

Ethical Record

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The Proceedings of the



TURNING THE TIDE ON PLASTIC



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CONWAY HALL ETHICAL SOCIETY

Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL

www.conwayhall.org.uk

Trustees' Chair: Liz Lutgendorff · Treasurer: Carl Harrison

Please email texts and viewpoints for the Editor to: editor@ethicalsoc.org.uk

Chief Executive Officer:	Jim Walsh	ceo@conwayhall.org.uk
Arts & Partnerships Co-ordinator:	Martha Lee	martha@conwayhall.org.uk
Finance Officer:	Linda Lamnica	finance@conwayhall.org.uk
Library & Learning Manager:	Sophie Hawkey-Edwards	sophie@conwayhall.org.uk
Visitor & Events Manager:	Maggie Nightingale	maggie@conwayhall.org.uk
Systems Analyst:	Sid Rodrigues	sid@conwayhall.org.uk
Marketing & Evaluation & Production Editor, Ethical Record:	Deborah Mohanan	deborah@conwayhall.org.uk
Marketing & Fundraising Co-ordinator:	Jeff Davy	jeff@conwayhall.org.uk
Digitisation Co-ordinator:	Alicia Chilcott	alicia@conwayhall.org.uk
Venue Hire:	Carina Dvořak, Brian Biagioni	venuehire@conwayhall.org.uk
Caretakers:	Eva Aubrechtova (i/c) together with: Brian Biagioni, Sean Foley, Tony Fraser, Rogerio Retuerma	eva@conwayhall.org.uk
Maintenance:	Chris Bird	chris@conwayhall.org.uk

New Look at an Old Issue

Guest Editor: Deborah Lavin

Prostitution was a major feminist and civil rights issue at the South Place Ethical Society (now Conway Hall) in the 19th century. But ethical interest in prostitution died away after the Second World War, as it was genuinely believed that the new welfare state combined with improved educational and employment opportunities for women would dry up the supply while the easing of traditional morality before marriage would kill demand. Events have proved otherwise and Conway Hall is again interesting itself in the issue, which has both remained the same and changed beyond all recognition.

Traditional sole traders still operate, along with small independent brothels operating as small tax free businesses. The men and women involved at this level of the trade usually demand decriminalisation, arguing on civil libertarian grounds that they are exercising *choice* and *agency* while pointing out that legalisation would bring in tax revenue. On the other side of the debate there are also women, “trafficked” sometimes by deception from one country to another. It is difficult to see how “one size fits all” laws could ever be drafted to fit both scenarios (or the various others in between), yet a global world seeks global laws.

Where the 19th century debated “toleration” versus abolition, the current debate in this country is largely between supporters of total decriminalisation and “Abolitionist” supporters of “The Nordic Model” (named because it was first adopted in Sweden and Norway). Decriminalisation allows for big money and mega brothel companies as in Germany, New Zealand and Australia where the most successful

brothel companies trade shares on the stock market. The Nordic Model takes a very different approach and criminalises. In between these two discrete alternatives, there are also arguments for “toleration zones”. In fact, arguments abound about the definition of “pimp” and the use of the traditional word “prostitute” still used in government statute, or “sex worker” used by advocates of decriminalisation, and there are also debates about “trafficking” and how it relates to immigration policies.

The aim of the six talks in the Prostitution, Pimping and Trafficking series is to inform and discuss, not convert, and the six speakers (all academics), have different to opposing views on the contemporary debate, but only the first and last speakers are concerned directly with the current arguments, the four talks sandwiched in between are all historical, but all feed into the current debates:

The first speaker, Dr Stacey Banwell (September 5th), *Forced Prostitution, Unpacking the Links between Globalisation, Neo Liberalism and the Illicit Sex Trade*, pulls no punches in defending decriminalisation. Her descriptions and explanations of what is going on in Middle East war zones are vivid and telling. They are also thought provoking, revealing to what to most of us are unimaginable dilemmas.

The very last speaker, Dr Roger Matthews (October 10th), *Contemporary Prostitution, Politics and Policy*, focuses on this country, as he outlines the present battle within both the government and opposition, which has the All Party Parliamentary Group report in 2014 “*Shifting the Burden*” tending to the abolitionist stance and advocating the introduction of some form

of the Nordic Model including the criminalisation of customers; while the Home Affairs Select Committee (when chaired by Keith Vaz) tended towards decriminalisation of the sex trade along the lines currently practiced in New Zealand (including the decriminalisation of soliciting and of small brothels. Having laid out these alternative viewpoints, Prof Matthews will argue in favour of “Abolitionism” and the Nordic Model.

In between the *sandwich* of Dr Banwell and Prof Matthews’s directly opposing views, there is History, including a talk by Dr Siobhan Hearne (3rd October) on prostitution in Tsarist and Soviet Russia, *From Yellow Ticket to Bourgeois Evil Prostitution in Russian 1900-1930*.

Dr Jane Jordan’s talk (19 September) on *Josephine Butler and the Ladies Campaign against the Contagious Diseases Act (CDA)* deals with British feminists’s major involvement with the prostitution debate. They had allies, not only from the South Place Ethical Society but from moralistic “anti-vice” religious groupings, as well as Annie Besant and the civil libertarians in the secular Dialectical and National Secular Societies. All these varied grouping shared outrage at the gendered nature of the CDA, which forcibly incarcerated women

found infected with syphilis in Lock Hospitals, while leaving infected men free.

This gender bias of the CDA ties in directly with the talk by the medical historian Dr Kevin Brown (September 12), *They always blame the women, Syphilis and Fallen Women 1495-1945*, which looks at the long history not just of syphilis as an horrific illness, but at the peculiar mind-set which saw women as “carriers” of venereal diseases and men as their hapless victims! (A view of contagion turned on its head by the Suffragette leader Cristobel Pankhurst in the early 20th century.)

The remaining talk by Dr Julia Laite (26 September) begins where Dr Jane Jordan left off, as it discusses the campaign to raise the age of consent from 13 to 16; and the gradual change in the public perception of prostitutes as victims, even “white slaves” who needed to be “saved”, to the Hard Girl image of the 1940s and 1950s, which led to the Street Offences Act 1959.

All six talks are stand alone, and make sense without reference to each other, but it makes for good and lively Q and A to have a few people in the audience who have come to all the talks in a series of them which is why there is a Barnum and Bailey offer of all six talks for the price of five.

Deborah Lavin was originally an actress and wrote plays. *One, Happy Families*, a Greek Tragedy in Hampstead, is being revived in Japanese translation this winter at the Studio Life Theatre in Tokyo. Deborah is currently finishing a biography of Dr Edward Aveling and in conjunction with Catherine Howe has embarked on a new project, a history of the Theatre Girls Club, 59 Greek Street, Soho.



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

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, the *Ethical Record*, is issued quarterly. 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)

A THINKING ON SUNDAY LECTURE, 29 July 2018

Turning the Tide on Plastic

Lucy Siegle



On 29th July Lucy Siegle provided a powerful call to arms to end the plastic pandemic along with the tools we need to make decisive change. Following Lucy's talk, Daniel Webb gave a short talk about his experiment of collecting all the plastic that flowed into his life over 12 months. Their standpoints are outlined below.

Lucy Siegle is a writer and TV presenter specialising in environmental issues and ethical shopping and lifestyles. She is well known on TV as a reporter and presenter on BBC1's *The One Show*, and has been reporting on the problem of single use plastic since the show began. Her book, *Turning the Tide on Plastic: How Humanity (and you) Can Make Our Globe Clean Again*, published by Trapeze, will ignite the plastic activist in all of us.



"I love plastic. I want to be plastic," Andy Warhol once opined. Having spent the last six months metaphorically submerged in plastic I do not share Andy Warhol's enthusiasm.

But to an extent we are all submerged in plastic. It's impossible not to be, especially given global annual plastic production has now reached over 320 – 350 million tonnes, with more plastic produced in the last decade than ever before¹. The actual consumable, physical visceral products are inescapable. They surround us: new plastic arrives in daily doses, but at the same time we're still grappling with the old stuff. When part of the river Thames was drained last year, it revealed thousands of wet wipes (made from plastic fibres), that formed a new layer of river bed. We are literally changing the curvature of our landscape through our enthusiasm for plastic.

We had the iron age, the bronze age and this is the age of plastic (as many have remarked). The sign of overproduction and overconsumption is all around us in the form of "fugitive" plastic; single use drinks bottles (according to Greenpeace estimates, soft drinks giant, Coca Cola, alone puts 110 billion of these on the global market every year) bob along rivers the length and breadth of the British isles and tiny round nurdles – the feedstock for plastic manufacture – glint in the sun along our shorelines.

However distasteful you find this scenario, it can feel like there is no escape from the onslaught, from periodicals wrapped in a thin plastic wrap (I really hope this magazine is immune) to coconuts in supermarkets, shrink wrapped despite famously wearing their own protective, hairy husk. It can feel like we've lost our minds. The supermarket shelves suggest we're making some appalling decisions.

As ever, the earth and other species are bearing the brunt of this so far. This fact was brought home to many when the BBC's star vehicle for the natural world, *Blue Planet II*, showed the plastic pandemic in typically cinematic fashion. As David Attenborough's narration explained the peril of plastic in the ocean, viewers saw sea creatures ingesting familiar plastic discard. A whale appeared to eat a bucket. A whale calf dies. The appalling scene of an animal dying with a full stomach; ingesting plastic instead of protein was a visceral depiction of ecocide (a crime perpetrated on

planet earth). Many of us were moved to tears, to fury and finally to action.

