

Ethical Record

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The Proceedings of the
Conway Hall
Ethical Society

FIRST INTERNATIONAL ISHASH CONFERENCE

Report by **Liz Lutgendorff**

**The Evolution
of Atheism:
The Politics of
a Movement**

Book review by
Dr Bill Cooke *PAGE 6*

**Sex and
Prostitution:
Chalk and
Cheese**

by Janice Williams
PAGE 10

**London Thinks
Partners
with Ideas
Roadshow**

by Sid Rodrigues
PAGE 19

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

Correction to the September issue: on page 3, the title of the editorial
should have read 'The Ethical Record: Its Vital Role'.

In This Issue of the Ethical Record:

3	<i>Editorial 150th Anniversary of the National Secular Society</i>	<i>Liz Lutgendorff</i>
4	<i>First International ISHASH Conference</i>	<i>Liz Lutgendorff</i>
6	<i>The Evolution of Atheism: The Politics of a Movement</i>	<i>Dr Bill Cooke</i>
10	<i>Sex and Prostitution: Chalk and Cheese</i>	<i>Janice Williams</i>
13	<i>Bloomsbury Festival: Angelic Chaos (6,6) Anag</i>	<i>Martha Lee</i>
16	<i>Digitisation Project: Architecture and Place</i>	<i>Samantha Callaghan</i>
19	<i>London Thinks Partners with Ideas Roadshow</i>	<i>Sid Rodrigues</i>
21	<i>Viewpoint: Pleased that the EU Referendum was 'Out'</i>	<i>Donald A. Langdown</i>
23	<i>Sunday Concerts</i>	
24	<i>Forthcoming Events</i>	

150th Anniversary of the National Secular Society

Guest Editor: Liz Lutgendorff

Last month saw the 150th anniversary of the National Secular Society. 150 years never looked so young – with so many of the NSS’ past campaigns still finding relevance today. Religious privilege is still part of the fabric of this country and many others, limiting secular progress or attempting to reverse it.

As the struggle against blasphemy in the 19th century showed – laws to protect against the offence of religion mean the prosecution of those who don’t share those beliefs. It took Charles Bradlaugh (the first president of the NSS) and the Oaths Act to afford the non-religious (and dissenting religious) the same protections under the law and in Parliament that those who were of the majority religion opinion already enjoyed.

While Bradlaugh may have triumphed in the UK, blasphemy laws still exist close to home in Ireland, but also across the world. Luckily, we have the International Humanist and Ethical Union taking that fight internationally, alongside the National Secular Society here in the UK.

It also took Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant to show that obscenity laws can be used to restrict access to reproductive information for the working class. In parallel today, it takes organisations like FPA and We Trust Women to fight against the still very restrictive abortion laws in Northern Ireland. Even harsher restrictions on reproductive rights

exist across the world in places like Brazil, even with the threat of the Zika virus. The rise of legislative restrictions in the United States is a reminder that sometimes it’s not enough to win the battle once, you have to fight it over and over again.

As a historian, it is always depressing to see history repeat itself before your eyes but that is what it feels like when it comes to laws about religious privilege. Announced this month, the potential expansion of faith schools to discriminate against children based on faith (more than they already do), reminds us that the fight for truly secular education in this country has never been won. If you look in our archives you’ll find out about the Moral Education League or the Secular Education League – starting this campaign in the early 20th century. Coming from Canada, I really can’t understand how such a system has been perpetuated for so long – for me it really is a historical anomaly. The only religious reference I had in school growing up was the mention of ‘god’ in the national anthem. The complete absence of religion in my schooling meant that we received the more important sex and relationship education that is still also largely lacking in the UK. For those of you on twitter, the #srenow hashtag was an especially depressing read.

Continued on page 9 →



Liz Lutgendorff works in technology as a civil servant. She’s working on a part-time PhD in the history of secularism from 1880 to 1930. She’s also the Chair of Trustees of Conway Hall Ethical Society. She tweets as @sillypunk.

CONFERENCE REVIEW

First International ISHASH Conference

Liz Lutgendorff reviews the first ISHASH conference, which took place at Conway Hall over 4-5 June 2016



The Religious Change in the West panel, with (from left to right) Professor Callum Brown, Matt Sheard and Liz Lutgendorff

In June this year, Conway Hall Ethical Society played host to the first conference for the International Society of Historians of Atheism, Secularism and Humanisms (ISHASH). The small society branched out from the Nonreligion and Secularity Research Network (NSRN) to focus specifically on the historical phenomenon of non-religion. We're still a relatively small group, but one that we hope keeps expanding in the future.

It was a truly international experience, with historians from three continents and 11 countries: Austria, Canada, England, Estonia, Finland, France, Japan, Scotland, Sweden, Turkey and the United States. The conference's focus was to 'examine the state of the field' as the professional historical inquiry into non-religion has never been more popular. Having been the preserve of a small number of academics like Professor Ted Royle (York University, Emeritus), Professor David Nash (Oxford Brookes and my PhD supervisor) and Professor Callum Brown (University of Glasgow), the number of PhDs up and coming across the world is truly amazing.

The first session really set the tone for discussion over the two-day conference; Nickolas Conrad (University of California, Santa Cruz) and Atko Remmel (University of Tartu, Estonia). The discussion that resulted at the end of the talks reverberated throughout the weekend. What should our field of study be called? Does it matter if it's unreligion, unbelief or nonreligion? Should it always be defined contextually? My favourite point made was by Umut Azak (Okan University, Turkey) who stated that in Islam, all terms are equally bad. Potential differences in the West or English suddenly would lose relevance in some ways, when translated to a global context.

That was the best part of the conference – that bringing together all these historians, studying different time periods, thematic areas and geographical regions probably raised more questions than it solved – showing that the field is maturing but also has a great deal to offer future historians. It was useful for me as a part-time PhD student, as I haven't had the opportunity to share my work alongside historians who look at the same thematic areas as myself. In my intake

at Oxford Brookes, there were more people studying Methodist painters than those studying non-religion.

Another fascinating area of exploration has been the pushing back of the boundaries of when atheism or non-religion really started. We're all familiar with British history of Carlile, Holyoake, Bradlaugh and Russell, but what about Yamagata Bantō? Shuhei Fujii from the University of Toyko gave a compelling argument about Yamagata's atheist and materialistic outlook, in a time and place where you might not expect atheism to arise – 18th century Japan. As well, the very new book by Tim Whitmarsh, *Battling the Gods: Atheism in the Ancient World*, came up in conversation quite often.

What I enjoyed most was how much more complex the history of non-religion is becoming. Intersections between race and empire were examined by co-organisers Nathan Alexander (University of St Andrews) and Patrick Corbeil (Queen's University, Canada), as well as other historians like Professor Tina Block (Thompson Rivers University, Canada) and Professor Lynne Marks (University of Victoria, Canada).

