

# Ethical Record

The Proceedings of the South Place Ethical Society

---

Vol. 113 No. 5

£1.50

May 2008

---

## OPENING OF THE CENTER FOR INQUIRY LOW COUNTRIES

On 3 May 2008 the new CFI Low Countries was officially launched at the 400 year old University of Utrecht in the Netherlands. Over 75 people attended including the SPES Editor and Librarian. Some 60 distinguished scientists, scholars and philosophers have joined CFI Low Countries as Fellows.

The Conference was chaired by Rob Tielman (professor emeritus of sociology, chair of CFI Low Countries). He said that it seemed that many ideals of the Enlightenment of democracy, individual liberty and autonomy have been realized in the Netherlands, but in recent years there seems to be opposition to these ideals.

Stephen Law and David Nash from the UK gave talks. Azar Majedi, a political activist for women's rights and individual freedom, who was born and raised in Iran, passionately pleaded for a secular state and, going further, criticized religion in general and Islam in particular in being misogynous.

Norm Allen spoke about organized humanism and the work of Center for Inquiry in Africa. Allen pleaded for a pragmatic approach in propagating the secular humanist agenda: because homosexuality is such a widespread taboo in Africa, it blocks communication when homosexuality is placed high on the humanist agenda.

Ibn Warraq criticized the European Union and the UN for their attitude towards blasphemy: blasphemy laws mean the end of the freedom of speech. Professor of philosophy Herman Philipse stated that there is indeed a 'warfare between science and religion'; there is an epistemological unbridgeable gap between science and religion.

In the tradition of the radical Enlightenment inaugurated by Spinoza, the Center for Inquiry Low Countries is ready to work on the project of the Enlightenment by defending and propagating science, reason and freedom of inquiry.

See a photo report of the conference: [www.verlichtingshumanisten.web-log.nl](http://www.verlichtingshumanisten.web-log.nl)

---

<i>CUTTING GOD IN HALF</i>	<i>Nicholas Maxwell</i>	3
<i>THREE HOMILIES</i>	<i>Albert Adler</i>	7, 23
<i>THE STRANGENESS OF MEMORY</i>	<i>Christopher Bratcher</i>	7
<i>THE CAMPAIGN TO MAKE WAR HISTORY</i>	<i>Chris Coverdale</i>	12
<i>THE CASE FOR POLITICAL EDUCATION</i>	<i>Nita McCrossan</i>	17
<i>VIEWPOINT, Kyla Greenbaum-Crowcroft</i>		23
<i>ETHICAL SOCIETY EVENTS</i>		24

## SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY

Conway Hall Humanist Centre

25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL.

Tel: 020 7242 8034 Fax: 020 7242 8036

Website: [www.ethicalsoc.org.uk](http://www.ethicalsoc.org.uk) email: [library@ethicalsoc.org.uk](mailto:library@ethicalsoc.org.uk)

*Chairman:* Giles Enders

*Vice-chairman:* Terry Mullins

*Registrar:* Donald Room

*Hon. Rep.:* Don Liversedge

*Treasurer:* John Edwards

*Editor, Ethical Record:* Norman Bacrac

### SPES Staff

*Executive Officer:*

*Finance Officer:*

*Lettings Officer:*

*Librarian/Programme Coordinator:*

*Lettings Assistant:*

*Caretakers:*

together with: Shaip Bullaku, Angelo Edrozo, Nikola Ivanovski, Alfredo Olivio, Rogerio Retuerta, David Wright

*Maintenance Operative:*

Emma J. Stanford

Linda Alia

Carina Dvorak

Jennifer Jaynes M.Sc.

Marie Aubrechtova

Eva Aubrechtova (i/c);

Zia Hameed

Tel: 020 7242 8034

Tel: 020 7242 8034

Tel: 020 7242 8032

Tel: 020 7242 8037

Tel: 020 7242 8033

### New Members

We welcome to the Society:

Hanna Greek of North London;

John Molson of Harpenden, Hertfordshire;

Richard Francis of North London;

Jo Secher of North London;

Christine Seymour of Brentwood, Essex.

---

## THE SOURCES OF THE BOOK - MAY 5 - 10 AT CONWAY HALL

A course on the literary beginnings of Judaism, Christianity and Islam

R.J.Hoffmann was taken ill in the USA just before he was due to deliver three lectures arranged by the Centre for Inquiry London on the Judaism and Christianity part of the above course and had to remain in the USA.

However, his colleague Ibn Warraq delivered his two lectures to a very keenly interested group. He referred to the paucity of the original sources for the Koran and the frequent difficulties in interpreting the sense of its text. On Monday 5 May, Barbara Smoker joined Ibn Warraq in comparing Christianity with Islam. On Saturday 10 May, Ibn Warraq gave a special lecture on "Apologists for totalitarianism - Stalinism and Islamism - compared."

### SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY

Reg. Charity No. 251396

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

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

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

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

# CUTTING GOD IN HALF

Nicholas Maxwell

Emeritus Reader in Philosophy of Science at University College London

*Lecture to the Ethical Society, 13 April 2008*

God, according to Christianity, Islam and Judaism, is a Being who is all-powerful, all-knowing and all-loving. Such a God is knowingly responsible for all human suffering and death brought about by natural causes (and even brought about by people since natural causes are always implicated). How can such a God be all-loving? In order to solve this problem, I claim, we need to sever the God-of-Cosmic-Power from the God-of-Cosmic-Value. The former is Einstein's God, the underlying dynamic unity in the physical universe responsible for all that occurs. Because it is impersonal, it can be forgiven the terrible things it does. The latter is what is of most value associated with conscious human life – and sentient life more generally.

Having cut God in half in this way, the problem then becomes to put the two halves together again – to see how the God-of-Cosmic-Value can exist and flourish embedded in the God-of-Cosmic-Power. This is our fundamental problem – our fundamental philosophical problem, our fundamental theoretical problem of knowledge and understanding, and our fundamental practical problem of living (personal, social and global). It is, at root, a religious problem, and ought to be the central concern of academic inquiry and education, and indeed of all of life. Unfortunately, at present, it is not, in part because of our long-standing failure to cut God decisively in half, and thus appreciate the fundamental character of the problem that results.

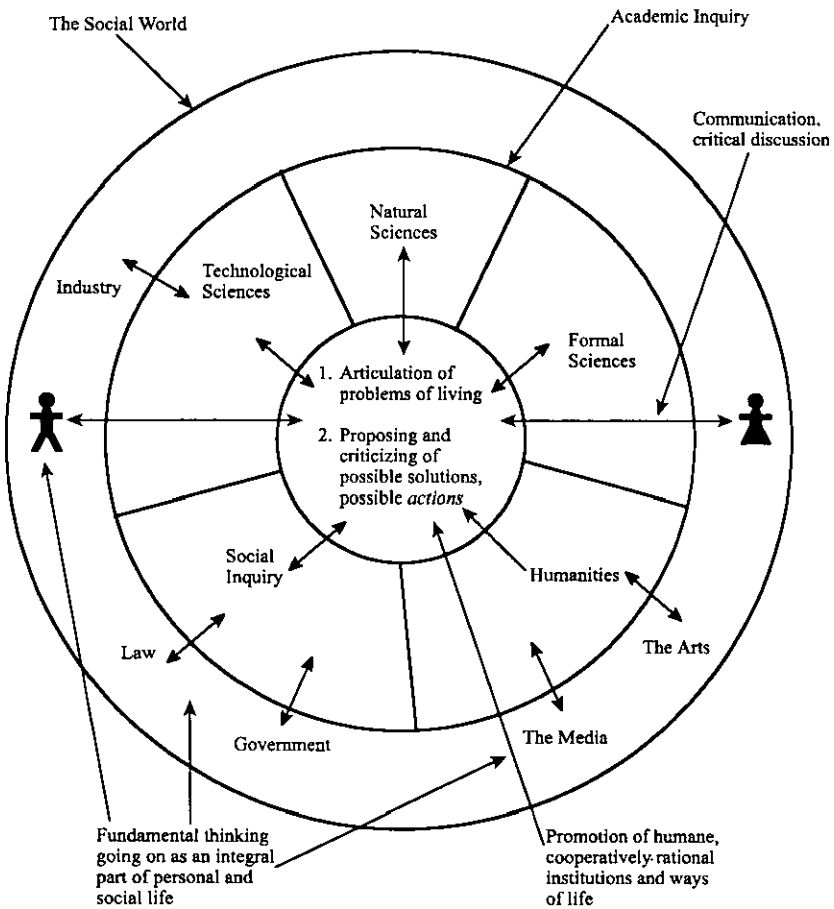
## **Physics Depicts The God of Cosmic Power**

