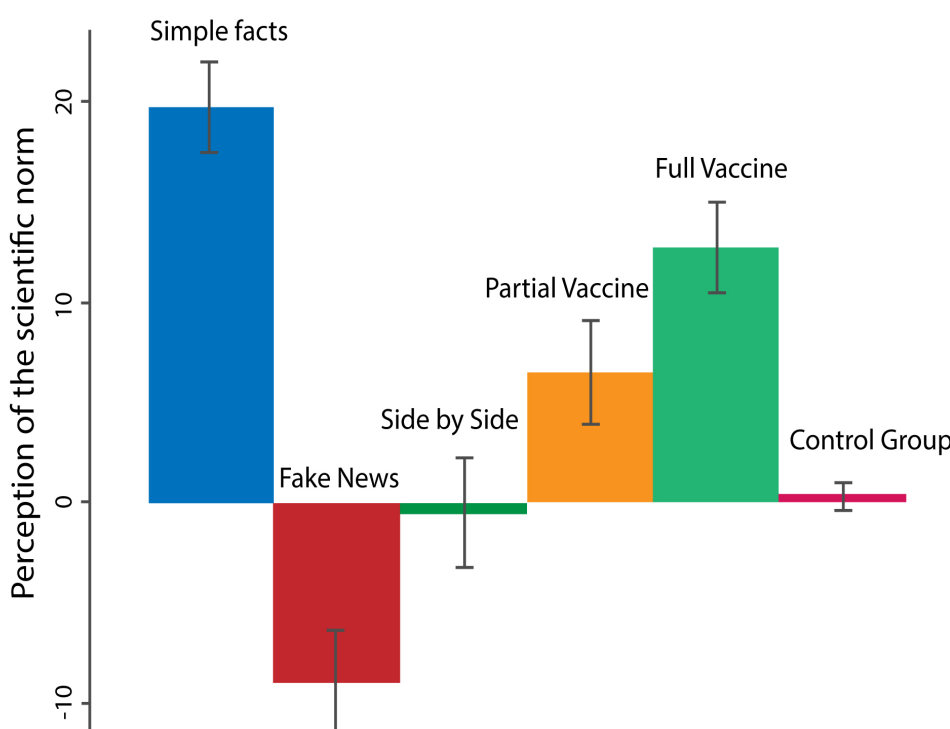


Figure 1:
Fake News vaccine

against fake news. It turns out that a psychologist named William McGuire had started a program of research at Yale University in the 60s exploring how attitudinal resistance to persuasion attempts could be induced using the same biological metaphor. To illustrate: injections that contain a weakened dose of a virus (vaccines) can confer resistance against future infection by activating the production of antibodies. Inoculation theory postulates that the same can be achieved with “mental antibodies”. In other words, by preemptively exposing people to a weakened version of an argument, and by subsequently refuting that argument, attitudinal can be conferred against persuasion.

Although McGuire was interested in protecting beliefs about relatively innocuous matters (“cultural truisms”), my colleagues at Yale and I conceptualised that it might be possible to extend and adapt this approach to a context in which facts are heavily “contested”. Our study focused on disinformation about a very serious societal issue: climate change. In particular, there is a debunked petition that formed the basis of a viral fake news story that claimed that thousands of scientists had concluded that climate change is a hoax. In our study, we tried to inoculate the public against this bogus petition (Figure 1).

Essentially, we found that when we just communicated the simple fact to people that 97% of climate scientists have concluded that global warming is happening, most people shifted their perceptions in line with the science (blue bar). As expected, when we exposed people to the false petition, they shifted away from the conclusions of climate science (red bar). When exposed people to both stories side by side (reflecting the current media environment), the misinformation completely cancelled out the facts (green bar), highlighting the potency of fake news. In the inoculation conditions, we preemptively warned people that there are political actors who use misleading tactics to try to mislead the public (partial vaccine, orange bar) and we explained (in advance) that the petition contains false signatories (e.g. Charles Darwin). In both groups, people were much less influenced by the misinformation, preserving about one third and two thirds of the “facts”. What’s promising is that we observed these patterns across the political spectrum, reducing

group polarisation.

I have come to believe that the real power of the vaccine lies in its ability to be shared interpersonally. If we know of a falsehood and have the opportunity to help inoculate someone against an impending fake news story, the moral responsibility lies with us. In an ideal scenario, the social spread of the inoculation (both online and offline) could help create societal resistance, or “herd immunity” against fake news.

Could the media help? This is a difficult question. While news organisations are at the forefront of what news is about to break, they are currently not in the business of inoculating people against fake news, primarily because the incentive structure of the media is such that there is a need to rank in clicks and pay the bills. In some sense, education may be the greatest inoculation. We have recently developed an educational “fake news” game that we have begun to pilot test in high schools. The purpose of the game is to inoculate students against fake news by letting them step into the shoes of different fake news producers

Of course, there are other solutions. Several European countries have started to fine social media companies for failing to remove defamatory fake news. Facebook has partnered with independent fact-checkers to help flag “disputed” content. Google is demoting fake news in their search results. Vaccines do not always offer full protection but the gist of inoculation is that we need to play offence rather than defence and that it’s better to prevent than cure. It is one tool, among many, to help each other navigate this brave new world.

FURTHER READING

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Conway Hall Ethical Society

Annual General Meeting

Sunday 12th November 2017

2.30pm (registration from 2pm)

Members only • to join, see our website

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Richard Priestley

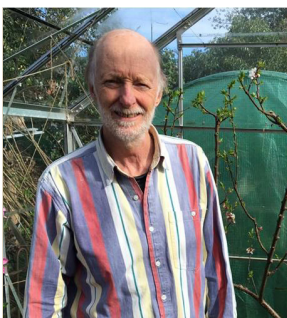
Unlocking a Better World

A better future is possible. Achieving all the UN Sustainable Development Goals is philosophically and technologically possible; the stumbling blocks have all been political. We need a new political and economic paradigm. This essay explores what might happen if ecological sustainability and global social justice replaced national self interest, individual greed and economic growth as the principles that underpin politics, and why that might happen, and happen very suddenly.

Creating a better future may be a pre-condition of our survival as a species. Humanity has unwittingly created a series of inter-linked macro-ecological problems which are together undermining the very habitability of the planet upon which we are totally dependent. Climate change, ocean acidification, species extinctions, depleting aquifers, soil

erosion and myriad forms of pollution: I do not need to detail the nature, causes and interlinkages of these challenges. This essay seeks simultaneous solutions to all these macro-ecological problems, and also to a whole raft of social problems.

Hunger and poverty persist, just as new problems like mass scale obesity emerge. Since the neo-liberal revolution of 1979, inequality has got worse in and between countries. The richest eight individuals now own as much wealth as the poorest 3.6 billion people. In *The Spirit Level*, Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett provide ample evidence that greater equality is better for everyone. Creating more social justice in the world is of course a worthwhile goal in itself, but it may also be a necessary part of tackling the ecological crisis. The scale of the challenges ahead requires humanity to cooperate in a way in which it has never



Richard Priestley is an environmentalist and activist. For the last decade he has spoken, taught and written extensively, including a blog on 'Global Problems: Global Solutions' www.richardpriestley.co.uk.

His work focuses on solutions to the complex web of problems ranging from climate change to hunger and poverty. He considers that inclusion of all sectors of humanity is key to pursuing fundamental reform at the social, economic and political levels. He strongly advocates pollution control, energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies.

done before. Our ability to creatively cooperate may be the defining skill that determines whether or not our species survives into the twenty-second century.

We have evolved as a species to be good at responding to sudden threats, like attack by wild animals, or from rival tribes. Nation states obsess about their relative strength. The macro ecological threats are different. The chemistry of the atmosphere and the oceans is changing incrementally. If the oceans become too acidic for phytoplankton to live, the oxygen content of the air we breathe will plummet and we, along with all the larger mammals will rapidly become extinct.