There has already been a fantastic investigation into women and atheism with Laura Schwartz's book *Infidel Feminism* (which you can borrow from our library). At the conference we also had another look at women and atheism from Suvi Karila (University of Turku, Finland) with the excitingly titled "Female skepticism is social poison" which examined gender and atheism in the United States in the 19th century.

Our keynote speaker was Professor David Nash, who raised many questions about the future of the field. Is there a relationship between the history of emotions? Is atheism natural or inevitable? The questions raised by David Nash and throughout the weekend showed that we're only beginning to shape the history of non-religion.

The overwhelming impression I had throughout the two days was genuine interest, enthusiasm and excitement about the quality of scholarly work investigating atheism, humanism, skepticism – or unbelief, unreligion or nonreligion. Even if the geographical area or time period was unfamiliar, similar themes would occur and parallels could be identified. It felt like a field coming together, searching for the edges of what this historical field is and what it might be in the future. It was with incredible positivity that in our wrap-up session, we were already thinking of the

next conference. Or the crisscrossing of conferences across the Atlantic to make sure that the conference and society stay truly international.

Conway Hall, and our amazing library, were given great thanks for hosting the first conference. The conference highlighted the rich archive and radical history we have right under our noses. It was also a prescient reminder that it is important to preserve our history and the archival documents that we have, so future historians can do further investigation into the history of this movement.

The library has been an integral part of both my Masters and now my PhD research, especially with almost complete runs of periodicals of the time – which we're really lucky to have preserved. I look forward to sharing even more of the history where we can with exhibitions and future digitisation projects. What I commented on at the time, and which David Rosenberg states at the end of *Rebel Footprints*, the physical history of the radical past (including atheism, humanism and secularism) is rapidly disappearing in London with the inevitable and inexorable rounds of redevelopment and gentrification. Conway Hall still remains as a beacon of that history, perhaps only still shared with the Leicester Secular Hall in the United Kingdom. The programming and education that we're capable of to bring that radical history to the general public and to schools alike is something that I think early humanists like Frederick James Gould would be proud of. He thought that it was only through education that we'd be able to have a truly secular society (and was most often disappointed when it shifted from being a focus) from the societies and originations of his time. With renewed focus on expanding faith school selection, it's more important than ever that we are emboldened by our charitable object – the study, research and education into ethical humanist principles.

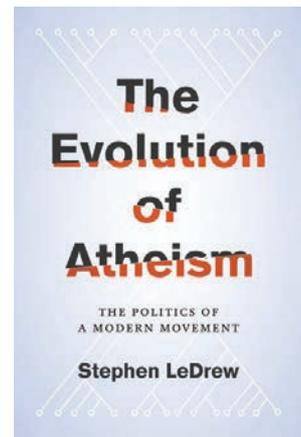
I'm happy to carry on with my research and hopefully others will continue to join those of us at ISHASH. It's a fascinating history, with campaigners and people of influence across many time periods and across the world – which we're only beginning to uncover. I hope one day more people will know the reason behind our society and hall being named after Conway. But equally, they will be interested in the list of appointed lecturers and find out about the campaigners that helped the world become a more secular place – and maybe continue that work in the future.

BOOK REVIEW

The Evolution of Atheism

The Politics of a Movement

by *Stephen LeDrew*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016
ISBN 978-0-19-022517-9, Hardcover, \$27.95



Review by **Dr Bill Cooke**

The English historian Norman Stone once noted that doctoral dissertations are about amassing ponderous armies of facts to pursue a war of attrition on behalf of some trivial insight. *The Evolution of Atheism*, which is the result of Stephen LeDrew's doctoral work, is an example of this genre. For the most part, the book is a sociological critique of New Atheism, with some changes of focus along the way. New Atheism, we are told, is a white male-driven secular fundamentalism, utopian in its ideological zeal for scientism and anxious to roll back pluralism in the interests of 'cultural homogenisation through scientific hegemony.' (p 175) This core assertion is repeated in various guises throughout the book, though, as noted, the targets change as the book progresses.

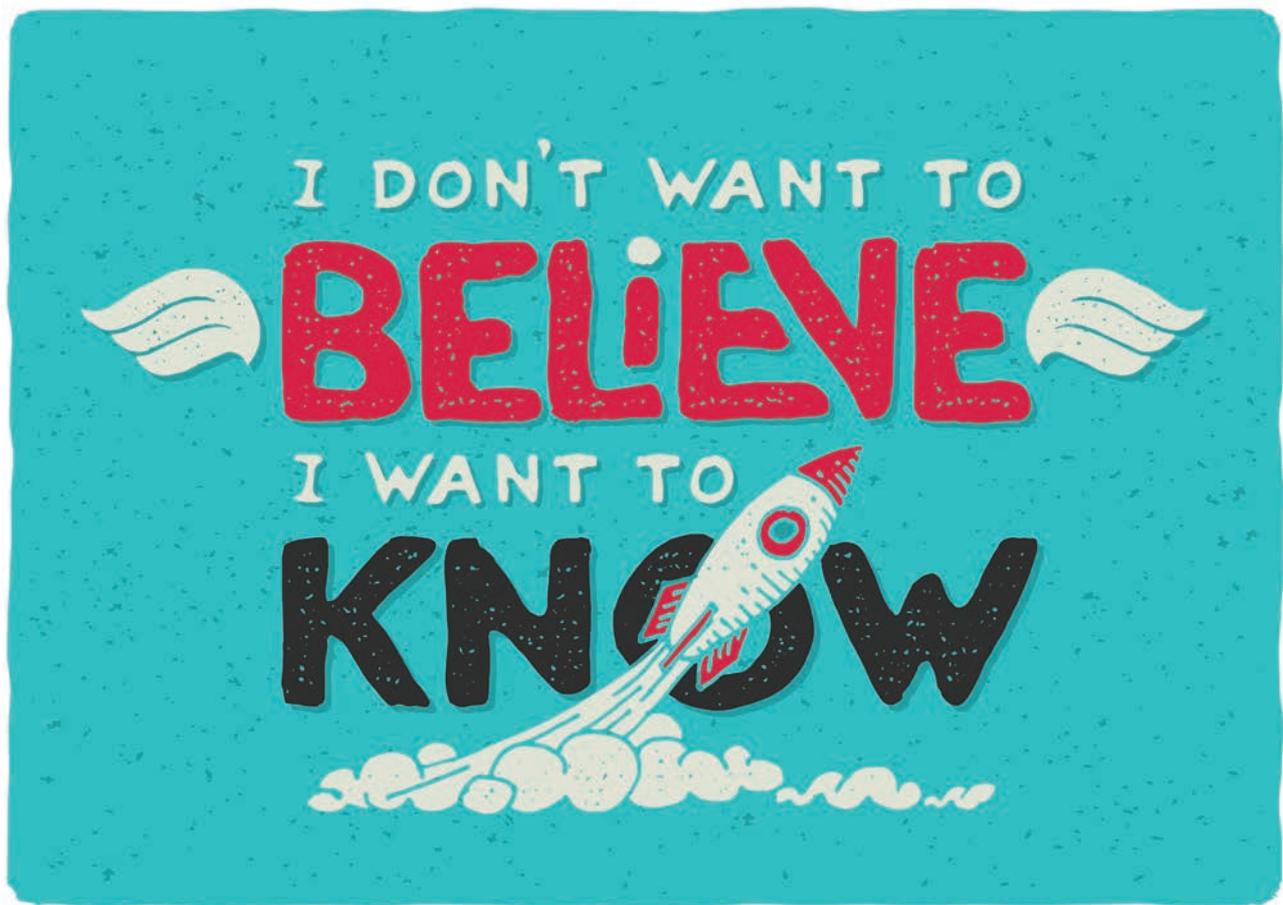
Research for this book is relatively broad but very shallow, and is replete with airy generalisations and in-language. The constant talk of 'narratives', 'discourse' and 'strategies' reduces the people he is writing about to something akin to bacteria on a glass plate, ready for inspection through a microscope. From these Olympian heights, LeDrew analyses the feeling American humanists have of being embattled