I was no exception. I took it upon myself to track this plastic Polymer obsession and turned amateur sleuth, a latter day Miss Marple for the *Age of Plastic* – if you like. I unraveled our dependency on it, and the connections between our consumption and the global pandemic. I went through the bins of families, retirees, students and singletons. I followed them shopping, I battled with celebrity chefs and retailers and made clandestine trips to plastic factories (there are a few in the UK still). I became adamant that we must use our agency and actively stop the flow of single use plastics into our own lives. Then finally I developed my strategies to kicking plastic out of your own life, and how to amplify your individual stance by plugging into a global campaign.

What did I find? So many things, but number one: plastic is suspiciously complex. It seems so simple: via chemical reactions hydrocarbon molecules are joined together in chains to produce polymers. But load on politics, consumers expectations, world trade, money and a hundred other things, and they become ridiculously complicated. I also learned it is an old technology (the forerunner to plastic was invented in Hackney, East London, via Birmingham in the mid 1800s and was intended to be used in place of tortoiseshell for collars, cuffs and buttons in gentlemen's shirts and suiting (which was a misnomer, as the actual material used was the shell of the Hawksbill turtle). I became astonished that we still talk about this chemistry in the hushed tones of awe and wonder as if discussing some extraordinary innovation. We use plastic polymers that are inherently durable and will not degrade for hundreds of years for products such as drinking straws, to line on-the-go coffee cups and lunchtime salad containers. All products in our hands for seconds and minutes, and in the ground for centuries.

I learned that macro plastics do degrade in oceans to become micro plastics and that an estimated 51 trillion plastic particles have infested the earth's waterways. This is not good news. Research shows that molecules of toxic chemicals (banned on land by international treaty such as DDT) attach themselves to the abrasive surface of microplastics in water

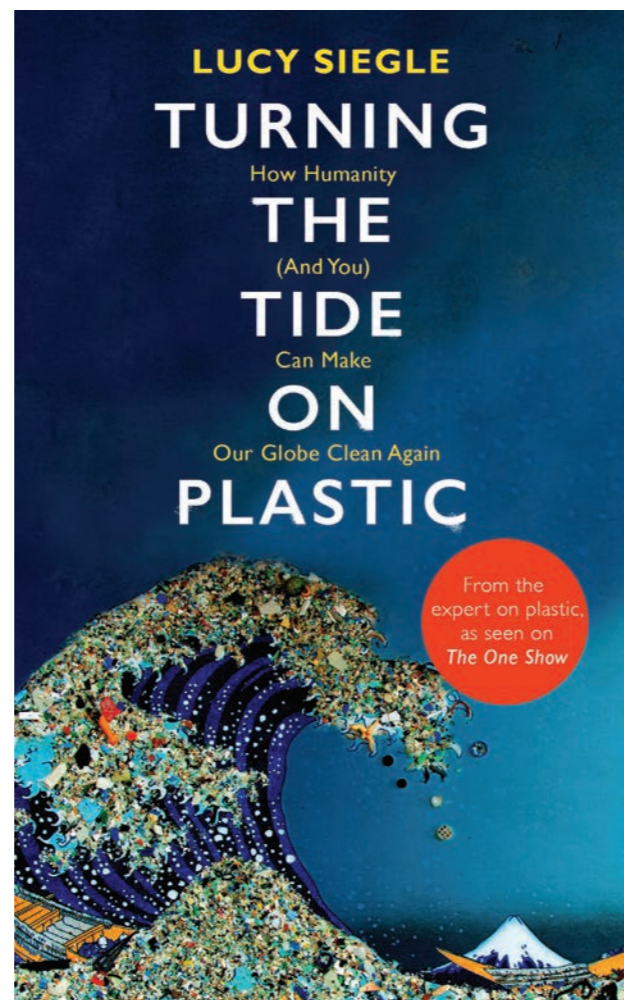
¹ Plastics Europe. Plastics – the facts 2016: an analysis of European plastics production, demand and waste data. Preprint at <http://www.plasticseurope.org> (2016).

and are carried through the water column. I learned that everywhere we have looked for plastic, from the Arctic circle to the deepest ocean trenches, we have now found it.

While Andy Warhol's quote seems dated (like much of his output), I found that there are still defenders and apologists for even the most pernicious types of plastic; single use, avoidable plastic objects. But they are more subtle in their reverence. These days plastic apologists are inclined to agree with we campaigners and activists. "Yes, the plastic pandemic is awful and we must not let plastic be our legacy on earth," they say. But they have no intention of stopping the useless plastic. Instead they try to convince us that the solution is in recycling. If we could all just get better at recycling, then we could get on top of this problem. Recycling is not the silver bullet. The global economy ensures an increasing flow of oil based plastics of increasingly complex make up. In theory anything can be recycled, it's a matter of energy and effort, but recycling is also dictated by the markets and while virgin materials are cheap, the market for our empties remains limited and vulnerable.

My strategy for Turning the Tide on Plastic (the title of my book) employs the 8Rs, from recording to refilling and reusing (I'm at a loss to explain why everything involving waste and recycling begins with an "R"). In my strategy recycling is the very last port of call for a piece of waste plastic, when everything else has failed. It's a change of emphasis, but an important one. There is no substitution for cutting the flow of plastic and just requiring less.

I wouldn't have been able to form my strategies or undertake my work on plastic without evidence. I learned during the course of my research that much of the official evidence, collated on behalf of manufacturers, retailers and distributors who put the lion's share of the single-use plastic we encounter on to the market was flawed. Recycling statistics had been vastly over inflated (as was pointed out by a recent report from the National Audit Office). Fortunately I was able to rely on evidence collated by concerned citizens



such as Daniel Webb (my co-writer here). When Daniel saw plastic washing up on his local beach he was understandably furious and wanted to know what part he might play in all this. He wasn't satisfied by stock responses from his council and retailers, so he started his own experiment, collecting all the plastic that flowed into his life over 12 months. The results are fascinating. Together with evidence collected by the thousands of UK citizens and millions of global citizens who have taken part in beach cleans around the world, this type of evidence has been a lifeline for me. It has informed my strategies and clearly signposted where we need to act with urgency in order to turn this tide.

Food Packaging and its Fruits

Daniel Webb

Seeing as 67% of my throwaway plastic was food packaging (and half is flimsy plastic film), I'm going to stick my neck out here and suggest that supermarkets are responsible for a lot of single-use and unnecessary plastic packaging waste. When you walk into a supermarket, you are looking at a livestream of plastic pollution, albeit very neatly arranged and inviting. In a big Tesco, for example, there are literally millions of items on the shelves. Imagine that only 4% of everything you see ends up being recycled.

Our fruit and veg, meat and meat substitutes, milk and milk alternatives, dips and chips, cereal bags and crisp bags all come wrapped in this flimsy, low-grade, low-value film that is unrecyclable in the UK. One of the worst offenders is fresh food. A huge portion of fruit and veg available to us is no longer seasonal or indigenous. We can sprinkle blueberries over our cereal all year round and enjoy our lives knowing avocados are in endless supply.

Given that the UK's climate isn't compatible with growing pomegranates, pine nuts or paprika, over 50% of our food has to be imported. As a result our food is travelling further and for longer, and transportation is a major contributor to increased CO₂ emissions.

It is argued that plastic packaging protects our food in transit and extends its freshness. But we're also

wasting more fresh food than ever before. We're sold the idea that we need plastic packaging to prevent our food from going off. But how many times have you thrown out a half-used packet of fresh herbs, an oversized bag of spinach or a load of sprouting potatoes? As Brits, Europeans, Westerners, we are fortunate enough to have food in absolute abundance. We can afford to buy too much, and often we don't have a choice but to buy too much. Between 2004 and 2015, food waste in European households almost doubled while plastic packaging increased by 25%. This is no coincidence.

Currently plastic packaging uses around 5% of globally mined fossil fuels – notably oil. But fracking for shale gas – a cheap and newly tapped resource – is going to step this up a few gears. Despite the current global attention against plastic pollution, the plastic packaging industry is undergoing huge investment. \$180bn has been pumped into building or boosting facilities since 2010. With more and more of our energy now coming from renewable sources, shareholders of Shell, ExxonMobil, BP and co. are not ones to rest on their laurels. Plastic packaging is clearly where they see an alluring opportunity for return on investment.



Founded by **Daniel Webb**, Everyday Plastic is an art and educational project that aims to communicate the realities of our plastic consumption. Daniel collected every piece of plastic he used in 2017. Having counted, categorised, weighed and photographed his plastic waste, he turned it into a large-scale mural. The project received worldwide media coverage and has had features in *The Guardian*, *National Geographic*, *Metro*, Sky News, BBC and more. everydayplastic.org / [@everydayplastic](https://twitter.com/everydayplastic)

The report *Everyday Plastic: ever wondered how much plastic we use in a year and where it goes?* will be released in association with Surfers against Sewage in early October.

AGM

Our Annual General Meeting will be held in the afternoon on 11th November 2018. More details to be confirmed soon, to all members in good standing.

How to Fight the Alt-Right

Mike Wendling



On 20 February 1939, 20,000 Nazis assembled in a stadium. They stood under a swastika banner and denounced “international Jewry”.