We now have the scientific tools to monitor these phenomena in tremendous detail. We do not have the political structures or the political will to respond. With many of these macro ecological threats we truly are all in it together. Either we all thrive or we all die. We need a new kind of politics that is organised around our collective self interest as a species. All of our futures depend on this simple fact.

Humanity has got better at cooperation. The UN programme to eradicate smallpox is one shining example. The European Union was established in order to promote peace and prosperity in a continent that has been ravaged by centuries of conflict. The last 72 years have been the most peaceful and prosperous in the history of the continent. The EU has been at the forefront of improving environmental standards, human rights and politically cooperative ways of working. The UK should stop Brexit and place itself at the heart of Europe.

Angela Merkel is now proposing a new Marshall Plan for Africa, which proposes that the German model of local renewable energy cooperatives is exported to Africa as a way of helping solve multiple problems, from poverty in Africa to climate change and the problems associated with large numbers of people seeking to migrate from there to Europe.

I have been writing, blogging and speaking for many years using the title 'Global Problems: Global Solutions', and making the case for how we, as a species, could create many multiple win-win situations as we tackle the macro-ecological crisis and the social justice crisis simultaneously. Angela Merkel's proposal fits exactly with what I've long been advocating.

Climate change dictates that we leave the vast majority of the known reserves of fossils in the ground.

A cleantech revolution is unfolding that means that humanity can move to 100% renewables for all its energy needs, for electricity, heating, cooling and transport. As the cost of much of this cleantech is falling, especially relative to the costs of fossil fuels and of nuclear power, switching to 100% renewables makes increasingly good economic sense. If we internalise the externalities of production and include the costs of climate change in the fossil fuel balance sheet and the full costs of decommissioning and waste storage in the nuclear balance sheet, then the economic case for switching to 100% renewables as soon as possible and on a global scale becomes overwhelming.

By applying ever higher standards of energy efficiency, very much greater use can be made of each unit of energy. The change from incandescent light bulbs to LEDs meant we could increase the amount of light from about 15 lumens per Watt to over 100 now, and soon to 200 lumens per Watt. Houses built to Passivhaus standards typically use only about 10% of the energy of an older house. Many past projections of future energy demand saw the graph climbing ever upward. Energy use is already falling in many advanced economies. If globally we implemented policies aimed at making energy use more efficient the decreasing demand in more developed countries would be more than enough to allow the less developed countries to develop, and indeed to technologically leapfrog the richer countries, without total energy demand increasing. This transformation is not just about individual appliances and households, but about how we organise whole cities and the global economy.

A new political dichotomy is opening up in the world that, to a large extent, has already become more important than past divisions between left and right, communism and capitalism. The new division is best seen as how we respond to these macro ecological and social justice challenges.

Green and environmental groups have long advocated change. Now something new has happened: voices as diverse as Pope Francis, Mark Carney the Governor of the Bank of England, Angela Merkel the conservative leader of Germany and the Swedish Social Democrat/Green coalition government are all calling for action. The Paris Climate Agreement was signed up to by the vast majority of the world's governments.

There is a discernible new consensus emerging about both the need to take action and the kinds of



action required. Jeremy Leggett refers to this environmentally and socially responsible position as “Appropriate Civilization”, which he contrasts with the “New Despotism. This “New Despotism” stresses old values of nationalism, military force, continued use of fossil fuels and tends to be either in denial of, or indifferent about, the macro ecological crisis, of which climate change is only the most prominent aspect.

The New Demagogues act in the economic interest of the tiny clique of multi-billionaires and seem to be in denial of, or indifferent to, the needs of the very poor. Alain de Botton defines a demagogue as “one who protects the rich by getting the poor to blame the weak.” This is the underpinning of so much of the rhetoric around the migrant crisis and Brexit. Perhaps Putin, Trump and Farage are some of the best known representatives of the New Demagogues while Merkel, Macron and the whole Paris agreement represent the mainstream of “Appropriate Civilization” and Caroline Lucas and Isabella Lovin represent its pioneering cutting edge.

We live in a world with abundant financial and material resources and a powerful range of technologies. We need to make very much better use of all that is at our disposal. Many trillions of pounds, dollars or Euros could be raised each year by introducing a carbon tax, Pigovian taxes on all forms of pollution, closing tax loopholes and havens, increasing higher rates of income taxes, property taxes and taxes on wealth, and on financial transactions via Robin Hood or Tobin taxes. A global tax on all forms of advertising could help dampen demand. Also a lot of

money could be saved by scrapping perverse subsidies that perpetuate damaging practices, from farming to oil exploration. Many infrastructure projects, from Hinkley Point and HS2 in Britain to coal fired power stations in Vietnam, should be abandoned. Global military budgets could be scaled back towards zero. We simply have more important and beneficial things to do with our resources.

Here are a few places to start: A system of global health care, free at point of use to all people the world over: ditto for education, from nursery through to post graduate. A global citizen’s basic income would be the fastest and most efficient way to reduce poverty and help humanity adjust to the increasing levels of automation and robotisation that are coming. Beyond a certain minimum level it is not material gain that leads to enhanced human wellbeing, it is improved friendship networks with family and community, improved health and fitness, learning new things and helping others. Economic policy should be redirected to promote these ends. We need millions of community scale projects of the sort advocated by the Transition Towns Network. We also need some very much bigger projects.

As far as I am aware, nobody is advocating for these green megaprojects with very ambitious social and ecological objectives. Angela Merkel’s proposal for taking the German renewable energy cooperative model to Africa seems a good place to start, and as a little thought experiment let us imagine how this could be done at sufficient scale to really make an impact.

Germany currently has about 850 renewable

energy cooperatives with more than 180,000 members. These are mainly smallish affairs, generating a few Megawatts with investments of a few million Euros. In Denmark, the Middelgrunden offshore wind farm was one of the early pioneers, with 10,000 individual members owning half the 40MW project and the municipal utility company of Copenhagen owning the other half. The 200MW first phase of the Trianel offshore wind farm at Borkum has been created by the cooperation of 33 cities.

Solar power will probably be the major power source for humanity. This includes a range of technologies from solar photovoltaic panels with which most people are familiar, solar water heating either at household scale or to run the district heating systems with summer to winter heat storage, as has been pioneered in Denmark. In hot, sunny deserts, concentrating solar power has huge potential to drive desalination, industrial processes and to make electricity. It is now normal practice to add thermal storage so that electricity can be generated around the clock or flexibly to meet demand. The Ouarzazate solar power station in Morocco will produce 580MW at a cost of about \$9bn. Ikea has recently installed a 2MW solar pv plant in the Azraq refugee camp in Jordan, with the intention of providing electricity, jobs and training for local people and Syrian refugees.

Various companies and countries are proposing building very large concentrating solar power stations, for example Nur Energie is proposing a 2.5GW plant in Tunisia with a large part of the electricity exported by cable under the Mediterranean Sea to help bring cheap, dispatchable, low carbon electricity to Europe. A project such as this could have various other aspects like a large teaching hospital, schools and a university, a solar power research and development centre, a reception centre for migrants and refugees offering excellent education, training and employment.

A new permanent city could be established to pioneer more energy efficient and convivial ways to organise a city. With solar power, seawater could be desalinated and hydroponic systems of agriculture could be developed in greenhouses as has been done by Sundrop Farms at Port Augusta in Australia. Surplus water could be used to establish orchards as has been done since the 12th Century at the Agdal Garden in Marrakech and to reclaim desert, as has been done so successfully by the Sekem project in Egypt.

Many highly productive and sustainable systems could be pioneered and hundreds of thousands of jobs and training opportunities could be created for the refugees, migrants and for the local population, and for international students keen to learn about the new solar technologies, systems of agriculture and urban design. It could all be done on a cooperative basis, where the entire infrastructure would be owned by the local and global communities and penniless refugees could own a share through systems of sweat equity.

Many such projects could be developed on a global scale. The Thar Desert would be an ideal location for such a solar green mega project. Air quality in Delhi could be rapidly improved as solar replaced coal power stations and electric and direct solar stoves could replace dung and charcoal for cooking. Investment in trains and trams could rid Delhi of its traffic jams and more of its polluted air. Such projects could be envisaged for anywhere on earth.