Here, in outline, is how this fundamental religious problem can be solved. Theoretical physics, properly understood, seeks to depict the nature of the God-of-Cosmic-Power. But physics depicts only a highly selected aspect of all that exists. It leaves out of account the world we see, hear, touch and are a part of, the experiential world imbued with meaning and value – the God-of-Cosmic-Value, in other words. We can, in this way, see how the God-of-Cosmic-Value can exist embedded in the physical universe, the God-of-Cosmic-Power. Furthermore, we can see how we can exist, conscious beings of value, embedded in the physical universe. We can see how we can act with some measure of free will embedded as we are in the physical universe. Darwinian evolution can be re-interpreted to make intelligible the process of the gradual evolution of life of value in the impersonal physical universe.

But if we are to do better than at present at helping the God-of-Cosmic-Value to flourish within the God-of-Cosmic-Power, we need to learn how to do it, which means in turn that we have in our possession institutions of inquiry and learning rationally devoted to this task. It is just this that we do not have at present. For both intellectual and humanitarian reasons, we need to bring about a revolution in science, and in academic inquiry more generally, so that the basic task becomes to help life of value to flourish in the physical universe. The basic intellectual aim of academia needs to be, not knowledge, but rather wisdom – wisdom being the capacity to realize what is of value in life for oneself and others, thus including knowledge and technological know-how, but much else besides. At the heart of academic inquiry we need to put the tasks of articulating, and improving the articulation of, our problems of living (individual,

social and global), and proposing and critically assessing possible and actual solutions – possible and actual actions, political programmes, policies, philosophies of life.

These tasks need to be taken up by social inquiry and the humanities. Pursued in this way, social and inquiry and the humanities are intellectually more fundamental than natural science. The task of tackling problems of living is fundamental; and problems of knowledge and technological know-how emerge out of and feed back into, problems of living, at the heart of academia: see diagram. The natural sciences need to be transformed so that contributions are made at three levels: (1) evidence, (2) theory, and (3) aims, the third level including discussion of problematic assumptions concerning metaphysics, values and politics.



*Academic Inquiry Rationally Devoted to Helping People Realize What is of Value in Life*

The fundamental task of academia becomes to help humanity learn how to create a better world – how to tackle problems of living in rather more cooperatively rational ways than at present. If we are to create a better world – a world in which the God-of-Cosmic-Value can flourish more joyfully, less painfully, than at present, we need to learn how to do it, which in turn means that we have institutions of learning rationally designed for, and devoted to, the task. What we have at present is a kind of academic inquiry devoted to acquiring specialized knowledge, but not a kind of inquiry rationally devoted to helping life of value to flourish in the physical universe.

Believers, especially believers in Christianity, Islam and Judaism, need to improve their ideas about the nature of God if they are to acquire a little more intellectual and moral integrity – religious integrity one might say. But even more important, perhaps, non-believers, agnostics and atheists, need to retrace the steps along the path that has led to their current position, to recover and develop much of value discarded by too hasty a past jettisoning of belief in God. I am not merely echoing Nietzsche in declaring God to be dead. My concern is to show how we can improve our ideas about the nature of God, . Believers and non-believers alike ought to pay attention. Both Richard Dawkins (author of *The God Delusion*) and Alister McGrath (author of *The Dawkins Delusion?*) should take note.

### **Europe Suffered A Gigantic Rupture**

European culture – and thus, in a sense, world culture – has suffered a past gigantic rupture. Once upon a time everyone believed in God. Then we had, in succession, the Renaissance, the seventeenth century scientific revolution, the eighteenth century Enlightenment, the industrial revolution and the Darwinian revolution. Belief in God decayed; ceremonies associated with belief in God dwindled. The rupture took the form: “Once we believed in God; now we don’t, but in some circumstances we observe ancient rituals and pretend that we do”. Many, of course, resist this general decay of belief in God. Religious fundamentalists even try to turn their back on the modern secular world. But for many others, especially in those parts of the world most influenced by European culture, belief in God has been replaced by belief in science, in humanism, in liberalism, in democracy, socialism, freedom, progress, or the market – although, it has to be said, these latter beliefs are all looking, these days, a bit tarnished.

This rupture in European and world culture – from a God-dominated to a multi-faceted secular world (containing pockets of religious fanaticism) – vital and tremendous as it is in all sorts of ways, has nevertheless failed to develop ideas and values in the best possible way. As a result of rejecting God, instead of performing the surgical operation recommended here of cutting God in half, we have failed to develop properly what we have inherited from the rupture, and this inheritance has failed to come to full fruition. Science, education, humanism, liberalism, democracy, the arts, the market: all these suffer. Our culture, our whole modern world, is damaged. Above all, we fail to get into proper focus our fundamental problem: How to put the pieces together again once God has been sliced into two. How to help that which is of most value to flourish embedded as it is in the physical universe.

What we need to do, in short, is not lose our faith, but improve our faith, develop a rational faith, and above all try to put our rational faith into that which does really exist or can exist, and is genuinely of value. When we discover that God, in the

traditional sense, does not and cannot exist, we need to work out carefully and delicately how our deepest aspirations, previously associated with the non-existent traditional God, can be developed in the best possible way, doing justice to the new universe we find ourselves in, and the new possibilities for what is of most value in that universe. The discovery of the non-existence of the traditional God impacts on our deepest, most personal desires, hopes and fears; and it impacts on the broadest, most public aspects and structures of our culture and society. Great care and sensitivity are needed to keep these threads in touch with one another, so that we may see how the deeply personal and the objectively social may be kept in touch with one another, so that both can develop in the best ways possible.

### **Traditional Religions Failed**

If our current ideals – science, humanism, liberalism, democracy, socialism, freedom, progress and the market – all seem these days somewhat tarnished, here is the reason: we have failed to perform the delicate operation of cutting God into two halves properly, and consequently have failed to get into focus properly what needs to be done to try to put the two halves together again. The secular “gods” that we have acquired as a result of the great rupture – science, humanism, etc. – have all emerged in crippled, distorted forms, in forms which fail to help what is of most value in life to flourish.

We need a religious revival – a religious revolution. We need to acknowledge and do justice to a religious dimension inherent in all our endeavours – political, educational, scientific, academic, even agricultural, industrial and commercial. But this needs to take the form of religious faith which meets elementary requirements of intellectual integrity and rationality, religious faith which sees the need to cut God in half, and which seeks to come to grips with the fundamental problem that results of putting the pieces together again, so that the God-of-Cosmic-Value is helped to flourish within the God-of-Cosmic-Power. Traditional religions and our current secular world fail to meet this challenge.