But this fascist gathering did not take place in Berlin, or Munich – or even in Rome, or Tokyo. Instead, the rally was sponsored by the German-American Bund, and was held at Madison Square Garden in New York City.¹

¹ I first learned of the Madison Square Garden through a vivid account in historian Sarah Churchwell’s book, *Behold America: A History of America First and the American Dream*.

Mike Wendling is a writer, producer and broadcaster. An editor at BBC Trending, which investigates social media stories, he’s spent years covering extremism and internet culture for radio, online and television, and was part of the BBC team covering the 2016 US presidential election. He is the author of *Alt-Right: From 4chan to the White House* (Pluto, 2018).



It’s one particularly telling example of the fact that authoritarianism and fascism have at times been much closer to the surface of US politics than many realise.

One anti-fascist voice at the rally was journalist Dorothy Thompson. Sitting in the front row, she shouted at the speakers: “Stupid fools!”

Later, in her popular newspaper column, Thompson outlined the threat that fascism posed, and pointed out the key quandary for democracy’s defenders.

She wrote of the Nazis: “They enjoy the prerogatives of free speech, and with the instruments of democracy they intend to set up in this country a Fascist regime.”

For the last few years I’ve been looking at the alt-right – an amorphous group which includes white nationalists, anti-feminists, haters of political correctness, libertarian hackers obsessed with race – and yes, hard-core Nazis.

I’ve interviewed stick- and shield-wielding warriors in California, and a self-described national socialist in a leafy pub garden on the outskirts of London. In Stockholm I chatted to an anti-immigrant MP who mocks the alt-right by using their language and symbols – and has in turned been accused of being a fascist himself. And in Oregon I was driven to secret meetings with anti-fascists who are prepared to fight the alt-right in the streets.

But mostly, I’ve been online – lurking in the innumerable dark corners of the internet, traveling to places I would advise no-one to follow.

Today’s Madison Square Garden is the website 4chan. It’s basically a message board, with a few characteristics which make it almost unique. First, all users are by default, anonymous. Unlike the mainstream social networks that dominate much of the internet today, there is no way for ordinary users to login or even create an account.

Each new thread on 4chan requires the user to input not only a message in text, but an image. Threads can live or die by the attached illustration. This forces poster to be very creative when it comes to images – or, to give them another name, memes – the cultural currency of the internet.

And moderation on the site is extraordinarily lax. Material that is straightforwardly illegal in the United States – child pornography for instance – will

be deleted. Pretty much anything else is OK. Calling for all Jews to be killed, for instance, is allowed.

And so 4chan is a place where you have an anonymous group of people, constantly buzzing, flitting to the newest posts, trying to one-up each other with catchy memes, with few constraints or rules.

On the board now – specifically on the /pol/ or “Politically Incorrect” section – you can find any type of race hate you can think of. Jokes about rape and murder, users telling other users to kill themselves, fake news and conspiracy theories: all are standard fare. Alt-right apologists and 4chan defenders often say that users are joking, that they are being “ironic”. And to be sure, some of them are. But after having looked at the site day after day, something else is equally clear: many posters actually do mean what they say.

This current day Madison Square Garden is starting to look even more confusing and frightening than that one in 1939: a fascist funhouse with all sorts of odd characters, scrawled memes, and curious onlookers.

Censorship and big-tech “community guidelines” suck the life out of 4chan and related websites, and thus central to the alt-right’s political strategy is a staunch, often absolutist defence of a particular type of free speech.

At the same time, as progressives have turned increasingly ambivalent about freedom of expression, the issue has given the far right an entrée into mainstream political discourse, as defenders of a core Western value. It’s a popular stance. Large majorities in many countries are strongly in favour of freedom of expression – particularly in America.²

What then should be done when fascists and authoritarians use free speech to undermine a society? It’s a thorny question but I have a few ideas.

First, it’s clear to me – as a journalist – that any political movement, must be evaluated, reported on, and called to account.

I pay little heed to the argument that ignoring extremists will make them go away, even at the risk of giving the alt-right the publicity and mainstream media attention that its most enthusiastic advocates so clearly crave.

But covering such movements requires deep and considered thought. Speed and nimbleness – qualities so highly valued on social media and by some new

² <http://po.st/offensive-speech>

media outlets – militate against proper thought and evaluation.

In a recent study³, Whitney Phillips, a professor at Syracuse University, examined the role of the media in amplifying the far right.

Phillips separated journalists into two camps. The first were millennials: comfortable in the world of memes, many of them were familiar with 4chan. To a large degree, Phillips reported, they assumed the content they were reporting on was ironic, and thus sometimes missed the signs of serious danger.

The second group was older. They tended to take most of what they were seeing as completely serious, and in some cases fell into traps that jokey trolls had set.

I’ve also observed that journalists of all ages have been suckered into spreading messages by undue attention to surface affectations – dress sense, good manners, hipster beards – that make the new fascists appear different from the stereotypical picture of white nationalists.

I also urge people to resist the nihilistic lure of claims that we suddenly find ourselves in a “post truth” society.

For one thing, it’s historically inaccurate. Has there ever been a “present truth” society? Have people in any democracy ever voted on facts alone?

Yes, we have suddenly become aware of propaganda, misinformation, and distortion. Social media has allowed all of this stuff to spread further, faster, than ever before. These are serious problems.

But throwing up your hands and abandoning any hope of living in a reality-based world encourages exactly the sort of chaos that the alt-right welcomes. It gives them power, and removes a huge bulwark against their infiltration of the mainstream.

Just as we should not give up on facts, we should also welcome opinions. Because taking away the sting of the rising far right will necessarily involve a rededication to authentic free speech. Not the toddler version that the alt-right pedals – “I can say anything I want whenever I want” – but a healthy respect for a broad range of thought.

What we have now is a phony free speech war. A white nationalist tries to give a talk on a liberal college campus, and cries “I’m a victim” if someone tries to stop him. A hooligan whipping up hate against

Muslims calls himself a journalist, despite not knowing the first thing about media law. And then “free speech” protesters chuck bottles at police while rioting down Whitehall.

These kinds of stunts allow the far-right to take up the banner of free speech without any of its attendant responsibilities.

Arguing about free speech is hard. It can get heated. Reasonable people can come to very different conclusions. We can differ on what kinds of ideas are worthy of debate. But as a society we can’t simply leave these hard questions to the trolls and the far right.

Part of this discussion about free speech will have to include a serious debate about the role of direct action. There is an obvious and broad social coalition against extremism, within which we can probably all agree that political violence is bad. Although – as one young anti-fascist pointed out to me in Oregon – Americans sure do love movies where Nazis get blown to bits.

More to the point, there are protests, blockades, and even more aggressive techniques which have been used to shut down extremists.

It’s been over a year since the shocking scenes in Charlottesville, which resulted in violence and the death of a counter-protester. Since then, anti-fascists have come out in force against similar gatherings of alt-right neo-Nazis and nationalists. Windows have been smashed, and fights have broken out.

At the same time, several alt-right leaders have admitted that they have been thwarted in their attempts to build a solid street movement.

Which tactics are justified? Which are actually effective? Although the alt-right would like free rein on the free speech battlefield – and for their toddler version to win out – I don’t think these questions can be out of bounds.

There’s another, clearer way that free speech can tackle extremism. When Dorothy Thompson shouted “Stupid fools!” she pretty much hit the target. The power of humour and mockery should not be underestimated.

In many ways, the alt-right is ridiculous. Its disciples build elaborate castles out of language. They are obsessed with race to a perverse degree. And their preoccupation with conspiracy theories and online message boards resembles a role-playing game.

Anything people can do to pop the self-righteous bubble of anger and perceived victimhood that white nationalists carry with them is to be wholeheartedly encouraged.

Nobody will convince the hard-core neo-Nazis that they’re wrong, any more than you’re going to convince those German American Bund members to leave Madison Square Garden, walk down the street and enlist in the Army to fight Hitler. So shout “Stupid fools!” instead – or, since it’s 2018, post a meme.

Despite gatherings of neo-Nazis with tiki torches and battles down Whitehall and a guy in the White House who retweets people who spread alt-right conspiracy theories, I have hope in the present moment, for one reason: the inevitable exhaustion of political anger.

Anger is only attractive when there is not an alternative narrative of hope. In 2008, Americans were scared, uncertain about the future, and really leaning out over into the abyss – and they voted for the guy who campaigned on hope.

Barack Obama may not have fulfilled that promise – and there is a compelling argument that says his failure to deliver on several counts led to the rise of Donald Trump. That said, don’t forget that a lot of Trump voters saw hope in their guy.