A green megaproject suitable for Northern Europe is being proposed by the Dutch grid operator TenneT, who suggest it would act as a hub for 30GW of offshore wind. An artificial island (which could also include a tidal lagoon for energy generation) would be built in the North Sea, with high voltaic interconnectors linking the electricity grids of much of Europe. Cheap Icelandic geothermal, hydro and wind, Norwegian hydro, Scottish wind, wave and tidal would be sent to this energy hub for use in power hungry Germany, England and Holland and on to the rest of Europe. This along with Saharan solar, smaller local renewables, radically increased efficiency and changed urban planning would mean fossil fuels could rapidly be ditched, air quality and human health improved, and carbon emissions plummet.

Perhaps a new green eco-city might be built on this energy hub in the North Sea, with its inhabitants being the first to be citizens not so much of a county but to be European or Global citizens. Pioneers of a post fossil fuel, post nation state based future. Bring it on!

With this level of cooperation we might just have the ability to create an ecologically sustainable and socially just future within the limited time window that exists before climate change and the other macro ecological problems spin so far out of control that our existence as a species is thrown further into jeopardy. It may be a choice between a radically different and better future, or the extinction of our own species.

Vladimir Putin in Perspective

John Edwards



Starting with a brief biography, we will trace how Vladimir Putin came to power in late 1999 and why those who sponsored him did so, following the catastrophic political and economic collapse of the Yeltsin era. We will examine the subsequent changes in Russia, what is happening today and account for his continuing popularity.

We will also look at current policies and hope to discuss their implications for the future, and examine western attitudes.

BIOGRAPHY

Putin's father served with the NKVD, often behind enemy lines, and was injured in 1942.

For his parents, young Vlad [b. 1952] must have seemed like a miracle baby for his devoutly Christian mother, over 40, who had already lost two siblings and nearly starved to death herself during the siege of Leningrad [St. Petersburg]. His brother had to be put in a home because they could not feed him but still died.



John Edwards read Engineering Science at Oxford and has had a long and well-researched interest in things Russian. He has been a member of the Conway Hall Ethical Society since 2005, and has given presentations on climate change, energy, the Ukraine and the former Yugoslavia.



*Vladimir
Spiridonovich
Putin*



*Maria
Ivanovna
Shelomova*

A bit of a tearaway in his early youth, he got down to work aged 13 to realise his ambition of joining the KGB, studied law and joined in 1975.

Posted to Dresden in 1985 until after the fall of Berlin Wall, he was clearly loyal to the system at this time. He then moved to St. Petersburg and became involved in local government as an advisor. Here he made a good impression on Anatoly Chubais, who then joined the Government.

Putin resigned from the KGB with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel on 20th August 1991, immediately following the attempted coup against Mikhail Gorbachev by opponents of his Perestroika policy (which was merely democratic socialism).

Later, he became deputy mayor to Anatoly Sobchak. During this time he became involved in a huge fraud scandal, but managed to escape from it and, by 1996, was in a job in Moscow. In 1998, Yeltsin appointed him director of the FSB (formerly KGB). He soon sacked most of the top people.

In 1991, Boris Yeltsin took advantage of Gorbachev's weakened position to gain power.

THE YELTSIN YEARS, 1991–1999

After Yeltsin instituted “shock therapy” there came a time of epic economic failure –the economy finally bottomed out at around half its previous level just before Yeltsin relinquished power. This was a greater slump than that in the USA in 1929, in which output only fell by 20%.

Seumas Milne called this “Catastroika”. In his book *The Revenge of History* he calls it “the most cataclysmic peacetime economic collapse of an industrial country in history”... Under the banner of “reform” and American-prescribed “shock therapy”... Capitalist restoration brought in its wake mass pauperisation and unemployment, wild extremes of inequality, rampant crime... all combined with legalised gangsterism on an heroic scale and ruthless looting of public assets”.

Even after ending the first Chechen war, by a “ceasefire”, in order to improve his ratings, Yeltsin only stayed in power in 1996 with extensive help from oligarchs such as Berezovsky and from Bill Clinton to rig the election. They even featured together on the cover of *Time* magazine. Towards the end of his rule his popularity ratings were only about 2%.

PUTIN ERA, 1999–?

By August 1999, Yeltsin had appointed Putin deputy prime minister and on September 23rd, Yeltsin received a letter from 24 governors asking him to hand over power to Putin, which he did and, at the same time, issued a secret decree authorising a restart of the war in Chechnya, a challenge which Putin took up with tremendous enthusiasm and leadership, gaining huge popular support with his tough talk: “no more pious claptrap about ‘bringing terrorists to justice’, no, we will hunt them down, wherever we find them, we will destroy them –even if we find them in the toilet.”

Putin eventually got to grips with Chechnya by befriending one of the warlords, Akhmad Kadyrov, who was pro-Moscow, giving him special help against rival warlords. When Kadyrov senior was assassinated in 2004, his son Ramzan took over and helped Putin finish the job. They are now the best of friends and

he has offered the services of Chechen troops in Syria.

His KGB background was an invaluable asset because the KGB/FSB told him the truth, whereas they only told Stalin what they wanted him to hear. However, the quality of FSB intelligence available to him was initially a problem in Chechnya.

In an interview in 2000, shortly after his accession to power, Putin said he thought that Lenin had betrayed the country by signing Brest-Litovsk pact. This was because Putin had clearly needed to distance himself from his past in order to gain favour with Yeltsin. Yeltsin had always hated the Communist Party (CP) after what they did to his parents, resigned from it in 1990 at the 28th Congress and, in 1991, issued a decree banning it.

Yeltsin chose Putin as his successor because he was not closely associated with the CP and was one of the few people who had remained loyal to him. Berezovsky, who masterminded Putin's campaign, and other oligarchs, thought that Putin would be easy to control. But he soon proved them wrong, by slowing the rush to privatisation, keeping strategic industries in state control and pushing the oligarchs away from politics.

However, a slight whiff of corruption still remains. He had to do a deal with them.

He did not come to power soon enough or have the air power to "do something" about the NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999.

However, Putin has had to respond to incursions around his borders, such as an attack on a Russian region by Georgian troops.

Most notably, Putin had no option but to respond to the Western-backed "putsch" in Ukraine by reclaiming Crimea. The US had already planned an immediate take-over of Russia's principal "warm water" naval base, including plans for upgrading the buildings. Putin executed a meticulous plan whilst securing the consent of the vast majority of Crimea's population.

THE KILLING OF JOURNALIST ANNA POLITKOVSKAYA IN OCTOBER 2006.

Putin commented "The murder of such a person – the cold-blooded murder of a woman, a mother – is in itself an attack on our country this murder does

more harm to Russia and its current government and to the current government in Chechnya than any of her articles."

Alex Goldfarb concluded that one of the one of the warlords had her killed to make it look like Kadyrov had done it. Putin thought he was being framed not by Kadyrov but by Beresovsky's camp in London and his traitorous spy Litvinenko had been accusing Putin, who had him killed.

Politkovskaya had indeed been an outspoken critic of the government. When I offered my condolences in a comment to the Telegraph, I added "Of course this could not happen in our country; Our journalists know when to keep their mouths shut."

Somewhat unfair perhaps, in view of the above evidence, but what about David Kelly?

As for Syria there is already a sense of relief that with Russia's help, the crisis is hopefully drawing to a close. This is of enormous strategic significance to Russia, because a secular Syria is seen as a barrier to the penetration of Saudi-backed Wahhabist ideology into the Muslim regions of Russia.

RELIGION:

Putin is keen to promote Orthodox Christianity because it encourages stability and family life, which he has policies to promote. He is also on good terms with the Jewish and Muslim communities.