by a religious majority. This 'perception', we are told, is only to be expected in subcultures working with a strong sense of 'other.' (pp 107-8) LeDrew reserves for himself a God's-eye view that he disparages in others when he declares that New Atheism is 'only ostensibly about religion.' What it's *really* about, we are then told, is 'an extension and manifestation of the modern project of scientific mastery of the world and the rationalisation of society.' (p 15) Later on, *American Atheists* under Madalyn Murray O'Hair is spoken of as 'a product of its time, framing its discourse and activism within the narrative of the emerging civil rights movement...' (p 106) This reliance on in-house jargon and fondness for dialectical generalities gives his work an oddly elitist tone, which jars in a book condemning elitism. He's also incorrect to call *American Atheists* the first organisation formed to advocate specifically for atheists. The American Association for the Advancement of Atheism predated *American Atheists* by more than three decades.

It comes as no surprise that LeDrew's prime target is Richard Dawkins. Some of his criticisms

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are valid, as when the wisdom of Dawkins' more strident tweets are called into question. But LeDrew is on much shakier ground when he denies, more than once, that Dawkins is the 'enthusiastic Darwinian' he claims to be. Once again taking a God's eye view, he accuses Dawkins of a progressionist evolutionism more associated with Herbert Spencer (p 33). Two points need to be understood here. First, it is important to appreciate how much of a put-down this is from LeDrew's point of view. This is not just a fastidious point of academic correctness: it's an insult. Second, it's simply not true. Dawkins regularly condemns progressionism in evolutionary thinking. It would be tiresome to cite example after example, so this one from *Unweaving the Rainbow* must stand in for the others. Here Dawkins condemns what he calls 'bad poetic science', mentioning Spencer by name, as well as Julian Huxley and Teilhard de Chardin. Bad poetic science is explained as 'contriving a general law of progress working at all levels in nature, not just the biological level.' (p 192) When claiming to know a person's thoughts better than the person who uttered them, as LeDrew does, extraordinary

levels of evidence need to be made available. This does not happen.

Much of LeDrew's book reads more like the literature review a doctoral candidate works up prior to undertaking research. It's a survey of what's already out there. And disparaging words are reserved for those who fail to acknowledge the supremacy of his own discipline. In this way, work not showing due deference to the paramountcy of sociological expertise is 'highly provincial' (p 53). Without realising it, LeDrew exhibits a great deal of the 'territorialism' (his term) he claims to see in the New Atheists, as when he devotes several pages to Dawkins' criticisms of sociology. And elsewhere he is generous in the use of scare quotes, but only for terms he disapproves of. Words like 'scientific' are routinely scare-quoted, but words like 'nuanced' or 'diversity': never.

Then there is the issue of the range of research undertaken. LeDrew's strong reliance on Michael Buckley's history of atheism skews his approach. With little appreciation of the wider and deeper range of history in this area provided by Jonathan Israel, for example, LeDrew's historical account of atheism

is limited. And, though it appeared too late for his book, Tim Whitmarsh's game-changing history of atheism in the Classical World also makes LeDrew's historical overview a bit underdone.

This weak historical awareness is compounded by LeDrew's limited range of primary source material, restricted mainly to the works by the main New Atheist authors, but very little from the wider movement. No evidence, for example, is offered from other earlier evolutionist thinkers. Take Joseph McCabe as an example. McCabe was the Richard Dawkins of the early twentieth century, with nine books, several translations and pamphlets, and countless articles, lectures and debates on evolution around the English-speaking world. For LeDrew's work to ring true, we should expect to find McCabe's work to be progressionist, teleological, Eurocentric and prone to social Darwinism. In fact, none of this is true. McCabe was a critic of social Darwinism, eugenics, and other fads of the time like emergent evolution. He told his non-specialist readers there was no law of progress and scorned claims that the advantages enjoyed by Westerners were the inevitable product of natural superiority. The weaknesses LeDrew wants to see in 'scientific atheist' evolutionists are in fact just as apparent, often more, in religiously-inclined evolutionists, like J. Arthur Thomson.

LeDrew's analysis is also limited by his focusing only on North Atlantic atheism, most especially in Chapter Six, which is an extended treatment of fifteen American and Canadian atheists. Reading these responses was interesting, but the survey is far too small to make valid points about the irrelevance of the New Atheist priorities, which is the point of the chapter.

An important distinction for LeDrew is that between scientific atheism (his main target, particularly in the form of Richard Dawkins) and humanistic atheism, which he clearly prefers. Here LeDrew follows – sensibly – Colin Campbell's groundbreaking work *Toward a Sociology of Irreligion* (1971), which made the distinction between 'abolitionists' and 'substitutionists.' LeDrew acknowledges Campbell's 'uncanny prescience' and has usefully updated Campbell's categories.

But this good work is undermined by LeDrew's preference for sharp binaries, which runs counter to his preference elsewhere for nuances. A theme

which runs through the book is the 'fundamental ideological tension between atheism and humanism that has gripped the secular movement since its birth in the nineteenth century.' (p 125) I agree that atheism and humanism have different trajectories and react to religion differently. But LeDrew overstates this division, seeing it in more dialectical terms as an irrevocable rift. Another strong binary, more assumed than stated, is his assumption that the New Atheist advocacy for science and reason must necessarily exclude the possibility of successful pluralism. (p 87) This is a zero sum game for which there is no evidence.