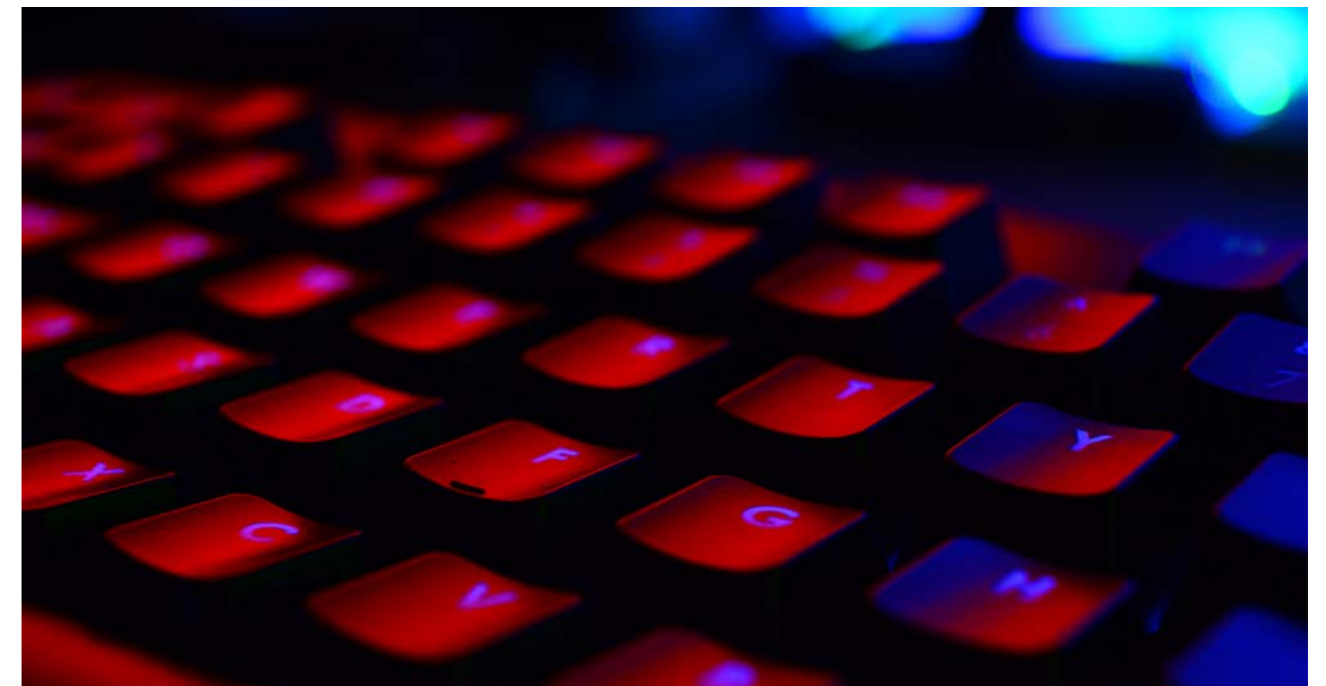
But by 2016, the tone had clearly changed. Trump effectively channelled a peculiar strain of anger in just the right places to win.

Whether that is a long-term strategy is debateable. Hate corrodes and erodes. The online far-right looks hollow in comparison to grassroots movements based on positive change. Mocking and memes only get you so far. And opponents of the far-right have a natural advantage. They are fighting hate.

Throughout 2017, as I was writing my book, I watched as the alt-right started to break up. There was infighting – deep arguments about ideas and tactics. Hate was effective in building up Twitter followings and getting a lot of attention, but was useless in building a real political force. At the end of 2016, alt-right leaders were talking about taking over political parties, organising political conferences, and going mainstream. One year later they were cowering, sniping online, in disarray.

I don’t want to downplay the danger. There will inevitably be further “lone wolf” terror attacks like the one in Charlottesville. In November, several alt-right friendly candidates will be trying to win seats in the US Congress. The street movement that failed to form in America is on the verge of materialising in the UK.

But in the face of these movements, we’ve got some good guidance from the past. It’s time to pay attention to Dorothy Thompson again.



³ “The Oxygen of Amplification: Better Practices for Reporting on Extremists, Antagonists, and Manipulators”, <https://datasociety.net/output/oxygen-of-amplification/>

Pause for Thought

Christopher Templeton



PART 1: REFLECTIONS ON THE FIRST HUMANIST BROADCASTS FOR BBC WORLD SERVICE RECORDED BETWEEN 1997 AND 1999

The ethical conflict between rationalists and the BBC is as old as the corporation itself. Over time, those tensions have been vented in constructive ways, but a mutual ire is acutely demonstrated with the eponymous series known as *Thought for the Day*. You know TFTD, it's the three-minute morning thought platform from which all humanists have been locked out since its first broadcast in 1970.

This was an odd way to go for the BBC, when you consider that the inaugural BBC Reith Lecture in 1948, the one that spawned all others, was given by Bertrand Russell. A presentation that set a cracking pace for the broadcaster on the themes of "*Authority and the Individual*". It was original sounding stuff that really made you think twice.

Despite this enlightened beginning, programming output in this genre became at least for atheists,

predictably establishment, arid and almost entirely religious in outlook.

Let's be clear about the BBC's position here. Over this great stretch of time, the charm of their conceit was to suppose that rationalist thinking, at least spoken out loud, would be of no value to its audiences. Why disturb the status quo after all? Why till the soil? Over two generations a body-politic condition emerged along with an attitude that the people out there, the so-called "audience", really didn't want to hear that category of opinion or be made uncomfortable by it.

Of course on this side of the fence, for the emerging humanist communities, for the active rationalists and atheists of the period – the need to tune into enlightened ethical ideas was extremely important. When you listen to the radio, you define yourself by what you hear after all. The lack of our

Christopher Frederick Templeton is the Scottish/Hungarian scriptwriter and director whose radio plays and television documentaries have highlighted human rights abuses in both America and Europe, stretching from the immediate post Cold War era of the 1990s to the present day. Templeton was born in Los Angeles, California, the son of the Glasgow playwright William P. Templeton. He wrote and directed several plays for the BBC World Service and was the Producer for all 26 Humanist contributions on the *Pause for Thought* strand broadcast between 1997-1999.



kind of sentiment on the airwaves was in short, a compromised freedom.

However in 1997, there was a breakthrough. At the time, I was a radio drama producer at the BBC World Service on the "*Play for the Week*" series but had also just joined the RPA.

During those early meetings at Conway Hall, the dominant issue that appeared to be driving everyone to madness was how to secure an atheist on the "*Thought for the Day*" strand. To my mind, it was a kind of monomaniacal occupation. There was nothing else to do in the humanist universe as far as I could see. I did understand however, because the BBC acted without compunction. Letters and verbal salvos were passing back and forth between the RPA and Broadcasting House on a weekly basis - and of course getting nowhere, with the BHA also breaking its honourable lance at every attempt.

In 1996, the World Service ran a parallel strand to "*Thought for the Day*", called "*Pause for Thought*". These notional titles were largely interchangeable because the *domestic* BBC Radio 4 and the *international* BBC World Service shared their recordings. Both strands were entirely religious in their persuasions. Editors arguing the old trope that only the religious do ethics. Remind yourself that this was twenty years ago.

In many ways the World Service, ex-Empire Service Radio and steady employer of George Orwell was in a real sense, the soft underbelly of the corporation. Here, economics had a great way of deflecting the establishment strictures and allowing exposure to new ethical outlooks. Because its paymaster was the Foreign Office, not the licence fee payer, the BBC World Service Editors were arguably more freethinking than their domestic partners.

This proved to be an all-important distinction. After proving ourselves with several pilots, I managed to secure a production budget to record 26 non-religious and distinctly secular episodes of *Pause for Thought*. These were duly recorded, delivered and broadcast between 1997 and 1999 to international audiences of over 35 million people. A significantly greater audience reach than the 2-3 million BBC Radio 4 listeners that the RPA were seeking to connect with. We had effectively walked around the problem and found richer, greener pastures.

Some folks are interesting enough to say: "*I don't like that music I'm listening to - but I do appreciate its*

originality". Well that's rationalism all over, always searching for the germ of an idea, or the originality of an idea that advances understanding. The shifting constructs of human life are deeply fascinating to rationalists and so, for the first time on BBC radio, humanists and rationalists were let loose *en masse* onto the airwaves, offering their personal thoughts and ideas for the first time.

The contemporary speakers on the strand tended to be religious leaders of course, or perceived to be the best advocates of their faiths. Men, and they were largely all men at this time, like Rabbi Blum, Lord Sacks, Rowan Williams, Tom Butler and James Jones, were re-circulated on the beltway from the pulpit to the microphone and back again.

You discovered a pattern here in that the BBC would often double down on certain individuals if they were mildly entertaining. The Reform Rabbis, with a lighter grip on their faith, tended to get the airplay largely because unlike the Anglicans, they didn't take themselves too seriously. They were arguably more secular in outlook as well. After all, Jews make great atheists. In this way, World Service editors were already moving closer to the humanist mind-set, only they didn't realise this at the time.

When approaching our set of recordings, we developed a new psychology for the strand. It wasn't easy, but in the end we decided to promote "ordinary" humanists. In other words, not the people who were perceived to be public figures within humanist circles. Bravely, we drew on the deeper humanist community at large.

Most of the speakers we selected to record had never been in a recording studio before and therefore what you heard, in contrast to the theists and deists, amounted to a new kind of pure sentiment - in stark contrast to the prepared and laboured dogmas of the religious. They became unique examples of this genre. It is also why they succeeded as stand alone thought pieces. In the spirit of Bertrand Russell's original 1948 radio lecture, this was original sounding stuff that really made you think twice.

To remind myself of this distinction and to prove this to you the reader, Part Two of this article offers a transcription of one particular broadcast entitled, "Yellow". Read it and compare to the current "*Thought for the Day*" broadcasts. Celebrate the unique tenure of the piece despite the twenty-year gap in time and place.