REFERENCES:

- Masha Gessen, *The man without a face: the unlikely rise of Vladimir Putin*, Granta (2012) – Gessen's book, which is a source of useful facts despite being, as are many other books on Russia, extremely prejudiced against the subject.
- Vassily Mitrokhin, *The Mitrokhin Archive* – Former KGB librarian and elderly defector to the west who brought with him almost the entire archive of the KGB up to 1992. He has also expressed nostalgia for the "good old days" of the Soviet Union, before corruption set in.
- Seumas Milne, *The Revenge of History*, Verso (2013)
- Wikipedia – A good source of facts, sometimes biased.

BLOOMSBURY FESTIVAL



Sunday 22 October

Sunday Festival Hub at Conway Hall; 11am – 8pm

Rousing talks, vital debates and thought-provoking exhibitions from some of the boldest and bravest voices around. Housed in Bloomsbury's home for those who dare to dream of a better world.

EXHIBITIONS

Slave Owners of Bloomsbury – LBS, UCL

This project traces the contentious lives and legacies of slave-owners who lived close to UCL.

11am – 5pm; *FREE – Just Turn Up*

Who Said What About EU Migration? – Alexandra Bulat

Discussing attitudes towards EU migration in the UK, based on Alexandra Bulat's PhD research at UCL and her placement at the British Library.

11am – 5pm; *FREE – Just Turn Up*

My Journey to Bloomsbury – Alexandra Bulat

Where are you from? Map your family's story on an interactive map, and talk with Alexandra.

11am – 5pm; *FREE – Just Turn Up*

TALKS, DISCUSSIONS & WORKSHOPS

Thinking on a Sunday: Gandhi and Non-violence – Dr Shahrar Ali

Using Gandhi's teachings as inspiration, what is the meaning of nonviolence as a form of political action and how does it work?

11am; *FREE but pre-booking is recommended*

Modern Slavery in the UK – Kathryn Cronin and Louise Hooper

Barristers of Garden Court Chambers discuss slavery in Britain today. Who are the victims, where do they come from, how are they recognised and what are we doing about it?

11.30am; *FREE but pre-booking is recommended*

Viewing Post-Independent India from the Outside – Dr Sanjukta Ghosh, Rani Singh, Gary Raymond and Janine Shroff

In this India-UK year of culture, how is changing India reflected in journalism, arts and performance-based collaborative projects?

1.15pm; *FREE but pre-booking is recommended*

Four Conversations: A United Kingdom? – ScotRes

Four speakers, with differing backgrounds and specialisms, discuss the current state and future of the United (or Disunited) Kingdom.

1.15pm; *FREE but pre-booking is recommended*

Why is my Curriculum Colonial?

Decoloniality as Education – Simmi Dullay, Oana Parvan, Gitanjali Pyndiah & Nydia Swaby

Discussing the commonality and differences in knowledge production of the global South, decolonization and the presence of the colonial knowledge systems inherited as residues of 500 years of European colonization.

1.30pm; *FREE but pre-booking is recommended*

Four Conversations: Four Anniversaries – Dr Subir Sinha

A snapshot of four very different areas of the world – each with a significant anniversary this year. Four specialists discuss a burning issue.

3.15pm; *FREE but pre-booking is recommended*

Independent Employment? Business Pioneers Workshop

Using historical examples and situations found in our present days to help us explore our personal attitudes to independence in the context of employment and entrepreneurship.

3.30pm; *FREE but pre-booking is recommended*

PERFORMANCES

When Annie Met Gandhi

Bloomsbury Festival/Ingenious Purpose co-production. Commissioned by Conway Hall.

The fiercely free-thinking Annie Besant and Gandhi admired each other hugely, but they disagreed about how to achieve Independence for India. In this short play Annie is anxiously awaiting the arrival of her fellow trailblazer...

12 noon & 3.30pm

FREE but pre-booking is recommended

Ashok Klouda (cello) – Sunday Suites 1

Masterpieces which inspired Ashok to take up the cello, from J.S. Bach's Suites to new works.

5.30pm (pre-concert performance)

FREE to ticket holders for 6.30pm concert

Harriet MacKenzie (violin) & Morgan Szymanski (guitar)

An evening of works for violin and guitar, from Baroque greats Vivaldi and Bach to Piazzolla.

6.30pm; *Tickets: £10 (£8)*



Art for Our Sake

Dr Jim Walsh

#Culture.Matters

At one of the first speeches Nick Serota gave when he became Chair of the Arts Council, he referred to the experience of art:

“First, the arts change lives. I think that for everyone here today there will have been a moment when hearing a piece of music, reading a book, seeing a particular play or looking at a painting or a sculpture gave us a new insight into our own sensibilities, or stimulated new ways of thinking about the world, helping to shape our values.”

So, let's take that idea for a walk... We say we want **real experiences**, a sense of depth to our lives and sometimes even a sense of community. But why aren't we getting these experiences? Why aren't we going deep? And why do we sometimes avoid community?

Fear.

We worry that we might get unsettled. The balance achieved in our lives could be overturned and our safe, comfortable, existence lost.

My premise is that art can give us **real experiences**, depth and a sense of community, but we have to let it in... we have to try new things and go beyond the safe, the comfortable and the known.

Jeanette Winterson, in her essay on Gertrude Stein in *Art Objects*, exposes this issue by presenting a thought experiment in which a writer tries to create something genuinely meaningful, and not just bland and repetitive:

“Suppose there was a writer who looked despairingly at her readers and who thought: ‘They are suspicious, they are conservative. They long for new experiences and deep emotions and yet fear both... How to smuggle into their homes what they would normally kill at the gate?’”

How does an artist get past this “conservative” fear and demand for art to be subservient?

Following on from Jeanette Winterson's recommendation that artists need to smuggle their art across unsuspecting audience's horizons to prevent the usual



As well as being the Chief Executive Officer of Conway Hall, **Dr Jim Walsh** has written a blog – After You, Jackson – on ethics and the importance of culture, which examines how culture can open our minds at a philosophical and ethical level. In particular, Jim focuses on why artists at times kidnap their audiences and also how art poses necessary and difficult questions that we otherwise shy away from. To contact him email ceo@conwayhall.org.uk.



slaughter at the gate, we come across another problem: the attention span of the audience. It seems these days that even if an artist can get their art onto the doormat of the audience's mind they still aren't guaranteed to make an impact. There is the decidedly annoying problem of getting them to pay attention.

In these days of fast moving technological advancement, we seem to find ourselves all too often content in our flighty attitude of continuous-partial-engagement; that uninspiring residence of stupidity that is constantly on the alert for the next sliver of gratification. Humility and patience do not sit well with coffee-fuelled, frenetic, sloppy thinking. Consequently, trying to get anyone to "sit down and enjoy the show" is a deeply troublesome and unrewarding task.

In the face of such a futile and seemingly thankless undertaking, it's not hard to notice that certain artists have got wise to the fact that their once thoughtful and emotionally susceptible audience is probably now going to send a text or take a selfie, whilst standing in front of their life's work. Some artists, indeed, seek to rally themselves and resist the creeping miasma of contemporary dull-headedness and actively fight back with high explosive counter measures and a range of consciousness-disorientating techniques to prevent such disinterest, vapidness, and moronic behaviour as we, their dubious audience, fumble in our pockets and bags to mute or answer phone calls. No real weapons are employed, but all the same we are kidnapped.

One such kidnapping took place in Colchester, in 2009. The scene of the "crime" was Holy Trinity

Church, a space had not been opened to the public for fifteen years.

Conceived many centuries past to allow the maximum amount of light into its otherwise cold, damp, and dark enclosure, all the windows had to be 'blacked out.' When visiting the site prior to the installation of her work, Kathleen Herbert, the artist, realised that her low lit, dark palette, film would be compromised by streams of daylight pouring in from the many arched windows of the gothic space. Consequently, in an effort to allow the film to be seen, black self-adhesive plastic needed to be cut, trimmed, and placed over every window, stained or not. Scaffolding to the ready, the interior of the church was gradually cast into the permanent dead of night.