Nowhere does this preference for dialectical rifts distort the facts more clearly than with his account of Paul Kurtz's departure from the Center for Inquiry (CFI), which LeDrew casts as an ideological clash between Kurtz's kindly humanism versus the rebels' confrontational atheism. (p 145, 147) Kurtz was instrumental in founding the sceptical movement in the United States in 1976 and the Council for Secular Humanism, formed in 1980, was his humanist advocacy group. Both organisations were brought under the umbrella of the Center for Inquiry in 1991. LeDrew's reading of Kurtz's departure is, at least, a gross overstatement. The Council for Secular Humanism slogan: 'Beyond atheism, beyond agnosticism, secular humanism' should be enough to counter this claim. Rather than humanism being an 'unnecessary and meaningless addition' for the CFI rebels, as LeDrew asserts, humanism is seen as the logical culmination of atheism. Atheism can only say what one is not. Secular humanism goes further by saying what one is for. LeDrew misunderstands what is going on here. He also misses the fact that Paul Kurtz's declining health was as important a reason for his departure as any great clash of principle. These messy contingencies are overlooked because LeDrew sees Kurtz's departure in dialectical terms, something built inevitably into the fabric of the movement. He also draws some shaky parallels between Kurtz's departure and the disagreements in England between George Jacob Holyoake and Charles Bradlaugh over the future of the National Secular Society.

Late in the book, LeDrew alters his line of fire. Till now the so-called Four Horsemen (Dennett, Harris, Hitchens and, especially, Dawkins) have been the main targets. But all of a sudden they disappear

and attention shifts to the CFI. Via little more than a series of anecdotes from recent events, LeDrew makes a case for the CFI being a preserve of misogyny and right-wing triumphalism before concluding that new forms of atheism ‘peculiar to the twenty-first century are emerging, most importantly a relationship between atheism and right-wing politics – a radical break from its traditional association with socialism and social justice movements.’ (p 214) And this comes only a few pages after acknowledging that no reliable link can be drawn between the atheist movement and the ‘ideology of evolutionism’, misogyny, and a host of other things. (p 209)

As the person who co-ordinates the CFI’s international programme, it is hard not to be bemused by this. It is hard to see why a misogynist and doctrinaire right-wing CFI, given over to libertarianism individualism, would demonstrate ongoing commitment to helping the poor and dispossessed in Africa, Asia and South America, as it does. In the years I have attended CFI events, I have never once heard an objection to its international work along libertarian lines, or along any lines for that matter. The only regret I’ve ever heard expressed is that more support cannot be given. And among the many atheists, humanists, sceptics and rationalists in Africa and Asia (where these distinctions hardly register) who work, sometimes at considerable risk to themselves, LeDrew’s accusations would come across as meaningless armchair theorising.

And finally, issue has to be taken with LeDrew’s labelling, in Chapter Six, of scientific atheists as ‘purists’, because of their dogmatism and avoidance of nuance. But can’t LeDrew’s own approach also be seen as irretrievably purist? Criticising a movement for failing to conform in every respect to one’s own preferences seems a lot like purism. As it happens I agree with LeDrew about libertarianism. But, not being a purist, I am happy to involve myself in a movement where I cannot expect to be agreed with at all times, on all subjects. It’s called being nuanced.

It might seem, after such a relentlessly negative review, that Stephen LeDrew’s book has no merits. But that is not the case. LeDrew is right to lament the dearth of scholarship on non-religious people. He has done good work updating Colin Campbell’s pioneering research on the sociology of non-religious people. His teasing out of the issues around confrontation versus dialogue with religion is helpful and pertinent. And much of his work on libertarian atheism is insightful. His criticisms of many of Sam Harris’s more excitable pronouncements are entirely warranted. But the weaknesses, distortions and simple falsehoods are frequent and serious enough to undo these positives, and call the book’s value seriously into question.

EDITORIAL

150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

→ *Continued from page 3*

People from all over the country explaining what missing out on sex and relationship education meant for them – from being told that being gay was not OK, not having consent explained or feeling guilty for being the victim of sexual assault.

It is a reminder for us at Conway Hall Ethical Society to always face outwards – to offer our platform to those still fighting for the rights of the non-religious. So Happy Birthday to the National Secular Society! Also, good luck to the British Humanist Association for gearing up for the fight against faith schools. More than ever, secularism and humanism are needed – it is important that we continue our historical role in shaping these important debates.

Sex and Prostitution: Chalk and Cheese

Janice Williams discusses the highly controversial topic of whether it should be illegal to pay for sex, and argues that we need to adopt the Nordic Model



'Evil begins when YOU begin treating other people as things'.

Terry Pratchett

What is sex? What does it mean to enter a sexual encounter with another person? I say it is an intimate, comfortable, reciprocal, safe, pleasurable meeting of bodies with the goal of enjoyment, and not premised on a major differential in any kind of power, physical, mental or economic. In other

words, if you are paid because you are only doing it for the money, it isn't sex, it is exploitation based on a power difference. If you wanted to do it, you wouldn't need to be paid. It is often said that the best things in life are free, and sex is definitely one of those. Sex is NOT paying to shove your penis at

Janice Williams has degrees in Classics and Psychology, and after a religious episode lasting into her 30s had a reverse 'road to Damascus' experience with Clare Short's "No More Page 3" campaign and became an active feminist. Jan has worked as a consultancy manager for a charity, and is currently a tour manager, family coach and Humanist Funeral Celebrant. She is a veteran of the Campaign Against Pornography and Object, which campaigns against media sexism, and also works with the campaigning group Nordic Model Now.



or inside another person – while the other person pretends not to mind or even to like it (or you) when you really don't know each other. Money is no substitute for the skills to form a relationship, however fleeting. So what happens to a woman in prostitution is not sex, it is violence and exploitation.

Would it be OK to pay to sexually penetrate animals? Denmark changed the law on this in 2015, and in most countries it is now illegal and seen as animal abuse. Would it be OK to have sex with a member of an ethnic minority on a paid basis, as in a system where your caste determines your job? No, because that would be racist. People with disabilities, maybe? No! Yet we deem it OK to designate a 'caste' of women (generally poor, vulnerable, underparented, homeless and often sexually abused as children) exploitable so that a man who is not that poor, vulnerable, homeless, or abused can have this 'fun' – in addition to all the other kinds of fun he can have, if he has money to pay. The icing on one of his many, many cakes is more important than the basic safety of a vulnerable woman? 95% of prostituted people are women. If they were animals or a minority there would be an outcry, but because they are 'just women' it is seen as OK.

I am not going to repeat the statistics I gave in my talk; if you are interested, look them up on www.nordicmodelnow.org. Pay special attention to the Survivor Stories and the Punters (or perpetrators) who normally escape unnoticed. If the recent Home Affairs Committee of MPs who looked at prostitution are anything to go by, you as a mere member of CHES are likely to be stuck in denial and suffering from thought paralysis, so I can only offer you some blinkers and suggest you head to the nearest beach and bury your head in the sand. Sing la-la-la to yourself if that doesn't work.

But you want to know more? Let's try a decision tree. If for you the answer is no, stop there and recognise that this is not OK. If you think a level is OK, go further:

1. Would Activity X be OK if the mortality rate was at least 12 times that of any other Activity?
2. Would Activity X be OK if it involved working with body fluids of people who have unprotected sex, without having any protection yourself? (NB most jobs that involve contact

with body fluids require full body cover like the people who dealt with Ebola or Zika.)