PART TWO: PAUSE FOR THOUGHT BBC BROADCAST “YELLOW”

The range of broadcasts we produced were uniquely playful and unlike any previous reflections on this strand. The broadcast “Yellow” is a good example of this anima, reminding me of Milan Kundera’s book the Festival of Insignificance, because of the clever way the piece converts outwardly wasteful words and actions of people into something that is significant and far reaching.

It is also the best exposition of pure, natural scepticism that you’re ever likely to hear. The reader didn’t have to announce his humanism. Simply put, the speaker promotes original thinking. It is called “Yellow”, was produced and broadcast in five cycles in June 1998, and narrated at the time by Andrew Neil from Scotland:

I travelled to see my mother yesterday. I got onto a train at Euston station in London with a lap-top computer which I discovered had a spell check that questioned “Hogmanay”, the Scottish new year but didn’t blink at “Hiroshima”.

A harassed mother sitting opposite, was having trouble with her two young children who got bored quickly and loudly. Little boy was sporting what was obviously a new watch, his sister asked him what time it was and he said: “Yellow!”.

They went into fits of laughter and kept repeating the double act.

“What time is it?”

“Yellow!”

And their mother’s:

“Don’t be so stupid Brian...”

Fell on deaf ears.

But it reminded me that I was travelling to see my mother. I don’t know where I travelled through. Physically, I changed trains in the Scottish city of Glasgow, then travelled 40 miles to Patna, a small ex-mining village in South Ayrshire, which is where my mother is, in a Nursing Home for Alzheimer’s and dementia sufferers. They say her mind has gone and I say:

“Where to?”

And they shrug. Nobody has the skills, or time or patience or the knowledge to unlock whatever door

she closed shut behind her when she chose to abandon the logic that you and I rely on. And step into a past, or present, or future, which is bound to make us uncomfortable when we try to put it into words. The staff at the Nursing Home, caring, dedicated but understandably concerned with hygiene, safety and days that run smoothly, ignore the far side of that mental door.

I too have no skills, or time or patience, but she is my mother – so I find myself guessing. All her life her main article of faith was that we should not accept readily. She could be cruel in the pursuit of that belief.

I came home from nursery school one day ecstatic that I was beginning to be able to read, I clutched a picture book:

“Look Mummy!”

I opened the book, I pointed to a tree:

“Tree!”, I said. I turned the page. I pointed to the drawing of the cat.

“Cat!”, I said. She went off to make tea.

About an hour later she sat me down with the same book. She opened it at the picture of the tree.

“What’s that?”, she asked.

“Tree!”, I said proudly.

“No...”, she said.

“...it’s a cat”. And on she went, page after page, putting the wrong names to pictures and confusing me utterly.

Years later when I asked her why she’d done it, she said: “I wanted you always to ask questions – even of the most obvious. I wanted you never to forget that as somebody once said, *we do not live in the best of all possible worlds*”. I said: “Who said that?”, she said: “Somebody from Spain. Or was it England?”

Her Nursing Home has a garden and on the warmer milder days, they wrap her up and wheel her out into the fresher air and she sits there, her hands agitated but her mouth smiling – looking over the fields where the coal mines once were. Looking at the river and the distant sheep and the trees.

Or the river, and the distant sheep - and the cats!

VICTORIAN BLOGGING

Writing Wrongs

Deborah Lavin



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Dissent, political, religious, social and sexual, did not enter the world with printing, but printing certainly accelerated the spread of new and maverick ideas. But the new printing technology developed in Europe in the 15th century required capital. The equipment was large, heavy and noisy. While at the top end, the skilled workforce had to be literate and know some Latin. The need for such educated workers made the wages bill high and the first master printers were rich and well-connected men with little interest in challenging the existing social relations. And if, by chance, they did want to put forward unorthodox ideas, they soon found the state and religious authorities very willing to censor, ban and confiscate books, while the printer-publishers could be fined, pilloried or imprisoned. While in some jurisdictions, scientific writers might be burned at the stake for heresy. All this made the publication of the independent and subversive a reckless and unattractive proposition. At least in book form, as books are heavy and difficult to transport and conceal.

Yet this very difficulty presented opportunities to the skilled and literate printing workforce, who with their “out of hours” access to a printing press could produce cheaper, more portable, more easily hidden and hence more difficult to censor; pamphlets!

The birth of pamphleteering came so quickly after the birth of printing, they could be taken for twins. And for some three hundred years the pamphlet was the media of choice of every dissident, rebel, utopian and revolutionary. Where openly on sale books and newsheets could be censored, or prohibitively taxed out of existence, and public lecturers and street orators could easily be rounded up and imprisoned, the small and easy-to-hide pamphlet could be exchanged for a farthing and passed on surreptitiously from hand to hand. By choice and necessity most of the early subversive *would-be changers* of the world gravitated to employment in the printing trade, and from that vantage point they were among the first to make the abiding radical demands for Free Speech and an End to Censorship.

In the first talk of the Writing Wrongs series (Wednesday October 31st at 7pm), *The First Resort: Pamphleteering and Politics in Early Modern Britain*, Professor Joad Raymond looks at the role of pamphlet culture in challenging elites and orthodoxy, as well as the methods of censorship and repression that these offended and threatened elites took to suppress and control the pamphleteers.

The following four talks change tack and look at individual *single issue* causes which feature strongly in Conway Hall's largely 19th century pamphlet collection. Other issues could have been chosen, as the collection is extensive, but a choice had to be made and we decided on four that seriously mattered in the 19th century and have relevance today: slavery, blasphemy, Utopias and birth control.

Moncure Conway, who gave his name to Conway Hall, made the abolition of slavery in his United States homeland, one of his life's central fights. Three years ago, Conway Hall mounted a series of talks (which I curated) on the British Business of Slavery, which looked at the issues from the beginnings of British involvement in African slavery up to its abolition in the British Empire in 1834. Slavery, of course, continued not only in the United States of America, but throughout the globe and Dr Joseph Kelly's talk on November 7th, *The Elimination of Slavery from the Whole World: Problems of Anti-Slavery in Victorian Britain*, takes up the post-1834 battle against slavery. Concentrating on the later 19th century and a little beyond, Dr Kelly's talk gives an insight into the battle now being fought against the resurgence of slavery in our contemporary world.

November 14th will see Professor Gregory Claeys talk on *Marx, Morris and Utopia*. Creating a better, even perfect, world is at the core of both the ethical debate and Conway Hall's pamphlet collection. Prof Claeys makes some new and provocative connections, not least about the ethical basis of Marx's materialism.

Professor David Nash's November 21st talk, *Blasphemy, the Individual and the State: From Historical Flashpoint to Contemporary Grievance*, deals with one of the central maverick pamphleteer campaigns. First the right to reject the state religion, in favour of alternatives and later with the Enlightenment and the Age of Reason, the right to reject all religion. It was a long fight with many heroes and heroines before the crime of blasphemy was finally abolished in 2008. (Arguably it has now returned in the new guise of Hate Crime.)

I give the last of the four "single issue" talks on November 28th on *Annie Besant and the Liberal, Radical, Socialist and Feminist Opposition to Birth Control in the 19th Century*. As the title suggests the talk explores the opposition to birth control from such important figures as Charles Darwin, Millicent Fawcett and Karl Marx among others. But it also focuses on what is often omitted, when discussing the trial under the obscenity law of Annie Besant (and Bradlaugh) for publishing the Fruits of Philosophy birth control pamphlet. Namely, how instead of relying simply on the current economic enthusiasm for Malthusian economics, or the feminist argument for women's bodily autonomy, Besant and Bradlaugh sought to make the longstanding radical argument for Free Speech and No Censorship. This segues into the final talk to be given by Viv Regan of Spiked on December 5th, *The End of the Wild World Web, Internet Freedom in the 21st Century*.

In the early 21st century, the new technology of the internet creating blogging, just as the new technology of printing had produced pamphleteering, but where each is fundamentally democratic or populist blogging has given a strength and a reach to dissident voices unimaginable to the early pamphleteers. Equally, blogging has presented a much quicker and immediate threat to the prevailing elites and their related orthodoxies.

At first merely amazed but now seriously worried, governments are seeking to put the genie back in the bottle by regulation and outright censorship with (in the West) punishments ranging from job-loss, fines and imprisonment. Elsewhere in the world, independent bloggers have met with more violent fates. Yet far from there being any great demand for free speech rising to confront the new elite push to silence. There has been prevarication and even collusion from liberal and left groups opposed to some of the new blogging voices. How this has come about is one question, what should be done about it is another. Viv Regan will round up the talks series by vividly addressing both these concerns and more.

Q and A promises to be lively, but we do not think hard hats will be required.

There is no charge for any of the talks in the *Writing Wrongs* series to be sure of a place, but please book early.

The Outlook of the Energist

Tom Rubens



The above term "energist" relates to a general ontological position called *energism*, one which I have slowly developed over many years; but also one which remains, and must remain, provisional only. It is a modification

and extension of points made in a book that I published in 2008 (*Progressive Secular Society*: Imprint Academic, Exeter), in an essay entitled "A Provisional Ontology."