Arriving as a member of the audience means first gaining access to a previously locked cemetery within the town's centre and then edging along a small path to the main entrance of the church. Bespoke wooden doors allow entry into Holy Trinity's portico. From here, an invigilator informs you of what is to be expected inside the church; makes you aware of health and safety matters; opens the inner doors to grant you access; and then finally closes the inner doors behind you. Unbeknownst to you, of course, partaking and agreeing to all the preceding activity swiftly delivers you into the kidnapper's grasp. Every movement and interaction that went before has led you to a place that can not be walked away from with any simplicity or ease.

Unlike standing in front of a painting in a museum

and then moving on to the next without a moment's thought, a trap silently awaits your entrance and then quietly closes behind you just at the moment when you begin to grapple with the realisation that you are in an extremely dark space and have no real knowledge of where you are. At first you can't even make out your own hand in front of your face and you have to wait for your eyes to acclimatise in the darkness so that you can meekly shuffle forward across the smooth cold stone floor, which gently undulates beneath your feet. The artist, due to the diligent execution of their kidnap, has triumphantly gained your attention and you are effectively blindfolded whilst you agree to their demands. Once inside the church and having taken a few faltering steps toward what you dimly perceive as the film screen, your commitment becomes total. You will now watch the film and not simply walk away as you would from a painting in a museum.

There are, of course, many other types of kidnap. The list is probably endless, but to build a fuller idea of the power employed it is perhaps worthwhile exploring one further illustration in detail.

In February 2005, New York City found its much beloved Central Park the subject of intense activity over the course of a few months, prior to a grand unveiling which, as the saying goes, "the like of which had never been seen before". Two artists, the husband and wife team that was Jean-Claude and Christo, finally managed to activate a long-held ambition for the city of New York and put into place a spectacular artwork that stretched the length and breadth of the

city's largest park. The installation of *The Gates* was an immense tour de force.

7,500 gates, each twelve feet tall with a five foot saffron-coloured fabric panel hanging beneath a crossbar attached to two uprights posts, would be spaced at ten to fifteen foot intervals throughout Central Park's winding pathway system.

And on 12th February 2005, after all of this activity, Christo and Jean Claude's audience trickled through the many entrances to the park and began to walk among the gates themselves.

Their experience was akin to being eight years old, waking up on a cold winter's morning to discover that it had snowed deeply outside. To wander through those gates on that first day and discover how their vibrant colour and shape re-animated the already beautiful park was breath-taking. The feat of engineering and project management had yielded its payoff and delivered to thousands an experience that changed the most hard-nosed and cynical native New Yorker into a wide-eyed child, once again filled with wonder, curiosity, and the possibility of hope.

A few days later, Manhattan succumbed to a recent vogue for deep snow in February and the magic was doubled.

Any park in snow is a special place that disrupts the normal grind of daily routine, but to have the gates intertwined within such a setting was a unique encapsulation of beauty and it induced child-like wonder in all. However, getting lucky with the snow in no way should overshadow the achievement of the gates upon



their audience. The experience of the gates themselves in their execution was awe-inspiring, and it is this quality that belongs solely to the artists because they managed that rare thing of kidnapping hearts.

Gates, then, aren't all bad. As well as being smuggled past they can be artistically used for widening audiences experience, perception and understanding. Jean-Claude and Christo's use of play within their installation worked. It got audiences to engage, to forget their usual ways of understanding the world and it got past their barriers, their internal gates. There was no fear, audiences were out of their comfort zone and having rich and powerful experiences. Art was doing its job.

Now, when I agreed to participate in this talk that was going to be my finishing point.

A couple of weeks ago that changed when I came downstairs at Conway Hall to see the final pieces of Raquel Chinchetru exhibition *Transitions* being installed.

Like everyone in this room, I'm sure, I have been appalled by the plight of refugees over the past few years and also the dehumanizing responses by those on the hard right that we have had to witness in our once open and tolerant society. However, also, possibly like some and certainly not all of you, I have shielded myself from the full impact of the refugee plight. I've read the news, followed the events and been stunned by the horror of human tragedy... but at the same time I have always preserved a distance and not let myself get too affected by the individual stories and onslaught of news items.

That changed one Friday in June.

I stood looking at *Abou*, the human in the suitcase and made myself let the work into my mind. I rationally thought about and understood what was going on in the painting and probably even puffed out my cheeks, widened my eyes and breathed out in a gesture of incomprehension at how someone could go through that torment of claustrophobia.

I then turned to the interpretation panel opposite. As always, when reading such panels I glanced and skimmed across to find something that catches my eye before I choose to read in a more considered manner. This time my skimming resulted in one word standing out in front of all the others. 'Boy'...

This is one of the words I use to call my nine-year old son. "Hey, Boy, up and at 'em, school today." The realisation that the human in the suitcase was someone's



Abou by Rachel Chinchetru

son and that the parents faced such a terrible choice as to his survival that he ended up in a suitcase came like a wave of emotion to me as I spun back round to look at the painting again. The blood drained from my head to my feet and I felt like I was punched in the stomach. Fortunately, this experience happened at the end of the day and, feeling quite overwhelmed emotionally, I made my way home. That evening, as I described what happened to my wife, the obvious emotional outcome occurred and I burst into tears.

Raquel's art had managed to do in practice, here at Conway Hall, what I have described in the preceding text and images. Her work had made a genuine connection with me and got past the gate of my rationality that protects me from the horror and suffering of those around me whilst at the same time allowing the continuation of my privileged "western" aloofness from such misery. Her work had catapulted me out of my emotional numbness, as she explained later when I met with her, and into a new space of emotional integrity and depth. The potential depth of experience and emotions that Nick Serota and Jeanette Winterson wrote about had reached out, gripped hold and shaken me. In those moments, art had connected me as a human to that suffering experience of Abou and his parents. Art had suspended my self-protective shield and given me back some of my humanity.

That's what art can do.

That's why culture matters.

And that's why art is for our sake.

ADDRESS GIVEN BY DR GEOFF LEE ON SUNDAY, 10 September 2017

Palestine, Israel, Politics and the Beautiful Game; Dilemmas for a Post-ethical Age



REPRESSION OF PALESTINIAN FOOTBALL

Following the complete ban on the Palestinian team leaving to play in Singapore, in 2007, Israel has eased its limits on international movement of players –but uncertainties and delays still remain. Domestically,

the game is seriously hampered by road blocks. Since 2015, the two-leg final of the Palestine Cup between the leading West Bank and Gazan teams has been possible. However, intervention by FIFA (the controlling body of international football) has twice been necessary to ensure enough players can actually travel.



Dr Geoff Lee first visited Israel in 1966 but saw little of the Palestinian community. However, the visit awakened an interest. He visited in November 2013 on a political tour organised under the auspices of the *Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions* and then in March 2014 on the invitation of the *Palestinian Football Association*.

He is a member of the *Camden Abu Dis Friendship Association*, the *Palestine Solidarity Campaign* and the *Red Card Israeli Racism* campaign.

Israeli forces continue to destroy sports facilities and deny the development of new facilities through FIFA's Goal Project. Footballers continue to be assaulted, shot, placed under arbitrary arrest, and football facilities are raided and tear-gassed. Israelis normally claim "security" concerns, but lack of discipline in their forces appears to be very severe.

RACISM IN ISRAELI FOOTBALL

While Palestinian citizens of Israel (20% of the population) play in most senior Israeli teams, there is one particular exception. Beitar Jerusalem has never played a Palestinian and is proud of its "forever pure" approach. There is a core of extreme, racist supporters who call themselves "La Familia", who have been known to attack locals and who chant "Death to Arabs". The Israeli Football Association (IFA) has never adequately tackled this problem. There also may be a growing problem at Maccabi Tel Aviv.

The Youth teams in the Al Shomoron area were about to be segregated into one Palestinian league and one Jewish league until a legal challenge stopped it. A similar situation arose at Hapoel Hadera teams. Israel's "Coalition Against Racism" organisation has warned of "racism spreading across the country". The IFA is seriously compromised by these incidents.

FIFA AND ISRAELI SETTLEMENT CLUBS

Every year since 2013, the Palestinian Football Association (PFA) has approached FIFA at each Annual Congress to resolve the above problems for Palestinians. In 2015, FIFA established the "Israel Palestine Monitoring Committee", chaired by African National Congress member Tokyo Sexwale to resolve the above problems.