---

## **HOMILIES BY ALBERT ADLER**

### **Posterity**

“It is not incumbent on thee to finish thy work: Thou shalt not therefore cease from it.”  
(Talmud)

Plant still more trees, ensure that they take root:  
Although you may not live to see the fruit,  
Those who enjoy the shade of the grown tree  
And eat its fruit will bless your memory.

### **Who’s in charge?**

Paul (Romans): “For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.”

Ovid (Metamorphoses): “I see the better things, and approve; but I follow the worse.”

A thousand times I vow, “By all above,  
I must reform my ways and sin no more!”  
But find, alas, when “push” turns into “shove”  
That I behave much as I did before!

# THE STRANGENESS OF MEMORY

Chris Bratcher

*Based on a talk to the Ethical Society, 27 April 2008*

“This analysis of memory is probably extremely faulty, but I do not know how to improve it.”: so ends Bertrand Russell’s chapter on Memory in his *Analysis of Mind* (of 1921). Anyone who tries to get a handle on memory will come to share this feeling; not least because it has many forms (“extremely faulty” ones in my case). First, I talk about Russell’s philosophical problems. Then I cover some puzzles about the mechanism of memory. I end with snippets about damaged brains other than my own. All this is a personal trip down ‘memory lane’ and an attempt to jog thoughts. It is no sort of overview of academic studies, available free on-line in, e.g., the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

## The Realists

The philosophical analysis of memory, as an apparent window on the past, parallels issues over the status of our senses (collectively known as ‘perception’) as a window on the world, with the twist of a time shift. What do we have in mind when we remember? So-called Realists on perception hold that we directly see objects, and, in memory, that we acquaint ourselves with the past. This view had a clutch of adherents and opponents following Henri Bergson’s very influential work, *Matter & Memory*; the fifth edition of which came out in 1908, and was then translated into English. (The work, for all its period faults, is, still valued, particularly by philosophically minded artists for its insights into the status of images and representation, and I felt that the anniversary should not pass unnoticed.) I should emphasise that the writers of the time were not naive: Bergson gives a good account of the early neurologists’ classic investigations into aphasia and memory storage in the brain, the mapping of which has merely become more precise over the last century.

Realism revived in the heyday of purely linguistic analyses of the mind (from Gilbert Ryle to Norman Malcolm), by appealing to our very conception of memory: that what we remember is in the past. Russell alluded to this in his earlier *Problems of Philosophy*: “There is some danger of confusion as to the nature of memory, owing to the fact that memory of an object is apt to be accompanied by an image of the object, and yet that image cannot be what constitutes memory. This is easily seen by merely noticing that the image is in the present, whereas what is remembered is known to be in the past.” The Realist will say that that memory-image (like some philosophers’ ‘sense-data’) is not an existent at all; it is not some thing different from the experience remembered. As any philosophy ex-students with remnants of memories will expect, the objections to this theory are precisely analogous to the standard objections to the Realist theory of perception: for example, that our memory image may differ in many respects from the item remembered, and/or is illusory.

The more serious objection, which goes back to Aristotle, is that it remains totally unexplained how we can literally be aware of the past, which no longer exists. Russell, despite characterising the problem of memory as an extension of Hume’s difficulties with causation, nevertheless toyed with the possibility of a direct link that he termed ‘mnemonic causation’, because of the difficulties of alternative views, before abandoning it in *Human Knowledge, its scope and limits* (1948; his last major philosophical work).

## **Our Representative May Call... Do Not Admit Without Proof Of Identity**

The contrary view is called the Representative Theory of memory. We call to mind something in the present that bears some relation to the past: the question is, "what?" (relationship). Russell's problem was how can we, in the abstract, claim to know that a putative memory is such, let alone accurate. The issue is not remembering skills or tasks: which, following Bergson, Russell terms 'habit memory' - or even feats of memory such as 'Kim's game', where there may be no re-visualising of the objects in question; but 'knowledge' (episodic) memory. However we characterise the memory-image in relation to the original experience (and Russell talks of "copy", "correspondence" and "resemblance"), there is an insurmountable problem: we cannot compare it with what it purports to recall. The Representative Theory seems mechanically obvious, but seems to have got the process of verification of memory exactly the wrong way round; it suggests we establish from the experience alone that we are remembering rather than imagining,; but in fact we refer to what happened to tell whether we are truly doing the former.

The impossibility of comparison is only in the strictest sense true where we can access a photographic type record, which is the acknowledged "past" frozen into the present. (Russell ignores photography, despite the fact that the argument concerns images. He does acknowledge modernity in the lovely aside that "people are not so different from gramophones as they like to believe"! ) There may of course be questions about the provenance of such records, but they can in principle be solved. It is tempting to think that the philosophical discussion of memory had been "frozen" in the pre-photographic age, and we now have a model of how memory operates, by laying down a trace that is later retrieved with some sort of developing and processing to deliver something akin to a print.

What then is the problem? Questions of how memory operates presume we know what it is. Even if we are clear on that, the model is plainly inadequate. There is no 'straight' transfer, but apparent selectivity, in memory deposition and/or retrieval; photos of events are rarely as we remember witnessing them. We are liable to confabulate and construct indistinguishable 'fake' memories to order. This is not just a case of pure philosophical doubt about the possibility of Descartes' demon presenting us with a false world, or of Locke's imagining that one could exchange memories, with the conundrums that it would cause. For example, I have snatches of what present as direct memories of my parents. I think that almost all, certainly the most distinct, are in fact memories of lost photographs seen much later, as it were taken out of their frames and presented to consciousness as 'originals'.

## **Our Memories Of The Incomparable - Norman**

We can also do a check when the object or norman remembered, let's say, Norman Bacrac, comes in, and we say "that's not - or just - how I remember him". Our comment may be about a change in him, if he has been gone long enough, rather than our inaccurate, or differently focussed, memory ( I remember him by his eyes, you by his voice, and so on). That memory of the old Norman is itself in the past, and when recalled is a memory of a memory, and how accurate is that? Often, as soon as we are confronted with the present, our memory image updates, and we may struggle to remember how exactly we formerly did remember something, and we are left just with the feeling that it was different. This evidence of change in how we remember something; that we compose some memories by correction or compounding - which

makes perfect sense, given that we are dealing with a working organ - of course undercuts any claim to be simply accessing the past, and reintroduces Russell's problem.

Russell says that our confidence must be based on characteristics of the memory image itself; perhaps a sense of familiarity, or appropriate "pastness", or a context that assigns it to a place in our life. (He makes the interesting aside that "the feeling of reality is akin to respect") But he says that the judgement that what seems familiar has actually been experienced, is a product of reflection, and thus no knowledge of the past is to be derived from the feeling of familiarity or recognition alone. He is right, as cases of 'false memory syndrome' show. My feeling, along with A.J. Ayer, is that Russell had a correct view, also, of his own analysis. One can recollect a past experience without reproducing it in imagery; and one can know about one's past, with an appropriate image and feelings of familiarity, etc, even if one does not remember it, if one is sufficiently told about it. Concerned as he was to place memory within a 'theory of knowledge/true belief' derived from the senses without external verification, Russell gets stuck in a philosophical mire by concentrating on images and their status, and his problem of what we are entitled to believe muddies the issues; ludicrous ones to one attender. I think that beliefs are only relevant through being very similar to memories in creation and reinforcement.