Essentially, my present position regards the physical



Tom Rubens Tom Rubens has spent most of his working life as a teacher of English in further education. Also, he is a long-standing member of CHES, and has given several talks at the Society. He has published eight books on philosophy, a novel, and a selection of poems. On these, see his website: www.tomrubens.co.uk

entity which modern physicists such as Heisenberg call “energy”¹ as being one of two things. *Either* it is the constituent of all objects which exist within the framework of space-time – in which case all such objects are physical in character; *or* it is the constituent of all objects within space-time which are physical in character, but not of other objects which may also exist in space-time, and which would therefore be, not physical but mental in character. A further putative point about the latter is that, if indeed they do exist, they do so either as effects or properties of the states and processes of certain physical objects: these objects being cerebro-neural systems.

Of the two positions stated above, the first can be defined as *reductive physicalism*. Hence the second can be defined as *non-reductive physicalism*, since it is saying that a mental sphere may exist, in addition to the definitely-existent physical sphere.

However, in adding that a possibly-existent mental reality could only be an effect or property of the physical reality, non-reductive physicalism is contending that the mental sphere could not originate itself; and so, by implication, could not sustain itself. Thus, its coming-into being and continuing-in-being would entirely depend on the physical sphere.

This in turn would mean that the mental realm could not possess causal power – power to bring anything into existence, or to impact on anything either inside itself or outside itself. It could have, then, no agency. Agency, therefore, would lie solely in the physical realm. So, we see that even a non-reductive physicalism confines agency strictly to the physical.

Despite the clear difference between non-reductive physicalism and the reductive kind, both forms share common ground. This commonality goes beyond confining agency to the physical; it also relates to the doctrine of neo-Darwinism. For neo-Darwinists, biological evolution has been, and remains, a *physical* process; and, as both physicalisms argue, the sphere of the physical is pervasive: in reductive physicalism, it is total, and in non-reductive physicalism, foundational. Also, to repeat, with both viewpoints the physical is the sole agency. Thus, for both, the evolutionary place which man occupies is, and will continue to be, the outcome of physical events.

The energistic ontology sees humankind as the product of a certain path of energy-evolution: a path existing among countless others, on this planet and elsewhere in the universe. So, mankind is a specific area of evolved energy – of that energy which, either as a sole or foundational entity, pervades the universe.

Viewed in this way, energy is clearly being seen – as the Heisenberg quotation shows – as a *thing* which is quite distinct from the entity it has traditionally been regarded as, i.e. as merely a characteristic or feature of actions performed by physical objects: as in, for example, the words “His sprinting displays a lot of energy.” It was in this latter way that energy had been previously defined, prior to the advances in modern physics.²

Other important considerations emanating from the view of energy as a thing constituting physical objects are as follows:

1) Energy exists, and can only exist, in specific physical structures. It has, then, no extra-structural mode of existence (as, for example, a Platonic Form or Idea). So, if there ever was a chronological first state of energy, then it would have been a particular structure: and one – it can be logically inferred – which was capable of giving rise to subsequent structures. The latter, in turn, must have possessed the same kind of ability, leading to the myriad-upon-myrriad of structures now comprising the physical cosmos.

2) The action-capacity of any physical object is *constituted* by the pattern of that object’s energy-structure. Therefore capacity for action consists of, as distinct from being an emergent property of, physical organisation and make-up. An object can do things because of the specific way it is constructed. Also, since capacity-difference is a form of *qualitative* difference, qualitative diversity between objects resides in the *form* of the objects (their structure-patterns) rather than in their *content* (which is, uniformly, energy).

Of course, this whole perspective is one which may have to change, in the event of new scientific discoveries, especially in physics: discoveries which may seriously call into question, or completely refute, the Heisenbergian position. But, unless and until such eventualities occur, the perspective will remain what it is. Though necessarily provisional, and constantly open to

questioning, it continues to offer itself as, at least in my estimate, the most comprehensive ontological position as yet available.

The energistic outlook, viewing energy as a natural entity, obviously challenges all super-naturalistic doctrines: the implication being that, the more this outlook is adopted, the more that belief in such doctrines will wane. In that event, the more human beings will come to view the cosmic totality – the “out there” stretching away on in stupendous scale – as no kind of friend or ally. The perspective will be that mankind, like any other highly developed form of energy which may exist elsewhere in the universe, must learn to look to itself, in a fully aware, unillusioned and practical manner, to secure its own well-being and flourishing.

Further, in pursuing our project of surviving and flourishing, we must recognise that the energy which informs us is, like all energy, without a rational character. Santayana describes man as “the product and captive of an irrational engine called the universe.” To this, I would only add that the non-rational engine is an *energetic* one. Thus, though the efforts made by any form of energy to preserve itself do have a rational character, because they are goal-oriented, the same does not apply to the thing being preserved. Energy’s constitution, primary drives and propensities, do not derive from reason. Only the means of satisfying them does. In this sense, then, the rational is harnessed in support of the pre-rational, the sub-rational.

The energy informing the human species assumes, of course, many different forms, patterns, configurations: a fact which accounts for, not only the greater complexity of mankind in general, as compared with all other forms of life on the planet, but also for the many different degrees of complexity *within* mankind.

Overall, the *valuing* of this complexity, as distinct from just the perceiving of it, forms part of the basis of the humanistic morality which inevitably emanates from the energistic outlook.

Deploying, as has just been done, the mentalistic language which is admissible in non-reductive physicalism, we can say, in folk-psychological manner, that the valuing is a process of feeling, of experiencing and of prioritising emotion. But we must immediately remind that the process is at bottom a physical activity of the cerebro-neural system, one which either produces, or inherently contains, the conscious emotional experience described above.

Also, continuing in folk-psychological vein, we can add that, for all those humanists who, with Hume, regard morality as feeling-based, ethics is essentially an expression of affect.

Of course, from the reductive physicalist standpoint, the act of valuing is entirely a physical event, without remainder; hence, mentalistic language can in no way be applied to it. However, for the sake of using diction which is generally accessible to the reader, I will continue to deploy mentalistic, folk-psychological language, and in the manner in which I have done so far – that is, *as if* I were adhering to the non-reductive position.

As well as being bound up with emotion, morality is of course additionally linked with intellectual honesty and integrity. For the energist, this means accepting the full implications of the view that no known instance of extra-human energy can be expected to provide intentional support for mankind. Certainly as far as present knowledge shows, no such support exists. Whether any will ever be discovered, through an extension of our knowledge, is a completely open question: therefore definitely not one that can be assumed to have a positive answer.

Hence, the energist outlook involves no small amount of courage, fortitude and stoicism: qualities which are demanded far less by doctrines which are far less scientific, empirical and logical – and so, far less based on intellectual integrity. In the rigour of their perspective, energists take in fact a certain pride; though this attitude is always tempered and moderated by their unceasing commitment to the real, and to the on-going challenges this commitment produces.

The pervasive austerity of the energist position finds many parallels in the outlooks of a number of writers who have emerged, chiefly in Western culture, from the later 19th century onwards: from, that is, the period when the maximal impact of the naturalistic perspective was first felt and assimilated. For instance, Nietzsche and Spencer (both, in their different ways, influenced by Darwin) were so much affected by this perspective that they saw ethical reasoning as being, from now on, inextricably linked to considerations of natural selection. The same perspective was later to be evident in the outlooks of, among others, Santayana, Russell and Dewey.

Finally: these frameworks of thought are seen by the energist as among the defining features of that human area which has so markedly distinguished itself from all other known regions of energy in the cosmos.

¹ See Heisenberg’s *Physics and Philosophy* (1958): “Energy is in fact the substance from which all elementary particles, all atoms and therefore all [atomically-structured] things are made, and energy is that which moves. Energy is a substance, since its total does not change.....Energy can be changed into motion, into heat, into light and into tension. Energy may be called the fundamental cause of all change in the [physical] world.” (As quoted by Bryan Magee in *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer*: Oxford, The Clarendon Press, 1991 (1983), p. 139.)

² However, we should note that, well before 20th century physics, the philosophers Kant and Schopenhauer (late 18th and early 19th centuries respectively) had viewed energy in the essentially Heisenbergian manner, by averring that physical matter was reducible to energy. Thus, at a theoretical level, though not an experimental one, they had defined energy as the substrate of the physical world.

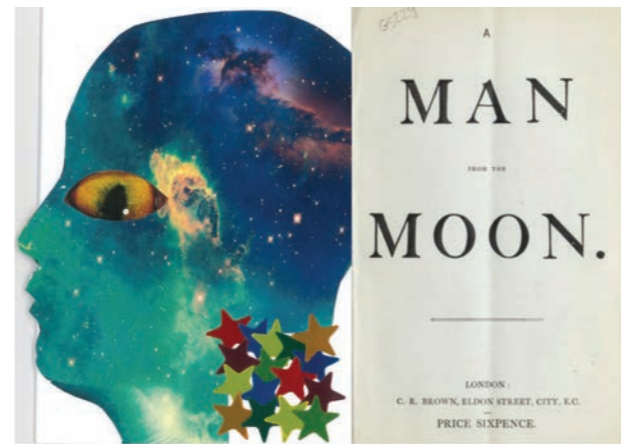
Zine Workshop

Alicia Chilcott

On the 13th of June we ran a zine-making workshop as part of the Heritage Lottery funded project, *Victorian Blogging*, taking our collection of nineteenth-century activist pamphlets as inspiration to create contemporary zines. Participants in the workshop have kindly allowed us to share their work. Our collection of over 1300 Victorian pamphlets covers topics such as freedom of the press, secularism, gender equality and political suffrage – many of which are still relevant today. The collection consists of the personal collection of our namesake Moncure Conway, pamphlets from the library of the National Secular Society and some other bound volumes of pamphlets.