3. Would Activity X be OK if everyone who did it needed to self-medicate with drugs or alcohol in order to get through the shift and mostly became addicted to the harmful substances involved?
4. Would it still be OK if all the above were true and then most of the money you earned went to other people and not to you?
5. Would it still be OK if there was, say, a 90% risk of getting mental health problems as a result of the Activity if you didn't already have them when you started?
6. Would it still be OK if racism was completely acceptable in the Activity?
7. Would it still be OK if you were, say, 70% likely to get raped or beaten up by a stronger person while doing this Activity?
8. What if that stronger person could have a knife or a gun with them and you wouldn't know until they used it on you?
9. What if there were no-one to come and help you when you screamed, or if the police did get called, they shrugged and looked the other way, or worse.
10. What if so-called 'safe areas' (like the one in Leeds) were designated for this activity but women still got murdered in them?

Are you still in? Do you really think 'Activity X' is OK? Wow, you are brave or ... something. Sadistic sounds about right to me. Let's continue. What if, added to all the above...

11. Ageism is also completely normal, so Johns only want very young people; pay and opportunities decline steeply the older you get.
12. You got into this activity because you couldn't pay your rent/feed your child/get a roof over your head and a 'friend' said you could stay with him and then raped you and told you that you had to earn money this way if there was no other, or he would throw you out?
13. What if your users enjoy hurting you, the more you hurt the more they seem to enjoy it?
14. What if when you were sore, injured, exhausted and feeling ill you still had to go

- on working, with no sick leave and no paid holidays?
15. What if you had to keep changing your hair and clothes to keep the users interested so they didn't use elsewhere?
 16. What if you were doing this to support a child you often couldn't see because of the hours and type of Activity you do?
 17. What if your 'boyfriend' who says he loves you, rapes you regularly and then sends you out to perform your Activity and give him the money so he can 'look after' you?
 18. What if you knew that Members of Parliament, judges, aristocrats and business leaders thought it was fine to hurt you with this Activity, or turn a blind eye to others doing so?
 19. And have you remembered always to smile, never to argue and always to pretend that you are happy and love every minute of it?
 20. By the way, you can't combine this Activity with an ordinary job.

Is it still OK with you? Is it? Gonna sign up? Looking forward to your start date? If so you have just OK'd the worst set of conditions known to humankind. Congratulations. I could go on, there are plenty more. But instead of looking at abolishing this wonderful Activity (as has been successfully and cost-effectively done elsewhere) – no! Better that women should suffer and get infected, addicted, beaten and murdered! I know, instead of making it illegal to buy it, let's see how we can tweak Activity X (OK for women but definitely not for animals or minorities) to make it more acceptable. You know, like they did to Aztec child sacrifice, Chinese foot-binding, Female Genital Mutilation, British child chimney-sweeps and world-wide slavery. Wait a minute, they didn't tweak child sacrifice, foot-binding, child chimney-sweeps, or slavery, they just passed a law to abolish them outright! Simple! Except for FGM of course.

Suggested tweaks have included:

1. Slavery: 'Let's call slaves Assistant Planters and then it will be all right'.
Activity X: 'Let's call the women Sex Workers and then it will be all right'.
Reality: Changing a name changes nothing.

2. Slavery: Let's deal separately with the actual trading of slaves, that is the real problem'.
Activity X: Trafficking is the real problem, let's separate it off and deal with that'.
Reality: trading and trafficking are just the supply chain bringing 'goods' to the market.
3. Slavery: 'A slave in America lives better than a free man in Africa' – Cotton Mather
Activity X – 'They do it for the money, you know, it gives them employment'.
Reality: It is not OK to pay to abuse. We should not have to be abused in order to live.
4. Slavery: 'Let's mount vicious personal attacks on abolitionists'
Activity X: 'Let's call them moralists, pearl-waving Mary Whitehouses, Feminists!'
Reality: We are just calling a spade a spade: truth-telling, not moralising. Anyway what's wrong with pearls? What's wrong with equality and human rights?

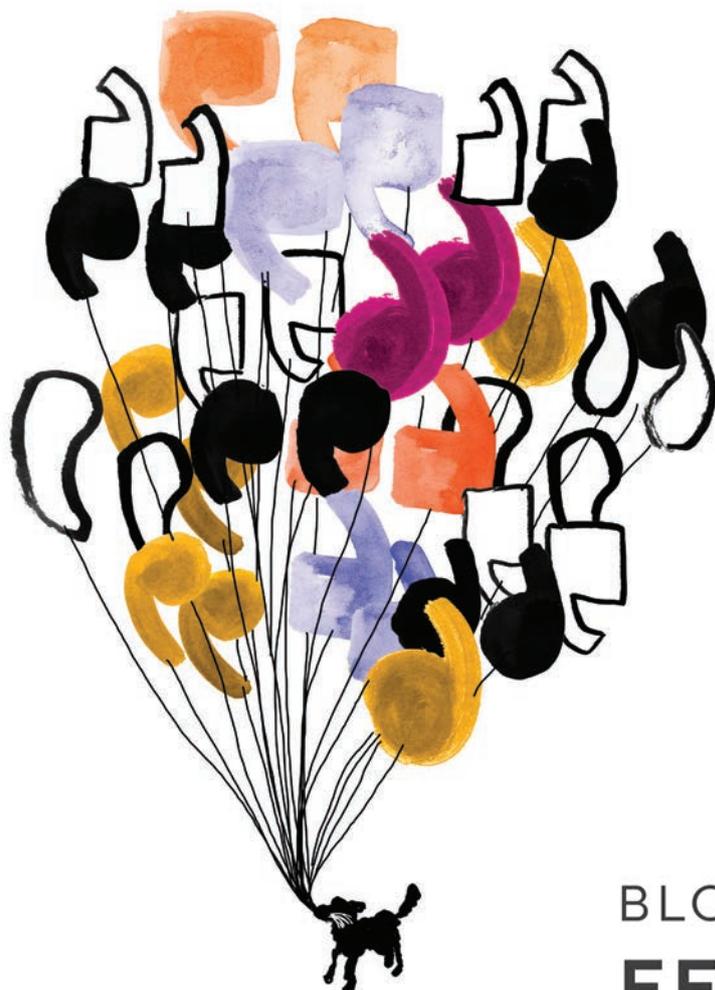
I could go on... but what we really need is the Nordic Model, and we need it now. The watchword for the abolition of slavery was, 'Am I not a man and a brother?' For Activity X it is 'Am I not a woman and a sister?' Because if prostitution is so OK (revisit the decision tree above if you are unsure), then it is OK for you and for your sister, mum, friend, auntie, gran, girlfriend. Would you really wish that on them? Like the slave-owners justified slavery? If you are tempted to laugh superciliously or think about looking tolerant and cool, again, get back in your (sorry, the) tree or put your head into the sand. Schopenhauer said: 'All truth passes through three stages: first, it is ridiculed (go ahead and laugh), then it is violently opposed (there is plenty of that about), and then it is accepted as being self-evident.' Like in Sweden. Like in Norway. Like in Canada. Like in Northern Ireland. Like in France. Maybe, as Sterne said, they do order these things better in France.

www.nordicmodelnow.org

Martha Lee

BLOOMSBURY FESTIVAL: Angelic Chaos (6,6) Anag

Bloomsbury Festival comes to Conway Hall Sunday 23rd October, 11am-6pm



BLOOMSBURY
FESTIVAL
19-23 OCTOBER 2016



For the second year running, Conway Hall is delighted to be one of the three main Bloomsbury Festival hub venues alongside Goodenough College and UCL.