Linked to these, the question of Israeli settlement clubs has emerged as fundamental. Within the hundred or so settlements in the West Bank there are six which have football teams playing in the mid-level Israeli football leagues. According to international law these settlements are based on Palestinian territory, where the PFA has jurisdiction. For these teams to play in Israeli leagues, i.e. leagues in another FIFA

country, FIFA Statutes demand that they must be given permission by the relevant FA –in this case the PFA. That has not been given.

Sexwale's first draft report in March 2017 identified a solution to remove the settlement clubs from the Israeli leagues on threat of suspension of the IFA from FIFA. His idea was to follow the "Crimean precedent" whereby a few years earlier Crimean clubs were not allowed to join Russian leagues after invasion and were obliged to establish their own league.

The IFA objected vehemently to the above threat of suspension so Sexwale removed it. However, he kept the basic demand of removing settlement clubs from the Israeli leagues. Sexwale's report was not submitted in time for debate at the May 2017 FIFA Annual Congress, so a decision will be delayed until later.

Recognising the likelihood of FIFA prevarication, the PFA submitted its own motion to the May 2017 Annual Congress. This was summarily dismissed by the chairman, Infantino, who proposed that the whole matter be discussed by the FIFA Council in October 2017 or March 2018. This proposal was accepted by the FIFA membership, although the process did not conform to the strict FIFA Statutes.

The PFA objected to this improper process and appealed to the Court for Arbitration on Sport for the FIFA action to be declared void. The respondent is FIFA and the Court's "arbitral award" is due on the 26th of January 2018.

CONCLUDING ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Sexwale commented once that Palestinian football is played only by permission of the Israelis. As we have seen, Israeli control over the Palestinian game has been all-pervasive. At the working level, ethical considerations seem to have been subordinated to security considerations: border guards, soldiers and policemen have often shown little respect for both Palestinians and for the beautiful game. Regrettably, security considerations often appear illusory.

Palestinian and Israeli teams have never played each other and probably never will, or not until the political and security outlook is more certain. Some games between European teams and Palestinian and

Israeli teams have taken place at youth level, and while this will have no effect on politics, it should help individuals to understand each other better.

More seriously, football's institutions appear to have limited regard for ethical behaviour. The IFA takes minimal heed of the imperative to reduce racism, whatever the officials say. The FIFA bureaucracy has ignored its own rules in order to appease Israel and its leading politicians. It manages this because, as one acute observer has observed, the President has his foot on the throats of the membership.

FIFA has a long way to go to clean up football's image and to adopt superior ethical standards. However, football has one great benefit: it spotlights these problems of racism and political corruption in Israel/Palestine which nation states and their governments can and do ignore. In particular, football spotlights the Israeli challenges that designates the West Bank and Gaza as "occupied territory". FIFA is obliged by its own statutes to act on settlement teams and can therefore give an ethical lead to the international community by observing international law.

REFERENCE BOOKS

- Noam Chomsky and Ilan Pappé, *On Palestine* (2015) – Good current summary
- John McCarthy, *You can't hide the Sun, a journey through Palestine* (2013) – A very readable introduction to life for Palestinians inside Israel.

- James M Dorsey, *The Turbulent World of Middle East Soccer* (2016) – Good section on Palestine and Israel.
- Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (2007) – Standard work on the Zionist expansion of 1947–48, based on Israeli archives.
- Tom Suarez, *State of Terror* (2016) – Study of conflict involved in creating Israel, based on UK archives.

REFERENCE DOCUMENTARIES BY ISRAELI FILMMAKERS

- Dror Moreh, *The Gatekeepers* (2012). Interviews with all (at the time) six surviving former heads of Shin Bet (Israeli Internal Security service). A film that exposes deep concerns about the direction taken by Israeli politicians and the future of Israel.
- Ra'anan Alexandrowicz, *The Law in These Parts* (2011). An examination of the Israeli military's legal system applied to Palestinians since occupation began in 1967. Featuring interviews of nine retired judges, interspersed with footage on the consequences of their decisions.
- Mor Loushy, *Censored Voices* (2015) – The story of the Six-Day War in 1967, based on contemporaneous interviews by Amos Oz and Avraham Shapira, which was subsequently censored.
- Guy Davidi and Emad Burnat, *Five Broken Cameras* (2011) – A Palestinian farmer's moving and disturbing video chronicle of his non-violent resistance.

Conway Hall Ethical Society

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

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What Role for Capitalism in the Digital Age?

Harry Shutt



The starting point is to understand that, as Marx and Engels showed, technology largely determines the pattern of economic and social relations in any given society. Hence, as described in the Communist Manifesto, the pre-industrial feudal society, based primarily on agriculture and manual labour /

cottage industries, was bound to die off in the face of mechanical technology emerging from the Industrial Revolution, enabling huge gains in productivity and living standards – which Marx and Engels rightly saw as a huge boon to society as a whole.



Harry Shutt is a freelance economist and consultant who has worked on more than 100 assignments over the last 30+ years, mainly for international development agencies such as the *World Bank*, *United Nations Development Programme* and *European Commission*. He has also worked for a trade union (in the 1970s) and has devoted much time over the years to analysing the future prospects for labour markets, international trade, “developing” countries and related issues. Harry is the author of numerous highly-acclaimed books including *Beyond the Profits System* (2010), *The Decline of Capitalism* (2005), *A New Democracy* (2001), and *The Trouble with Capitalism* (1998). His most recent articles and further information can be found at his blog, harryshutt.com.

The need for large concentrations of capital, rather than land, distinguished capitalism from feudalism, but needed a different legal framework to make it possible. In particular, it meant that private investors had to be incentivised to put their money as equity (risk capital) into companies over whose management they had no control – an idea deplored notably by Adam Smith. To achieve this it was found necessary, in the British companies acts enacted in the 1850s, to grant the right of limited liability to any company that wanted it, so that none of their shareholders need fear the prospect of unlimited liability for the consequences of any failure or misdemeanour by a company whose management they were not in a position to supervise or control.

However desirable this might have been in the early days of capitalism – when without the privilege of limited liability railway companies (for example) would have struggled to assemble the capital needed to finance the huge investments required – there is no longer any justification for it. That is primarily because in the new high-tech / digital age there is much less need for capital formation (fixed investment) – in terms of the amount of finance that can be absorbed – than there was in the 19th Century relative to the size of the economy. But largely because of limited liability, combined with the natural tendency of competitive capitalist markets to foster over-accumulation of capital, there is still mounting pressure to find new outlets for it.

In the absence of real demand for productive investment this intensifying demand has led governments to facilitate largely speculative investment – aptly described by Lord Adair Turner as “socially useless” – in (for example) the privatisation of public utilities and companies buying back their own shares (before the 1980s this had been banned in most countries since the 1930s crash, when it was identified as facilitating market manipulation).

The growing imbalance between the high and rising volume of corporate profits available for re-investment and the steady decline in demand for capital is illustrated in a recent UNCTAD annual report (2016). This points out that between 1980 and 2015 the share of fixed investment in Gross Domestic Product in the leading developed economies fell from around 20 per cent to below 16 per cent, while in the same period the share of profit rose from 14.6

per cent to 18 per cent. Thus if the share of profits in GDP, instead of rising since 1980, had fallen at the same rate as the share of investment it would have declined to under 12 per cent instead of rising to 18 per cent, implying the possible diversion of as much as 6 per cent of global value added (\$3.6 trillion a year at current levels) to non-productive uses.

Aside from speculative investment referred to above, this surplus value has also been diverted to socially harmful activities such as gambling and pornography – a trend greatly facilitated by liberalisation of these hitherto severely restricted sectors. It may also account for high-level resistance to ending the destructive “war on drugs”, which is extremely lucrative – and the mainstay of many developing countries – thanks to continued prohibition in the West.