## **The Mechanism Of Memory**

### **(a) *Strange – where are the traces?***

As mentioned, neurologists have long identified particular regions of the brain that are necessary for particular manifestations of memory, and spots on the temporal lobe that will be apt to generate them. So what's the problem? For a start, stimulation of the same spot a little later may produce a quite different memory, or none. The reported experience may depend as much on the patient's other thoughts at the time as on the locus stimulated. There seems to be nothing like a one-to-one (academically known as 'isomorphic') relationship: we are not (except when we are on hobby horses!) like gramophone records. The received view for long term memory is that encoding is achieved by structural change at the synapse, resulting in the activation of a particular pattern of cells. (Some believe that it is done by molecular change in RNA; but I understand that RNA transfer from trained to untrained rat does not convincingly transfer the training, which may be a relief to job trainees.) Rats! – rats are a problem. Karl Lashley cut out portions of the brains of rats familiarised with a maze, and then reintroduced them, hoping to find where the memory of the maze was located. Surprisingly, it made little difference to a still functioning rat where, or even what, he excised, unlike computers. Finding your way is not necessarily due to episodic memory recall, so one might wonder exactly what kind of (rat) mentation he was trying to trap! Which brings us back to philosophy.

There is an indefinite number of ways in which we can demonstrate we have succeeded in remembering something, and likewise, of describing the "target" event in question, which makes a philosophical theory of simple correspondence between particular brain and mental states pretty much a non-starter. As Wittgenstein, Russell's pupil, noted, "whatever the event does leave behind, it isn't the memory" (*Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, (1980) para 220). Daniel Schacter reminds us that "the engram (the stored fragments of an episode) and the memory ... are not the same thing" (*Searching for Memory* (1996) p. 70). Traces are "merely potential contributors to

recollection". Psychologists' attention is increasingly focused on the context of recall. Developmental psychologist Susan Engel argues that often "one creates the memory at the moment one needs it, rather than merely pulling out an intact item, image, or story" (*Context is Everything: the nature of memory* (1999), p.6). More fundamentally, Wittgenstein asked: "Why must something or other, whatever it may be, be stored up there in any form? Why must a trace have been left behind?" (Zettel (1967), S610). It seems from his pupil, Malcolm, that he was merely making the point that the concept of memory doesn't presuppose a mechanism, but it makes you think – in my case, that trying to identify particular traces for mental states is like pursuing a 'will o' the wisp', even though I grant there may be such.

**(b) *Stranger still ; how do we retrieve them?***

An American authority on memory, Donald Norman, confessed himself baffled by retrieval. The "basic question.. has not been studied. If you know the answer for which you are looking, then you would not need to look. But if you don't know the answer, then how do you recognise it when you find it ?" (This is an old chestnut: Plato poses the paradox in the *Meno*.) The American philosopher Howard Bursen (*Dismantling the Memory Machine* (1978)) developed this. How is what we seek to match, become matched? Let's suppose a search mechanism runs through all the possible traces of what we are trying to recall. How does it know when to stop? If we say that the mechanism just knows when to stop, we are clearly begging the question. "It is", says Bursen, "to attribute to the retrieval mechanism the very power that was denied to people at the outset: memory". He thinks one is either involved in an infinite regress, or have to admit that philosophical no-no, a mind within a mind (known in the trade as a homunculus), that makes the identification! I think this is a shade too clever, although it has re-generated a fine old philosophical debate.\*

It is hard to see how our search is narrowed down when we seem to have nothing to go on; when I don't even think I know what I am looking for. For example, I might not consciously remember anything, say, of a tune or its title, which is, in my case, almost invariably the case. If we put an inadequately specified 'search term' into Google, we come up with a zillion 'hits'. Memory delivers just one, which we then think about if it seems to be a miss: but how do we conclude that, when we seemingly still don't know what we are looking for? To alter the stress: we might not consciously remember anything. William James long ago said:

"Suppose we try to recall a forgotten name. The state of our consciousness is peculiar. There is a gap, (but one) that is intensely active. A sort of wraith of the name is in it, making us at moments tingle with the sense of our closeness... If wrong names are proposed to us, this singularly definite gap acts immediately to negate them.. The gap of one word does not feel like the gap of another, all empty of content as both might seem necessarily to be when described as gaps." (*The Principles of Psychology*, 1890)

By contrast, I can be specific about what I am trying to remember: say, 'what happened in my office on the morning of 27 April 1978?', and draw a blank, even if something of significance did. It seems to be the wrong sort of information request, unless I already know the date is significant for me, and is 'tagged' in some way. Ribot, in his classic *The Diseases of Memory* (1881), remarked that markers (such as 'the first

\* *Google quickly alerts me to any references to a word I request, say, 'epiphenomenalism'*[Ed]

time I met...”) “are the more numerous the more varied an individual’s life”. The paucity of these in later life, he thought, may partially explain loss of memory of that period – and, interestingly, it may explain why subjective time seems to shoot by the older we get. Yet for certain, often autistic, ‘memory men’, the mere specification of the date is ideal, suggesting they may store, mark, and access memory very differently. There may not be a universal *modus operandi* for memory. Their abilities have also persuaded the majority of psychologists (according to a survey) that we store up every experience we have ever had.

To me, the situation is stranger still when I am not knowingly racking my brains. We would be literally lost without constant and appropriate access to memory. I gave a talk a while ago on the late John Beloff, who was Reader in Psychology at the University of Edinburgh, and a distinctive contributor to the Mind-Body interaction debate. Happy enough as he was to stick with brain traces as the record of memory, he had this to say: “The incredible flexibility of memory in the human case makes it difficult to believe that the retrieval process can be wholly due to the automatic action of the brain feeding us, in computer-like fashion, with just the right amount of information that we require at just the right instance – when we speak, when we perform a skilled action, and so on.

Relative to the speed of computer processing, neural transmission is very slow, so that the time factor alone would appear to rule out the amount of processing required in those cases.” He should know: I am not qualified to comment, beyond doubting that it is such a huge step from what animals achieve. Beloff believed in telepathy, and speculated that memory may be a ‘paranormal’ (inexplicable, but constantly occurring) mental operation, of which telepathy is a rare extra-cranial extension! Now that is a scary thought!

### **Stranger Than Fiction**

I cannot commend enough a fascinating (and genially and humanely written) book on personal (autobiographical) memory by Dutchman Douwe Draaisma. It puts the strange feats and failures of the gifted and impaired into the context of the history of memory research. I recounted the sad and graphic tale of how an otherwise good golfer in the early stages of alzheimers was beaten by experimenting with the delay between shots until memory of his last shot failed him; shortly thereafter, of course, he forgot that the game had ever occurred. I suspect that the interval at the end of SPES talks for announcements has often the same effect.

A curiosity is ‘implicit memory’, a substrate that those suffering from this form of *anterograde aphasia* (the label for the inability to make new memories after injury) reveal but literally know nothing about. Set them an identical word association test at a suitable interval after revealing the quite tricky answers, and they will have no memory of having set the tests, but will get the answers right! The tendency to forget what you have forgotten bedevils diagnostic and research practice based on questionnaires, as well as elderly talk givers and receivers. The book is called *Why Life Speeds Up as you get older* (Cambridge, 2004): it was the source of my comments about the paucity then of memory markers. I hope there is no connection with how talks speed up as you get near the end, and you forget the middle in no time. That is what the *Ethical Record* is for.

# THE CAMPAIGN TO MAKE WAR HISTORY

Chris Coverdale

*Lecture to the Ethical Society, 27 April 2008*

## All War Is Illegal

The armed invasion and occupation of Iraq is illegal in international and domestic law, violates treaties and renders those involved criminally liable for war crimes.