Established in 2006, Bloomsbury Festival is a creative explosion of arts, science, literature, culture and fun throughout the streets, parks, museums,

galleries, libraries, educational establishments and public and (normally) private buildings of this vibrant cultural quarter. Bloomsbury Festival brings together artists and academics, scientists and dancers, school pupils, musicians, nurses and publishers, providing unusual creative opportunities to inspire and learn from each other.

Inspired by the centenary of SOAS and with Bloomsbury residents reflecting one of the highest levels of diversity in the UK, the theme selected for this year's festival is Language. Language comes in many forms; speech, symbols, non-verbal communication, performance language, dance notation, morse code, sign language, computer code. Language will be explored throughout the festival events.

Kate Anderson, Bloomsbury Festival director, says: 'Bloomsbury Festival is unique, as is the area of Bloomsbury in which leading institutions and world-class creative organisations rub shoulders with primary schools and lawyers. We make the festival with over 100 Bloomsbury partners, providing opportunities for unusual collaborations and development opportunities for all. The result is a very distinctive festival indeed! And with over 150 events including all art forms, science, architecture, walks, technology, outdoor music, debating and hubs focusing on families, I think we can safely say there is something for everyone at Bloomsbury Festival.'

Titled 'Angelic Chaos (6,6) Anag', the Conway Hall hub will explore the language of social change, bringing together exceptional thinkers, scientists and artists to consider some of the key issues of today. A variety of talks, discussions, workshops, art exhibits and performances will take place on the day throughout the building.

Talks and discussions will include our regular Thinking on Sunday Lecture featuring Dr Cicely Marston, Associate Professor in Social Science at LSHTM, who will discuss the role of language in the sexual behaviour of young people. A panel discussion on 'Cultural Identities and Stereotype Threat' from The Knowledge Quarter will reflect on what cultural identities are and how they can be transformed into stereotypes. In 'What Right to Play?', a panel of experts in family law, child psychology and theatre will discuss childhood in an increasingly complex world. The Weiner Library will be giving talks on 'The Kindertransport' and 'Propaganda and the Nazi Regime', and there will be a pre-concert talk, 'Music and Language', ahead of our regular evening recital by musicologist Roderick Swanston exploring how notes and structures convey meaning and emotion.

Following on from the pre-concert talk, Conway Hall Sunday Concerts will present a colourful recital of string quartets by Mozart, Beethoven and Bartok

with the Jubilee Quartet. Come and see 'Terrific Tongues', world-changing speeches you thought you knew but can't really remember presented by Ingenious Purpose and Westminster Kingsway. Or come and watch the thought-provoking play, 'Removing the Legal Chains of Violence Against Women', which will be performed in our humanist Library.

If workshops are your thing, we have a few to choose from, including '(we are) a sign of our times', a think-share-explore workshop run by a School of Thought, which looks at the rhetoric, persuasive language and slogans of social change. Or come and find out how to 'Communicate Better in your Relationships' with the renowned life coaches The School of Life. 'Press This Button' will be offering you the chance to press a button to instantly eject someone or something from your life, teleport to another location, or enhance your mortal powers. Or you can come and try a language taster session – Spanish, German, Italian or Brazilian -with Lingua Diversa Group, a language school based at Conway Hall.

Walk onto Theobald's Road and in our 'shop-front' window you'll find on display some of the 24 posters from 'Now It is Permitted: 24 Wayside Pulpits', visionary statements from artists/writers including Gavin Turk, Fiona Banner, Ali Smith and others. Then, see if you can find the other posters in the series, which will be displayed in The Swedenborg Society and other locations around Bloomsbury.

In the foyer, you'll be able to watch the film 're/de-signs' by artist Adamram to show alternative views and statements – sometimes politically charged, sometimes context/content-specific, sometimes random, sometimes silly. Philologist, Valeria Valotto, will be 'Switching hats, Walking in Someone Else's Shoes', encouraging you to experience the different ways the concepts of fear and wonder are expressed in different cultures and languages. In between events you will be able to relax and mingle in our foyer with coffee and cake or browse through the books and 'thought inspiring' gifts in our pop-up shop.

Details of the Bloomsbury Festival and how to book for events can be found on the festival website: www.bloomsburyfestival.org.uk, and on Conway Hall's website: www.conwayhall/bloomsbury/.



Photos: Stuart Keegan

Samantha Callaghan

Digitisation Project: Architecture and Place

In a strange way, architecture is really an unfinished thing, because even though the building is finished, it takes on a new life. It becomes part of a new dynamic: how people will occupy it, use it, think about it.

Daniel Libeskind

The Humanist Library and Archives has undertaken its first digitisation project, called Architecture and Place, which went live the weekend of our participation in the Open House London Festival (17-18 September 2016). We intend to make these collections available to a wider audience beyond those researchers who are able to visit us at Conway Hall.

For several years the South Place Ethical Society, based in Finsbury, recognised the need to move to a new home; a new home that would better accommodate their membership's needs. Conway Hall was designed by architect and member F. Herbert Mansford and opened to the South Place Ethical Society in September 1929.

Mansford had drafted several plans over the years, to ensure that the Society's new home would not only accommodate the growing congregation for the Sunday lectures but also meet the literary, culture and social needs of the membership. To this end he included a library, the main hall with great acoustics for the regular Sunday Concerts, cloak-rooms, offices and other spaces for the various social groups. He also included in his designs a secret door from the main hall to what was designed as a chair store as well as