Pamphlets first emerged in the 1500s, following the invention of the printing press. They were cheap, small-format publications disseminating alternative political, social and religious ideas. They rose in popularity in the following centuries, alongside improving literacy levels and printing technologies. By the nineteenth century, pamphlets were closely associated with radical thought. Many were written in fairly accessible language and sold affordably at around 1-6 pence. Small independent publishers, such as Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant's Freethought Publishing Company, and self-publishing pamphleteers produced pamphlets on topics not widely dealt with in mainstream media.

Zines in many ways evolved out of pamphleteering culture, adopting similar formats and cheap production methods and sale prices. The earliest zines



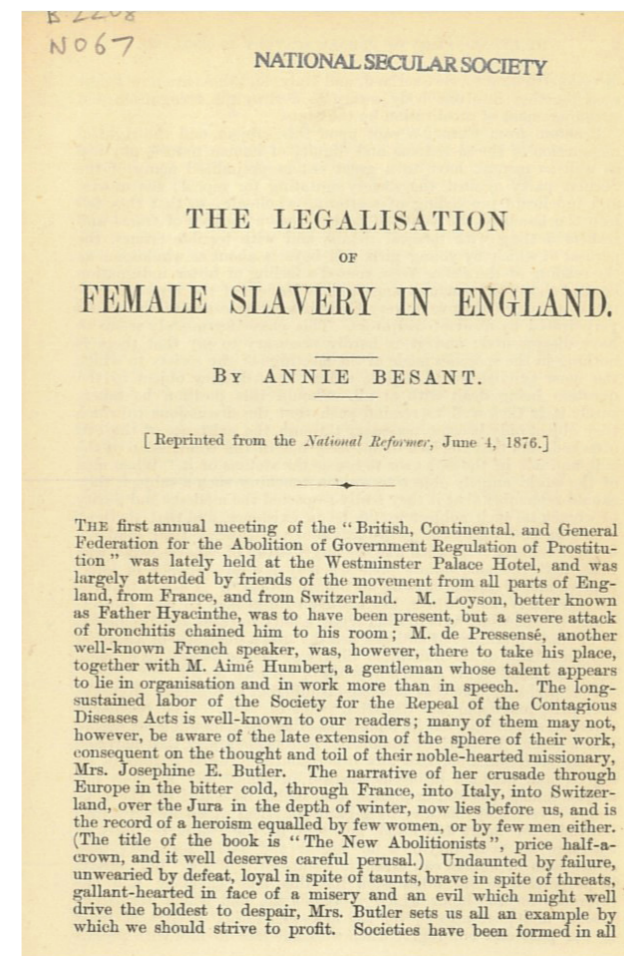
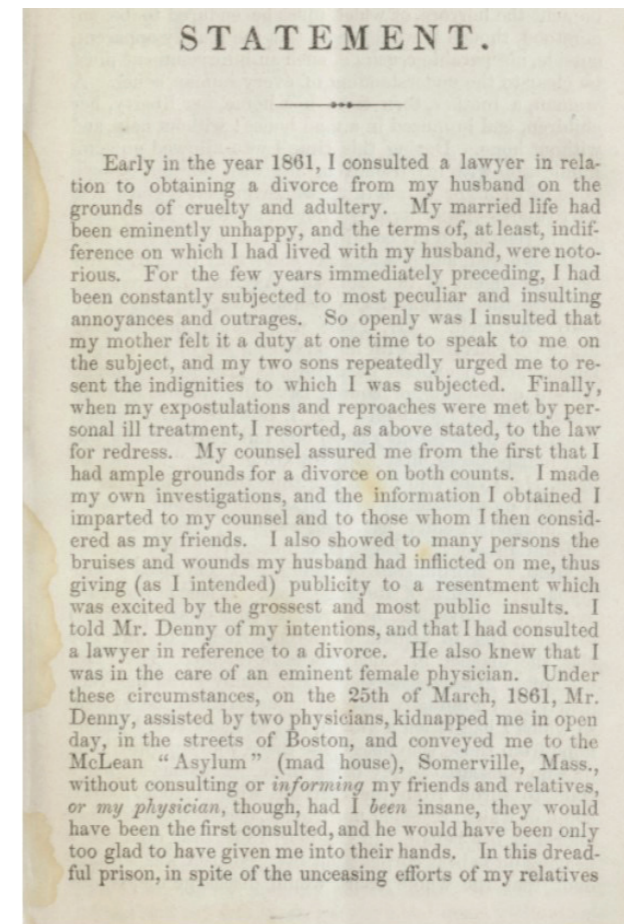
were 1930s sci-fi fanzines, which shared short sci-fi stories and comics, often with political messages. In the 1970s, the format was adopted by punks and other alternative subcultures to circulate ideas and information about new music and events. These became increasingly political and, by the early 1980s, were associated with radical ideas and political dissent. In the 1990s, the riot grrrl movement produced feminist zines that combined music and subculture news with political campaigning. Zines are still produced today, on a variety of topics – from veganism to vaginas.

Alex's zine, *How to Define Sanity*, took inspiration from the pamphlet Statement of Lydia B. Denny.

There are many similarities between pamphlets and zines, but they are not exactly the same. Both are small-format and cheap to produce and buy; largely deal with political and social topics; and are both non- (and often anti-) mainstream. Whilst pamphlets are mostly text-based, zines tend to be more visual – they deliver their message through collage, illustration, comic strips, bold slogans, poetry and short essays. The tradition of self-publishing or using independent publishers for pamphleteering has adapted to a more informal, DIY form of production for zines. Zines are traditionally reproduced by photocopier onto coloured paper, but are increasingly made available online.

You can see the zines created in this workshop in our current library exhibition, Tue-Thu 10am-5pm until mid-October 2018.

Alicia Chilcott is Digitisation Co-ordinator at Conway Hall Library and Archive, working on an HLF funded project to digitise our collection of around 1,300 Victorian pamphlets. These pamphlets were written by London's radical thinkers to disseminate ideas about freethought, humanism and social and political movements such as the early women's rights movement, freedom of the press and anti-blasphemy. Alicia qualified as an archivist in 2017 and has a background in social and economic history.



BOOK REVIEW

Seven Types of Atheism

Norman Bacrac

The library has acquired John Gray's new book *Seven Types of Atheism*, which surveys some atheist "schools" for their alleged faults. Thus "new atheist" R. Dawkins is then typically wheeled in as "ignorant of the religions" he so harshly condemns and also for introducing the useless idea of "memes" – here Gray himself unwittingly employs the popular "anti-Dawkins" meme!

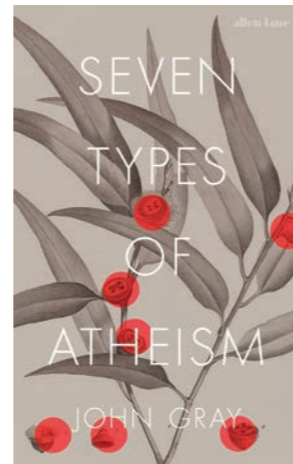
Secular humanists are then accused of retaining elements of the Christian morality they should have left behind, but this is to misunderstand humanism, which avers that all religion was a human creation – there never was a supernatural input.

Humanists are therefore fully entitled, should they so wish, to make use of any concept of alleged "religious" origin, because it was necessarily a purely human thought.

Gray maintains humanists are wedded to the idea of perpetual progress and improvement, an idea, he says, acquired from monotheism. Exceptionally, the late Jacob Bronowski was, but this idea is not basic to humanist philosophy. However, as Steven Pinker's new book *Enlightenment Now* (also now in the CH library) conclusively demonstrates, human life is now better than in any previous time. Gray doesn't tell us in which previous century he would have preferred to live.

Atheism is simply the non-belief in god. It's not committed to belief in "Utopia" (as the communists were) nor any particular moral system, although most humanists are inclined towards utilitarianism, the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Gray is right to deny Sam Harris's claim that science can tell us what to do – "Ought" cannot be derived from "Is". We do need to select the aim, say "welfare for all", after which science can help.

Gray is an atheist. He has written a useful commentary on historic atheism, but readers may find his grudging negativity rather tiresome.



Thinking on Monday Begins

Scott Wood

The relaunch of Thinking on Sunday in April has been a great success with a crowded Brockway Room hosting some revealing, thought-provoking and inspiring talks. Expanding our invitation to members and the public to come hear thoughts that are aimed at making the world a better place, the Thinking on Sunday team are now hosting Thinking talks on Mondays.

We begin Monday 21st January and have talks across winter / 2019 on 18 February 2019, 18 March 2019, 15 April 2019 and 20 May 2019.

Save the dates! As with Thinking on Sunday members attend for free but must pre-book to guarantee their space on the day.

We look forward to seeing you there.

OBITUARY

COLIN LOUIS AVERN LEAKEY

(13th December 1933 – 29th January 2018)

Professor Colin Leakey, scientist, botanist and plant breeder, has died after a short illness at the age of 84. After a green burial his farewell service was held on 24th February in the Cathedral Centre in Lincoln.