When Tony Blair and the Attorney General claimed that the war with Iraq was legal and authorised by the Security Council they lied. The use by Britain's armed forces of cruise missiles, rockets, cluster bombs and depleted uranium artillery shells to attack villages, towns and cities in Iraq killing Iraqi citizens violates the International Treaty for the Renunciation of War, the UN Charter and the Rome Statute and constitutes a crime against peace under Article VI of the Nuremberg Principles as well as genocide and a crime against humanity under the International Criminal Court Act 2001.

## War Law And War Crimes

War was outlawed in 1928 by the International Treaty for the Renunciation of War [the Kellogg-Briand Pact]. Sixty three nations including Britain, America, France, Germany and Japan ratified the Pact condemning recourse to war and agreeing to settle disputes peacefully. This treaty is still in force.

ARTICLE I The High Contracting Parties solemnly declare in the names of their respective peoples that they condemn recourse to war for the solution of international controversies, and renounce it, as an instrument of national policy in their relations with one another.

ARTICLE 11 The High Contracting Parties agree that the settlement or solution of all disputes or conflicts of whatever nature or of whatever origin they may be, which may arise among them, shall never be sought except by pacific means.

The Kellogg-Briand Pact formed the legal basis for the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials. The attack on Iraq renders Britain's political, civil and military leaders liable for the same crime of waging aggressive war for which Germany's leaders were convicted and hanged in 1946. The judgement concluded:

“After the signing of the Pact, any nation resorting to war as an instrument of national policy breaks the Pact. In the opinion of the Tribunal, the solemn renunciation of war as an instrument of national policy necessarily involves the proposition that such war is illegal in international law; and that those who plan and wage such a war with its inevitable and terrible consequences are committing a crime in so doing.”

“The charges in the indictment that the defendants planned and waged aggressive wars are charges of the utmost gravity. War is essentially an evil thing. Its consequences are not confined to the belligerent states alone, but affect the whole world. To initiate a war of aggression therefore, is not only an international crime, it is the supreme international crime differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole.”

## **The Nuremberg Principles**

These seven international war laws derived from the Nuremberg and Tokyo War Crimes Tribunals were adopted as universal statute war law by the United Nations General Assembly in 1950.

I. Any person who commits an act which constitutes a crime under international law is responsible therefor and liable to punishment.

II. The fact that internal law does not impose a penalty for an act which constitutes a crime under international law does not relieve the person who committed the act from responsibility.

III. The fact that a person who committed an act which constitutes a crime under international law acted as Head of State or responsible Government official does not relieve him from responsibility.

IV. The fact that a person acted pursuant to order of his Government or a superior does not relieve him from responsibility under international law, provided a moral choice was in fact possible to him.

V. Any person charged with a crime under international law has the right to a fair trial on the facts and law.

VI. The crimes hereinafter set out are punishable as crimes under international law:

(a) Crimes against peace: (i) Planning, preparation, initiation or waging of a war of aggression or a war in violation of international treaties, agreements or assurances; (ii) Participation in a common plan or conspiracy for the accomplishment of any of the acts mentioned under (i).

(b) War crimes: Violations of the laws or customs of war which include, but are not limited to, murder, ill-treatment or deportation to slave-labor or for any other purpose of civilian population of or in occupied territory, murder or ill treatment of prisoners of war, of persons on the seas, killing of hostages, plunder of public or private property, wanton destruction of cities, towns, or villages, or devastation not justified by military necessity.

(c) Crimes against humanity: Murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation and other inhuman acts done against any civilian population, or persecutions on political, racial or religious grounds, when such acts are done or such persecutions are carried on in execution of or in connection with any crime against peace or any war crime.

VII. Complicity in the commission of a crime against peace, a war crime, or a crime against humanity as set forth in Principle VI is a crime under international law.

Armed attacks on another State are illegal

When Britain signed and ratified the UN Charter we made a binding agreement with every Member State never to threaten or attack them and to settle all disputes peacefully.

2.3 All members shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace, security and justice are not endangered.

2.4 All members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.

Pre-emptive attacks are illegal. The only legitimate use of armed force is self defence. If an attack occurs a nation may legitimately use proportionate force to defend itself, but it may do so only until the UN Security Council implements measures to resolve the conflict.

The UN Security Council cannot authorise the use of armed force.

The claim that the invasion and occupation of Iraq was authorised by Security Council resolutions 678, 687 and 1441 was a lie. The Security Council is a peacekeeping body and may not use armed force.

41. The Security Council may decide what measures not involving the use of armed force are to be employed to give effect to its decisions, and it may call upon its members to apply such measures ...

### **Intentionally Killing A Person Is A Crime**

At least 80,000 Iraqis including 30,000 children have been violently killed since the war with Iraq began. Wilful killing is a crime and is never condoned or 'right' in law. The Human Rights Act 1998 specifies:

"Everyone's right to life shall be protected by law. No-one shall be deprived of his life intentionally save in the execution of a sentence of a court following his conviction of a crime for which this penalty is provided in law."

Deliberately killing a person because of their nationality is a crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. It is never legal for a serviceman to wilfully kill an enemy. Just as it is a crime to explode a bomb in a pub or to fly a plane into the World Trade Centre so it is a crime to deliberately cause the death of another human being. When the first Iraqi citizen died as a result of the actions of Coalition forces those responsible for giving, transmitting, executing or condoning the orders to wage war committed a crime and became criminally liable for every violent death .

### **Killing Iraqi Citizens Constitutes Genocide**

It is an offence against the law of England and Wales for a person to commit genocide, a crime against humanity or a war crime, or to engage in conduct ancillary to such an act. This applies to acts committed in England or Wales or outside the United Kingdom by a UK national, resident or person subject to UK service jurisdiction.

For the purpose of this Statute "genocide" means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such (a) killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

When Coalition armed forces attacked Iraq causing the deaths of thousands of Iraqis every resident of Britain involved in aiding, abetting or executing the decision to wage war became criminally liable for the crimes of 'genocide' or 'conduct ancillary to genocide' and subject to the sanctions of domestic and international law. If a person did anything to aid, abet or assist the commission of the crime, even such things as paying tax, speaking in favour of executing Saddam Hussein or congratulating returning troops for a job well done they committed a crime of conduct ancillary to genocide. You may argue that you did not intend to destroy a national group, but as the legal meaning of intent is defined in the legislation you will find it hard to argue that you were not aware that anyone would be killed.

A person has intent in relation to 'conduct' where he means to engage in the conduct, and in relation to a consequence, where he means to cause the consequence or is aware that it will occur in the ordinary course of events.

Every resident of Britain who condoned, supported or took part in the invasion or occupation of Iraq is bound by the Rome Statute and criminally liable for genocide and conduct ancillary to genocide.

This Statute shall apply equally to all persons without any distinction based on official capacity. In particular, official capacity as Head of State or Government, a member of a Government or Parliament, an elected representative or a government official shall in no case exempt a person from criminal responsibility under this Statute, nor shall it in and of itself, constitute a ground for reduction of sentence. Immunities or special procedural rules which may attach to the official capacity of a person, whether under national or international law, shall not bar the Court from exercising its jurisdiction over such a person.

*The above is a summary; for the full definition of the offences refer to the International Criminal Court Act 2001 [Sections 50 - 80]*

### **Everyone Has A Duty To Disobey Illegal Orders**

24. If a person who is bound to obey a duly constituted superior receives from the superior an order to do some act or make some omission which is manifestly illegal, he is under a legal duty to refuse to carry out the order and if he does carry it out he will be criminally responsible for what he does in doing so. "

This article from Chapter VI of the Manual of Military Law applies to every British citizen and taxpayer as well as to servicemen and women. It was derived from the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials when Germany's leaders claimed that they were not responsible for the crimes of the German Government as they were following Hitler's superior orders. The judgement rejected their claim.