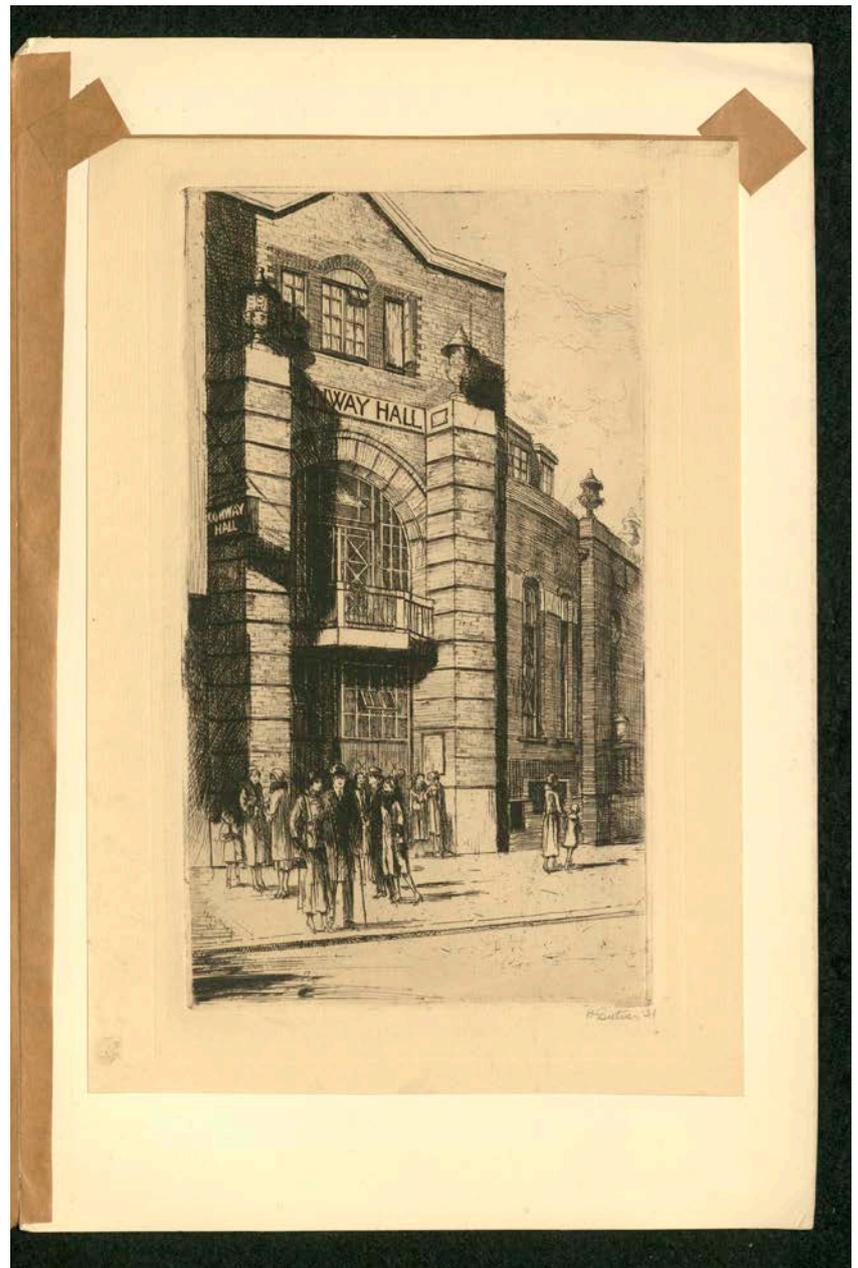


Illustration of Conway Hall, by Herbert Cutner

© Lord Wandsworth Foundation and The Sternians Trust Fund.

Digitised with their kind permission

a spyhole (which you can still see today) between the main hall and the switch room for the benefit of whoever was operating the house lights at events. The digitisation project, Architecture and Place, includes a range of materials: plans; deeds; illustrations; letters; souvenirs; and photographs. The project can be found at: conwayhallcollections.omeka.net. It would be of great help, after you have explored the collection, if you could complete a [short evaluation survey](#), or it can be found at 'Feedback' on the main project webpage.

The choice to develop a project around the theme of Architecture and Place was influenced by a number of considerations:

- To provide context to new members about where the Society has made its home over its history;
- To create a project that would be of broader interest to the public and new diverse audiences beyond the general specialist nature of our library and the bulk of our archives;
- To develop a project that would be a suitable pilot to develop our processes, test platforms and support a range of materials beyond the textual; and,
- Ensure that our digitisation projects inform and provide context for our developing learning strategy.

The last point is to ameliorate the risk of digitisation projects becoming 'siloed'; heritage institutions can fail to integrate their projects with their other digital content and the digitised material is underutilised due to this lack of integration into educational practice.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For the Architecture and Place project, Sophie Hawkey-Edwards (Library and Learning Manager), and I would like to thank:

- Jim Walsh, our CEO, for his enthusiastic support of our work on this project;
- The Trustees of Conway Hall Ethical Society for their support, especially Carl Harrison who provided additional help in improving the descriptions of some of the physical items;
- Our volunteers, Olwen Terris and Rebecca Price, for their hard work in describing the items included in the project, undertaking copyright due diligence for orphan works, digital image QA and checking the condition of items returned after scanning;
- Gordon Terris, who helped us to date some of the photos included in this collection with his mastery of vehicle recognition;
- Our colleagues, Martha Lee, Deborah Bowden and Sid Rodrigues, for their wide ranging help and support over the course of the project;
- Gareth, for his keen eye and design skills for the promotional bookmarks and pocket exhibition to launch the project; and,
- Sean Pike, for his technical savvy in relation to CSS and QA.

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@ethicalsoc.org.uk



In collaboration with



Critical Conversations

Onora O'Neill
October 6, 2016

Roger Penrose
November 10, 2016

John Elliott
December 1, 2016

Doors open at 7pm, starts 7.30pm

**CONWAY
HALL**

Sid Rodrigues

London Thinks Partners with Ideas Roadshow

On 9th October 2014 Conway Hall Ethical Society launched its first London Thinks with two young third-wave feminists who, between them, managed to highlight sexism in the UK and change the way the roles of women and men are represented to the public. A year later Laura Bates was awarded the British Empire Medal for services to gender equality for her project 'Everyday Sexism', and Caroline Criado-Perez was awarded an OBE, for 'services to Equality and Diversity particularly in the media', both in 2015 in the Queen's Birthday Honours. We've hosted 21 events in that time, with such luminaries as; Dr Ben Goldacre, Nate Phelps, Dr Adam Rutherford, Professor Francesca Stavrakopoulou, Rev Giles Fraser, Professor Peter Singer, and Professor Brian Cox, and have discussed topics ranging from;

religion, belief and non-belief; the ethics of the sex industry, economics, philosophy, science, free speech, politics, and more recently the future of the European Union.

From that first event, London Thinks and Conway Hall Ethical Society have gone from strength to strength. Not only has this venture reached a much larger audience at the events themselves, but with the advent of video recording and through our website and media channels, its reach has become truly international, with an estimated audience of 200 thousand people viewing these videos from around the world to date.

In 2016 we will be celebrating the second anniversary of London Thinks and expanding our audience with a partnership with Ideas Roadshow. Ideas



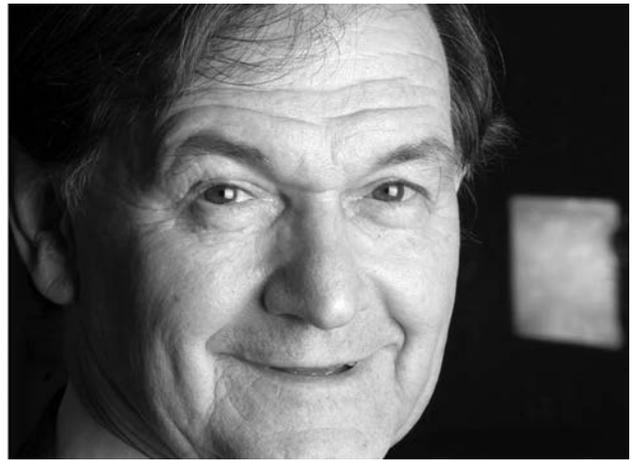
Baroness Onora O'Neill



Professor Sir John Elliott

Roadshow is an innovative multimedia educational resource founded by Howard Burton, featuring the personal, scholarly reflections of a wide variety of leading thinkers in the arts and sciences captured through the accessible medium of a filmed dialogue. Their current institutional subscribers include Harvard, Princeton, Imperial College and the London School of Economics. Their present collection includes over 70 long-form videos and corresponding eBooks. All participants of the London Thinks/Ideas Roadshow Critical Conversations series have been, or will soon be, guests on Ideas Roadshow.