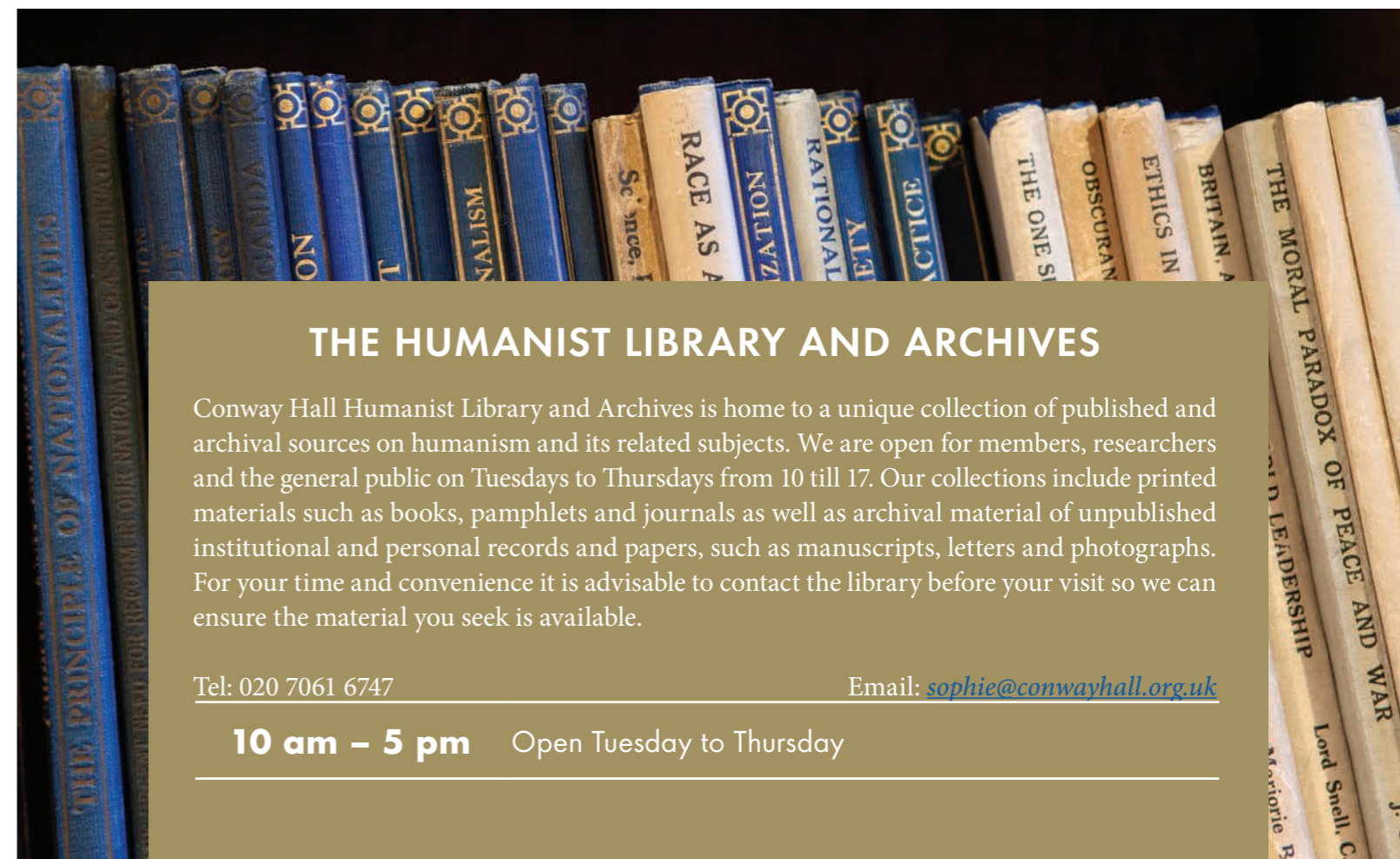
Leakey cheerfully called himself a "bean counter", a description which modestly underplayed his immense contribution to our understanding of the plant world and, especially, of legumes. Son of the pioneering paleo-anthropologist Louis Leakey and half-brother of conservationist Richard Leakey, there was an inevitability about Leakey's interest in the natural sciences. His research took him around the world. The central focus became legumes but he also investigated diseases in other crops such as coffee, bananas and vanilla.

Apart from agriculture, Leakey was a warm and loquacious polymath with an extraordinary range of interests, from music, art and bee-keeping to politics (he was Liberal Democrat European parliamentary candidate). In all that he did, Leakey's was a life driven by strong humanist instincts. Genetics, he believed, may help determine who we are but how we live as individuals or a society is a matter of choice.

Leakey was always interested in the activities of Conway Hall, though he could attend few events due to the distance. He gave a "Darwin" lecture for the Society a few years back, and also a most successful 80th birthday seminar in the library, where there were four various Professor Leakeys speaking.

Leakey is survived by his wife Susan, daughters Emma, Tess and Tamsin and seven grandchildren.

The obituary is based on an extract from Colin's farewell service obituary.



THE HUMANIST LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES

Conway Hall Humanist Library and Archives is home to a unique collection of published and archival sources on humanism and its related subjects. We are open for members, researchers and the general public on Tuesdays to Thursdays from 10 till 17. Our collections include printed materials such as books, pamphlets and journals as well as archival material of unpublished institutional and personal records and papers, such as manuscripts, letters and photographs. For your time and convenience it is advisable to contact the library before your visit so we can ensure the material you seek is available.

Tel: 020 7061 6747

Email: sophie@conwayhall.org.uk

10 am – 5 pm Open Tuesday to Thursday

Forthcoming Events

THINKING ON SUNDAY

Start at 15.00 unless specified otherwise.

Oct 14	Undercover – The True Story of Britain’s Secret Police <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rob Evans
Oct 28	The Ethical Stripper <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stacey Clare
Nov 18	Where Did the Hostile Environment Against Immigrants Come From? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Russell Hargrave
Nov 25	Secrets and Lies – The Psychology of Conspiracy Theories <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prof Karen Douglas
Dec 16	The Perils of Perception: Why We’re Wrong About Nearly Everything <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bobby Duffy

WRITING WRONGS

Start at 19.00 unless specified otherwise.

Oct 31	The First Resort - Pamphleteering and Politics in Early Modern Britain <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prof Joad Raymond
Nov 07	The Elimination of Slavery from the Whole World: Problems of Anti-Slavery in Victorian Britain <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dr Joseph Kelly
Nov 14	Marx, Morris and Utopia <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dr Gregory Claeys
Nov 21	Blasphemy, the Individual and the State: From Historical Flashpoint to Contemporary Grievance <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prof David Nash
Nov 28	Annie Besant and the Liberal, Radical, Socialist and Feminist Opposition to Birth Control in the 19th Century <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deborah Lavin

TALKS, DEBATES & LECTURES

Oct 23 19.30 to 21.00	New Lands: Hearing the Light – Skipping Pylons and the Strange Sound of Silent Motion <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dr Elliot Freeman
Oct 31 19.30 to 21.00	Research and the Public Good: Ethics, Priorities and Conflicts of Opinion <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sir Paul Nurse
Nov 1 19.30 to 21.30	1968 and After: Culture and Education <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Various speakers
Nov 14 19.30 to 21.30	London Fortean Society: The Hexham Heads <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Richard MacLean Smith

COURSES & WORKSHOPS

Oct 03 18.30 to 20.00	Women and Humanist Photography <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grace Gelder
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PROSTITUTION, PIMPING & TRAFFICKING

Start at 19.00 unless specified otherwise.

Oct 03	From “Yellow Ticket” to “Bourgeois Evil”, Prostitution in Russia 1900–1930 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dr Siobhán Hearne
Oct 10	Contemporary Prostitution, Politics and Policy <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prof Roger Matthews

Events subject to alteration • See conwayhall.org.uk for the latest information

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

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SUNDAY CONCERTS

Start at **18.30** unless specified otherwise.**Oct 7****Hiro Takenouchi** • Mozart • FREE PRE-CONCERT RECITAL • 17.30**Duo Mezzena e Giavazzi** • Beethoven / Bloch / Ravel**Oct 14****Alauda Quartet** • Schubert / Bartók / Mendelssohn**Oct 21****Barbican Piano Trio** • Schumann / Joseph Phibbs / Schubert**Oct 28****Royal College of Music** • Haydn / Missy Mazzoli / Farrenc / Barber**Nov 4****Trio des Alpes** • Haydn / Dvořak / Ravel**Nov 11****Robert Hugill** • FREE PRE-CONCERT RECITAL • 17.30**Oculi Ensemble** • Haydn / Strauss / Brahms**Nov 18****Hiro Takenouchi** • Mozart • FREE PRE-CONCERT RECITAL • 17.30**Monte Piano Trio** • Haydn / Schoenberg / Chausson**Nov 25****New Zealand String Quartet** • Beethoven**Dec 2****Hiro Takenouchi** • Mozart • FREE PRE-CONCERT RECITAL • 17.30**Simon Callaghan** • Beethoven / Schubert / Schumann**Dec 9****London Piano Trio** • Beethoven / Mendelssohn / Brahms**Dec 16****Royal College of Music ensembles** • FREE PRE-CONCERT RECITAL • 17.30**Chamber Ensemble of London** • SEASON FINALE • Handel / Schubert / Elgar / Britten / Vivaldi / Bach / Kreisler / Ireland / Clive Jenkins / Mozart / CoplandFor more information & tickets, visit: conwayhall.org.uk