"It was submitted [by the defendants] that international law is concerned with the action of sovereign states, and provides no punishment for individuals; and further, that where the act in question is an act of state, those who carry it out are not personally responsible, but are protected by the doctrine of the sovereignty of the State. In the opinion of the Tribunal, both these submissions must be rejected. That international law imposes duties and liabilities upon individuals as well as upon States has long been recognised ...

The very essence of the Charter is that individuals have international duties which transcend the national obligations of obedience imposed by the individual State. He who violates the laws of war cannot obtain immunity while acting in pursuance of the authority of the State, if the State in authorising action moves outside its competence under international law ...

Leaders are responsible for the war crimes of their subordinates

The International Criminal Court Act makes it clear that no matter who launches the rockets, fires the cruise missiles, drops cluster bombs or deploys depleted uranium shells, responsibility for the resulting deaths, injuries and destruction lies with those who ordered the attack to take place.

65. A military commander, or a person effectively acting as a military commander, is responsible for offences committed by forces under his effective command and control or his effective authority and control ... A person responsible under this section for an offence is regarded as aiding, abetting, counselling or procuring the commission of the offence.

78. This Act binds the Crown and applies to persons in the public service of the Crown.

Although it is impossible to arrest and try everyone in Britain responsible for war crimes many of Britain's political, civil and military leaders may eventually be arrested, tried and punished as war criminals.

### **We All Have A Responsibility To Act**

All British residents must abide by their obligations and duties in law and confine their activities to the legitimate path outlined by the UN Charter and the laws of war. To do this you must disassociate yourself from any action that can be construed as aiding, abetting or assisting the British Government's use of armed force. Members of the Armed Forces and Civil Service must refuse all superior orders contributing to the wars with Iraq and Afghanistan. MPs and Peers must force the Government to end the use of armed force or resign from their seats in Parliament. Taxpayers [Individuals and employers] must withhold taxes from the Inland Revenue until the crimes have ceased and others should report war crimes to the police.

The wars with Iraq and Afghanistan in which thousands of innocent men, women and children have been killed constitute the worst atrocity ever committed by a British Government and they must be stopped. They continue today because too many of us condone or support the Government's illegal actions and fail to take active practical steps to end the killings.

© Chris Coverdale The Campaign to Make War History January 2008

### **THE HUMANIST REFERENCE LIBRARY**

The Humanist Reference Library is open for members and researchers on Mondays from 12noon-4pm and on Tuesdays to Fridays from 2 - 6pm. Please let the Librarian, Jennifer Jaynes, know of your intention to visit the Library.

Tel: 020 7242 8037/4. Email: [library@ethicalsoc.org.uk](mailto:library@ethicalsoc.org.uk)

# THE CASE FOR POLITICAL EDUCATION

Nita McCrossan

Lecture to Ethical Society, 6 April 2008

Political Education in the school curriculum and in teacher education programmes is a pressing need. This is because disillusionment with party politics generally and the distrust of the main party political leaders in particular, has led to an apathy and a sense of powerlessness amongst electors which threatens the limited democratic rights that have been won so far in Britain over centuries of struggle.

Initially, therefore, we need to examine concepts of democracy more closely. For – like those of freedom, equality or justice, they are both descriptive and prescriptive terms that lend themselves to much ambiguity in interpretation and usage. For different theories and systems of government described as democratic are similar in name only. Communist regimes for example, have called themselves ‘people’s democracies’ on the grounds that they were more egalitarian. Western democracies on the other hand, have assumed that their representative governments are more democratic because the electorate has the legal right to change the government periodically.

I aim to show that it is a participatory democracy that is most likely to promote the ideals of freedom, autonomy and equality – provided this process also forms the basis of political education that should begin in the first or primary school.

The origins of democracy can be traced to the fifth century B.C. when the Ancient Greeks classified governments in terms of the numbers who participated in political decision-making. A system of government in which the majority made the final decisions was said to be democratic; but in classical times, only that section of the people identified as the demos or citizenry was actually involved in decision-making and would, therefore, not qualify as being democratic today.

## Locke’s Concept Of Property

The roots of modern democracy in Western Europe have been traced to the 17th century when absolute monarchical rule was being increasingly challenged both with the growth of individualism associated with the decline of mediaeval ideas, as well as the libertarian force behind the developing market economy. Hence and not surprisingly, writers such as John Locke did not initially foresee the full social and economic implications of claiming unlimited property for everybody - but having realised its impossibility, it was also Locke who formulated the principle that all men owned property in their labour power. This has remained central to the liberal concept of property. It does, of course, overlook the fact that their right of access to the means of life is dependent upon their right of access to the means of labour owned by others.

Thus, it is significant that when the full capitalist market society was established during the C17, the idea of common property fades and the government’s chief task was regarded as one of protecting property which by then was understood in terms of the individual’s right to the exclusion of others. This process of absolute appropriation and exploitation of property continued to expand during the C17 and thereafter. It was this liberal-justifying theory that is associated with the utilitarian writers from John Locke to Jeremy Bentham for whom the maximisation of utilities became the criterion of a good society. *[By the maximisation of utilities, Bentham could have meant “ the*

However, in contrast to his predecessors, Locke and Bentham, it was John Stuart Mill who asserted a higher set of moral values when he and other critics of market morality accorded an equal right to every individual to make the most of himself. Nevertheless, the claim that the individual freedom bestowed by the liberal society can be compatible with the equality of the democratic society has never been made good – inasmuch as Western Liberal democracies are still capitalist societies in which the maximisation of utilities remains the criterion of a good society. Unless the distribution of property can be shown to be just, the claim of equitable maximisation is not sustained.

### **Rousseau's Concept Of Participation**

Like John Stuart Mill, Jean-Jacques Rousseau also saw that participation had both psychological and moral implications, both were necessary in democratic decision making. In his books, *The Social Contract* and *Emile*, Rousseau's concept of participation is an important assumption underlying his twin beliefs in democratic government and self-direction in education. Whereas with John Locke, sovereignty through the Social Contract was transferred from the people to the ruler, Rousseau's originality lies in his retaining sovereignty with the people.

Also, his concept of government was one of the direct participation by individual citizens and NOT a representative one. Hence his approval of small, economically self-supporting social units in which individuals owned the means of production, both collectively and equally. This would prevent any accumulation of power and wealth by a minority at the expense of an enslaved or dependent majority. While this organisation is impractical in today's world, the co-operative and participatory spirit underlying it serves, above all, an educative function which can apply to all who are educated for socially responsible behaviour. For, like Hegel and Marx, Rousseau was optimistic about man's ability to change his environment and in the process, change himself.

### **Marx's View Of The State**

The term 'Marxism', like the concepts of 'freedom' and 'democracy', conveys no single meaning. For Karl Marx's theories can be traced to diverse elements of Western European philosophical traditions that continued to develop throughout his life. In fact, Marxism is increasingly being regarded as a set of procedural principles or tools for analysing ideas. In Marx's own postulate, 'Philosophers have hitherto attempted to interpret the world; the real task is to change it'.

For, unlike most philosophers, to Marx the state was not the highest form of social organisation through whose judicial, social and political institutions man could only attain his full liberty. For Marx, the state is an institutional licence, founded by sectional interests. Similarly, religion or God does not create man but man creates God and instead of History being a process of the development of an Idea or Belief etc., for Marx the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of the class struggle based on the current economic system i.e. capitalism which developed from the contradictions that existed within feudalism. Then the former 'ruling class' or feudal lords were overthrown by a new ruling class or bourgeoisie who owned the capitalist means of production by overcoming all restrictions imposed on the productive forces by feudalism.