Our first three events with Ideas Roadshow have been confirmed, and will feature Baroness Onora O'Neill, who current holds the position of Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission. A welcome return to Conway Hall from Professor Sir Roger Penrose, with the release of his new book *Fashion, Faith, and Fantasy in the New Physics of the Universe* in September, we hope this will be a welcome addition to his Conway Memorial Lecture in 2012 on 'Seeing Signals from before the Big Bang'. Finally, Professor Sir John Elliot, historian and expert in separatist movements will cast his eye, not only on the past ructions in Europe, but on the possibility of future civil unease in the current world climate.



Professor Sir Roger Penrose



Conway Hall Ethical Society

Reg. Charity No. 1156033

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

We invite people who identify with our aims, principles and objects to join our society. The Society maintains the Humanist Library and Archives. The Society's journal, Ethical Record, is issued monthly. Conway Hall's educational programmes include Thinking on Sunday, London Thinks, discussions, debates and lectures, courses, and Sunday concerts of chamber music. Memorials, funerals, weddings, and baby naming ceremonies can also be arranged.

THE ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION IS £35 (£25 IF A FULL-TIME STUDENT, UNWAGED OR OVER 65)

PLEASED THAT THE EU REFERENDUM RESULT WAS 'OUT'

Congratulations to the departing editor for an excellent July-August edition of the ER setting out the BREXIT issues. A.C. Grayling makes some good points, particularly on the question of the validity of a small majority in a referendum on such constitutional issues. However, the deed is done – on Mr Cameron's terms – and it is right that we should get on with it. Of course, I may be completely wrong and we may wind up crawling to Mr Juncker pleading to be let back in, but I don't think so. The anti-BREXIT appeal to members of parliament was rather short on facts and long on emotion, while the pro-BREXIT argument concentrated on facts.

It must be true that some people with a nice house, a good job and an assured pension will believe that the common man has voted for BREXIT out of frustration with social conditions rather than considering the facts, but the desire for social reform could be a legitimate reason for voting BREXIT. Personally, I voted to leave the EU and was very pleased that the referendum result was 'out.' The actual majority for leaving was around two million, which is a reasonable figure when we could have been faced with a really small majority (in or out), which would have been very problematic.

My reasons for voting 'out' are simple and factual. Firstly, the EU already appears to be a failing institution, with no answer for the problems of unemployment and inequality. The bureaucracy is top-heavy and it lacks a clear democratic system, and trying to bring about needed reforms to the institution is almost impossible. Most of all, the EU is wedded to a very aggressive form of capitalism, where the rules force us to ignore the social costs of unemployment and low pay. Secondly, I am seriously concerned with what the UK will look like in 20 or 30 years' time



with no control over our borders, if it is to remain a pleasant place to live in. We are a small island with already great pressure on transport, schools, housing, and all the social services – and most of all – on land. Control of our borders is not an option, it is a must.

As has been said, we may be leaving the Union, but we are still part of Europe, and will need to combine with our continental neighbours to tackle our many Europe-wide problems that require Europe-wide solutions, such as defence and pollution. The whole idea of a referendum was an extraordinary fluke in our parliamentary system, and the unexpected outcome is an unbelievable opportunity to start again and try to develop a democratic system that brings justice to all sections of society.

Donald A. Langdown
Canterbury, Kent

CONWAY HALL

*SUNDAY
CONCERT*

30 Oct 6.30 pm

Coriolan String Trio

Sara Wolstenholme (violin)

Ruth Gibson (viola)

Robin Michael (cello)

Beethoven String Trio in G Op.9/1

Helen Grime Aviary Sketches

Mozart Divertimento in E flat K563

**Tickets: Adults £10, free entry for under-26s
(courtesy of the CAVATINA Ticket Scheme)**

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

Conway Hall is owned and operated
by Conway Hall Ethical Society.
Registered charity 1156033

CONWAY HALL SUNDAY CONCERTS

Start at 18.30 unless specified otherwise.

OCTOBER 9, 14:00 to 15:00

Children's Workshop with Sergio Serra (cellist)

OCTOBER 9

Musicians from 'Musique à Marsac'

OCTOBER 16

Trio Martinü

OCTOBER 23

Jubilee Quartet

OCTOBER 30

Coriolan String Trio

NOVEMBER 6

London Festival of Bulgarian Culture: Concert 1

NOVEMBER 13, 14:00 to 15:00

Children's Workshop with Alena Lugovkina (flautist)

NOVEMBER 13

London Festival of Bulgarian Culture: Concert 2

For ticket prices and other information, please visit www.conwayhall.org.uk/sunday-concerts/



LONDON THINKS

Start at 19.30 unless specified otherwise.

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- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Thursday
Oct 6 | A Critical Conversation with Onora O'Neill
• <i>Baroness O'Neill</i> in discussion with Ideas Roadshow host <i>Howard Burton</i> |
| Monday
Oct 10 | Ladybird Books and Constructing the Future Past of Modern Britain • Chaired by <i>Samira Ahmed</i> |
| Thursday
Nov 10 | A Critical Conversation with Roger Penrose
• <i>Prof Sir Roger Penrose</i> in discussion with Ideas Roadshow host <i>Howard Burton</i> |
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THINKING ON SUNDAY

Start at 11.00 unless specified otherwise.

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|---------------|--|
| Oct 9 | Are the Courts Biased Against Defendants?
• <i>Donald Room</i> . At 14.30, Donald's new book will be launched. |
| Oct 16 | Religious Education – where it's been, what it's doing, where it's going? • <i>John Holroyd</i> |
| Oct 23 | The Role of Language in Understanding Sexual Behaviour
• <i>Dr Cicely Marson</i> |
| Oct 30 | Cooperatives: The New System?
• <i>Adotey Bing-Pappoe</i> |
| Nov 6 | The Kurdistan Secular Centre
• <i>Gona Said</i> |
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OTHER EVENTS

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- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Friday
Dec 16 | Conway Memorial Lecture 2016 – Lawrence Krauss – Hidden Realities: The Greatest Story Ever Told... So Far • Start at 19.00 |
|--------------------------|---|
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For ticket prices and other information, please visit www.conwayhall.org.uk