The disparity between this continued over-supply of investible capital and the ever-dwindling need for it in productive activities can only become ever more glaring in the digital era. This will result not only from rapidly shrinking costs of production – leading, as some have forecast, to the “zero marginal cost society” – but to declining growth in consumption, notably of certain types of food (e.g. sugar) as the damage to public health from excess consumption (the diabetes epidemic) becomes ever more unacceptable. At the same time the possibility of producing more goods locally on a small scale regardless of climate or natural resource availability will likely lead to a steep decline in international trade.

These factors will all contribute to a progressive marginalisation of capital and the capitalist mode of production – a process which should be seen as benign and should be aided by restricting limited liability to those companies engaged in what the community determines to be socially useful activities. Such a process will surely mean that the existing superstructure – including the vast financial sector and much of the City of London – will progressively disappear.

What exactly will take its place – and how the world economy will look in 100 years’ time is far from clear, though it seems probable that it will be much more fragmented and localised than the present model.

Victorian Blogging – The Pamphleteers Who Dared to Dream of a Better World

Sophie Hawkey-Edwards



In September 2016, Conway Hall launched the pilot digitisation project Architecture and Place: conway-hallcollections.omeka.net. The success of this led to us forming a working group to look at future digitisation plans and the development of a project bid.

We are pleased to announce that this has resulted in Conway Hall being awarded £88,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for an exciting project, Victorian Blogging – The Pamphleteers Who Dared to Dream of a Better World. The project will digitise and open online access to over 1,300 19th century pamphlets, many extremely rare. Victorian radicals used this cheap and rapidly disseminated medium to express their ideas on contemporary ‘hot’ issues such as freethought, humanism, secularism, gender and political suffrage.

Many of the issues addressed are still highly relevant today. The project will explore parallels between 19th century pamphleteering and 21st century blogging, and encourage people to re-engage with these issues. 2018 sees anniversaries of key milestones in the extension of the franchise, human rights and freedom of thought –the Representation of the People Act 1918, which opened voting in national elections to all men and some women, the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, urging respect for human, civil, economic and social rights, including freedom of expression and belief, and the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 which finally saw success for the campaign to de-criminalise blasphemy in the UK.

The project will create exhibitions and online

and print learning resources bringing to life the campaigners, such as Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh, who fought for a more equal and better world. Local people will be able to hear talks and take part in a course, including historical walking tours as well as classroom based learning, to suit a variety of learning styles.

Volunteers will learn skills through cataloguing, researching, blogging and creating exhibitions. In community Wikipedia edit-a-thons volunteer researchers and writers will create and edit pages relating to the people, places and movements in the pamphlet collection. This will include feminists such as Florence Fenwick Miller and radical publishers such as George J. Holyoake and G.W. Foote.

Workshops with school partners will enable students, through blogging, to acquire the skills to become citizen journalists. Beyond this we will link with bloggers on similar themes, networked by the International Humanist and Ethical Union's 'Freedom of Thought Report'.

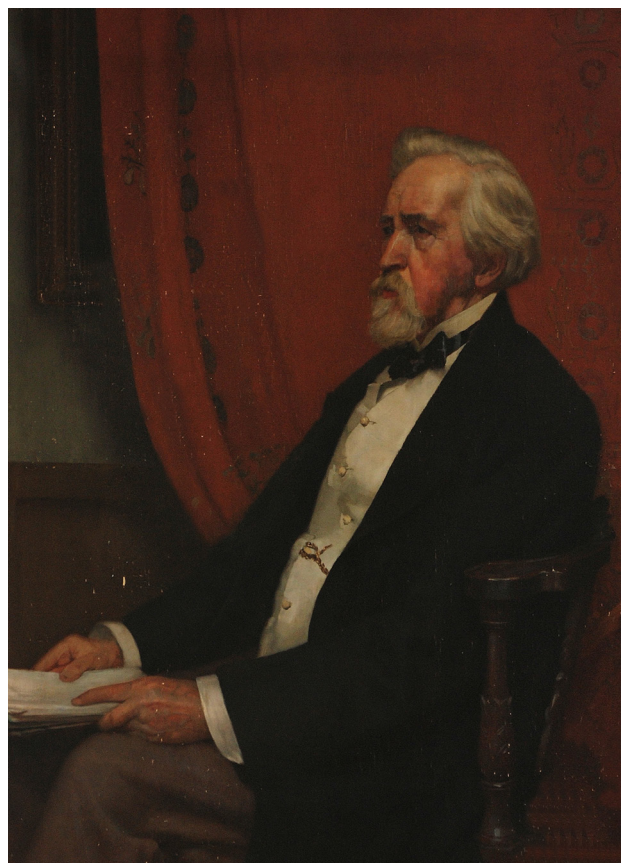
Jim Walsh, Conway Hall's CEO, says that "the struggles for gender equality, human rights and freethought are present throughout our pamphlet collection and 2017 has demonstrated vividly that they haven't gone away. Conway Hall has a tremendous heritage as a centre for people wrestling with these issues. The core aim will be to link past and present to continue the project of 'daring to dream of a better world'."

Stuart Hopley, Head of HLF London, adds "ever wondered what Victorian era social media would look like? Without the wonders of Twitter and Facebook, the humble pamphlet was crucial to sharing information, radical ideas, political debate and yes, even pictures of cats. As community life quickly changed, pamphlets became the blogs of their day; I am delighted that money from National Lottery players will support digitisation and public access, bringing this wonderful collection to life once more".

If you'd like to participate or find out more, contact Sophie Hawkey-Edwards, Conway Hall's Library and Learning Manager.



Annie Besant



George Jacob Holyoake

BOOK REVIEW

THE MAKING OF HUMANITY: POETIC VISION AND KINDNESS

by **Dinah Livingstone** Katabasis Press, London 2017, ISBN: 978-0-904872-48-4, Price £10

Review by **Tom Rubens**

In this relatively short book (140 pages), Dinah Livingstone presents the weighty argument that both theology and poetry offer us visions and ideas which are morally uplifting and inspirational, moving us to act in deeply sensitive ways toward our fellow human beings.

At first glance, this argument may well meet with a mixed response from readers who are secular humanists. While they will probably all agree that poetry does indeed have the effect the author ascribes to it, many will surely take issue with the claim that theology does too. However, the author's thesis is explicitly qualified by an insistence that theology is, like poetry, an entirely human creation, the product of the human imagination and –at its most moving –of genius. It is, in other words, a form of poetry additional to the non-theological kind, and has a “sister” relationship to the latter. This qualification can then open the door to a fully sympathetic response from, probably, most secular humanists.

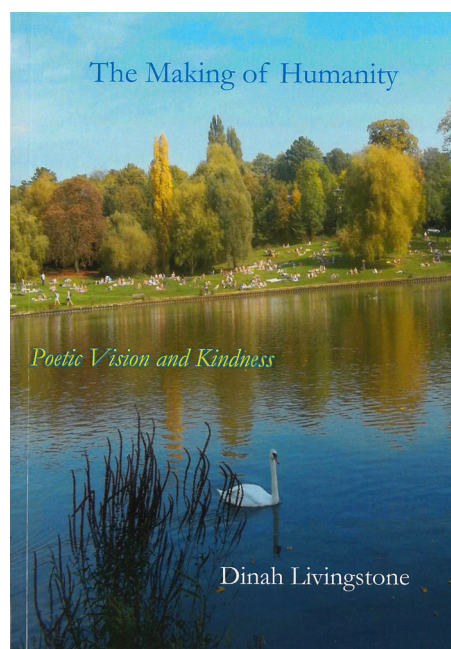
Such sympathy links to the fact that the author's view of theology as a form of human culture, and one to be carefully examined, has had a long standing in secular thought over the last 200-odd years. Among philosophers, its two leading exponents have probably been Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) and George Santayana (1863-1952). Their essential position is that the moral value of religious discourse lies in that discourse's symbolic and allegorical character, as distinct from its being true in any literal and scientific sense.