Marx saw that the bourgeoisie played a revolutionary role in history by not only revolutionising the instruments of production but also by sweeping away all the feudal relations of property. The latter or social class antagonisms were simplified under capitalism in terms of two great, often opposing camps, the bourgeoisie, the owners of capital – and the proletariat, meaning those owning no property except their offspring. Under capitalism, the proletariat sells its labour as a commodity and like all commercial articles, this is subject to the fluctuations of the market. A good example of this aspect of capitalism exists, when thousands were made redundant at the MG Rover factory at Longbridge. What the proletariat produces in a commodity-producing economy is not the members' own product because both access to and the means of labour is controlled or owned by capitalist employers.

### **Modern Capitalism**

Of course, mass education and the growth of Trade Unionism with representative governments have brought considerable political and economic changes during the past two centuries. Capitalists argue that due to its greater profitability, the private sector is the best.

Socialists, alternatively, aim for the common ownership of the means of production and distribution – to which the nationalisation of industry is only a stepping stone to further state-run enterprises and which usually provide managers and workers with greater job security when the profit motive is not uppermost.

However, the capitalist economy relies on the size of its profits and claims that it is, therefore, more innovative and profitable. The primacy of the individual as the basic unit of a capitalist society was well established by Margaret Thatcher who stated: "There is no such thing as society – only individuals". This C19 utilitarian philosophy was reinforced in the C20 as the foundation stone of bourgeois thinking and still affects all our lives, individually and collectively – both in society and in schools.

So far, bourgeois capitalism has not privatised health, education and other social services. However, Tesco is a very good example of a growing trend in modern capitalism, whereby industries become concentrated in fewer and fewer hands and monopoly capitalism develops.

The claim for political education is a long-overdue, necessary safeguard to maintain and improve the political rights already won. General elections, representative government and universal suffrage are all important methods of control in capitalist societies. Clearly, since Parliament and other institutions arose out of democratic struggle, they can and should continue to provide platforms for mass activity. Not that control has ever existed over extra-Parliamentary centres of financial and economic power, because Western liberal democracy has remained politically partial.

### **Political Education In Schools**

Having argued the case for political, I now wish to indicate how one might organise its teaching. Initially, in view of the extreme complexity of modern capitalism, there is a strong case for broadening political education so that it can operate on several fronts. These would include using the existing machines of representative democracy, as well as introducing innovatory practices, such as campaigning for political education to be an integral part of the school curriculum, beginning in the first school. Children would

thereby become recruits to a developing mass movement outside Parliament, consisting of varied political and neo-political organisations such as a feminist movement, Oxfam, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) etc. A central forum outside Parliament is also needed for people to discuss national issues and to co-ordinate the allocation, production and distribution of resources in a technological age.

Today, time will only permit us to consider the importance of political education beginning in the primary school. Very surprisingly, the major Plowden Report on the Primary School, published in 1966, made no reference to political education – even in the section on the history curriculum which is generally recognised as the most appropriate subject for its inclusion. Since the Plowden Report, however, considerable research in the USA and in Britain has shown the possibility of developing political education in teaching history at all levels of education. Since the curricula of most secondary schools is related to the preparation for state examinations, primary school teachers are relatively freer to introduce political education, together with appropriate textbooks for 8+ year olds.

### **My Research On History Teaching**

My individual research was focussed initially in a S.E. London Primary School in a working class neighbourhood, facing the usual problems of poverty. Over-crowded housing, one-parent families and violence. Having worked in both Primary and Secondary State Schools, I have learnt that a problem rather than a period approach to teaching history often enabled pupils to see that people in the past had problems in common with ours today and this provided a useful basis upon which to compare past and present solutions critically.

Questioning is an art which also forms an essential part of building a democratic rapport with children. Teachers have golden opportunities today to draw on the children's knowledge rather than regarding pupils as recipients only of your knowledge. Thus, since many of the children in today's classrooms have relatives who originated from former British colonial territories, they should be encouraged to explore some of the big problems that still exist in these countries and the solutions that are needed.

Although proof exists of an increased interest in political education after 1970 – that only secondary pupils were intended to benefit from it, was indicated by the finding of a Research Programme by the Nuffield Foundation in 1974. This takes a traditional view of political education, primarily concerned with political literacy associated with the institutions of the national political system.

We should also not be confused by what is mistakenly called 'community spirit' in American political education programmes, whereby they could provide a cover-up for political socialisation in which blind obedience to the existing American and British way of life is indoctrinated. Furthermore, teachers must not accept the false belief that in order to be objective, they must remain neutral in controversial issues. Clearly, problems stemming from political indoctrination are complex and ubiquitous. All teachers, therefore, need to be politically educated in order to minimise irrational bias and indoctrination in whatever context it may appear. Often teachers themselves hold a committed or partisan point of view.

One of the greatest dilemmas in education is how to pass on ideas we value without indoctrinating immature minds. In a pluralist society, such as Britain, attempts to indoctrinate pupils intentionally are usually rare – except for those teaching in denominational schools.

All politically educated teachers know that consciousness of bias is still largely its own corrective. Thus few teachers today would fail to justify the civil disobedience of those coloured, unenfranchised Americans during the Civil Rights Movement in the sixties before the USA became an electoral democracy.

### **Adapting History To Children's Needs**

When teaching primary school children, teachers should not only draw upon children's own familial histories, but should also adapt world history to their needs and capacities and understand that they are often teaching pseudo-history if not art. Critical and objective history can only be taught when they are able to understand history as distinct from art. Furthermore, historical content can continually give rise to a number of conceptual difficulties – such as the kinds of anachronisms children resort to when left to their own conclusions. Thus a pupil thought Cardinal Wolsey wanted to shoot the Pope, because he had just read that 'Wolsey aimed at the Papacy'.

On my first visit to my research Primary School, I noticed that several classrooms lacked displays of children's work with which they could identify. There was also very little evidence of craftwork, despite there being a separate craft room. In short, the majority of classrooms were essentially teacher-centred. The teacher also needs to avoid a strong member of the class becoming a dictator. Thus teachers who abdicate their leadership roles prematurely, should not be surprised if the classroom becomes an Animal Farm!

Tape-recording is another valuable research tool and as the children became experienced tape-recorders, they were more prepared to respond to my queries about their meanings. Pupils each had a 'Words' section in their loose-leaved History books – made, written and illustrated by them. Since we also placed an important emphasis on Drama, this encouraged them to write dialogues and poems in their Word books, prior to tape-recording them.

For example, Mrs Beeton's recipe for gruel as part of the workhouse diet aroused much indignant political discussion about Victorian life for the different social classes in England: "Mix a tablespoonful of oatmeal with some cold water. Boil the rest of the water, pour it on the wet oatmeal and stir together until boiling. Simmer for half an hour and add a pinch of salt". Pupils soon became obsessed with tape-recording each other's dialogues. Songs can also prove a most important means of illustrating different periods of history. All primary school teachers should learn to read music – so that nursery rhymes and treble tunes at least can be accompaniments to words. For example, 'Won't you buy my pretty flowers?' often aroused much political discussion about the poverty endured by Victorian children.