Actually, the above sphere of reference should really have been part of the text of this book. If, as

I assume, the book is aimed mainly at readers who have an evolutionary-naturalistic outlook but who are interested in religious culture, then the author could have widened the framework of the text by briefly describing the tradition of constructive secular thinking about religion which modern philosophy demonstrates. This would have conveyed the broad context in which she herself is writing: a context which is familiar to a large part of her intended readership.

However, despite this omission, and despite some over-repetition of key points plus occasional laxity in organisation of material, the text's content is rich and powerful, as it continually emphasises the need for establishing a more just, humane, caring and inclusive kind of society: the kind which, she claims, is advocated in both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. This need is, of course, never outmoded, as the author stresses when she refers, for example, to current social conditions in Britain. Also, in her urging of social reform, she goes further than simply calling for a “change of heart” on the part of the rich and powerful, and advocates “strong political action.”

Another source of the text's forceful impact is its Biblical scholarship. Being a secularist lacking such learning, I myself acquired a good deal of knowledge about early Jewish and Christian culture, as conveyed in the Bible, and I'm sure that, as a reader, I will not be alone in this regard. My response is, I suppose, an example of how one can be moved morally by an outlook whose ontology one cannot accept.



TALKS, DEBATES & LECTURES

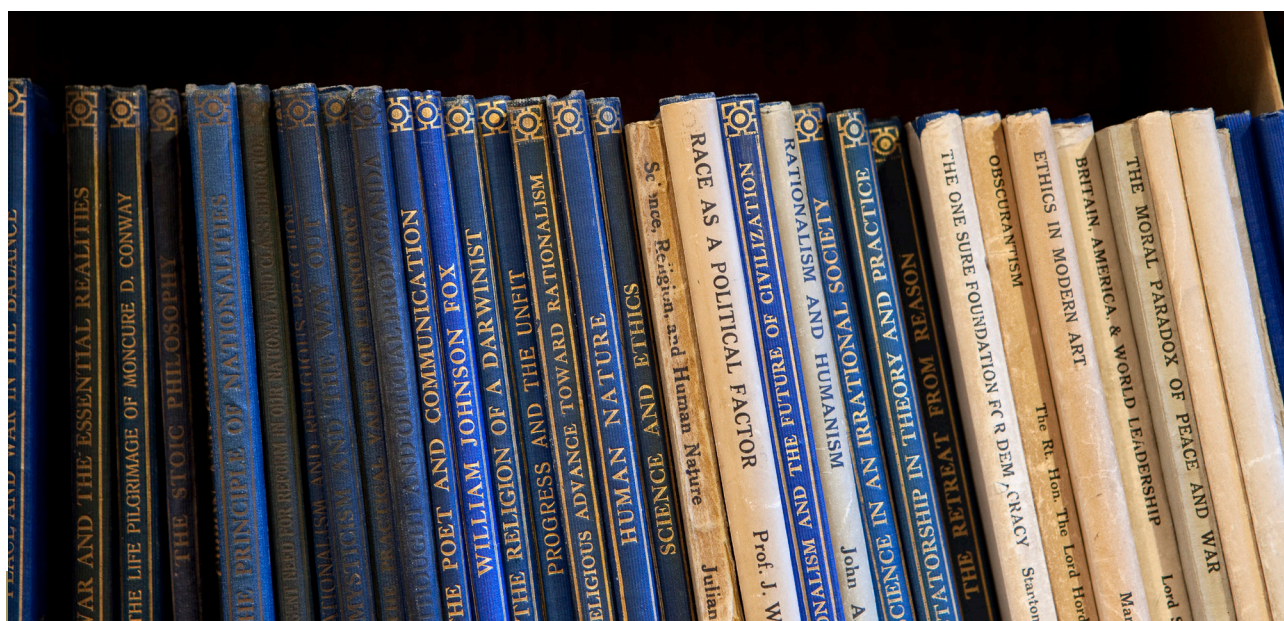
Oct 27 Conway Hall Book Club

Nov 13 Islam & Atheism: Irreconcilable Enemies?
• Arzoo Ahmed, Andrew Copson, Dilwar Hussain and Aliyah

Nov 16 So They Call You Pisher!
• Michael Rosen in conversation with Daniel Hahn

Nov 18 The Haunted Landscape 2017: Folklore, Ghosts and Witchcraft
• Various authors & speakers

Nov 24 Conway Hall Book Club



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 10 till 17. 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@conwayhall.org.uk

10 am – 5 pm Open Tuesday to Thursday

THINKING ON SUNDAY

Start at 11.00 unless specified otherwise.

Oct 8	Fundamentalism –a psychoanalytic perspective • <i>Richard Burgess</i>
Oct 15	Doughnut Economics • <i>Kate Raworth</i>
Oct 22	Bloomsbury Festival: Gandhi and Non-violence • <i>Dr Shahrar Ali</i>
Oct 29	Why We Tell Stories – and How We Live Them Out • <i>Tim Lott</i>
Nov 12	The inglorious dead of WWII • <i>Chris Bratcher</i>
Nov 19	Become a humanist vegan • <i>Olivia Mather</i>
Nov 26	Annie Besant's passion for neo-Malthusianism • <i>At 14.30</i> • <i>Deborah Lavin</i>
Dec 10	Is the NHS worth defending? • <i>Dr Henry Marsh</i>

COURSES

Oct 14 & 15	No Gods No Masters • <i>David Rosenberg</i>
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Events subject to alteration • See conwayhall.org.uk for the latest information

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SUNDAY CONCERTS

October

1st	6.30pm	Fulham Opera Verdi Opera Competition
8th	5.30pm	Roderick Swanston + PRE-CONCERT TALK
	6.30pm	Monte Piano Trio BEETHOVEN/AMY BEACH/DVOŘÁK
15th	5.30pm	Anna Quiroga & Valentina Ciardelli (harp/bass) + PRE-CONCERT RECITAL
	6.30pm	Noûs Quartet BOCCHERINI/VERDI/RESPIGHI
22nd	5.30pm	Ashok Klouda: <i>Sunday Suites 1</i> + PRE-CONCERT RECITAL
	6.30pm	Harriet MacKenzie & Morgan Szymanski (violin and guitar) VIVALDI/PONCE/BARRIOS/DE FALLA/PAGANINI/BACH/SARASATE/PIAZZOLLA
28th	3.30pm	Gildas Quartet & Ensemble: <i>Music in Motion</i> + MATINEE BACH/PURCELL/VIVALDI/PÄRT/JANÁČEK/ELGAR
	7.30pm	Gildas Quartet & Ensemble: <i>Music in Motion</i> BACH/PURCELL/VIVALDI/PÄRT/JANÁČEK/ELGAR
29th	5.30pm	Ashok Klouda: <i>Sunday Suites 2</i> + PRE-CONCERT RECITAL
	6.30pm	Sacconi Quartet HAYDN/JANÁČEK/DVOŘÁK
31st	7.30pm	Gildas Quartet & Ensemble: <i>Music in Motion</i> BACH/PURCELL/VIVALDI/PÄRT/JANÁČEK/ELGAR

November

5th	5.30pm	Ashok Klouda: <i>Sunday Suites 3</i> + PRE-CONCERT RECITAL
	6.30pm	Odysseus Trio MOZART/BLOCH/BRAHMS
12th	6.30pm	Ruisi Quartet PURCELL/LIGETI/STRAVINSKY/HAYDN/BARTÓK
19th	6.30pm	Rautio Trio MOZART/BEETHOVEN/HILLER/BRAHMS
26th	5.30pm	Robert Hugill + PRE-CONCERT TALK
	6.30pm	Sounds Baroque PURCELL/CORBETTA/DRAIGHI/DODGSON

December

3rd	5.30pm	Danols (electric guitar) + PRE-CONCERT RECITAL
	6.30pm	Jubilee Quartet & Simon Callaghan HAYDN/SCHNITTKE/STRAVINSKY/BEETHOVEN
10th	6.30pm	Amatis Trio HAYDN/SHOSTAKOVICH + AUDIENCE CHOICE
17th	6.30pm	London Mozart Players Chamber Ensemble SCHUBERT/MOZART/BRAHMS

For more information & tickets, visit: conwayhall.org.uk