### **The Workers' Music Association**

The late Professor Alan Bush worked at the Royal Academy of Music in London and in 1936 founded the Workers' Music Association and trained a choir, one section of which now meets here in Conway Hall on Thursday evenings. All are welcome and we

sing songs that echo the traditions of the Labour Movement through History. The choir is quite small at present but many people have learnt to read music and enjoy our big repertoire that has commemorated every important historical event that has advanced the working class struggle for better lives. I would like conclude this section by playing you an excerpt from *Wat Tyler* and the 1381 Peasants' Revolt, an opera written by Alan Bush with the libretto by his wife.

### **Results of my Teaching in the Primary School**

I have selected some responses of a few classes of 9+ year olds to my teaching of Political Education.

#### **At Peshawar**

I was beginning to learn the names of those children with whom I had lunch and we were also building a relationship through a common interest in animals. I mentioned on one occasion that when I worked in Peshawar (Pakistan), I was known as 'the lady with a dog' because most Muslims did not keep dogs in our campus. The children wanted to know the reason why; so the shy Muslim girls in this class had a rare opportunity to explain that Muslims regarded dogs as unclean animals. There followed a fierce argument – so I intervened, explaining that in Mohammed's time, dogs were indeed rabid – so banning them from homes helped to prevent the spread of the disease. The morale of the Muslim girls had been given a boost. In answer to the question, 'Do Muslims still think dogs are dirty?' Salmi assured her audience that dogs are kept as pets today by many Muslims, provided they aren't allowed near human food.

#### **Class on the Egyptians**

To consolidate the teaching on the Pharaoh's power, I thought a visit to the British Museum's Egyptian Exhibition might be worthwhile. It was obvious that their understanding of slavery was incorrect as most of them were competing fiercely to be slaves in the dramas. I had to impress them emotionally if they were to develop morally. I therefore introduced the concept of genocide in connection with the Jewish captivity in Egypt and told the story of how Moses escaped the Pharaoh's genocidal decree which resulted in the murder of Jewish male babies. One pupil commented, 'So Hitler wasn't the first man to kill the Jews'.

#### **D's Class**

To teach concepts such as 'victim' and 'persecution', we did some role play about discrimination by segregating four children at the back corner of the room and forbade anyone to speak to them. I criticised their work, ridiculed their clothes and issued them with yellow cardboard Stars of David which they had to wear always on their right arms. We were all relieved at the end of the lesson. I assured them that we were acting but that Jewish children had really suffered under the Nazis in schools – until they were sent to the gas chambers with their families. I felt that older children (11+) need to experience what discrimination feels like.

The teacher said most of the children had been moved by the story of the Holocaust – although some became confused chronologically and thought the Egyptians gassed the Jewish women and babies in the Holocaust...

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

## VIEWPOINT

### Hitler and Religion

In response to Donald Room's letter (Viewpoints, *ER* April 08), note that the 'New Laws' enacted by Hitler in 1933 were promised to the Catholics in the late 1920s, cf. *Main Kampf*, and for obvious reasons - he needed their support. He said, also in *Mein Kampf*, that no new political party could take on a well-established religion (like Catholicism) and hope to win power. He probably foresaw that the Churches would not oppose his ultimate plans for the Jews. Some did and ended up in Dachau where about 1000 German priests died.

There were plenty of people who saw what was happening in Germany in the 1930s and warned against the Nazis (some of them fought in Spain against Franco, who was supported by the Germans). They were not listened to here in the UK by a right-wing government.

It is difficult to work out if Hitler himself was religious or not. He did express a belief that Jesus was an Aryan. It seems quite possible that in his perverted mind he saw himself in that role! However there is no doubt that the Nazi leaders - Goebbels, Himmler, Rosenberg et al, were atheists. Documents released by Cornell University in 1998 from the Nuremberg Trials revealed that some members of the Nazi Party planned to end Christianity at the end of World War II. They also planned a new, so-called 'Scientific State'. Ideas included selective breeding in favour of the 'Aryan' race, extermination of the mentally defective etc., all in the name of science.

It is lucky for us that they did not get the atom bomb first! I did not have time to go into all of this in my talk. My two main points were:

- a) the paradox of how a religion, often with a cruel history, could inspire great works of art, eg music, and
- b) the world population growth - perhaps the most important ethical problem of the 21st century.

How are we going to solve the latter - by preaching atheism while children starve?

**Kyla Greenbaum-Crowcroft**

*[The main impediment today to the slowing of population growth is the theological opposition to artificial contraception, still propounded by the Vatican. Because of the religiously inspired US support of this policy, family planning programmes throughout the world are starved of funds, resulting in millions of unwanted births. {Ed.}]*

---

### HOMILY BY ALBERT ADLER

#### Awareness

Emily Dickinson: "The brain is just the weight of God"

The light of day  
Shines not more bright  
Nor steadily  
As does, by day or night,

The light within the brain  
Revealing what's outside  
And what's within,  
While consciousness abide.

**PROGRAMME OF EVENTS AT THE ETHICAL SOCIETY**  
The Library, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, Holborn, WC1R 4RL.  
Tel: 020 7242 8037/8034 Registered Charity No. 251396  
Website: [www.ethicalsoc.org.uk](http://www.ethicalsoc.org.uk) email: [library@ethicalsoc.org.uk](mailto:library@ethicalsoc.org.uk)  
No charge unless stated

**MAY 2008**

- Sunday 25 Bank Holiday  
1100 **W.E. (BILL) SWINTON, THE FIRST DR DINOSAUR - SPES APPOINTED LECTURER 1953-61. An Appreciation Mike Howgate**
- 1430 **SPES BRING AND SHARE SOCIAL** Please bring food and drink
- Tuesday 27 **SECULAR FEMINIST MEET UP GROUP**  
1900 **FEMINISM FOR BOYS AND GIRLS Sue Mayer.** Males welcome

Thursday 29

- 11-7pm **AMNESTY BOOK SALE** of Second Hand Books

**JUNE**

Sunday 1

- 1100 **THE ARCHERS, PETER HITCHENS AND THE CONSERVATIVE CRITIQUE OF THE MEDIA.** David Murray, Former editor of *Ethical Record*, Oxford History student, Performance Poet. [www.livejournal.com/users/david\\_murray](http://www.livejournal.com/users/david_murray)

- 1500 **ALLEGRO BARBARO.** A film by Zsuzsanna Ardo. A visual poem to music about creativity and trauma, followed by a discussion on the film.

Sunday 8

- 1100 **THE DEEPER CAUSES OF THE COLLAPSE OF THE SOVIET BLOC**  
**Peter Gowan**, Prof. of International Relations, London Metropolitan University

- 1430 **HOW CIVIL LIBERTIES HAVE BEEN DAMAGED WHILE TONY BLAIR WAS PRIME MINISTER** (2hr video)

Thursday 12 **ETHICAL SOCIETY BOOK CLUB**

- 1830 tea Tono Bungay by HG Wells [www.online-literature.com/wellshg/tonobungay/](http://www.online-literature.com/wellshg/tonobungay/)  
-2100 Facilitated by **Sally Stevens**

Sunday 15

- 1100 **SPINOZA ON SECULAR AND RELIGIOUS LAW**  
Professor **Susan James**, Dept. of Philosophy, Birkbeck College

- 1500 **THE MEDIEVAL MIND - ATTITUDES TO WOMEN AND SEX (DVD)**  
**Sue Mayer**

Monday 16

- 1830 **CONWAY HALL JAZZ CLUB**

Sunday 22

- 1100 **WHY PEOPLE SHOULDN'T GET WHAT THEY WANT.** **Bob Brecher**  
Director of Centre for Applied Philosophy, Politics and Ethics, University of Brighton

- 1500 **HOW EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS INFILTRATE POLITICS** video